

10,000 of the city's residents, (75) the central library being responsible for buying and keeping the volumes circulating among the various branches. At present Christchurch has a suburban library for every 8000 of its population but, as has already been observed, each of these libraries does not cater for 8000 people. The responsibility for this rests, of course, with the City Council and not with the suburban libraries.

The mention of a branch system raises the final important item. At present Christchurch has fifteen entirely independent libraries. The City Library and that at Opawa belong to the New Zealand Libraries Association, while the suburban libraries have their own association, but there is no organic connection between any two libraries, let alone a unified, centralised system. (76) What is the result? In the first instance there is a large amount of wasteful expenditure and duplication. The large majority of small libraries can only afford to buy one copy of a new book, whereas, under a system of centralised buying it would be possible to buy twenty or even more. Besides, many expensive books are beyond the means of small libraries, and, if they are purchased, it is likely that only a small number of members will be interested in each one. In order to pacify all its subscribers the small library is compelled to purchase only those books which will give the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number. This disadvantage is obviated under a centralised system. As reference works and the better class of non-fiction are usually in the higher price levels, it often means that a small suburban

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75. Munn and Barr. op.cit. p.20. An effort is made to ensure that each library serves an equal number of people.

76. The various libraries agree not to interfere in each others affairs.