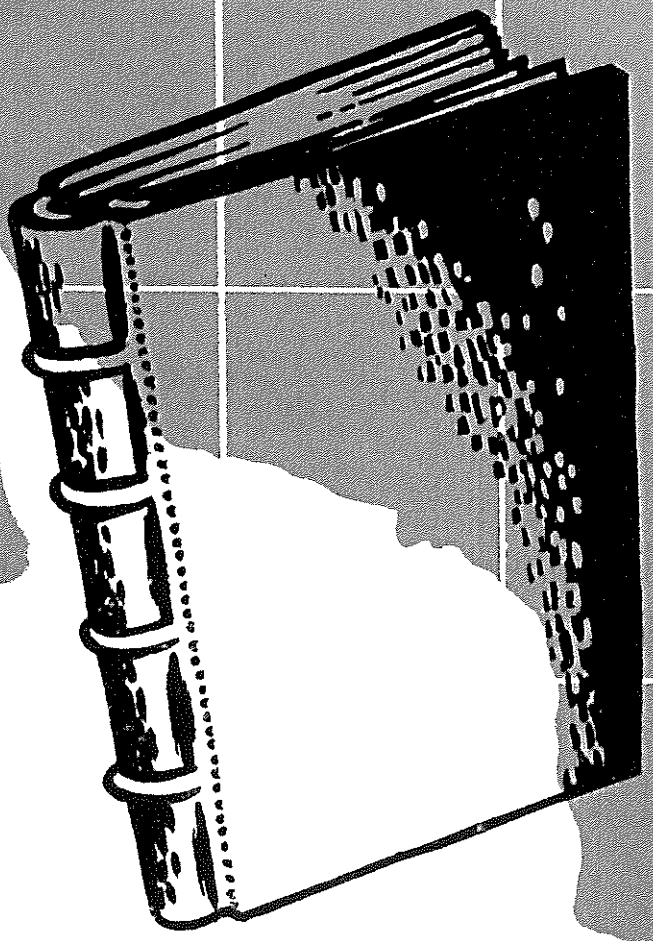
1948

# Libraries in Australia

Norman Lynravn

# LIBRARIES in AUSTRALIA





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QUEST

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# LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA

# QUEST

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# *LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA*

BY

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# INTRODUCTION

Of the many profound things that Socrates is reported to have said, that which has always impressed me as the most profound was that no one voluntarily chose evil. If men did pursue an evil way of life, he maintained, it was purely because they were ignorant of what was good. This contention was based on the most impeccable of arguments, as were all the great philosopher's conclusions, but just the same the powers that were, in due course, cast him into prison and finished him off with an overdose of hemlock.

Four hundred years later Jesus Christ began His herculean crusade to show men the way to live, and suffered a violent death for His pains. A little later, Stephen, as he was being pelted to death with stones, cried: "God forgive them for they know not what they do." History is indeed full of notorious instances of the results of ignorance.

Despite its many set-backs the Christian influence has spread widely in the last two thousand years and has achieved many wonderful things, but it has not yet proved strong enough on its own to prevent great world disasters.

Unfortunately for humanity, Christ in His very short life could do little more than propound His formula and illustrate its application by means of parables and by setting a sublime example in His own behaviour. He was not allowed to live long enough to show how the formula, which we know briefly as the Golden Rule, could be applied to nations with clashing ideologies. He could have had only one answer to a question on this point, the answer that Socrates had given before Him: the way is through Knowledge.

But whose responsibility is it to diffuse this Knowledge? Up till perhaps half a century ago neither church nor government nor any other authority displayed any keenness to accept the responsibility, except of course for the privileged few. In fact the attitude that prevailed for many centuries was that the education of the masses would be a highly dangerous policy and one to be avoided. In some countries this attitude still seems to prevail, and, speaking pretty generally and admitting there may be exceptions, it is noteworthy that it is in these countries that the seeds of war are engendered.

However the position is one that does not yet call for despair. The quest for Knowledge, or freedom from ignorance if you like the modern style, is one that is spreading and is likely to continue doing so.

What exactly constitutes Knowledge? I should say it has no limits. But if in pursuing it we arrive at an understanding of values, of good citizenship and world-fellowship, if we learn from what the world already has to offer how to enrich our own lives and yet leave the world still richer, then we are perhaps half-way along the road. When we can sift the truth from rhetoric and propaganda, when we can fairly decide what is good and what evil, we have travelled a long way further.

But Knowledge is something that cannot be grasped from nothing. In fact it cannot be acquired at all without the assistance of external agencies, of educative processes. This discussion is concerned with the Australian version of one particular agency, an instrument whose power and possibilities have only latterly come to receive the wholesome respect that they merit. This instrument is the people's library. It does not by any means provide a complete solution to the problem, but it can go a long way towards it. It is the very core of any system, national or otherwise, which aims at making a people knowledgeable and informed. Perhaps even this understates its importance.

> "The more I see of libraries," said Lionel McColvin, "the more I think about them, the more I observe the world in which the library has to function, the more I realize that we have a contribution to make to the civilization of today and tomorrow that no other social agency can perform. *We can help people to be their own individual selves.*"

McColvin, the man who said this, is rated among the most outstanding public librarians in Great Britain. On a recent world tour he inspected 275 libraries.

> "I passed through countries," he said, "where there were no libraries for the people, where the people, in fact, would have been incapable of using them had they existed, because they couldn't read and I saw what went with illiteracy, with lack of opportunity for self-development — poverty, filth, degradation, disease, superstition, exploitation. . . . I was forced to realize . . . that without books there can be no decent way of life, no freedom."

Till about ten years ago Australian libraries had not played a very wide role in our social and cultural life, but since 1934 there have

been developments so promising as to give great hope for the future. By no means am I suggesting that perfection or even adequacy in library services is near at hand. When every community has its professionally-administered, free public library, when the resources of such libraries can be made available to even the most isolated of our citizens, when library services are so co-ordinated that they can readily provide anybody with any information he seeks, can lend him freely the literature he needs, whether he is adult or child, when the library is recognised and accepted as an indispensable and integral part of our lives, then the goal will be getting near.

The story which follows is an interpretation of the progress that is being made towards these ends. Being an interpretation it would be miraculous if it contained nothing that was disputable. My only reply is that Truth, whether it be relative or absolute, is still an elusive quarry. The story is written largely from personal observations made in five States and two Territories. Liberal use has also been made, however, of material, some of it unpublished, in numerous articles and reports, in papers read at Library conferences, and in other documents. My indebtedness to many librarians and authorities is fully recognised and acknowledged.

# II

# THE MUNN-PITT SURVEY

In 1934 one of America's foremost librarians was invited to Australia to make a survey of our libraries and of our systems of library service, and to make recommendations for their improvement.

The survey itself was conducted under the auspices of the Australian Council for Educational Research, and was the outcome of requests by educationists, librarians and public-spirited citizens who realised that by overseas standards Australian library services were not all they could be.

The expense involved in conducting the survey was generously met by the Carnegie Corporation in New York, an institution, world-wide in scope, whose very admirable object is to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding.

The man invited to make the survey was Ralph Munn, A.B., L.L.B., B.L.S., director of the Pittsburgh Public Library and a librarian of exceptional ability and wide experience. He later added to his accomplishments the presidency of the American Library Association. In his survey of the position in Australia he was assisted by Ernest R. Pitt, B.A., principal librarian of the Public Library of Victoria.

The two men tackled their investigation energetically and intelligently, and as thoroughly as anybody could have done in the two months at their disposal. Over 100 libraries were inspected and inquiries of 1500 others were made in the form of questionnaires.

The result of the survey, known generally as the "Munn-Pitt Report," was published in 1935, and it is questionable whether, in the chronicle of criticisms of public and semi-public institutions, there has ever been criticism as trenchant as this classical report on the Australian library set-up.

What in essence the report did was to proclaim that in the provision of library services Australia in 1934 was worse off than it had been

fifty years before, and, so far as *free* public libraries were concerned, Australia was among the most backward of the civilized countries of the world.

Could such accusations really be true of a country that could point with some pride to its system of State education which, at the primary and secondary levels at least, compared with the world's best? A country that, with New Zealand, to use the Carnegie surveyors' own words, "led the world toward government ownership of public services and socialized activity"?

Yet few, if any, disputed the findings of the report. The plain, naked truth was that provision for adult education, except for the privileged, was limited to that offered by a few voluntary organizations. True, the Munn-Pitt report was criticized. It was described as provocative and hasty, as harsh and unsympathetic. But that it gave a fair summary of the position nobody could deny.

> "The trouble," said the *Sunday Sun*, "is that this uncomplimentary report is perfectly true, and there is no answer to it."

Now what Mr Munn expected to find when he landed on our sunny shores he probably did not know.

What he did know was that he had just come from a country where library services were of a pretty high order, where money had been spent on them in thousands of millions; a country where there could be found a municipally rate-supported reference and lending library in almost every municipality that was worth the name, and where there were a score of State and university libraries with stocks of 1,000,000 volumes or more; a country where librarianship was rated as a most highly-skilled profession.

Munn was aware, of course, that the United States owed much to the Carnegie Corporation for its help in bringing these happy conditions about, and he also knew that there were still many gaps, particularly in the rural areas. But he was also aware of the high quality of all that had been achieved, and of the appreciative recognition by grateful citizens of what efficiently organized library services could do for them.

In Great Britain, the municipal library system itself was at an even more advanced stage. There existed a network of rate-supported free municipal library services that was almost 100 per cent. in its coverage.[1]

1. I quote from McColvin: "The whole country has been divided into nine regions. In each of these all but a few of the public libraries, most of the Universities and many of the special libraries have agreed to pool their

Finally, Munn could be expected to know something of the great libraries of the world; knew of the energy that Russia, a country of some 160 languages, was putting into the task of bringing books to its peoples; knew that in the State Public Library at Leningrad with a collection of between 6,000,000 and 9,000,000 volumes (there have been various estimates) the Russians could reasonably claim to have the largest library in the world.[1] And he knew something of the many magnificent libraries of Germany, Italy and Poland, of France with its Bibliothèque Nationale, a library of 4,500,000 volumes, of Britain with its world-famous British Museum Library, its rich Bodleian Library at Oxford, of many other great European libraries.

And when he came to Australia in 1934 what did Mr. Munn find? He found at Canberra a National Library with a little over 100,000 volumes, an institution that was still a fledgeling, and he found half a dozen State public libraries, the largest of which in Melbourne and Sydney each had less than half a million books. And most of the books in these libraries were available only for reference on the spot. He found as many university and parliamentary libraries, a number of industrial and technical libraries, and a thousand or more small subscription libraries, mainly fiction in content, and known variously as mechanics' institutes and schools of arts, most of them in varying stages of decay. And there were, of course, commercial fiction libraries attached to newsagencies and book shops. Throughout the whole

resources. Each region has its own central bureau and in eight of them a union catalogue of the non-fiction stock of the participating libraries has been compiled. Each library contributes to the administrative expenses of the bureau. The method of operation is simple. A reader who wants a particular book goes to his public library and asks for it. If it is not in stock there or cannot be acquired by a local library, the request is sent on to the regional bureau. If a copy is available in a library within the region—a fact discovered by reference to its union catalogue or (if there is no catalogue) by the circulation of lists of desiderata, the library owning the book is asked to send it to the library used by the requesting borrower. If a copy is not available in the region, the regional bureau sends the request to the National Central Library where one of three things may be done: the N.C.L. may provide the book from its own stock; it may procure it from another library; it may pass the request to the bureau of another region where it knows there is a copy."

1. The United States Library of Congress is probably now the largest. According to its annual report for 1946 it held, in addition to 8,000,000 books and pamphlets, a further 8,000,000 pieces of MSS., and 10,000,000 other items including maps, films, pieces of music, recordings, fine prints, serial parts, etc.

continent there were less than half a dozen rate-supported free municipal lending libraries.

And that was the framework in 1934 of Australia's library system.

The sorrowful thing about it is that if Mr. Munn had made his survey 50 years ago he would have found very nearly the same framework. He would not have found the National Library or the Queensland Public Library, and a couple of the university libraries would have been missing. What he would have noticed, however, was that the books in the institute libraries were newer to look at, and probably had less dust about them.

Had he made his survey 100 years ago he would still have found plenty of institute libraries, but no public or university libraries.

Had he come 150 years ago—well, let us briefly turn back a few pages of our history.

# 2

# THE STORY TO 1934

Taken by and large the material that went into the make-up of our earliest settlers had little in the way of scholarship about it. Hardy and intelligent pioneers though they proved to be, they were not—this was no fault of their own—what one would describe as cultured citizens. Probably 90 per cent. of them had never learnt to read.

The 10 per cent. or so of the community who could claim that they were educated brought a few books with them to Australia and also had books sent out after their arrival. From this handful of privately-owned collections there sprang what can be regarded as Australia's first library service.

The basis of the service was a consolidated, or union, catalogue of the libraries held by private citizens, and its compilation in 1821, if not a significant landmark in the story of Australia's library development, is not without historical interest. At any rate it whetted the appetites of those who were bookishly inclined.

In 1827 our first Australian library was opened, and though one might be pardoned for frowning over its shockingly exclusive character, the Australian Subscription Library and Reading Room, as it was styled, was to have a remarkable future. If we were to trace it through its fluctuating fortunes, and through its changes of location, we would see the emergence of the very fine Public Library of New South Wales.

When it was opened in 1827 the Australian Subscription Library had a collection of 1,000 books consisting predominantly of standard works on history, theology, biography, science and travel. The fiction section was represented by Scott, though it appears that subsequent demands from subscribers for something a little more amenable resulted in the acquisition of some Dickens, Lever and Lytton.

To join the Australian Subscription Library set you back five guineas (which in those days was more than pin money), and the

annual subscription was two guineas. In addition to these obligations you had to face a chance of being black-balled at the ballot box.

Less exclusive were the subscription libraries that began to find birth in the 'thirties and that were known, are still known, as mechanics' institutes, schools of arts and literary institutes. The first of them, the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, came into existence in 1833.

Nowadays when free libraries are being regarded more and more as a social right there is an inclination to look upon the continued existence of mechanics' institutes and similar subscription libraries with feelings varying in hostility according to the social progressiveness of the State in which we live. But though we may reasonably think that the existence of these institutes, often, to quote Munn and Pitt, "cemeteries of old and forgotten books," should now be a matter of history, their importance in the scheme of things during the nineteenth century should not be overlooked. They were originally conceived in England from a desire felt by artisans and other workers for self-improvement, a desire stimulated by the widening of education through the common schools, and also by the general unrest which resulted from the industrial revolution.

The mechanics' institute movement actually began at the end of the eighteenth century, and the first library of the type appears to have been the Birmingham Artisans' Library, founded in 1795. By 1850, the year when the British Public Libraries Act was passed, some 400 mechanics' institute libraries had been established in Britain. They appear to have reached their numerical peak in the 'sixties, when about 700 of them were operating. In the United States the counterpart of the mechanics' institute movement was the less expansive Mercantile Library Association, which first found expression in 1820.

Not only did these institutes in their heyday fill a need felt by a newly-emancipated class of society, but their influence on this hitherto unprivileged section unquestionably was a major contribution to the introduction of the 1850 Act, an Act that was a world landmark in the history of library services. Its original provisions (since greatly expanded) enabled town councils representing more than 10,000 inhabitants to establish public libraries and museums for the free use of all, by giving the councils power to levy a rate of up to a halfpenny in the pound for the purpose. Many mechanics' institutes, probably most of them, were sooner or later absorbed in the new rate-supported public libraries that resulted.

In Australia, however, mechanics' institutes and schools of arts began

to find their greatest strength at the very time that their decline in Britain had begun. By the 'eighties and early 'nineties the influence and services of the Australian institutes and schools of arts were at such a high level, comparatively speaking, as to inspire the Carnegie surveyors (Munn and Pitt) to say that "as a whole, Australia was better provided with local libraries in 1880 than it is today [1934]." An interesting discovery to support their statement was that the 1885 edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was almost standard among the institutes that had an encyclopædia at all.

In 1900 there were approximately 1,000 libraries of this type in Australia, probably more than ever existed in Britain, and nearly half of those 1,000 were established in the 'eighties and 'nineties.

One is reluctant to attempt a comparison between the service provided by the institutes in the two countries, and indeed one wonders if the high motives of the mechanics' institute movement in England were not largely forgotten by the time the latecomers into the Australian field were being established.

Whether this is true or not, the fact remains that as far back as 1898 concern was expressed at a conference of the Library Association of Australasia at the ethics of those conducting many of these institutes and schools of arts.

> "I am not," said one speaker, "attacking billiards. I take it simply as the game most usually introduced nowadays into schools of arts and the one which usurps most room from the legitimate objects of the institutions. My point is that, however admirable and noble these games are, it is not for them that Government should pay money away yearly out of the Education vote."

The point, one certainly has to admit, was fairly taken. Yet billiards are still the standby of many mechanics' institutes and schools of arts existing today.

Without wishing to take away from many of these institutions, especially those in the larger towns, any of the credit they unquestionably deserved for their efforts on the educational and cultural level, the fact remains that the institute movement in Australia, taken as a whole, has contributed comparatively little beyond providing a congenial form of amenity to a very small minority, probably no more than 5 per cent. of the community.

Of the 162 institutes in New South Wales whose membership figures were recorded in the 1897 Statistical Register, 92 had less than 100 members, and only 10 had over 200 members. 117 institutes

contained less than 1,000 books (many of them indeed less than 100) and the percentage of fiction was approximately 75. Quite obviously, even with the government subsidies they received, without light fiction and other amenities to offer their subscribers very few institute libraries would have survived at all.

The fifty years that have elapsed since then have witnessed the deterioration which in 1898 it was feared had begun, though the death of these subscription libraries, thwarted from time to time by government action, has been a lingering process.

In one State only, South Australia, has their decline been arrested effectively. It is one of those curious anomalies that South Australia, which has shown the way in so many social reforms, which was the first to throw its State Reference Library open as a free general lending library to the public, should still prefer subscription libraries with their restricted services to efficient rate-supported municipal libraries.

However, to return to our history. The establishment in each State capital of an official public library was inevitably but a matter of time; the first to appear was the Public Library of Victoria, founded in 1853, and the last the Public Library of Queensland in 1896. The place that these institutions have taken in the scheme of things is dealt with later. They were all established as reference libraries; this consequently meant that for many decades Australian citizens had to remain satisfied for their home reading with the restricted range of worthwhile books that they could borrow as subscribers of mechanics' institutes and other subscription libraries.

Gradually the State public libraries introduced extension activities which included in most instances lending services to country residents, either through established institutes or direct to individual borrowers. In three of the State libraries only, those at Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart, were lending branches for local residents introduced—that is, until the present time, of which more will be said.

The birth of university and parliamentary libraries followed naturally the establishment of the institutions they were to serve, and by 1900 only the university libraries of Queensland and Western Australia remained to see the light of day. Upon the turn of the century the latest of Australia's principal libraries, the Commonwealth National Library, was born as the Library of the Commonwealth Parliament, then situated in Melbourne.

There is a further page in this early history upon which we might with interest dwell a space. The 'eighties and 'nineties were a period

noteworthy for a number of reasons. The mechanics' institute movement was in its prime and three new State libraries were born. There was promise of memorable things to come.

During this period, when federative movements of more than one kind occupied the minds of men, the Library Association of Australasia was founded. Inspiration for its creation was provided from the official recognition as great and significant educative forces that had been given to the Library Associations founded in England and America in the 'seventies.

The Library Association of Australasia was organized in 1896; its objects were "to unite all persons engaged or interested in library work, in order to obtain their co-operation in all matters connected with library management, legislation and improvement; to stimulate public interest in establishing and improving libraries, and thus to bring the best reading within the reach of all; and in every practicable way to develop and strengthen the Public Library as an essential part of the Australian Educational System."

Most laudable and praiseworthy objects.

The Association, born with the highest of hopes, had a battle to survive from its commencement. From the introduction of the proceedings of its 1898 conference one learns the following:

> "The fact that of over 1000 libraries throughout these Colonies [which included New Zealand] less than one-tenth are members of the Association shows how much missionary work there is to be done to kindle the library spirit among country committees, and to arouse some enthusiasm among even large city libraries that seem to be unconscious of their pitiful isolation and its attendant disadvantages."

Apparently this missionary work was never done.

After its fourth conference in 1902, the Association gave up the struggle. During its six years of existence it held sessions in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne and, in addition to its proceedings, it published for one year *The Library Record of Australasia.*

Despite the high standard of the papers read before the Association, and the high ideals and ability of the more prominent members, the Association appears to have failed for two reasons. Firstly, it was not backed by the strength of State branches, although the constitution provided for their establishment, but rather it was a loosely knit federation of individual members and libraries, mostly of the circumscribed institute type. Secondly, distances in those days of slow trains

and Cobb & Co. were an obstacle not to be leapt lightly over when conferences and meetings were being organized.

In 1926, however, another attempt was made to form an association, this time mainly through the initiative of the Institutes Association of South Australia, and as a result the Australian Library Association (New Zealand not being a participant) was founded in 1928. The objects of the new Association were briefly "to promote library service and librarianship," and being in a position from its commencement to include as branches two already-established associations, and with good prospects of the formation of branches in the other States, the new body seemed to be assured of a healthy future.[1]

However, the Australian Library Association did not live any longer than its predecessor, and gave up the ghost in 1934. It might have survived had the consequences of the Munn-Pitt survey made in that year been different, though even this is doubtful. The fact was that from its very foundation the Association was composed of two irreconcilable schools of thought. One school stood for subsidised subscription libraries with their management in the hands of untrained secretary-librarians. The other school believed in free libraries, and in the scientific training and appointment of professional librarians.

Belief in the free library and trained-librarian principle was strongest in New South Wales, and in the failure of this State to form a branch of the Australian Library Association or to continue its support, might be found most of the reason for the Association's failure to become consolidated.

It was not until after the new era, heralded by the Munn-Pitt report, that a further attempt to establish an all-Australian library association was made, but this time the new body, the Australian Institute of Librarians, was founded on surer premises than its two antecedents.

The Institutes Association of South Australia, the Library Association of Victoria, and to a lesser extent the Schools of Arts Association in Queensland have continued to function effectively, and deserve credit for the assistance they have given to small libraries, particularly in country districts. The first two organizations respectively produce the *South Australian Institutes Journal* and the *Library Journal.*

1. The two existing associations were the Institutes Association of South Australia, founded in 1899, and the Library Association of Victoria, founded in 1927. Two other State bodies, the Tasmanian Libraries Association and the Queensland Schools of Arts Association, were founded between 1927 and 1928, but contributed little or nothing to the federal movement.

# 3

# THE STORY SINCE 1934

Though the Munn-Pittt report of 1935 was merely a document in which were recorded the findings and recommendations of two investigators and by itself could have achieved nothing, it provided the seed from which the modern library philosophy in Australia was engendered.

Fortunately the urge to reform library services was not wanting. To use the poetic words of a prominent librarian, the Munn-Pitt report fell "not on barren soil or among thistles, but, as it were, on virgin soil. It was welcomed by laymen and librarians alike, and watered by publicity."

Many suggestions and alternatives were made in the report for improving services as they existed, but the principal recommendations, some of them based on practices already partially adopted in some States, were on the following lines:

(a) The Commonwealth National Library, with the Library of Congress as its model, should develop its national role of acting as a great depository collection with a view to preserving and making available through other libraries unusual and highly specialized books which other libraries could not purchase; of collecting historical records which pertained to Australia as a whole; and of providing other libraries with bibliographical and ultimately centralized cataloguing services.

(b) The State Public Libraries (except in New South Wales with its established Sydney Municipal Library) should be combined State-municipal libraries to provide not only reference services for the State but lending services through central and branch libraries to residents within the metropolitan dis-

trict, and special reference and lending services to country residents.

(c) Secondary cities outside the capital city area should establish rate-supported municipal free libraries, using the existing institutes as the nucleus when possible.

(d) Small towns and rural areas should be linked by regional and district systems, the scheme to be a responsibility of the State.

Since the publication of the report in 1935, there has unfolded a chapter in Australia's library history that is of greater significance than all the previous chapters together.

In as few words as possible, the most important things that have happened have been the official acceptance and adoption by four States of the free-library principle, its gradual recognition by a fifth (Western Australia), and the adoption of at least a more realistic attitude towards the importance of library services in the sixth (South Australia); the establishment of an Australian institute of professional librarians; and finally, there has been made a real and concerted effort on the part of the leading libraries to achieve by co-operative effort standards of librarianship and service that measure up to the best that is offering in overseas countries.

The first move was the organization of the Free Library Movement, not by librarians, but by public-minded and influential laymen. The Movement made its own study of library services abroad and its conclusions were that any effective library service with a cultural value must be free, and that such libraries required trained librarians. The objects of the Movement were to advocate and work for the establishment of free libraries and to create and foster public opinion in the value of them. It did not waste time in putting its plans into action. Using every publicity device possible—pamphlets, broadcasts, public addresses—it attracted considerable attention to its cause.

Born in New South Wales in 1935, its effect was felt most immediately in that State, but its influence has since spread to most of the other States. The Free Library Movement does not claim full credit for the various library acts that have recently been passed, but as an organized expression of lay opinion it can claim with the Munn-Pitt report itself to have been a powerful influencing factor in moving governments to action.

This action resulted in official investigations in all States except Western Australia. The survey of Australian library services had of course already been made by Munn and Pitt, but the governments, now shaken out of the magnolias, wanted something more detailed to guide them in framing new legislation.

And so in the following years were made a series of independent inquiries, resulting in reports being presented to the governments of South Australia in 1936, New South Wales in 1938, Tasmania in 1943, and Victoria in 1944. In Queensland an investigation was also made, by the State Librarian of New South Wales, but it was not actually made until after the Queensland Library Act was passed in 1943. Rather was it an investigation made to determine how the new act could and should be applied.

The acts, which, excepting in Queensland, were introduced following these reports were:

South Australia — Libraries and Institutes Act, 1939.
New South Wales — Library Act, 1939.
Tasmania — Libraries Act, 1943.
Queensland — Libraries Act, 1943.
Victoria — Free Library Service Board Act, 1946.

With the exception of the South Australian act, the new acts had similar objects, though naturally there were provisions in each which were not features of them all.

The principal common objectives were broadly:

(1) To set up a State Library Board consisting of representatives of the State and local governments and of cultural bodies or movements, of which the State Librarian (that is, the Principal Librarian of the State Public Library) was an ex-officio member and in some instances the executive member.

(2) To authorize the Board to take the necessary steps to improve librarianship and to further the promotion of free public libraries by the State, municipal councils and other public authorities, by the following means:

   (a) Encouraging schools of arts, mechanics' institutes and private and semi-private libraries to surrender the management, control and conduct of their library to their local authority;

   (b) Encouraging local authorities (that is, municipal and shire councils, etc.) to set up free municipal reference

and circulating libraries by offering them assistance in the form of State subsidies and/or by the provision of books selected and processed by the State Public Library.

(c) Inspecting libraries and assisting in various ways in their development.

(d) Making provision for the training of librarians and encouraging local authorities to appoint trained persons as librarians.

In all cases the legislation is permissive in character, that is, it does not impose an obligation on any local authority to adopt the Act, though local authorities are encouraged to do so.

In three States, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia, the new boards have included in their functions the control of the State Public Library, while in New South Wales and Victoria the management still remains in the hands of a board of trustees.

The South Australian Act, though it provides for a "Libraries Board of South Australia" and the liberalization of library services generally, is fundamentally different from those of the other States in the restricted scope it allows the Board, and in its benevolent attitude towards subscription libraries. Though it provides for local authorities, if they so desire, to take over schools of arts and subscription libraries, the new legislation actually places these libraries on a more satisfactory footing than they enjoyed before. It has done this by strengthening the Institutes' Association and giving it a semi-official status, five of its twelve councillors being Government nominees. The Act provides for the distribution to institutes of money voted by Parliament by the Institutes Association, yet it gives power to the newly-created Library Board, inter alia, to lend books to the institutes. Whether this dual control of library services in South Australia will prove workable in the long run remains to be seen.

No comparable legislation has as yet been passed in Western Australia, though the effect of what has been happening in the eastern States has not gone unnoticed there and a move has already been made to introduce free libraries into the country areas.

The second development following the Munn-Pitt report was the foundation, during the course of a New Education Fellowship Conference at Canberra in 1937, of the Australian Institute of Librarians. Actually the conception of this Institute goes back a little further than the Munn-Pitt report, but the famous report of these two

gentlemen considerably accelerated its foundation, and from the sideline the Free Library Movement encouragingly nudged it along.

The failure of the Australasian and Australian Library Associations to last the distance gave the promoters of the Australian Institute of Librarians plenty to think about. They decided that, if it were to succeed, its composition must not be the heterogeneous mixture of its predecessors, and that its objects to commence with should be simply to "unite persons engaged in library work, and to improve the standards of librarianship and the status of the library profession in Australia."

By adhering to these objects, and by requiring candidates even for its lowest grade of membership to have at least matriculation and confirmed evidence of library training on approved lines, the Institute has already achieved much success, and more than any other institution, public or private, has it raised Australia's standards of librarianship to something approaching overseas levels. Its major activity to date has been to set up a Board of Examination and Certification and to introduce three grades of examination—a preliminary, which admits a successful candidate to student-associateship of the Institute; a qualifying examination, which admits to full membership; and a diploma for advanced students. The examinations are at a high level and compare favourably with those set for library trainees in Great Britain and America.

Annually the Institute holds a conference in one of the capital cities, and publishes the papers read in its *Proceedings*. It has active branches in all States and in the A.C.T., and has upwards of a dozen special committees engaged on some phase of librarianship or library development. The executive of the Institute usually changes its headquarters each year from State to State.

The establishment of a permanent secretariat and the widening of the Institute's membership to include corporate bodies are likely future developments. These innovations, and the desirability of formally including library promotion among its objects to bring the Institute in line with the Library Associations of Great Britain and the United States are now being considered by a special committee.

Thirdly, the period since the Munn-Pitt report has witnessed a new spirit of co-operation between libraries which in earlier days often looked upon each other as rival institutions. Inter-library loans have become an accepted feature in the Australian library pattern; the compilation of union catalogues showing the serial resources of the

main reference and technical libraries; the organized collection and distribution of documentary films, the regular screening of which is becoming a library service of major importance; the formal training of staff by the major libraries for their weaker brethren; the standardization of library practices; the valuable interchange of new ideas at annual conferences—all these are tangible evidence of a new spirit that is being manifested.

Perhaps no better instance of this co-operation could be found than in the war years, when the responsibilities of reference and research libraries increased to an unprecedented degree. In these years Australia's leading librarians pooled their knowledge and experience not only to meet the needs of authorities directing the war effort but to provide Australian forces with public library services in the field.

There is plenty of scope for more co-operation yet. The centralized cataloguing of Australian publications by the National Library is a feature still to be further developed. The result should be the saving of many man-hours in hundreds of libraries. The interchange of librarians, standardized salary scales at a professional level are a few of many laudable objectives towards which Australian librarians are conscientiously working.

Finally, Australia's forward moves in library development have been watched and assisted by overseas agencies. By providing travelling scholarships to many of our principal librarians to go abroad and acquire first-hand knowledge of overseas library systems, by providing a fund to assist the Free Library Movement, the Australian Institute of Librarians, and students in library training, and by financially helping other library development the Carnegie Corporation in New York has rendered Australia, at a time when she needed it most, a service of immeasurable value. But it would be unreasonable to expect this charitable treatment to go on indefinitely, nor is it likely to.

Further stimulus was given to Australian library activity in 1946-47 by the visit, under the auspices of the British Council, of Lionel McColvin, F.L.A., an authority on British library systems, and honorary secretary of the Library Association.

After surveying the library position in Australia, McColvin affirmed, with reservations, the basic recommendations of the Munn-Pitt report, and approved what had been done to give effect to them. Several States embarking on their new deals in library service availed themselves generously of his timely and practical counsel. McColvin's

report on the public libraries of Australia, published in 1947, is not only an invaluable yardstick from which the measurement of our last twelve years progress can be gauged, but is a stimulating contribution of fresh ideas and valuable suggestions for the further improvement of our library set-up.

## *War Library Services*

While the recent war might justifiably have caused a suspension in the development of library services, it had curiously rather the opposite effect. There was, of course, a serious debit side. The call to arms left most Australian libraries seriously understaffed, a situation which was by no means relieved by the heavy wartime assignments which the large reference and research libraries, in particular, were required to carry out. Fortunately, there were not the casualties that libraries in Europe suffered; our civilian library losses were confined to some 9,000 National Library books circulating in the Commonwealth Territories, perhaps 5,000 books belonging to libraries in the Territories themselves, and a number of consignments to Australia of books and periodicals, many irreplaceable, which went down at sea.

Two major war library services should be recorded here, services for which credit is due to a number of institutions for their remarkable co-operative efforts.

The two enterprises were the Camp Library Service, and the Army Education Library Service.

The Camp Library Service was a child of the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Institute of Librarians, and was put into operation within a fortnight of the outbreak of war in 1939. Other States soon followed the lead given in New South Wales by introducing the service for the troops encamped in their own territory, though it was not always a branch of the Institute that played the major organizing role.

Over a million books and periodicals, it is estimated, were collected, sorted and distributed to troops throughout the war. Considering that the project was one which called for the utmost in teamwork, the co-ordination of efforts directed by several bodies having the same objects, and considering the voluntary character of the undertaking, much praise is due to those who contributed to its remarkable success. One could mention quite a number of bodies concerned—the Australian Comforts Fund, the Y.M.C.A. and the Salvation Army;

branches of the fighting services themselves; public, university and other libraries; the press, and other organizations; and the public who responded to appeal after appeal until their own bookshelves at home must have reached a state of near denudation.

Most credit, however, is due to the New South Wales branch of the Institute of Librarians, and to the Public Library of that State, which made not only quarters available, but the full-time services of one of its officers and the part-time services of others. New South Wales not only catered for the large number of troops stationed and passing through there, but for troops in all theatres of war.

Now while the purpose of the Camp Library Service was essentially to provide recreational reading for the Forces, it was recognised that something more substantial as a morale-builder was called for. Quite early in the 1939-45 war it was realized that there were going to be long stretches between actions, that troops would be spending many months on end in camps, that the role of many for a long time was likely to be a static one.

The Army Education Service was introduced with the twofold objects of building and sustaining the morale of soldiers in just such a position, and of enabling them to use the time on their hands constructively and to their immediate and future advantage. Similar education services on a lesser scale were established in the Navy and Air Force.

How they set about their task is a story of its own. Such a service was a major essay in adult education. Among the things it introduced was a reference and lending library service on a scale never witnessed before in Australia, a service organized with such thoroughness that it defied comparison with anything on the same lines attempted in the American, British or any other Forces. Like all its provisions, the Army Education Service brought its library services, not as originally intended only to troops in camps, but as the demand persisted, to troops who were in the very thick of the fray.

Realization of the fact that no education scheme could function without adequate and co-ordinated library facilities was the first major headache of those entrusted with the organization of the education services in the three Forces. The Commonwealth Government had given its assurance that it would not be cheeseparing about it, but the question was how to set about it—particularly when the quantity of imported books was becoming rapidly fewer every day.

The library scheme originally planned was formulated by a special

library sub-committee of the Australian Services Council, which included the principal librarians of the National, Fisher and New South Wales Public Libraries and other leading librarians as co-opted members. The scheme provided for 115 "standard reference libraries" each to consist of some 2,000 catalogued volumes. These libraries were to be located in the main Australian camps. However, circumstances prevented the assembly of such a large number.

Thirty-five standard reference libraries were subsequently assembled, catalogued and despatched to camps and hospitals, but in the meantime the demand for reading material had become so insistent as to be quite beyond the scope of the Camp Library Service, and of the State Public Libraries which, in many instances, had waived their normal regulations, and were issuing to troops books which they would not usually lend out.

With its library headquarters established in the former premises of the Public Library of New South Wales, and with a New South Wales Library officer acting as O.C., the Army Education Service then embarked on the most sizable of its library undertakings and introduced a box library service which was to grow into dimensions hitherto unknown in Australia. These boxes, each of 40 selected new books in the proportion of two general to one fiction, were circulated wherever there were Australian troops.

The benefit that these books in the Army Education libraries conferred on members of the Forces was immense. The average Australian may not be the most educated citizen in the world, but given the opportunity, he is a prolific reader. The books sent out not only helped to sustain morale, but also offered an opportunity, often the only opportunity, for self-improvement or planned study, and eventually were to make the job of rehabilitation much easier than it would have been without them.

At the close of the war the Army Education Service was maintaining a central reference library of 3,600 volumes, had sent into the field 35 standard reference libraries, some 2,500 box circulating libraries, 200 field reference and music libraries and 3,500 Pocket and Fiction libraries. It was indeed, controlling a vast reference and lending library service of nearly 700,000 volumes, a library whose arms stretched all over Australia, all over the South West Pacific. A large proportion of the collection has now found its way into civilian use.

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# AUSTRALIAN LIBRARIES TODAY

And so in 1948 we find the Australian library set-up still far from perfect, but immeasurably better than it was in 1934. If the present developmental progress is maintained for another generation there should be no need by the end of that time for Australia to hang her head when the quality and degree of her library services creep into discussion.

There remains, however, the task of saying something about our most important libraries of the moment, and of the extent to which the library movement has actually spread. The headquarters of the movement are to be found in most cases in the National Library at Canberra or State Public Library. Not entirely within the orbit of the movement, but worthy of consideration, are a number of other types of library.

The growing importance of school libraries is evidenced by the increased money that is being spent on them, by the introduction of teacher-librarians, and by a growing insistance that these libraries are to be planned and catalogued according to approved public library principles. One could talk at length on school libraries and their future, but we must be content here with the observation that much is now being done to develop them, and, as curriculum education gives way as it is already gradually doing to the "project" method of teaching, the school library will inevitably become one of the most vital institutions in the school.

But let us have a look now at our most important public libraries.

## *Australian Capital Territory*

Though the youngest of the great Australian libraries, the Commonwealth National Library has made up a fair amount of leeway in

its short life of forty-six years, and has already built up a first-rate collection of 250,000 volumes. Serving as both a Commonwealth Parliamentary and National Library, the bulk of its collection is at present located in Parliament House. The only wing yet erected of its future home, a building being planned to hold at least 1,000,000 volumes, contains the rest of the collection.

In seeking a parallel for the scope and activities of the Commonwealth National Library, one can find it only in the United States Library of Congress, on which, in a moderate scale, it has been modelled.

The library was opened in 1902 as the library of the Commonwealth Parliament, but it was intended from its inception that it should become a national library in the fullest sense, a repository of Australian books and records and a library for Australian research. In addition, it was to serve the needs of the Commonwealth administration and, on its transfer to Canberra, the public of that Territory.

In pursuing its objects the National Library has had the advantage of the Commonwealth Copyright Act (1912) under whose provisions it is entitled to receive a copy of everything published in Australia, and of the presentation in 1909 of the 10,000 volume Petherick collection of Australiana, of the Mathews library of works on Australian ornithology, and a number of other very valuable collections.

In 1927 the library was transferred with the Federal Parliament from Melbourne to Canberra, and in 1935 the first wing of the new National Library building was opened to the public.

It is difficult to describe in a few words the present range of activities of the library. In addition to providing a legislative reference and information service to Members and Commonwealth departments, it is a public reference and lending library for the residents of Canberra. A.C.T. residents to whom the library is not easily accessible are serviced by library boxes. It supplements the Canberra University College library and its resources are available to any Australian student or research worker when material he seeks is not available in his own State.

One of the wings in the new building is to contain the Roosevelt Memorial Library—a collection of material illustrating American life and development—an Australian recognition of the work of the great wartime leader. Some of this material has already been assembled.

The National Library is the provisional repository for all Commonwealth archives with the exception of records of Service and related departments, which are preserved at the Australian War

Memorial. It is the central film library and non-theatrical distributing agency of the Australian National Film Board, and an international exchange bureau. Its extension activities include the selection and processing of material for libraries in all the Commonwealth Territories, and some thirty-five Australian information and reference libraries established in overseas countries. Further reference is made to these libraries later. Another function of the National Library is the formal training of librarians for Commonwealth departments, Territories and libraries elsewhere.

The publications of the library include the *Historical Records of Australia*, 34 volumes of which have already appeared, *Annual catalogue of Australian publications*, an annual *Select list of representative works dealing with Australia*, *Australian public affairs information service* (a monthly subject index to current literature on Australian political, economic and social affairs), and *Parliamentary handbook and record of elections*. It also produces monthly lists of books published in Australia and of its own acquisitions. The compilation of a union catalogue of non-scientific periodicals and serials held by Australian libraries is a major project still in process.

The National Library is rich in printed and MSS material relating to Australia, its most valuable item being the famous Captain Cook Journal. A project of interest being carried out in association with the Public Library of New South Wales is the microfilming of all material relating to Australia in the Public Records Office in London. The copying of other collections in Europe and America is to follow. A set of microfilms is destined for each of the two libraries.

The National Library has a strong social sciences section, particularly in the branches relating to law and legislation, and has an extensive range of Australian and overseas official documents. Its general reference collection is a broad and well-balanced one.

## *New South Wales*

In the States most progress has been made in the introduction and development of free library services in New South Wales. The focal point of these extending services is the Public Library of New South Wales, whose principal librarian is also executive member of the New South Wales Library Board.

The library was opened in 1869 as the Public Library of Sydney with a collection of 20,000 volumes. Its roots go back, however, to

1826 with the founding of the Australian Subscription Library, mentioned earlier. In 1845, this library moved into its own building in Bent and Macquarie Streets—the subsequent home for 70 odd years of the Public Library. Supported by now by the Government, the Australian Subscription Library gradually lost its exclusiveness though it still continued as a subscription library. It tottered on until 1869, when the Government purchased its building, land and books and reopened it as a free reference library for all.

A lending branch of the new public library was established in 1877, but under the Sydney Corporation Act of 1908 it was transferred to the City Council of Sydney, and in the following year was reopened as the Sydney Municipal Library, an institution which now issues nearly half a million books annually.

The Public Library developed both its reference and extension activities on progressive lines. In 1883 a country circulating department was established, boxes of books being sent to literary institutes and other organizations and to the smaller country schools. In 1946 over 2,000 institutions are recorded as having received the benefit of this service, while 19,000 people borrowed 43,000 books direct from the country reference section.

The name—Public Library of New South Wales—was adopted in 1895, and shortly afterwards the library received its most important bequest—the presentation by David Scott Mitchell of his vast and magnificent collection of Shakespeariana and Australiana, a collection of more than 60,000 volumes (since grown to 170,000), plus journals, diaries, maps, prints and other valuable material. This was followed by an endowment of £70,000. The Mitchell wing, completed in 1910, was the first section of the new Public Library building which was opened in 1942.

Another important gift in 1928 was a unique collection of pictures and prints relating to Australian history. This forms the William Dixson Gallery.

The Public Library of New South Wales, with its present collection of between 500,000 and 600,000 volumes, its generously equipped new building, its large staff of over 100 officers[1] and the many excellent services it provides, is well in the forefront of our most important libraries. In addition to its fine collections of Australiana, archival documents and other special material, it has a first-rate general reference library which is used by an average of 3,000 people a day.

1. Another 30 of its officers are on loan to State Departmental libraries.

Other departments of the library include an adult education section, a full-time research section, and a microfilm section which supplies photographic copies of books and papers on request. Another department, the library school, yearly trains some 60 students from all States to become librarians.

The public library is an international exchange bureau, and it is also entitled to a free copy of everything published in New South Wales, a privilege also enjoyed by the University and Parliamentary libraries.

One of the most important activities now carried out in the library, a result of the 1939 Act, is its assistance to newly-formed municipal libraries. The service includes the selection and purchase of books, centralized cataloguing and the loan to these libraries of other collections of books on an exchange basis.

Since its introduction in 1939, the New South Wales Library Act has been adopted, at the time of writing, by 64 councils covering a population of more than a million people, or over a third of the State. Thirty-nine are already operating libraries at a cost of £100,000 a year and they employ 70 librarians, many of them trained at the New South Wales library school. Within the last two years expenditure on libraries in New South Wales has more than doubled.

In New South Wales the old order is yielding to the new with accelerated progress. More and more subscription libraries of the institute pattern are giving way to free libraries, some of them with bookmobile services for outer residents, and children's libraries are spreading into suburbs and country areas. In this field, the Children's Library Movement, which has established centres in some twenty suburbs and country towns and a bookmobile service to another ten towns, deserve, as do several municipal authorities, special mention.

In 1947 a highly successful regional library conference was held in the Riverina, the first of its kind held in Australia. If testimony was ever needed of the extent to which the new library movement is spreading in New South Wales, it was amply given at this enthusiastic three-day conference.

## *Victoria*

The principal library of Victoria, and the largest in Australia, is the Public Library of Victoria, whose great domed building of British Museum style holds a collection of 650,000 books and 90,000 pamphlets. Founded in 1853, and opened to the public in 1856, it was the first State public library to make its appearance. Its nucleus was the

private collection of Redmond Barry, who later became chief justice and the first chairman of the Library's board of trustees.

The subsequent history of the Library has been one of solid progress and development. Innovations in its career were its incorporation in 1869 with the Museums and National Gallery of Victoria, a partnership which held until 1945, and its opening in 1892 of a lending branch to serve both Melbourne and country readers. It now has a lending library of 90,000 books and a country travelling library of 12,000 books. To this library stands the credit of being the first in any country to introduce the system of circulating boxes of books to literary institutes and small suburban and country libraries; this service was introduced as far back as 1859. It is worth noting that this system of country lending, which other State libraries later developed, anticipated by more than a quarter of a century the travelling library in the United States. In 1913 the Public Library was transferred to its present quarters in Swanston Street.

The Public Library of Victoria has a particularly well-rounded reference collection, is the richest in Australia in incunabula and rariora, is strong in art, music, English literature and history, and in Australiana. It receives a copy of each book copyrighted in Victoria, and acts as the State bureau for the distribution of international exchanges to and from scientific bodies throughout the world. It has a photographic service by which microfilms and photoprints can be provided at low cost.

The staff of the Library is predominantly male and the absence of many of these officers on war service seriously disrupted the library's more recent developmental programme. The introduction of an organized research service and of a library school, for which a director has now been appointed, is likely to be seen, however, within the next year or two. Another feature that is still missing is a planned State archives department, though the library is the repository for State archival material.

The Free Library Service Board Act was passed in Victoria only in 1946, following a survey of library services throughout the State that extended over four years. The executive member of the Board is the State Public Librarian. The implementation of the Act, as in the case of Queensland, has only just begun.

In the Board's initial approach to its new task, it had the benefit of the assistance of the visiting British librarian, Lionel McColvin. Characteristically, the Victorians have not rushed into the task of opening up new fields, but one can expect that the job when it is done will have the hallmark of thoroughness about it.

Actually in Victoria a fair start had already been made in the provision of free municipally-controlled libraries prior to the new legislation. In 1945 there were a number of them, mostly in Melbourne suburbs. All are subsidized by the Government as are 200 odd country subscription libraries and some 30 children's libraries.

The new chapter, however, in Victoria's library history has only just begun, and in planning for the future the valuable lessons to be learnt in New South Wales and Tasmania are not likely to be lost on the State that lies between them.

## *South Australia*

The Public Library of South Australia with a book total of 250,000 volumes is the third largest State library in Australia. It is also one of the most virile. It was founded in 1884, but its origin can be traced back to 1834 when the South Australian Literary Society was formed. The reference and circulating library which this society set up was taken over by a mechanics' institute formed in 1838. Ten years later the institute amalgamated with the Adelaide Subscription Library, and in 1856 the amalgamation was incorporated by Act of Parliament in the South Australian Institute, a subsidized Library, Museum and Art Gallery. In 1884, the South Australian Institute ceased to be, and its collection of 25,000 volumes formed the nucleus of the Public Library and of the Adelaide Circulating Library, approximately half of the collection going to each.

Founded as the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia, it was not until 1940 that the institution became three separate entities.

Up till the late nineteen-thirties the Public Library developed on sound though hardly spectacular lines. Like most public libraries it suffered from inadequate State support, though it benefited by a £30,000 bequest by Dr. Morgan Thomas.

It built up a solid reference collection, acquired the privilege of receiving a free copy of works published in the State, and became a repository for international publications received through the Government Exchange Bureau.

A feature of special interest during this period was the introduction in 1920 of a separate archives department. In 1947, it held nearly 400,000 documents. An attractively housed children's library was also established.

The new dawn for the Public Library of South Australia broke in 1940 following a report by Dr. Grenfell Price on State-assisted library

services, and the passing of the Libraries and Institutes Act of 1939. Since then, South Australia has set a standard in two branches of library enterprise which with one exception still has no comparison in other State libraries.

The most important of these has been the throwing open of almost its entire book stock for home reading. Most of the borrowing is admittedly from a special lending section, but the whole reference stock, with a few necessary exceptions, is available for borrowing. This dramatic innovation is supported by experience in America, where there is a growing feeling that the distinction between lending and so-called reference stock is artificial. The Commonwealth National Library introduced this measure in respect of its general collection in 1932, but so far South Australia's is the only State public library to do so.

Secondly, the Public Library has created a research section, complete with photographing equipment, to undertake researches too protracted and beyond the scope of the reference officers at the enquiry desk. Eleven officers are engaged in the South Australian Research Service, which conducts about 300 researches a month. Where necessary, the Service borrows material or obtains photostats of articles from libraries in other States or overseas. The only comparable research service in Australia at present is that provided by the Public Library of New South Wales.

A third interesting feature of the Library is its Country Lending Service, opened in 1938. In its very early history, the Public Library established a circulating box system for institute libraries and was responsible for the distribution of subsidies, but by an Act of 1909 it was relieved of those functions by the South Australian Institutes Association, which still performs them. The Public Library's new country service does not trespass on the Institutes' ground, but sends books free to individuals, both adults and children, and travelling boxes are sent to country schools. In 1946, 580 boxes were circulated among 629 schools representing a total of 17,000 books. In the adult section, 32,000 books were sent out.

There is as yet no sign of a State-wide free library movement in South Australia, for which thanks appear to be due to the virility of the Institutes Association and a powerful opposition in Parliament to a bill to give controlling power of the libraries throughout the State to the Libraries Board. Most of the South Australian library progress has been made in Adelaide itself and in the healthy development of school libraries for which the Government recently appointed an organizer.

## *Queensland*

The Queensland Public Library was founded as the Brisbane Public Library in 1896; its nucleus was the collection of the late Mr. Justice Harding. In 1898 it assumed its present name. It was administered from 1896 until 1906 by a board of trustees, after which it became a sub-department of the Chief Secretary's Office. It was opened to the public in 1902.

Its history until recently has been uneventful and except for a period during World War II, when its rules were relaxed to help meet the demands of the Forces, it has been purely a reference library and has undertaken no extension activities save for a limited country service to individuals. Approval has now been given, however, for the operation of an organized country extension service. The Public Library has never enjoyed the privileges of its sister State libraries as a Copyright depository. Under the Copyright Act of 1874 (introduced before the Public Library was thought of) Queensland publications are lodged with the Parliamentary Library and the Museum. Neither does the Public Library act as an international exchange bureau, the handling of exchanges being a function of the Chief Secretary's Department.

The annual acquisitions of the Library have up till lately been few, and for most of its life it has been the most financially starved Public Library on the mainland. In 1932-3 it spent £10 on books.

The effect of the Queensland Libraries Act, passed in 1943, is only now being felt by the Public Library, but there is promise of a revitalised institution with a new and more commodious building, and a staff adequate in size and training, in the near future. Under the 1943 Act, the administration of the Library was placed in the hands of the Library Board of Queensland acting under the Minister of Public Instruction. The Library is still essentially a reference library, except for its so-far limited country service, but the Board has power to provide lending services and branch libraries.

A recent important acquisition by the Library Board was the Oxley Memorial Library, a collection of 30,000 volumes of Queenslandiana, which was originally purchased by the Queensland Centenary Fund with the aid of Government subsidy. The establishment of a State archives repository as a department of the Public Library was provided for in the 1943 Act, and it is likely that the Oxley collection will be allied with this department.

The Public Library is not a large one. Even with the Oxley collection it does not yet total 100,000 volumes.

Queensland is the only State in which the librarian of the Public Library is not also State Librarian, though it is probable that the two posts will be merged in due course. The immediate task of the State Librarian, a new position filled only in 1947, is to encourage Local Authorities to adopt the Library Act and to concentrate on the institution and development of library reference and lending services throughout the State. A difficult role in a State of so much area and where there has been so little library consciousness. Still, the seeds are germinating.

In the meantime, the Brisbane City Council has been sponsoring a number of libraries, while the Schools of Arts Association and the Queensland Book Club, with assistance from the Government, have been respectively providing lending and buying services to Schools of Arts, and books to individual readers in the country.

## *Western Australia*

Western Australia is the one State which has not recently reformed its library legislation.

The Public Library was founded in 1887 as the Victoria Public Library in commemoration of the Queen Victoria Jubilee. It was opened in 1889 with a collection of 2,000 volumes, and in 1897 the Library was transferred to its present building. In 1911 it was incorporated with two other bodies, and became the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, with the librarian as general secretary of the whole institution. This unholy alliance still persists in Western Australia, though similar combinations have been tried and since abandoned in Victoria and South Australia.

The State has not been very liberal in its provision of funds for the Library, and its staff, described in 1934 by Munn and Pitt as inadequate, has not been appreciably enlarged.

The Library's collection totals approximately 200,000 volumes, its greatest strength being on the history side.

Being the State Copyright Library it is well served with Westraliana, and it has a growing collection of State archival material. It is not a general lending library, nor does it maintain a lending branch. For the borrowing of serious books Perth residents have little alternative but to rely on the Perth Literary Institute, or the Adult Education Library, which is administered from the University by the Adult Education Board.

Two extension activities of the Public Library are its travelling libraries and its school library schemes. Under the former it distributes cases of books to institutes and associations throughout the State. The school travelling library service is supplemented by the Charles Hadley Schools' Travelling Library, organized in 1938 by a band of country school teachers, and between them the two services are reported to reach most of the children attending country schools.

Recent developments of interest in the Public Library include the establishment of an archives branch in 1945, and the transfer to the Library of the collections of the Western Australian Historical Society. Extensions to the Library building to provide accommodation for over 300,000 volumes, and substantial increases to the staff, are promised for the near future.

The free library idea is catching on only slowly in the West, but at least it *is* catching on. No definite legislation on the lines of that adopted in the other States has been passed, but there is a Country Free Lending Libraries Committee, appointed by the Premier in 1944, and a scheme has been introduced by which rural governing bodies receive a £ for £ subsidy up to £50—on condition that they maintain free lending and reference libraries for residents in the area served. In 1946, 35 country libraries received aid under this scheme. A modest beginning, but at least something.

In 1945 a provisional committee of the Free Library Movement was formed with the primary objective of establishing free library service in the metropolitan area. So far the results have not been tangible, but there are pointers that indicate future developments not only in the metropolis but through the whole State. But there is a great area to be covered in Western Australia, population is widely scattered, and trained librarians are few. The objectives are not likely to be reached in a hurry.

## *Tasmania*

The State Library of Tasmania, for 70 years a slight, unmeritable institution, but now one of the most active of our main libraries, was founded in 1870 as the Tasmanian Public Library.

Its nucleus was a subscription library set up in Hobart in 1849 which, though enjoying a Government subsidy for most of its short life, gave up the struggle in 1867. Three years later it was reopened and incorporated under the control of eight trustees, four appointed by the Government and four by the Hobart Council. This dual form of control, peculiar to Tasmania, continued until the end of 1943,

when, following the Libraries Act of that year, the Library was taken over by the Government, became the State Library of Tasmania, and had its administration put into the hands of a newly-created Tasmanian Library Board.

Up till this stage the Library's record was hardly one of achievement. A free lending branch was provided in 1907 in fulfilment of a guarantee to Andrew Carnegie, who donated £7,500 for a new building, but this was about the only highlight in its history. Its annual income for salaries and books, provided by the Government and the Hobart Council, rarely exceeded £2,000, its staff was inadequate and untrained, and its collection poor in quality and quantity. Its service to the citizens of Hobart was unsatisfactory and to country folk negligible. For a city of the size of Hobart the Library was, to quote Messrs. Munn and Pitt, "the poorest in Australia and New Zealand". To its credit, it was one of the first public libraries to provide a children's service. In due course it became a copyright depository for all publications issued in Tasmania, and a bureau for international exchanges.

The story since 1943 reads rather like a fairy tale, yet it is true enough. By that year the Free Library Movement in Tasmania had succeeded in arousing a not altogether unsympathetic Government into action. It invited the Commonwealth National Librarian to investigate the library position in Tasmania and to make recommendations on what should be done about it. The outcome was that on the 1st January 1944, the State Library of Tasmania came into being, founded on the near-century old Public Library and the Rural Libraries Advisory Board—offspring of the Tasmanian Free Library Movement.

Administered by a progressive State Library Board, of which the State Librarian is Secretary, the State Library has become an institution with which Tasmania can be rightly pleased. Its growth and extended activities have been so rapid that its walls have reached bursting point, and a new building has become an urgent necessity. Apart from its growing local reference and lending services, it is the hub of a network of free municipal libraries, further outcome of the 1943 Libraries Act. Already 90 per cent. of Tasmania's population has access to these libraries. So keen has been the desire by municipalities to set up libraries under the Act that the Tasmanian Library Board has found it difficult to keep abreast of the demand. As the Government subsidy to these libraries, except in the case of Launceston, takes the form of books purchased and processed by the State Library, its staff of fifty is kept very much on its toes.

Among the Library's other new services are the holding of a summer school for library trainees, supervision of the Parliamentary Library, and the establishment of Lady Clark Memorial Children's Libraries throughout the State. The latter scheme, under the charge of an American specialist trained in library science, aims to set up children's libraries in the 49 municipalities of the State.

The State Library, which in 1934 had a modest collection of 35,000 volumes, is likely at its present rate of progress to reach before very long the 100,000 level.

## *Outlying Territories*

Up till the late nineteen-thirties the libraries in the outlying Commonwealth Territories followed the pattern of institute libraries elsewhere in Australia. In their attention to country members, often isolated settlers cut off from other forms of amenity, many of these libraries showed a commendably realistic attitude to the meaning of library service. Still, their road was a hard one.

A considerable fillip was given to their efforts and to library services in the Territories generally by the introduction of a scheme sponsored by the Commonwealth National Library, and supported financially in its initial stages by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Under this scheme, some 3,000 books, consisting of fiction, general literature and reference works, were sent out each year at quarterly intervals from Canberra to libraries in the Territories; arrangements were made for the exchange of non-reference books from time to time. The scheme commenced operating in 1938, the books being selected, tropic-proofed, and catalogued by the National Library. Some 10,000 volumes were in circulation when war disrupted the service.

In Papua and New Guinea, now combined under the one administration, post-war restoration of library services has commenced, but on an entirely new basis. Prior to the war the principal libraries (through which the Carnegie service operated) were the Port Moresby Library Institute, the Samarai Library Institute and the Agnes Wisdom Library at Rabaul—all subscription libraries.[1]

The present position is that there is one central library—the free Papua-New Guinea Public Library, opened at Port Moresby in 1946, with branches now established at Rabaul and Lae. Being

1. In 1942 the books in the Papuan libraries were taken over by the Army Education Service, and those at Rabaul, to quote an eye-witness, "burned for many days" in a huge bonfire made by the enemy.

entirely a child of the new age, this library is one that has interesting possibilities. It was created by the joint effort of the administration and the Commonwealth National Library and its destiny is watched over by a committee consisting of the Administrator, the Secretary of the Department of External Territories and the Commonwealth National Librarian. The provision of catalogued books and of trained staff is a responsibility of the National Library.

The nucleus of the library was an Army Education standard reference library, and it was opened with a collection of 2,000 volumes. It is both a reference and lending library, has a liberally-equipped reading room of periodicals and newspapers, a growing children's section and what promises to be a first-rate collection of New Guineana. A country section whose function, pending the establishment of branch libraries, is to send book boxes and parcels to outlying residents has recently been added. Book parcels are accepted for free delivery by the post office—a concession still to be obtained in Australia. One of the first branch libraries that will be set up will be purely for the use of natives. Should it prove as successful as anticipated, it is intended to set up native libraries throughout the Territory.

The librarian is also supervising librarian of the Administration departments with power to vet their purchases to avoid unnecessary duplication. The compilation of a union catalogue helps him to do this.

The public library is housed in airy and spacious premises and provides the venue of most of the town's cultural activities. The popularity of the library, which contains from a quarter to a third fiction, is evidenced by the percentage of registered borrowers. The total in June 1947, nearly 600, was little less than half of the whole Moresby white population.

The story in Northern Territory is somewhat similar, though the reintroduction of its library services, which provides for a public library at Darwin with branches at Alice Springs and other populated centres, is still in the planning stage.

Originally the Palmerston Institute, formed in 1901, catered for the reading requirements of Darwin citizens but withdrawal of the £ for £ subsidy provided first by the South Australian and then the Commonwealth Government resulted in the Town Council taking over the library in 1934. In 1938 the Darwin Town Council Lending Library, as it had been renamed, became the Northern Territory Administration Public Library, and also the central library for the Carnegie

Library service, introduced that year. With the provision of a regular supply of new books, half fiction and half general, and the appointment of a full-time librarian, the quality of the service showed a rapid but unfortunately short-lived improvement. From a small lending library containing a few hundred fairly worn novels in 1938, there grew a well-balanced reference and lending collection of nearly 10,000 volumes, catalogued and classified on approved lines. Membership for Darwin borrowers was still fixed at 10/- (5/- for members of the Defence forces) but country membership was free. Prior to the blitz on Darwin in February 1942, upwards of 2,000 members had been enrolled. Small branches had been established at a number of points in the Territory and books were also being sent regularly to hospitals, camps and isolated settlers. Future prospects looked bright. However, they were soon shattered when the Public Library became a casualty of war. Half of the collection was in circulation when the Territory was taken over by the military occupation and the remainder was assumed by the Army Education Service for use among the Forces. Some of the books have since been retrieved, and some 7,000 Army Education books have been left in the Territory to form the nucleus of the new post-war library service. It seems likely that this new free service will be operating in 1948.

Alice Springs and Tennant Creek also provided distributing depots for Carnegie library books before the war, the former under the supervision of the District officer and the latter of the Australian Inland Mission. Lending services in both instances were free. Future plans envisage a branch of the new Darwin Public Library at probably both of these centres.

In Norfolk Island the reading requirements of the 1,000 odd residents were provided for up till 1939 by a private subscription library. The extension of the Carnegie Library Service to the island, however, inspired the setting up of the Norfolk Island Public Library in that year, with a branch children's library at the local school.

The public library, which has a nominal annual subscription of half a crown, has a part-time librarian. Its collection consists of a reference section and some 2,000 volumes, half of them taken over from the local Cable Station, and the remainder forwarded by the National Library and subject to exchange. Membership, including children borrowing from the school branch, is over 200, and over 3,000 volumes are issued annually.

Nauru and Ocean Island are two other Commonwealth territories that receive box libraries from Canberra. In Nauru a small public

library is shortly to be installed, with an Army Education reference library as its nucleus.

## *University Libraries*

After the State Public Libraries, the university libraries are the most important from the point of view of size and utility. There are six of them at present, one in each State. The libraries of the three affiliated University Colleges, at Canberra, Mildura and New England are as yet small and in the developmental stage. There are also, of course, the libraries of the Teachers' Colleges, one of which, Sydney, has an excellent collection of over 50,000 books.

In thinking of university libraries, it is best not to look for comparison with such libraries as the magnificent Bodleian Library at Oxford, nor of the three to four-million volume libraries of Yale and Harvard, nor of other vast overseas libraries that fall into the university category.

Considering, however, that none of the Australian university libraries is yet a hundred years old and that none of them has been blessed with benefactions approaching the scale on which they do things in England and America, Australia's university libraries have not fared too badly. Most of them are highly creditable institutions.

The oldest and largest of them is the Fisher Library, founded as the University of Sydney Library in 1852. A bequest in 1885 of £30,000 by Thomas Fisher resulted in the Library's being named after him in 1908. Its collection of some 250,000 volumes is nearly twice the size of that held by any other university, and indeed places it among the three or four largest libraries in the Commonwealth.

Melbourne (1856) and Adelaide (1876) were the next to be established. Melbourne now has upwards of 150,000 volumes. The Adelaide University Library, thanks to a gift of a new building in 1932 by the Barr Smith family (after whom the library is now named) is probably the most happily accommodated library of them all. It now has over 100,000 volumes.

Tasmania (established 1890), Queensland (1911), and Western Australia (1912) each have totals in the vicinity of 50,000 volumes.

The collections of these libraries have been built up primarily for the use of students, graduates, professors and lecturers, though material is freely made available, through other libraries, to outside borrowers. A feature of most of these libraries is the decentralisation of much of their material among the various departments and faculties, a measure often necessitated by the shortage of space in the central

library. As the professorial staffs have a large say in the selection of library material, many of the collections reveal strengths and weaknesses commensurate with the importance of the various faculties. On an average the university libraries are stronger in such specialized fields as law, science and medicine than the public libraries. The Fisher's collection of English literature is possibly the best in Australia.

The National University Library to be established in Canberra has, as yet, barely reached the planning stage. It is likely, however, to be a library of major significance, and it seems almost certain that its special fields will be largely in the sciences, in Pacific affairs and in certain of the humanities. For material on the social sciences it will probably depend largely on the Commonwealth National Library.

## *Adult Education Libraries*

To some extent the modern counterpart of last century's Mechanics' Institute Movement is the Workers' Educational Association, introduced into Australia in 1913. Supported by the Labour Movement, its objective is to promote working-class education. In providing classes, lectures, tutorials, discussion courses and other facilities, the W.E.A. has become allied in many States with another institution with similar aims—the university extension or tutorial department. A number of libraries for the use of students and serious readers has been set up by these organizations, while in New South Wales special library facilities are also made available by the adult education section of the Public Library. In some instances W.E.A. libraries have been assisted by Carnegie grant. Perhaps the best of the W.E.A. libraries are those in Sydney and Brisbane.

Two other adult education libraries, however, should be mentioned.

In Victoria, the recently-created Council of Adult Education is now responsible for a progressive circulating library system, and its plans include the establishment of a general information library in the heart of the city of Melbourne.

In Western Australia, a highly commendable Adult Education Library has been operating since 1940. Established as one of three schemes by a very active Adult Education Board (the other schemes were the promotion of adult education in country areas and a readers' counsellor scheme), the library received a gift of 10,000 dollars from the Carnegie Corporation and transferred after a short period at the University to the city proper. Here, it in part fills the gap created by the non-lending policy of the public library.

## *Repatriation Commission Libraries*

The provision of library services in general hospitals is an activity which so far has been left mainly to voluntary workers, the books provided being as a rule donated fiction. The possibility of municipal authorities providing organized hospital library services is now being tentatively explored in at least one State.

The fact that a citizen is confined to hospital, perhaps for a long duration, is no reason why he should be deprived of the library services available to his healthier brethren. Yet so far there have been few authorities that have recognized this fact or, that as an actual adjuvant to treatment or as part of occupational therapy, guided reading, or even unguided reading if the patient knows what he needs, might well prove to be a provision of inestimable value.

To date the Repatriation Commission is the one authority which has appreciated the possibilities and introduced organized library services into its hospitals. The library scheme is still in its infancy, but much of importance is likely to be learnt from the experiment when the results have been fully analyzed.

The library services given by the Repatriation Commission are an essential part of its very comprehensive programme of education and training for patients in its medical institutions. Each of these institutions has been equipped with a standard reference and lending library, inherited from the Army Education Service and subsequently augmented. A combined total approaching 25,000 volumes is held in these libraries, the number of subjects covered being 2,400, and each library is operated by a trained librarian.

## *Parliamentary Libraries*

The State parliamentary libraries are all run on fairly similar lines and with similar objects. Their nature makes them more or less exclusive to the use of members of parliament and in some instances to State government departments. The Victorian Parliamentary Library is probably the most liberal of them and does not refuse any reasonable request by a member of the public. The Victorian Parliamentary Library is the largest of its kind with over 100,000 volumes. Tasmania, with approximately 20,000 volumes, and now administered under the supervision of the State Librarian, is the smallest.

The officers of a parliamentary library are called upon to do research work for members or to put them on the right track to enable them

to do their own research. So that members can readily secure the information required in preparing for debate and so that ministers can determine the nature and effect in other countries and states of legislation proposed, the typical parliamentary library has a comprehensive range of acts, bills, parliamentary papers and documents of other legislatures, has a strong section in constitutional law and material relating to social problems, and indeed in any subjects likely to come up for consideration in Parliament.

## *Special Libraries*

A special library is one which has been assembled for the use of a particular group or section of the community and which contains material of special and usually professional interest to that group.

Thus parliamentary libraries could be included in the category. The tendency, however, is to regard as special libraries the highly specialized collections of government departments, industrial concerns, private institutions and Royal Societies, etc. Many large firms and industries have special libraries containing books and periodicals and other material likely to be of use to the administrators and staff in the performance of their duties. Most special libraries are very strong in periodicals, which have the advantage over books of providing more up-to-date information on the subjects with which the department or firm is most concerned. The latest information on how a particular type of work is being done elsewhere is something that a special library aims largely at providing.

A type of special library worth mentioning is to be found in the State branches of the Royal Society and other learned societies. These libraries consist very largely of scientific journals and transactions which are often received in exchange for the Society's own publications.

Among the largest special libraries in Australia are the Commonwealth Patent Office library with a collection of nearly 60,000 patent specifications, official documents and other technical literature, and the decentralized collection of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, with its headquarters in Melbourne.

## *Overseas Information Libraries*

A new type of Australian library that was born out of the war is the overseas information library, of which the first was set up in New York in 1940. Actually the first modern library of this kind appears to have been the British Information Library established in

New York in 1920, but coming into the field when it did, Australia was at least not behind the United States, which also introduced her overseas information libraries as an essential wartime measure. Australia's information libraries have continued to function during the peace, and are likely to continue doing so. The information libraries at London and New York receive anything up to 200 requests a day for information relating to Australia.

The need overseas for up-to-date and quickly available information on Australia's war potential, her wartime measures, her economic strength and weaknesses, her resources generally, was increasingly felt as the war got under way.

An up-to-the-minute Australian reference library was accepted as an indispensable basis of the Australian News and Information Bureaux that came to be set up in New York in 1940, London 1944, and subsequently at Ottawa, San Francisco, New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro. The libraries were assembled and catalogued on behalf of the Department of Information by the Commonwealth National Library, which has also provided two of its senior officers as librarians to the London and New York institutions. Both of these libraries bear comparison with the United States information libraries established during the war in Sydney and Melbourne.

The extension of Australian trade and diplomatic representation overseas and the recognized need for equipping these representations with comprehensive Australian reference libraries, resulted in the setting up of a further 24 reference and information libraries. This was the minimum number of libraries required for the needs of all representations, many of which shared the same premises. The number of these libraries continues to grow; the total at the time of writing is 35.

The view is fairly generally held that in the past Australian publicity overseas had been neglected much to our disadvantage. If the library facilities which are now being provided, in addition to keeping our own representatives informed on Australian affairs, are used as a means of effectively diffusing knowledge of our country in foreign lands, a move of considerable value to Australia will have been made.

The project to some extent is still in an experimental stage, and the libraries, though fully catalogued and containing in each case a comprehensive range of basic Australian reference material, including books, periodicals, cuttings and official documents, are still small and in need of further development. So far, Australian information and reference libraries have been set up in London (Australia House and

Whitehall), Dublin, Ottawa, Vancouver, New York (office of the Consul-General, and at the United Nations headquarters), Washington, San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, The Hague, New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, Colombo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Nanking, Tokyo, Manila, Batavia, Singapore, Timor, Noumea, Bangkok, Capetown, Pretoria, Johannesberg, Cairo, and Wellington.

# 5

# LIBRARIANSHIP IN AUSTRALIA

The quality of a library's service depends not on the magnificence of its building nor on the size and extent of its book collection, though these are admittedly important ingredients. Most of all does it depend on the calibre of its administrators and staff, the people who assemble the collection, who harness its resources and make them available to the library's public.

Two long-held conceptions of what the word "librarian" meant are fortunately dying out, for the modern librarian is not necessarily either of them. The first conception was that he was an erudite old gentleman, with a knowledge of books as likely as not in the classical field that was pretty near boundless, a man who knew the value of every book in his library and was, in short, a scholar.

The second conception was that of a middle aged spinster or widow who handed books out at the local threepenny circulating library, or some other subscription library.

The modern conception of the term "librarian" by no means ignores such qualifications as scholarship or spinsterhood, but it does include others of equal or even greater importance.

Not everyone is born to be a librarian any more than he is born to be an engineer or a mathematician. Firstly, the professional librarian is required to have very definite mental characteristics. He must be neither an extreme idealist nor an extreme realist, but he must certainly be something of both. His mind must be logical and orderly; he must have a flair for accuracy in detail and at the same time not allow himself to become a slave of detail nor let it blind him to the overall purpose. If he is a lover of books so much the better, but if his love for books is of the undying and all-consuming kind that does not permit him to put a book down without reading it from cover to cover, he will find this a certain disqualification.

Strange as it may seem, a librarian is not employed to sit down and read books. He is employed to work. True, this work may require him to catalogue and classify books, but this occupation is purely a technical one. The cataloguer analyses and classifies books just as the botanist or geologist analyses and classifies flowers or rocks.

The librarian must be capable of hard work, for he gets plenty of it, be tolerant and pleasant, and ready to go out of his way.

Secondly, some degree of scholarship *is* necessary. Obviously the more a librarian knows, the more effective he will be in his job. Nearly all the Australian public and university libraries require their professional staff to have a Bachelor's degree, usually in Arts, or expect them to acquire one during the course of their service. The more languages of which a librarian has a working knowledge the better. Many special libraries, such as law and scientific libraries require, or at any rate prefer to Arts, a degree more appropriate to their scope.

Thirdly, the fully-fledged librarian is required to have passed the qualifying examination of the Australian Institute of Librarians or its equivalent. The rule prevailing is that before he can sit for the qualifying examination he must have had three years' practical experience in an approved library (five years if he is not a University graduate), though some of this time may be spent in a library school. The qualifying examination, success at which entitles him to become a member of the Institute, consists of a selection of papers in theoretical and practical cataloguing and classification, book selection and reference work, organization of knowledge and aids to research, library administration and organization, book production and distribution, historical and descriptive bibliography, university libraries, special libraries, historical and archival collections, and school and children's libraries.

This professional knowledge is even more important than high academic qualifications. In a large library one may be called upon to specialize in a particular branch, from the selection of new material to its processing, which includes cataloguing and classifying according to certain accepted principles,[1] to do research work, or to guide the reader, whether student, child or everyday borrower, in the selection of his reading requirements. In a small library, a librarian is called upon to do all these things, and a lot more.

1. In line with most libraries in English-speaking countries, Australia's principal libraries are classified on the Dewey decimal system, and catalogued in accordance with the "Anglo-American Code," a set of rules drawn up by cataloguing experts of Britain and America.

Yet these academic and professional qualifications are not sufficient to make the complete librarian. He is expected to be proficient at the typewriter, capable of editing, proof-reading, sign-writing, organizing book displays, and of speaking in public. He must be able to write a decent letter, to produce a reasonable report, and to compile statistics. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, he must be possessed very liberally of that very vital commodity—general factor G.

# 6

# CONCLUSION

Clearly, the present move for free and better libraries for the people has been a great step towards the goal that lies ahead.

To attempt to create vast treasure houses in emulation of the large and wealthy libraries in America and Europe, libraries which vie with each other in the possession of priceless manuscripts, of precious incunabula and rarities, would be sheer folly and quite beyond us. Munificent benefactions and centuries of zealous hoarding have made these libraries what they are. And, after all, is the character of a country measured in terms of its art and literary treasures? Or is it not rather measured from the character and the mental level of the mass of its people?

It can be admitted—it costs us nothing to do so—that libraries of the greatest utility, and not treasure houses, are the things we need most. Indeed they are a prerogative of the people. Let us admit also that there can be no education without them, that without libraries, without books that are the gateway to the minds of the great and the skilled, we are denied the fruits of work already done, of experience already gained, of knowledge already harnessed. Without access to books we remain in microcosmic ignorance, an uncultured and uncultivated nation of people.

Let us admit these things and also that it is somebody's duty to see that our citizens *are* an informed and enlightened people, or at the very least are provided with every facility and encouragement to enable them to become so.

There then remains one further admission to make, and that is that the job is far beyond the compass of a rusty chain of under-nourished subscription libraries and a handful of State reference libraries. This admission, indeed, has already been made by our leading educationists and by most of our governments.

## CONCLUSION

But will the new free municipally-controlled libraries solve the problem?

My own conviction is that, admirable and progressive as was the legislation brought down in the last few years by most of the States, it still does not go far enough.

Roughly, what it does is to provide for a subsidy of up to a pound for pound to be paid by the State to local authorities who set up free libraries in their community. The onus is on the local authority, the municipal or shire council, to extract from its ratepayers sufficient revenue to guarantee the State that the money, including the subsidy that will be spent on library services will be on a scale equivalent at least to 2/- per head of the community per annum.

This legislation might adequately fill the bill in the case of towns or suburbs of 10,000 residents and upwards, but to what extent is it workable in towns of lesser size? In towns, for instance, with 1,000 ratepayers.

The answer that has been suggested to this problem is that such towns and townships should pool their resources in a regional scheme with one central library established in one of the towns and branch libraries set up in the other localities; that books should be regularly exchanged between them.

Well, this system *may* work, but one wonders how effectively. Certainly it works in England, but in England you have five, at the most ten, miles between towns and villages. In Australia's habitable areas, when you get away from the coastal regions, you might be lucky to find an average of half a dozen townships in every thousand square miles. And while general literature might still be exchanged between branches so widely scattered, it is patent that every village or township library ought still to be equipped with its own permanent reference and information collection.

The simple truth, and one observed by the Carnegie surveyors, is that few small municipalities, despite Government subsidy, can afford to provide a free library service of any value to their citizens.

What then is the answer? Obviously, the answer is that the State must play a greater part than it is already doing or proposes to do. I don't intend to go into all the ways it does or can play this part. McColvin in his recently-published report on Public Libraries in Australia, and other investigators have already done this very adequately.

But there is one possible line of development which so far does not seem to have been seriously considered. If the intellectual level of Australia's widespread people is to be raised—and there is no doubt

it can take a lot of raising—we must introduce into the scheme of things a universal system of education for the adult. Efficient community libraries would be an integral part of such a scheme. But libraries are more than mere collections of books. I borrow somebody else's words when I say that good libraries are made up of buildings, books and brains, and that the most important ingredient is brains. Now as the most important ingredient, brains should be provided and paid for by the authority in the best position to do so, which is not the municipality but the State. School teachers are trained by the State and kept on its payroll, and there seems to be only one valid objection to a similar plan for librarians.

That objection is the payment of a professional-scale salary to qualified librarians where their libraries serve populations of only a few hundred or even a few thousand people.

But this objection can be overcome if the librarian in a small community has a wider role to play. Is there such a role that he can play? The answer is a categorical yes. There is a role, of vital interest to the State, waiting to be filled in every community.

The Army found this vacant role existed in its own set-up, and to fill it, it introduced an officer whom it came to find so indispensable that it worked him often to the point of exhaustion. This Education Officer, as he was called, was the Army Education Service's man in the field. He was the vital element; upon him depended the success of the Army's gigantic adult education experiment. It is to his credit that it did succeed.

What did this Education Officer do, culled from the ranks of serving school-teachers, journalists, librarians, university graduates? He was the cultural beacon and educational adviser of a group of men of anything up to a Brigade in strength. He partitioned his flock into smaller groups, and in turn gave them lectures on the background of the countries in the news, of the general trend of events, of the pros and cons of referendum issues, on their post-war prospects, on science, art or indeed on anything the troops requested. Sometimes he used strip films, he screened documentary films, he produced news sheets, provided materials for hobby-crafts, coached backward soldiers, arranged correspondence courses, he arranged and gave commentaries on recorded music, organized discussion groups, debates; he controlled anything up to a hundred box circulating libraries which he exchanged between units. He was in short his unit's education adviser. If he was not a walking encyclopædia when he began his duties, he was one when he finished.

## CONCLUSION

The only criticism I ever heard of Education Officers by the men they served was that there were not enough of them.

Yet in our civilian framework there is none, or practically none, at all. Go to even the smallest community, and you will find its spiritual needs are catered for, primary education for its children is not overlooked, it has with few exceptions access to medical and dental services, and to many other facilities. But its cultural welfare more often than not is completely neglected. Its access to information that will better its production, and make its citizens generally more knowledgeable is pathetically limited.

It would be unjust to pass over the heroic efforts of the Workers' Educational Association established in the various States, or of the University Extension services, or of C.E.M.A. and other voluntary organizations. Excellent work has been done, is still being done by these organizations, separately and in co-operation.

But commendable though the work of these various bodies has proved, their results to date have not been sufficiently far-reaching to change one's view that a Commonwealth or State adult education scheme could be infinitely more effective. As a matter of interest a move has now been made in Victoria to launch a State scheme by the creation of the Council of Adult Education with responsibility to the Minister. The objects of the Council are, inter alia, "to plan and supervise the administration and development of adult education in Victoria and to assist other bodies actually engaged in adult education." Here we may find the beginning of something big.

But to return to my point. Every community should obviously have its free library, a library whose contents would be cultural, informational and recreational. If it cannot justify maintaining a trained full-time librarian, the answer is not a part-time, unqualified local "librarian" but its State-provided adult education officer.

Such an officer would be formally trained, among other things, in librarianship. In a small community his headquarters and responsibility would be the community library, but his services in the district would be of the diverse and utilitarian character of his counterpart in the Forces. Introduce this element into our society and I believe that the very small town library problem would be largely solved, and also that the way would be paved towards overcoming many deficiencies that have been obvious in our social framework for long enough.

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# THE LIBRARY COMES TO YOU

Since Victoria is so poorly served with libraries the Council for Adult Education is meeting a real need by bringing books to those who want them.

## *THE C.A.E. SUPPLIES*

DISCUSSION GROUPS with sets of books and notes on all kinds of topics;

PLAY-READING GROUPS with sets of plays which will be replaced at regular intervals;

PLAY-ACTING GROUPS with sets of plays which may be kept for the period required for production;

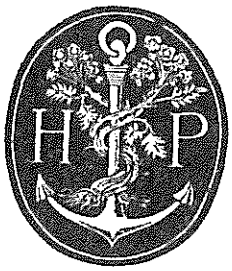
COMMUNITY CLUBS, PARENT ASSOCIATIONS and similar bodies with boxes of books chosen according to the interests of the members. These boxes can be kept for one or two months and then replaced by a fresh collection.

The charge for a regular supply of books for discussion and play-reading groups is 5/- per member, with a minimum of six members; for boxes of varied books, 5/- per box of about 20 books; for sets of plays for actual production, the charge is assessed according to circumstances.

*A MODEL LIBRARY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS*
*is also available from the C.A.E. for display purposes.*

For further details apply to

**The Director, Council of Adult Education**
**527 Collins Street, Melbourne, C.1**

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