

University of New Zealand

THESIS

Presented For The Examination Of

MASTER OF ARTS AND HONOURS

IN HISTORY.

November, 1950.

REFERENCE DEPT.  
CANTERBURY PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

THE  
CHRISTCHURCH  
METROPOLITAN LIBRARY SERVICE  
1852-1948

- A Critical Survey -

What do we as a nation care about books?  
How much do you think we spend altogether  
on our libraries, public or private, as  
compared with what we spend on our horses?

- John Ruskin

CANTEBURY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT  
CHRISTCHURCH, N.Z.

By

D.E. WOOD.

Christchurch,  
New Zealand.  
1950.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- B. of G. - Annual Reports of the Board of Governors of Canterbury University College.
- C.C.C. - Minutes of the Christchurch City Council.
- C.C.C. Officers' Reports - Christchurch City Council Officers' Reports.
- L.T. - The "Lyttelton Times", Christchurch.
- Minutes of C.C. and S.P.S.L.A. - Minutes of the Christchurch City and Suburban Public Schools Library Association.
- N.Z. A to J - Appendices to the Journals of the New Zealand House of Representatives.
- "Press" - "The Press", Christchurch.
- "Star-Sun" - "The Christchurch Star-Sun", Christchurch.



PREFACE

It is difficult today to realise that there was a time when the bulk of the knowledge of mankind was contained in a few priceless manuscripts which were faithfully copied by scholars for the benefit of others and jealously guarded. Mankind to-day is confronted with an ever increasing flood of literature that pours from the printing presses with such bewildering rapidity that, for many, the task of sifting the wheat from the chaff becomes so frightening that they abandon the unequal struggle and fall into apathy. So rapid are the advances made in many subjects that many works are already out-of-date when they make their first appearance on the bookseller's shelves. The expense involved in keeping abreast of these advances is beyond the means of most people and it is here that a good library provides a solution not only to the question of individual expense but also to that of selection. The cultural standard of any community is reflected in its libraries and the use made of them. In a democratic country such as this the wishes of the people are paramount and the blame must be borne by them if their libraries fail to fulfil their function. This function has been admirably defined by the late Professor H. Laski ( Professor of Political Economy at the University of London ) when addressing the fifty-eighth annual conference of the Library Association of England in 1935.

"I believe that the purpose of a public library is to make accessible the heritage of culture, in the widest sense of the word, to any who may wish to take advantage of it. The first implication, therefore, of my view is the need to view that heritage as something independent of any special attitude of mind. We are not entitled to narrow its substance because we are Socialists or Conservatives, Christians or Freethinkers, exponents of one philosophy rather than



another. The only test we can apply to the content of a public library is the test of significance. If the book meets that test, in the judgement of competent persons, the public is entitled to find it on the shelves of the library... We are not justified in barring gates which lead to roads we may not happen to approve."<sup>(1)</sup>

In the light of this statement, a study of the library facilities of any community should be very revealing, and yet no-one has undertaken such an investigation to substantiate or disprove the many scathing criticisms levelled at the libraries of Christchurch over a long period. To know that such criticisms are justified is not sufficient if the mistakes of the past are to be rectified. A first essential is to know how and why those mistakes occurred so that similar mistakes can be avoided in the future. The purpose of this thesis is to remedy this omission and, by tracing from its earliest beginnings the growth of the Christchurch library service, to provide the background necessary for any criticism of that service. An added incentive is provided by the fact that library development in the metropolitan area of Christchurch not only forms a complete unit but is also unique in New Zealand.

In England and the United States of America it is generally accepted that public libraries are not only free and supported from the rates but also are the natural extension of the system of public education. Although a number of libraries and mechanics' institutes were founded in the early years of this province for a similar purpose many members of library committees and the public generally appear to have forgotten that the city library maintains a reference service; that it has books available for inter-loan between libraries; that it supports an excellent service for the younger members of the community; that it is compelled by law to keep open, a free reading

1. "The Press", Christchurch. September 15, 1935.



room; that its duties do not cease with the issue of books but extend to advice and help; and that it is unable to forget for one moment, even if it so wished, that there is more in print than light fiction.

In general, few difficulties have been encountered with regard to sources as the files of the local newspapers and the minutes of interested organisations have usually sufficed. However, the chapter concerning suburban libraries offered no such readily available information. In some cases, meagre scraps of information have been gleaned from old minute books but in the majority of cases this source proved either entirely inadequate or else non-existent. All except one of the suburban libraries are completely controlled by volunteer workers who are only interested in supplying themselves and their friends with good( and more often indifferent ) reading matter. Naturally they are not interested in maintaining the type of records in which a historian is interested and, because of this woeful lack of material, it has been necessary in many instances to resort to personal recollections to furnish a brief outline of the growth of a library system in the suburbs of Christchurch. Fortunately these accounts have shown remarkably small divergence from the primary sources available.

Bare facts are, in themselves, of little value and of less interest and, moreover, they can even be misleading. Because of the obvious impossibility of incorporating every item of evidence, it is understandable that one is forced to select and discard. In so doing, one naturally forms appraisals and criticisms which, while making complete impartiality impossible, should not detract from the writer's disinterested standpoint and honesty of purpose. Failure to include these opinions reduces the value of a historical work to an almost



worthless chronology. There has therefore been no hesitation in including even the most damning criticisms wherever the facts give no doubt as to their accuracy. As the defects in the library system under discussion are by no means beyond remedy, it is more important than ever that detailed and informed criticism should be levelled before it is too late.

Finally it is my pleasant duty to record the names of those persons who, by their willing assistance, have greatly facilitated the search for information. Throughout my work Mr. E.J. Bell, Librarian of the Canterbury Public Library, has taken an active and friendly interest for which I am very grateful. I have also received valuable assistance from Mr. H.S. Feast (Town Clerk), Mr. J. Stringleman and Miss M. Beatson (of the Canterbury Public Library), Mr. C.W. Collins (Librarian, Canterbury College), Mr. J. Logie (Registrar, Canterbury College), Mr. M.W. Gorrie, Mr. E.G. Pegler and Miss C.T. McGahey (of the Christchurch City Council). In the suburban library field the following persons volunteered valuable information: Mrs. E. Chitty (Sumner), Miss A. Hall (Papanui), Mr. H.W. Friedman (Linwood), Mr. C. Pollard (Sydenham), Mr. H.C. Eaton (Spreydon), Mr. S. Betteley (Redcliffs), Mr. J.E. Jones (St. Martins), Mr. H. Jackson (Opawa), Mr. R.M. Flintoff (Addington), and Mr. G. Manning (W.E.A.). Research into the juvenile library service was made easier by the assistance of Mr. N.P. Lory (Headmaster, Wharenui School and Secretary of the School Library Service) and of Miss C. Robinson (Vocational Guidance Officer). Finally it is gratifying to acknowledge the encouraging and lively interest shown throughout this work by my tutor, Mr. J.J. Saunders M.A.



THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE CANTERBURY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY TO 1878

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Every age does not produce a Napoleon or an Einstein, a Shakespeare or a Beethoven, yet there are many names in every age which, although famous in their own particular spheres, remain unknown to the world at large. Originality is such a rare gift that the average man must remain content to use those things which have been discovered, invented, and formulated for him by others. Yet, in spite of its rarity, its worth is seldom recognised. People accept the ultra-modern household comforts of the twentieth century without comment, seldom pausing to reflect on the weeks and months and often years of research that have gone to produce such wonders of science. In like manner the printing press and all its boons are accepted with scarce mention of names such as Gutenberg or Caxton. The age of questioning and suspicion has been replaced, in highly civilised societies, by an age of acceptance. The invention lives, the inventor is long since forgotten.

Let us, in contradiction of the spirit of the age, pause for a few seconds to consider the name of George Birkbeck who was born at Settle, Yorkshire in 1776. He studied medicine at Edinburgh and London, taking the degree of M.D. in 1799 at the University of the former city, and shortly after became professor



of natural philosophy at Glasgow where he commenced his efforts at popular education. Having had his attention drawn to the difficulties in this field, he established courses of lectures for working men, which developed, in 1823, into the Glasgow Mechanics' Institute, evidently the first genuine institution of that sort. Birkbeck had left Glasgow for London in 1804 where he practised as a successful physician for a number of years. But when the establishment of the Glasgow Institute led to agitation for a similar movement in London, he immediately took the lead, lent £3,700 for the erection of a lecture-room, and as first president delivered the opening address on February 20, 1824. It was these foundations at Glasgow and London which were soon imitated throughout the country and which spread with the colonies to the new world. (1)

The focus of our attention is now narrowed to one particular colony, New Zealand; and further to one particular settlement, that of Christchurch where, within two years of the arrival of the first colonists in December, 1850 efforts were made to establish a Mechanics' Institute. That worth-while public institutions are not necessarily the outcome of a strong popular movement is evidenced by a letter to the "Lyttelton Times" in March 1852, some years before the actual formation of the Christchurch Mechanics' Institute. As this early development is not generally known the relevant part of the letter is worth quoting.

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1. Dictionary of National Biography; Smith, Elder and Co., London. Birkbeck, George: article by Sir Henry Trueman Wood.



Sir - "Since my arrival in the colony I have remarked with sincere regret the absence of those means for social intercourse which bind man to man, and of those amusements which tend to make the individual cheerful and virtuous, and society happy, ... In a settlement so young as ours the existence of a theatre is not to be expected, but are there not a sufficient number of young men who could form an Amateur Dramatic Club; or, what would be much better, could we not get up a Working Men's Literary and Scientific Institution, where working men and their wives, and their families might meet to enjoy

"The feast of reason  
And the flow of soul."

Lord Chesterfield has declared that, "a well regulated stage is an ornament to society, a school for morals and good manners, and an encourager of wit and learning," but I think, Sir, that a Mechanics' Institute far exceeds the stage in usefulness and morality; I shall, therefore, be happy to join with any of your readers in forming one, having had some experience in those matters. I have a few books which I shall be happy to lend or give as the commencement of a Library.

Being a stranger here I have no private circle of friends to whom I could communicate my ideas, I shall therefore feel obliged if you can afford me a space in your columns, and beg to subscribe myself, Sir yours most respectfully," (2)

Charles J. Rae.

Many letters to the editor are insufficiently provocative to arouse any further correspondence and, although in some instances a spate of letters serves to excite or amuse for a short time the correspondents in such cases are all too frequently merely airing theoretical views with no thoughts of practical action. It is indeed seldom that a newspaper correspondent has the satisfaction of sufficiently arousing public opinion to produce concrete results. Mr. Rae, however, was one of that select few. The "Lyttelton Times" of July 3 contained an advertisement calling a meeting in the Christchurch Grammar School on July

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2. The "Lyttelton Times", Christchurch. March 20, 1852.



9 of all interested in the formation of an exclusively literary and scientific institution at Christchurch and suggesting as a tentative title "The Christchurch Athenaeum."<sup>(3)</sup> A well attended meeting established the proposed society which immediately became the target of uninformed criticism from a number of prominent citizens who were at great pains to point out to all that the movement was in direct opposition to the Colonists' Society and as such should not be tolerated under any circumstances. One correspondent to the "Times" even went so far as to suggest, or rather insist, that it appeared as if a society comprising the mass of the people was not respectable enough for some few exclusives.

Admirable as the Colonists' Society was for the promotion of social intercourse in a new settlement by catering for a wide variety of interests, it was unreasonable for its protagonists to insist that it should preclude the establishment of new societies for specific purposes. In an attempt to clarify the issue, the committee of the newly formed society published a statement of its aims and objects; the diffusion of information, the cultivation of taste, and the promotion of rational enjoyment by means of a library, a reading room, lectures, music, and classes for mutual instruction formed by the members among themselves.<sup>(4)</sup> This is in complete accord with the accepted definition of a mechanics' institute.<sup>(5)</sup> In particular, in an unexplored and

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3. *ibid* July 3, 1852.

4. *ibid* July 24, 1852.

5. *vide* Chambers's Encyclopedia, Edinburgh, W. & R. Chambers Ltd.



newly settled country like New Zealand, it was suggested that such an institution might aid geological research and provide the means of mutual information on its geography, climate, and natural history. As in similar societies in England, religious and political questions were to be completely excluded. A society of this nature was more likely to provide a library service for Christchurch than was the Colonists' Society; but although it attracted eighty three subscribers and set itself the primary object of erecting a £200 building it passed into oblivion after publishing a further statement emphasising its exclusively literary and scientific interests.<sup>(6)</sup> Hostility and lack of support apparently contributed largely to its demise.

For almost seven years the citizens of Christchurch were silent on the question of a library and it was not until the matter was taken up by the Editor of the "Lyttelton Times" that any further developments took place. He said:

"Some efforts have been made in Christchurch for the establishment of a Mechanics' Institute and of a Book Club, in connection with it. Both of these objects are so important that any steps to be taken in the matter ought to be carefully considered. To establish such an institution, capable of meeting the requirements of the community, would be a heavy tax on Christchurch alone, and if it be wished that the institution should receive support from other quarters, it must provide advantages for all subscribers, whether residents in Christchurch or not. It appears to us that, especially with a view to founding a good library, it would be important to enlist a very general interest in the proposed work.

The most important desiderata to be first attended to would be the Library and Reading Room; and to get the full benefit of these advantages the individual use of a room and the individual attention of a clerk would be required. For this reason we are inclined to doubt the expediency of the proposed Town Hall plan.

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6. L. T. August 7, 1852.



Men of all classes and pursuits, resident or non-resident, would gladly join in keeping up a room that should be always open to subscribers within reasonable hours; well furnished with books and periodicals; well lighted and warmed in the evenings; and from whose stores they might take home any books which they might wish to read at leisure. Get a good book club and reading room thus started, lectures and other means of improvement will follow. We are satisfied, however, that the work ought to be a public one, independent of all other societies, and adapting itself to the hours and seasons of all alike." (7)

If by this article the editor hoped to rouse the people of Christchurch to action, his success must have been gratifying, for less than one week later a notice inserted in the "Times" by Mr. C.J. Rae of the 1852 venture called a public meeting in the Oddfellows' Hall for Tuesday May 26, 1859, "to take into consideration the best means of establishing a Mechanics' Institute."<sup>(8)</sup> In the same issue the editor's proposal was vigorously attacked by a correspondent who pointed out that one of the rooms being added to the Town Hall was intended for a library and that a large number of books and donations in addition to a sum of £120 had already been subscribed.<sup>(9)</sup>

Nevertheless, the correspondent wrote in vain, for a well attended meeting on the following day established the Mechanics' Institute on the motion of the Rev. C. Frazer who, in stressing the importance and desirability of such an institution, stated that, "in order to render it both popular and useful it is highly necessary that it should be conducted on the most liberal principles and the easiest terms consistent with its efficiency."<sup>(10)</sup> Evidently the pioneers appreciated the desirability of placing library facilities

7. *ibid* May 21, 1859.

8. *ibid* May 25, 1859.

9. *ibid*

10. *ibid* June 1, 1859.



within the reach of all. While stating that the desire of the promoters was to give the undertaking a purely public character, Mr. C.J. Rae disclaimed any intention of rivalling the scheme proposed in connection with the Town Hall. Fifty subscribers were then enrolled and, after appointing a committee and trustees, the meeting adjourned until June 9 when over seventy attended and the number of subscribers was increased to ninety-six. The society was then given definite form with a set of rules, honorary officials, and a librarian - Mr. F. Thompson.<sup>(11)</sup> Consequent on Mr. Rae's report that the promoters of the Town Hall were agreeable to the amalgamation of the two schemes it was decided to obtain temporary meeting rooms when the membership reached 100 and to proceed with the acquisition of a site and the erection of a building. Before two months had elapsed, temporary premises had been obtained in the Town Hall and on August 4, 1859 the Christchurch Mechanics' Institute was officially opened by Mr. John Hall. The Bishop of Christchurch - the principal speaker of the day - stated that the type of light reading which would be provided by the library to be formed was, he considered, instructive as well as amusing, and in many instances had been productive of much good, as for example the works of Sir Walter Scott. In the course of his speech he also suggested that good newspapers were of great value to such an institution as they supplied much beneficial information and instruction.<sup>(12)</sup> Although the value of the library was stressed in the opening speeches, the Institute proceeded to

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11. *ibid* June 11, 1859.

12. *ibid* August 10, 1859.



fulfil its other functions as evidenced by advertisements in the following November calling for enrolments in elementary classes in writing and arithmetic and announcing the first of a series of lectures on constitutional history. (13)

It is the rule rather than the exception with such public bodies as libraries and other similar institutions that the meagre finances which they can accumulate by means of subscriptions and donations are far from sufficient to enable them to fulfil, with any reasonable degree of success, their obligations to the public that supports them and should benefit from them. This was certainly the case with the Mechanics' Institute and on November 3, 1859 a Memorial from the members to the Superintendent of the province asking for a grant was laid on the table of the Provincial Council. (14) Later in the same session a motion was granted,

"That in the event of the funds of the province permitting it, his Honour the Superintendent be requested to authorise the expenditure of a sum not exceeding £200, to be divided equally between the Mechanics' Institute, Christchurch, and the Lyttelton Colonists' Society, for the purchase of books and periodicals for the use of the members thereof." (15)

The Provincial Council by granting this request established a precedent, whether intentionally or otherwise, and it is not surprising to find further requests made for increasing sums. Thus there was a grant of £150 in 1861 (16) while by 1863 the amount had risen to £250. (17)

The first year of life of any institution is a testing period

13. *ibid* November 19, 1859.

14. Journal of the Canterbury Provincial Council, Session XI, November 3, 1859.

15. *ibid* November 29, 1859.

16. *ibid* Session XVII, December 5, 1861.

17. *ibid* Session XX, September 24, 1863.



and the first annual report of the Institute did not seem to justify the promoters' arguments for its establishment. This was partly attributable to a period of general depression adversely affecting every individual interest in Christchurch and its neighbourhood. A statistical analysis makes gloomy reading. Of a membership of 112, only fifty had borrowed books from the library and an average of nine per night had attended at the reading room. The circulation figures, for the library of 168 books, were 314, suggesting that subscribers borrowed less than one book each per month. However, in spite of a seeming lack of interest the list of magazines and periodicals that were on the Reading Room tables is so imposing that it is of interest to give it in full:- The Lyttelton Times, Canterbury Standard, New Zealander, Wellington Independent, Nelson Examiner, Otago Witness, Sydney Morning Herald, Melbourne Argus, Home News, Illustrated London News, Builder, Economist, Punch, Mechanics' Magazine, Dublin University Magazine, North American Review, Quarterly Review, Edinburgh Review, Sunday at Home, Leisure Hour, Chambers's Journal, Art Journal, Athenaeum, Blackwoods Magazine, Illustrated Times, Cassell's Family Paper. (18)

If the major part of the report does not appear encouraging, at least this list shows that a wide range of colonial and overseas contacts had already been established. Finally, it is also pleasing to notice the interest shown by the Government which had already assured the Institute that the subject of a building site should have every attention. Naturally it seemed likely that the Institute would have a much better chance of thriving once it was



established in its own building.

Whereas it might have been expected that such an institution might have taken a year to gain its feet, in the case of the Mechanics' Institute the early years were fraught with difficulties and discouragement. Such was the position, that at the second annual meeting, the chairman was forced to say that,

"Indeed, it appears evident to your committee that unless the inhabitants of Christchurch step cheerfully and immediately forward to support this institution by their subscriptions, it is quite impossible that it can maintain a position to carry out those objects of public benefit and utility for which it was established." (19)

However in spite of this adverse statement, other sections of the report showed a marked improvement as the number of books in the possession of the Institute had increased to two hundred and forty-six while the number of volumes circulated had increased to over eight hundred, and there was also a larger average attendance at the Reading Room. Furthermore, a satisfactory assurance had been received from the Government that a grant of money in lieu of a site had been placed on the estimates and only awaited the approval of the Provincial Council.

Unfortunately, at this interesting stage, when the Institute was struggling for existence, there is no record of the minutes of the third annual meeting held on June 25, 1862. However, the following minutes of the fourth annual meeting reveal that, at the 1862 meeting, the committee had announced the purchase of a site consisting of half an acre of land (sections No. 405 and 406) on the east side of the River Avon, fronting on Hereford Street and

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19. *ibid* July 3, 1861.



Cambridge Terrace, for the sum of £262-10-0, and had recommended that funds for a building should be raised by shares and subscriptions. The present public library stands upon this excellent site, which is ideal for library purposes and very close to the centre of the city. Funds were further augmented by a grant of £250 from the Government as compensation for the site originally reserved for the Institute by the founders of the city.<sup>(20)</sup> The Committee recommended that funds for a building should be raised by shares (at £5) and subscriptions. Plans for the building had been drawn by Mr. Farr of Lichfield Street and the tender of Balcke and Broward to build at £1,169 had been accepted. Thus at last, after four precarious years, it appeared as if the future would take on a much brighter aspect. Added to this encouraging statement was a remarkable increase in the number of members to two hundred and thirty-four in the period 1861-62 and to two hundred and eighty in the following twelve months. Although the circulating figures did not show such a rapid increase they at least rose from 2654 to 4000 while 763 books were added to the library shelves.

Naturally such a large undertaking as the building to be constructed was bound to have its financial repercussions on so small a society and when a special general meeting was called on September 4, 1863 it was announced that the Institute had a debit balance of £733. The meeting decided to canvass for additional shares and subscriptions and also to approach the Provincial

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20. *ibid* Aug. 5, 1863.



— BUILDING PROGRESS 1875-1901 —



AN EARLY PRINT SHOWING THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (erected 1863) ON THE LEFT AND THE LENDING LIBRARY (erected 1875) ON THE RIGHT.



LIBRARIAN'S RESIDENCE  
ERECTED 1894



PUBLIC READING ROOM AND  
ENTRANCE ERECTED 1901 ON  
THE SITE OF THE MECHANIC'S  
INSTITUTE.



Government for further financial assistance. Although in debt the members must surely have been gratified by the report of this special meeting in the "Times" which stated that,

"The room in which the meeting was held is 40 feet long, 18 feet broad and about 23 feet high. The arrangements for ventilation are excellent; and when finished and fitted up, the Christchurch Mechanics' Institute will possess the finest public reading room, without exception in New Zealand." (21)

On October 1, 1863 this building was taken over from the contractors - together with a total debt of £1485 (including the cost of the site.)

Within ten months the canvass had resulted in a large increase in subscriptions and donations, had increased shares from 180 to 200, and had augmented the membership to 435. (22) Furthermore, and possibly most important of all, the Provincial Council, evidently appreciating the educational value of the institution, had on September 24, 1863 made a grant of £250 towards the building fund. (23) The library now consisted of 1,500 volumes and a catalogue was in preparation. Although by this time the greatest emphasis appeared to be on the library and reading room, the Institute was still fulfilling its other obligations with a marked degree of success. During the year well attended lectures were delivered on such subjects as arts of design, acclimatization, clairvoyance, and animal physiology. In spite of the marked improvement in all branches of its work the Institute was now heavily in debt and in an enlightening speech the chairman issued

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21. *ibid* September 9, 1863.

22. Minute Book of Mechanics' Institute at Canterbury Public Library. June 30, 1864.

23. *vide supra*. p 8, n 17.



the following challenge.

"Your committee feel persuaded that no institution so readily supplies the requirements of those persons who are desirous to turn their leisure hours to the best advantage, and who wish to keep themselves informed of what is passing in the world. To those of the members who, conscious themselves of the benefits to be derived from such an institution, your committee would ask their co-operation, each within the circle of his acquaintance, to endeavour to obtain additional subscriptions - persons who will not only contribute the reasonable amount of subscription - but who will use the Reading Room and Library and thus carry out the object of the promoters." (sic) (24)

During the following July a deputation waited on the Provincial Government requesting a further grant but this was refused. In his annual report of June 28, 1865 the chairman, commenting on this refusal said,

"It is to be regretted that this institution cannot be made entirely self supporting which, at present, is unfortunately the fact, and it is to be hoped the Government will yet see the necessity of assisting in supporting it by means of an annual grant of money, as similar institutions are helped in other colonies, at all events until the public is too firmly convinced of its importance to allow it to languish for want of funds." (25)

Because of the financial position it was found necessary to ask the shareholders if they would forego the interest due to them in August, to which they agreed. In addition to this twenty-one of the shareholders presented their shares to the Institute leaving 178 on issue. Whether or not the completion of the printing of the catalogue made the library more popular is indeed questionable but the number of volumes circulated during the current year rose to 5,376. A year later the number of shares on issue had dropped to 165 but the number of volumes circulated

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24. Minutes of Mechanics' Institute June 30, 1864.

25. *ibid* June 28, 1865. There does not appear to be any reference to the deputation in the proceedings of the Provincial Council and no reason for the refusal is given in the Institute minutes.



had also dropped by over 200.

Although on the surface the foregoing suggests that the Institute was gradually working its way into a sound position, underneath the position was not nearly as sound as it appeared. On the occasion of the eighth annual meeting a special memorandum was addressed to the shareholders.<sup>(26)</sup> It stated that, in compliance with the resolutions passed at a meeting of shareholders held on March 25, the committee had made arrangements for transferring the property of the Institute to the Government, subject to a vote of the Provincial Council for an amount for the Government to carry out its part of the undertaking. However, the vote was disallowed by the Council and therefore the whole proposition fell to the ground. Because of this the Committee was in such sore financial straits that there was no possibility of paying the annual interest on shares. The annual report stated that there was a decline in the number of subscriptions, probably on account of the commercial depression and the negotiations just mentioned. In 1870 the colony lay in or near the trough of a depression. The gold production had been declining since 1867 and with it, prices, while the war now drawing to a close had cost the community many valuable lives and burdened it with a heavy debt.<sup>(27)</sup> Although the Maori Wars were confined to the North Island the effects and the heavy debt were spread over the whole country.

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26. *ibid* August 14, 1867.

27. Shrimpton and Mulgan. "History of New Zealand;" Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd. Christchurch, 1921. pp 274-5.



At a quarterly meeting held on January 8, 1868 an important change was made in the nomenclature of the Institute. Because only a very small percentage of the members were mechanics it was decided to adopt the title "Literary Institute" and various alterations were made to the laws to suit this change. (28)

With a view to maintaining interest and increasing the funds of the Institute, debating and chess clubs were organised in 1869. (29) However the annual meeting in 1870 (30) did not show any reasons for enthusiasm over the amount of interest shown by the people of Christchurch, as the membership had dropped to 140. As the Institute had no extraneous revenue and was entirely self-supporting, it is clear that its success and progress depended on the members themselves, and, if there was not a large increase in membership in the near future, the very existence of the institution would be jeopardised. With a view to extending the usefulness of the Institute, the Reading Room was opened free of charge to persons residing in the country and visitors to the city, so long as they signed the visitors' book.

In an attempt to interest more people a number of improvements were carried out during the following year. Chairs replaced forms in the Reading Room while the tables were covered with green baize. The entrance was much improved by the introduction of glass doors and a new writing table was installed. However the most important

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28. L.T. January 8, 1868.

29. Minutes of Mechanics Institute. July 1, 1869.

30. *ibid* July 7, 1870.



innovation of all was the installation of gas lighting in the whole building. Apart from improvements to the interior of the building the exterior was repaired while the grounds were also put in order. Added to these improvements in comfort and appearance was the acquisition of the substantial number of over 500 new books. Proof of public appreciation was not slow in appearing as the subscription list jumped to 210 and the income rose by over £40.

Notwithstanding these improvements and in spite of the fact that by the annual meeting of July 4, 1872 the membership had risen to 243, the outlook was still far from bright. In his annual report the chairman said,

"It is a mortifying fact that with a library of 2500 volumes which is being regularly added to, a reading room supplied with all the local and principal colonial newspapers, only two hundred and forty-three subscribers can be obtained, the greater part of whom are quarterly members, who it may be taken as a rule only subscribe for three quarters of the year, one quarter of the four being allowed almost invariably to lapse. With our population and intelligence the membership should be fifty per cent. more at least." (31)

Meanwhile the need for a well financed library was being discussed in other quarters and for a short space we will leave the members of the Institute in order to see what other plans were afoot. A special committee set up by the Provincial Council to investigate the question of a Museum and a Library presented its report on October 27, 1870. (32) In general, the committee recommended the establishment of a Library in connection with

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31. *ibid* July 4, 1872.

32. Report of Committee on Museum, Library, Etc., October 27, 1870 (in Journal of Canterbury Provincial Council)



the Museum. This connection of the two is liable to be confusing both now and later, (as indeed it was to those concerned with library affairs in the early twentieth century) but, if it is clearly understood that the only connection intended was managerial (i.e. for the purposes of administration) and not functional, (i.e. for the purposes of operation) there should be no further difficulty encountered in this respect. Thus, the committee favoured the establishment of the two in the same building and under one attendant in order to reduce the expense of administration and maintenance. With these suggestions as a basis the committee recommended endowments to be made, "for the purpose of endowing the Museum and founding and maintaining a Public Library in connection with the same," and drew up a bill which became the Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance in 1870. (33)

From the passing of this Ordinance on February 18, 1871 until the opening of the thirty-ninth session of the Provincial Council on May 2, 1873 there appeared to be a lull while the Literary Institute struggled on fighting its gallant but losing battle against lack of finance. In his opening address to the Provincial Council his Honour the Superintendent said,

"The establishment of a Free Public Library will be brought under your attention. Private efforts have already been invited to raise a portion of the necessary funds. The benefits of such an institution are for all time confined to no one class, to no particular locality and to no one period in the history of a community. As supplementing the Educational Institutions which you have so liberally endowed, I trust the proposal will have your favourable consideration." (34)

33. Appendix A. p.138.

34. Journal of Canterbury Provincial Council. Session XXXIX, May 2, 1873.



It would appear that the Superintendent's plea produced the desired result for when the "Appropriation Ordinance" for the session was passed it included a grant of £5000 for a public library.<sup>(35)</sup> This was followed by a grant of £5000 in aid of libraries in country districts.<sup>(36)</sup> The reason for this second grant was disclosed by Mr. W.B. Tosswill (a member of the Provincial Council) when speaking at a public meeting at Templeton in the following month. He said that the country members felt that they should not be overlooked and accordingly passed a resolution to the effect that the country libraries should receive £5000 also.<sup>(37)</sup>

Before we return to the affairs of the Literary Institute there is one more development to trace - a development which was destined to exercise a greater influence over the history of the library system than any other single agency. By an ordinance of the Provincial Council on June 16, 1873 the Canterbury College was established.<sup>(38)</sup> This important development was closely followed by the Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance Amendment Ordinance which, in spite of its long and impressive title, had only one provision which need concern us. It empowered the trustees created by the Ordinance of 1870<sup>(39)</sup> to transfer property vested in them to the Canterbury College but did not otherwise change the law.

Thus with the stage set for the closing scenes of its struggle

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35. Ordinances of the Province of Canterbury. Session XXXIX, No. 16, Schedule B, Class 111, June 18, 1873.  
 36. Journal of Canterbury Provincial Council. Session XXXIX. June 14, 1873. Also *ibid* n.35.  
 37. L.T. July 10, 1873. Also *vide infra* Ch.4, p.84.  
 38. Ordinances of the Province of Canterbury. Session XXXIX, No. 4. "The Canterbury College Ordinance"  
 39. *vide supra* p.17.



the Literary Institute held its fourteenth and final annual meeting on July 3, 1873. In his annual report the chairman reviewed the struggle for existence over the last fourteen years and stated that at one period the situation had been so desperate that the committee had contemplated dispensing with the services of an attendant and opening the library only for an hour in the evenings, leaving the reading room entirely to the good offices of the subscribers throughout the day. At this stage Mr. Reader, the only paid officer of the Institute, had eased the situation by generously offering to forego twenty-five per cent. of his salary and to vacate his rooms in the building in order that they might be let. By the expenditure of much effort it had been possible to raise the number of subscriptions from 133 in 1869 to 270 in 1873 yet, in spite of this increase, the subscriptions were still barely sufficient to meet the expenses of the Institute if it was to be conducted on a scale commensurate with the requirements of Christchurch. Proceeding to the future of the Institute he said,

"It is therefore with great cordiality that your committee have welcomed an overture from the promoters of the public library for the absorption of the Institute in carrying out their free library scheme. Your committee had a meeting with two of the promoters of that scheme and the following resolution embodying their views on the matter was passed on that occasion. ...

'That the Committee of the Literary Institute learn with great satisfaction that it is likely that a public library will be established under the auspices of the Provincial Government, which will carry out the objects and intentions of the Literary Institute with more efficiency and to a greater extent than has been attained by the Literary Institute itself, and resolve to recommend the transfer of the property of the Institute to the proposed public library trustees, on condition that all the claims on, and obligations of, the Institute be satisfied; the committee of the Institute would earnestly recommend to the trustees that a portion of the library should be open for



circulation on moderate terms ...," (40)

Once the members of the Institute had heard and approved of the proposals of the Committee there was no cause for further delay. Thus at a meeting of the Board of Governors of Canterbury College on July 17 the chairman was able to report that he had written to Dr. Turnbull, President of the Literary Institute, asking under what conditions the Institute was prepared to transfer its property to the Board for the purposes of the proposed library.

(41) In his reply, Dr. Turnbull stated, that on condition that the Board promised to consider carefully the possibility of making a portion of the proposed library a circulating library and loyally endeavoured to carry out its object, he could see no difficulty in transferring the property of the Institute to the College. With the receipt of this favourable reply it was decided to set up a committee to investigate and consider all matters relating to the establishment of a public library. (42)

At the meeting of the Board on July 24 it was disclosed that the Provincial Government's £5000 grant for a library had been placed at the Board's disposal and a letter was received asking the library committee to meet the committee of the Literary Institute with regard to the transfer. (43)

When the results of this meeting were reported to the Board on August 5 (44) it was disclosed that there was a difficulty not foreseen by Dr. Turnbull as the trustees of the

40. Minutes of Literary Institute. July 3, 1873.

41. Minutes of Board of Governors of Canterbury College, Book 1, p.13.

42. The chairman (Mr. J.S. Williams), Rev. Habens, Rev. Buller, Messrs Inglis and Montgomery.

43. Minutes of Board of Governors of Canterbury College, Book 1, pp 18-19.

44. *ibid* p. 23.



of the Literary Institute could not give a title.<sup>(45)</sup> However, a bill approved by the Literary Institute had been forwarded to the Superintendent to counteract this difficulty and on September 22 an act known as "The Canterbury Public Library Act, 1873" was passed by the General Assembly of New Zealand empowering,

"any two of the Trustees of the said Institute ... to convey and assign ... the real and personal property so vested in the said Trustees ... to the Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury for the purposes of a Public Library." <sup>(46)</sup>

As soon as this bill became law, a deed of transfer was drafted by the provincial solicitor, and after amendments had been made by the Literary Institute, the library committee recommended, at the Board meeting of November 7,<sup>(47)</sup> that the property of the Institute be taken over on the terms of the deed as altered.

When all these formalities had been satisfactorily concluded it only remained to transfer the property to the College and the old Institute would be at an end. This deed of transfer <sup>(48)</sup> was dated December 15, 1873 and by its terms the complete property of the Literary Institute was vested in the Superintendent of Canterbury on the fulfilment of certain conditions, the most important of which were the maintenance of a reading room and of a circulating library. Concurrently with this transfer, the Superintendent gave control of the library to the Board of Governors of Canterbury College. However

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45. i.e. they had no power to transfer the property to another body.

46. Appendix B. p.139.

47. Minutes of Board of Governors of Canterbury College, Book 1, p.39.

48. Appendix C.



at this stage it will be observed that the College only controlled the library. It was not until after the abolition of the provinces in 1876 that the College gained possession. The Governor of New Zealand, in whom, as the Queen's representative, all public property was vested by the Abolition Act of 1876 conveyed by deed, bearing the date stamp of July 25, 1878, the Public Library to Canterbury College.

In the interim there were two important developments. At a cost of £2579, the Provincial Government, in 1875, erected the present circulating library facing on Cambridge Terrace as a new wing to the existing building, <sup>(49)</sup> while, in the following year the Provincial Council Library, consisting of 1212 volumes, was transferred to the Public Library as a result of the abolition of the Provinces. We have witnessed in this chapter an heroic struggle of fourteen years' duration during which the Mechanics' Institute and later the Literary Institute fought against insurmountable financial difficulties in an attempt to provide Christchurch with a library in keeping with its position in the country. The wonder is, not that they failed, but that, with such inadequate means at their disposal, they achieved so much. However, the odds were too great and it was probably inevitable that the public library should become public property. But it is very doubtful if it was foreseen that possession of the institution would soon pass to Canterbury College. It will now be necessary to see what degree of success or failure attended the efforts of this body to improve and enlarge upon the work of its predecessors.

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49. L.T. January 31, 1882.



CHAPTER IITHE PUBLIC LIBRARY UNDER CANTERBURY COLLEGE,  
1878-1913

The period from 1878 to 1913 largely resolves itself into a series of conflicts between the City Council and the College Council with regard to the control of the Public Library - and, as in the early period of the Library's history, finance was once again the cause of grave concern. A survey of New Zealand Libraries published in 1934 states that, "The Auckland Public Libraries ... comprise the oldest, largest and most fully-developed library system in New Zealand."<sup>(1)</sup> This Library also developed out of a Mechanics' Institute which had been forced out of existence by financial difficulties<sup>(2)</sup> so that a brief comparison of the ensuing developments of the Libraries of the Queen City and the Garden City should not be out of place at this stage. The Auckland Town Clerk's Report 1879 states that the City Council, having been unable to comply with requests from the Mechanics' Institute for pecuniary assistance, was prepared to accept an offer from the Institute to transfer its site, building, and library to the Council subject to the ratepayers endorsing their action, by means of a poll, to bring into operation the "Public Libraries Act" of 1869.<sup>(3)</sup> This Act,

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1. Ralph Munn and John Barr. "New Zealand Libraries." Christchurch, Libraries Association of New Zealand, 1934. p.19.
  2. John Barr. "Three Score Years and Ten." Auckland, Auckland City Council, 1950. p.3.
  3. *ibid* p.3-4.



which empowered the governing body of any city or town to levy a library rate, not exceeding a penny in the pound, for the establishment of free public libraries, could be brought into force in any area by a public poll held at the discretion of the Council or by a request in writing from ten ratepayers. (4) At the ensuing poll in Auckland the citizens endorsed the Council's action by a vote of 728 to 91. (5) Auckland was the first place in New Zealand to take advantage of "The Public Libraries Act" and the evolution of the Public Library from the Mechanics' Institute, as seen in Auckland, is a pattern which became commonplace throughout New Zealand. (6) In contrast to this pattern Christchurch stands forth as a unique example, as, for seventy years, the Public Library received no appreciable financial support from public funds but remained the property of Canterbury College which, because of a shortage of finances, was unable to maintain the library at a standard adequate to the needs of a growing city. It is this problem which makes the Christchurch library system so different from that of other New Zealand towns and on which we must now focus our attention.

In order to get to the roots of the problem it is necessary to retrace our steps to the year 1872 when, on January 15, a motion was passed in the Provincial Council

"That his Honour the Superintendent be respectfully requested to reserve a tract or tracts of country not exceeding in the aggregate 100,000 acres of purely pastoral hilly land in the Province of Canterbury, as an endowment for the School of Technical

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4. Statutes of New Zealand, 1869. No. 67, p.235.

5. John Barr. op. cit. p.4.

6. *ibid* p. 4-5.



Science and other educational purposes contemplated by the 'Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance, 1870.' (7)

This reserve was made and duly gazetted on July 8, 1872.<sup>(8)</sup> By the "Reserves Sales and Leasing Act" 1876,<sup>(9)</sup> the land reserved for these institutions was made purchasable, in the same way as the waste lands of the Crown, at £2 per acre, but unfortunately the land was not of such a quality that people would purchase at that price, and the revenue derived from the endowment was not sufficient to maintain the three institutions in a state of thorough efficiency.<sup>(10)</sup>

The Board of Governors of Canterbury College, realizing that the income from the endowments set aside by the Provincial Government for the Museum, School of Technical Science, and Library was insufficient, came to the sensible conclusion that it would be in the interests of the reading public to hand the Public Library over to the City Council, a representative body with power to rate, and thus obtain means to maintain the Institution on a proper footing.<sup>(11)</sup> Thus, at a meeting of the Christchurch City Council on November 26, 1883,<sup>(12)</sup> his Worship the Mayor said that he had received a letter from the Board of Governors asking him to appoint a deputation to meet the Public Library Committee to consider transferring the control of the Public Library to the City Council, and announced that he had asked the Works and Finance Committee to act in this capacity. All other things being equal, it would appear that this

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7. Journal of the Canterbury Provincial Council. Session XXXVI, 1872. p.36.
  8. Govt. Gazette of Province of Canterbury. Vol. XIX, No. XXXV, p's 168-9.
  9. Statutes of New Zealand, 1876. No. 10, p.33.
  10. Heinrich Ferdinand von Haast, "The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast"; Wellington, H.F. von Haast, 1948. p. 889.
  11. *ibid* p. 890.
  12. C.C.C. Vol. 12. P. 505-6.



was the opportunity to introduce the Public Libraries Act of 1869,<sup>(13)</sup> but nothing was done in this direction and as a result the whole future of the Library was jeopardised. The stumbling block was then, as again in the future, the question of the endowment.

In his letter to the City Council in November 1883, Mr. W. Montgomery, Chairman of the Board of Governors, declared that there were no reserves of land or other endowments for the Library in question.<sup>(14)</sup> Mr. Montgomery elaborated this statement in a memorandum of March 12, 1884 in which he argued that, when the Library became the property of the Board in 1878, the Reference Library had already been formed, and it was hoped, as it would not be necessary to buy many new books annually, that the expenditure would be kept within the limit of the means at the disposal of the Board which had never recognised the Circulating Library as having any claims on the endowment.<sup>(15)</sup> The intended interpretation of the 1870 Ordinance has already been explained<sup>(16)</sup> but it is now apparent that this interpretation was not acceptable to the Board of Governors which chose to ignore the explanatory memorandum prepared by the Committee responsible for formulating the Ordinance. This recommendation suggested that "a beginning could be made by the loan or deposit, under proper restrictions, of some libraries" then existing in the Province "so as to make it a library of reference

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13. Vide supra p. 24.

14. L.T. April 1, 1884.

15. *ibid* March 13, 1884.

16. Vide supra Ch. 1. pp. 16-17.



in the first place, supplemented by a grant of money." (17)

Thus the Board held that the Public Library contemplated by the Ordinance of 1870 and subsequently endowed in 1873 was merely a Reference Library - an adjunct to the Museum. However, the Board had considered that this might, with advantage to the public, be placed in the building which the Trustees of the Literary Institute had transferred to the Superintendent, and that a portion of the proceeds of the endowment which the Board, by law, was obliged to use for the maintenance of a Public Library, might fairly be applied to the purchase of books and the maintenance of the Reference Library in that building. But Mr. Montgomery felt sure that the Board had been aware that, should a doubt arise at any future time as to the legality of so appropriating the funds, then that doubt might be removed by transferring to the Museum the books purchased out of the proceeds of the endowment. This then was the stand taken by the Board in the ensuing negotiations.

Because of the importance of the matter, the City Council appointed a special committee to investigate the terms on which the Board would be prepared to transfer, with instructions that, if a greater burden would not be put on the City, it would be to the benefit of the citizens for the Council to assume control of the Library. Unfortunately no trace can be found of the exact terms proposed by the Library Committee of the Board, but in its report on January 7, 1884 (18) the special committee advised the Council

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17. Report of Committee on Museum, Library, Etc., October 27, 1870  
(in Journal of Canterbury Provincial Council)

18. C.C.C. Vol. 12 p. 529.



not to take over the Library, and suggested a conference with the Board of Governors concerning an endowment for the Public Library. It would, therefore, be reasonable to assume that the Board's terms were in keeping with the stand taken by the Chairman two months later. (19) This assumption is strengthened by the Board's reply to the Council's request for a conference. A special meeting of the Board in February 1884 (20) was called to discuss library matters and it was agreed that the following reply be sent to the City Council,

"That as the Library Committee have no doubt of the state of the law on the subject whether any of the endowments of the School of Technical Science are applicable to the Public Library, they think no good purpose can be served by the appointment of the Committee as suggested by the City Council."

Furthermore, the Board adopted the proposals of the Library Committee that the subscription to the Circulating Library be increased to £1 per annum; that the Circulating and Reference Libraries should be open from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily; the Reading Room from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and the whole Library closed on Sundays.

Here the matter may well have rested if it had not been for these new and irksome restrictions which inflamed public opinion. On February 16 the "Lyttelton Times" printed a letter from "Biblion" protesting against the curtailment of the Library hours without published reasons. But, once the matter was brought to public notice, it was not the restricted hours that aroused interest and opposition but rather the attitude of the College authorities to

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19. Vide supra p.26.

20. "Press", February 15, 1884.



the whole question. "Biblion's" letter was followed two days later by one from H. Wynn Williams, a prominent citizen, who emphasised the necessity of having all such important bodies as the Governors of the College chosen by the public whose interests they represented. He believed that, until this was done, there could be no hope of having their work publicly and properly done, and he considered that there was no doubt that the Public Library was being robbed of its share of the reserves, and that it was time the public were awakened to the fact. (21)

There can be no doubt, as later evidence will show, that the Board's attitude was mistaken, but to suggest its members were negligent in their duty to the College and to the public was a preposterous charge and savours of modern sensationalism. Even although the Board was in the wrong, it must be admitted that it was faced with a very real and serious problem. The National Endowment Act 1907 set aside an area of 7,000,000 acres (later raised to 9,000,000 acres) of land as an endowment in perpetuity to be disposed of only on leasehold terms. Seventy per cent of the net revenue was to help defray education costs, while the remainder was to be devoted to old age pensions. In 1926 the expenditure on education was £3,910,241 and on old age pensions £982,356 but the gross rental of the national endowment was only £138,040. (22) If the New Zealand Government had had to rely solely on this source to finance pensions and education, it would have been faced with the same problem which faced the Board who were trying to support

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21. L.T. February 18, 1884.

22. J.B. Condliffe, "New Zealand in the Making", London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930. p. 235.



three institutions on an endowment of 105,207 acres yielding only £1450 per year.<sup>(23)</sup> Even without the Library, the endowment was barely sufficient to meet the needs of the Museum and the School of Technical Science. It is thus small wonder that the Board was reluctant to part with any portion of the endowment to provide the citizens with fiction, when the 1870 Ordinance refers to the establishment of a "Public Library for the promotion of literature."

However, the Council reiterated the sentiments of Mr. Wynn Williams (24) although in a more restrained manner. The Mayor considered that the Board had treated the Council slightly and his suggestion, that a public meeting should be called, was endorsed by the Council. In accordance with this decision, a preliminary meeting of representative citizens was held on February 26 (25) to consider what action should be taken with regard to the recent resolutions of the Board of Governors, and a sub-committee was set up to master the facts of the case preparatory to laying the whole matter before a public meeting.

In an attempt to clarify the situation because of the apparent misunderstanding, the Editor of the "Times" devoted two successive "leaders" to the library question.<sup>(26)</sup> In the first of these, he advanced the hypothesis that there were three possible libraries which could have been intended by the 1870 Ordinance. The Council adopted the attitude that the Ordinance referred to the existi

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23. N.Z. Appendix to Journals 1883 E - 7, p.3.

24. L.T. February 19, 1884.

25. *ibid* February 27, 1884.

26. *ibid* February 28 and 29, 1884.



Public Library, but the Board contended that the reference was to the Library of the School of Technology - purely a reference library, an adjunct to the Museum. (27) Assuming both of these points of view to be incorrect, it may have been that the library referred to was the reference department of the existing Public Library. After a lengthy dissertation on the subject the Editor discounted the last two alternatives and expressed the opinion that it was the existing Public Library which was meant by the 1870 Ordinance. In his following "leader", he suggested that subscriptions should be such that the Circulating Library should be self supporting, and that the Free Public Library, stipulated in the deed of transfer in 1873, (28) was obviously the present Reference Library, which was most certainly entitled to a share of the endowments even if the Circulating Library was not. In conclusion, he emphasised three salient facts,- that the Board had acknowledged its inability to manage the Library and had offered to hand it over to the City; that, because of this, it could be concluded, that so long as the Library remained in the hands of the Board it would receive nothing from the public by way of deed, of bequest, or in any other manner; that the Library was entitled to a share of the College endowments.

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27. It is impossible to accept the validity of this assumption, as the "Lyttelton Times" of March 13, 1884, reporting on a meeting of the Board, states that in reply to a question as to whether or not he had received any legal opinion as to the appropriation of funds to the Public Library, the Chairman stated, that Mr. Cowlshaw (a former Provincial solicitor) had informed him that the Board might consider the Reference Library as the Public Library which it was bound to establish. However, this erroneous assumption on the part of the Editor does not otherwise destroy his hypothesis but merely reduces the possible libraries from three to two.

28. Appendix C. p.140.



With all due respect to the Editor of the "Times", these statements serve to confuse rather than to clarify. His conclusion declared the Public Library to be entitled to a share of the endowment, yet, in his previous paragraph, he had opined that the Circulating Library should be supported by its subscriptions and that the Reference Library was entitled to a share of the endowment, even if the Circulating Library was not. These statements are obviously contradictory. Moreover, in his first leader, he had discounted the possibility of the Reference Library being that library referred to in the 1870 Ordinance, yet, in his second, he readmits the possibility. If the Editor of the "Times" was so confused on the subject, it is understandable that the people of Christchurch were in an even worse plight.

The gentleman most directly concerned in the history of the Library from 1870 to 1876 was the Hon. W. Rolleston, who during that period, was Superintendent of Canterbury. When on a visit to Christchurch, he was approached by the Mayor as to the right of the Public Library to a share of the disputed endowment. He did not, at the time, consider it advisable to express an opinion, until he had had an opportunity of checking his recollections by a perusal of the documents. The resultant memorandum received by the Mayor was placed on the table for discussion at a special meeting of the Council on March 25, 1884.<sup>(29)</sup> As seen by the Hon. W. Rolleston, the question appeared to be threefold. Was the Public Library contemplated by the Ordinance of 1870 merely an adjunct of the

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29. L.T. March 26, 1884.



Museum - a Reference Library?; or was it a Public Library of a comprehensive character, general as well as scientific, supplemented by private effort as far as necessary?; and was the Library in Hereford Street that Library? He opined that the two latter questions must be answered in the affirmative, and, in reply to Mr. Montgomery's memorandum of March 12,<sup>(30)</sup> he stated that the report of the Committee of the Provincial Council in 1870 seemed to show that the idea of the Library being simply of a scientific or reference nature was only by way of a beginning. The memorandum continued ...

"I know of no authority, so far as the appropriation of the endowments is concerned for separating the Library into a 'Reference Library', so called and a 'Circulating Library', and a 'Reading Room'. All three seem to me to come within the scope of a 'Public Library' and the extent to which each branch may be entitled to a share of the funds available, is one for determination by the Board ... I do not think it can be reasonably contended that the Literary Institute would have given up its trust except on the undertaking that all its functions would be carried on as previously. The Reading Room and, unless I am mistaken, the Circulating Library were the principal features of the Institute. The Provincial Council Library was certainly handed over to the Public Library without any idea of a possibility of separating it into popular and scientific departments, and removing the latter. It appears to me, from a perusal of the reports of the College Governors, that no question has till lately been raised by them as to their responsibilities in respect to the Library. It is only recently that financial difficulties seem to have arisen in providing adequately for all three institutions - the Museum, the School of Technical Science and the Public Library. The conclusion to which I have come is that so far as endowment is concerned the three institutions have undoubtedly a proportionate claim upon the funds arising from the reserves as to what that proportion should be I am not prepared to express an opinion."

This opinion is both moderate and well reasoned, and, coming from a man so intimately connected with the situation, should command a

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30, vide supra p. 26.



great deal of respect. Reference to early College reports shows that in 1881 <sup>(31)</sup> the Chairman stated that the number of subscribers to the circulating department had fallen off considerably, probably due partly to the increase of the subscription from ten shillings to fifteen shillings per annum, and partly to the necessity for economy felt by all classes during the past year. But those reports that are available bear out the ex-Superintendent's assertion, and it is not until the report for 1883 that any mention is made of financial difficulties with regard to the Library. In his report of that year, <sup>(32)</sup> Mr. Montgomery informed the Board that, because of the heavy expense incurred in making alterations to the caretaker's house, and also because of the withdrawal of the General Government subsidy in 1881, it had been necessary to overdraw the Library account to the extent of £873. He added that the Library Committee could see no way by which this debt could be decreased except "by larger contributions from some source at present unavailable." The available evidence thus suggests that, when the College authorities found themselves unable to operate the three institutions efficiently on the income from the endowment, they attempted to give up the Library but to retain its share of the endowment.

When, on March 31, a deputation from the City Council waited on the Board <sup>(33)</sup> to discuss the position of the Public Library, and, more especially, its claim to a portion of the endowment, Mr. Wynn Williams (who addressed the Board on behalf of the deputation) made

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31. N.Z. Appendix to the Journals 1881, E-4, p.3.

32. *ibid* 1883 E-7, p.3.

33. L.T. April 1, 1884.



reference to two statements by the Board (34) which had created considerable alarm in the minds of the members of the City Council. The speaker contended that, as the Public Library in the Board's possession had been recognised as such by the Board since 1873, their new attitude was a matter for grave concern. He further pointed out that, from the very commencement of negotiations to transfer the property of the Mechanics' Institute first to the Province, then to the New Zealand Government, and finally to Canterbury College, there had been no departure from the term "Public Library". In conclusion, Mr. Wynn Williams advanced the opinion that, if the Board's contention was correct, it would involve the absurdity that the Library had been partly maintained for some years by funds which should have been applied in the establishment and maintenance of another Public Library altogether; and it would, therefore, involve the conclusion that the Board had been guilty of a breach of trust in expending public money "on an institution that was not entitled to receive one penny."

It would be foolish to underestimate the importance and significance of this meeting, as many of the persons present had been directly concerned in the transfer of the Literary Institute. Further disputes in later years were conducted by men who did not possess this first-hand knowledge, and it appears reasonable to assume that this would tend to militate against a satisfactory conclusion.

Mr. Joynt, in furthering the remarks of the first speaker,

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34. Vide supra n.14 and n. 20.



brought forward a very important piece of evidence, when he quoted the conditions of transfer of the Literary Institute to the Superintendent (and later to Canterbury College), stating that the property was transferred

"for the purpose of a Public Library to be established and maintained under the provisions of that trust ... a reading room, a reference library, and a circulating library should be constantly maintained."

The next speaker, Dr. Turnbull (a member of the Board and President of the Literary Institute at the time of transfer), stated, with reference to the Circulating Library, that he had always upheld the view that it was a part of the Public Library, but the other members of the Board had repeatedly said that "they had nothing to do with novels and newspapers, and that the public money should not be spent on such trash." In replying to Dr. Turnbull, Mr. C.C. Bowen expressed the general opinion of the Board that it had no right to spend public money on a circulating library confined to subscribers and not open to the general public.

At the City Council meeting on April 18,<sup>(35)</sup> the Board's reply was received asking that four members of each body should meet to discuss the position more fully, and this request was acceded to by the Council. When this meeting took place on May 12,<sup>(36)</sup> the Mayor placed three proposals before the Board. In the first place, he suggested that the balance appearing to the debit of the Public Library account be struck out, and secondly, that the Public Library be entitled to one third of the endowment provided by the Canterbury

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35. "Press", April 19, 1884.

36. L.T. May 13, 1884.



Museum and Library Ordinance 1870. Finally, he proposed that the Board of Governors be requested to hand over the control and management of the Public Library to a board consisting of twelve members, to be elected, on the basis of population, by the City, Borough, and County Councils of Canterbury, and to be incorporated by an Act of Parliament. These proposals had two main weaknesses in that, as the Board had persistently maintained that the Library was not endowed, it was hardly likely that they would approve of the second proposition. Even Rolleston had agreed that the proportion of the endowment due to the Library could only be decided by the Board. Although the Mayor's final suggestion was no doubt inspired by the highest motives, it was open to the charge of trying to parcel out the expense among the smaller provincial towns, which not only would not benefit greatly by the arrangement but also could ill spare the necessary finance, because of the economic depression.

As may be imagined, the Board declared that it had always been anxious to do the best it could for the Cambridge Terrace Library but that it was still of the opinion that the Library was not endowed. To complicate matters, the Chairman stated that there was, unfortunately, a danger in bringing the question before Parliament, as, if they took the initiative, they felt that they may lose the endowments. (37) He further pointed out that, whereas the Council had only the Library to consider, the Board had also to watch over the Museum and School of Technical Science, and that, of

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37. The General Government was intent on confiscating all the Provincial land it could in order to acquire the land revenues.



the three, they considered the Museum to be the most popular, the most creditable, and the most educating institution, so that it, in particular, should not be starved.<sup>(38)</sup> Although this point was strongly disputed by the Council representatives who argued that the Library was equally popular, it must be conceded in the Board's favour that, although a library can easily be established in a small community, such is not the case with a museum. The meeting concluded without any satisfactory progress being made.

In the preceding pages a survey has been made of the attitudes of the contestants. The conclusion that stands out most clearly is that the actual documents were of a conflicting nature. How is it possible to reconcile the preamble of the 1870 Ordinance (a Public Library for the promotion of literature) with the deed of transfer of the property of the Literary Institute. The key to the problem appears to lie in the words of the deed of transfer,

"For the purpose of a Public Library, to be established and maintained under and in pursuance of the provisions of the Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance, 1870, subject nevertheless to the conditions hereinafter expressed"...

These conditions refer to the maintenance of a reading room and a circulating library, as previously mentioned. In the light of these significant words, it is essential to interpret the 1870 Ordinance in terms of the deed of transfer, and not of the needs of education, thus destroying the main basis of the Board's argument.

As there appeared no possibility of a satisfactory solution, the

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38. The Museum received half of the endowment and the Reference Library and School of Technical Science a quarter each.



Council, tiring of its fruitless approaches to the Board, decided to continue with its earlier plan and called a public meeting, for Friday June 13, "to take into consideration the future management and endowment of the Public Library."<sup>(39)</sup> Thus after months of arguing and bickering the stage was set for what might well have been the final episode in the struggle over the destiny of the Canterbury Public Library. The people of Christchurch were to be called upon to bring the Board to account for its supposed wrongdoing. For those who are superstitious, Friday 13 is always a dangerous day and it was certainly "black Friday" in June 1884 for it rained - and, what is more, it rained so hard that, on the Saturday morning, the following short notice appeared in "The Press",

"The meeting which was to have been held last night to consider the Public Library question is postponed till further notice. The evening was wet and at half-past seven only about a dozen persons were present." (40)

But, for some undiscoverable reason, the "further notice" never appeared. Although both the local papers and other possible sources have been systematically scoured, no further trace of the proposed public meeting appeared.

It is only possible, in the light of one significant future event, to surmise what may have happened, if the meeting had been called. On September 11,<sup>(41)</sup> 1899, the City Council received a letter from eleven ratepayers asking for a public poll on the question of the Library in accordance with the provisions of the

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39. L.T. and "Press" June 9, 1884. et seq.

40. "Press", June 14, 1884.

41. C.C.C. Vol. 18, p. 410.



"Public Libraries Act", 1869.<sup>(42)</sup> The matter was referred to the Bylaws Committee which recommended that the petition be ordered to stand over,<sup>(43)</sup> and nothing further was done in the matter. This Act provided the only means of attacking the Board's control of the Library, and it is remarkable that it was not invoked sooner. Possibly it would have been, if the postponed meeting had been held. But the fact, that the public meeting was never held, forces two possible conclusions. Either the people of Christchurch, generally, were satisfied with the Library, as run by the Board, and were not prepared to support the Council in its proposed measures, or they were so apathetic that they were just not interested, and with the great majority, then as now, food for the body was possibly considered of much greater importance than food for the mind.

In this modern age of hustle and bustle, apathy is all too common in every branch of society. However, such a note has a false ring in the early days of the Canterbury settlement. Possibly our forefathers were not of greater intellectual stature than ourselves but there can be no doubt that they brought, to their new home, a great love of good books. Samuel Butler said, on a visit to a Canterbury sheep station,

"Under his bed I found Tennyson's "Idylls of the King". So you will see that even in these out-of-the-world places people do care a little for something besides sheep ... New Zealand seems far better adapted to develop and maintain in health the physical than the intellectual nature ... Yet, after all, it may be questioned whether the intellect is not as well schooled here as at home ..." (44)

42. Vide supra p.24.

43. C.C.C. Bylaws Committee Minute Book (1898-1905) p.32.

44. Samuel Butler "A First Year in Canterbury Settlement" London, A.C. Fifield, 1914 (revised edition). pp 49-50.



This tends to detract from the merits of the second conclusion as a possible solution. In order to discuss the first conclusion, it will be necessary to make a brief survey of the growth of the Library under the Board.

An inventory of the number of books in January 1874 will provide one basis of comparison with the size of the library at later dates. When the College took control of the Library, there were 3400 books on the shelves of the circulating department, while, by December 31, 1881, this number had been increased to 9068.<sup>(45)</sup> Although the majority of the additions (2814) were works of fiction, other subjects were well represented. History accounted for 210 of the additions, biography 231, travel 298, architecture 198, general literature 161, poetry and drama 67, science 150, miscellaneous 238, and periodicals 163. Meanwhile in the same period the reference department grew from 1190 volumes to 6384.<sup>(46)</sup> In 1893, the present reference department was added to the rear of the circulating department, at a cost of £895,<sup>(47)</sup> while, in the following year, the Librarian's wooden cottage was destroyed by fire and replaced, at a cost of £563,<sup>(48)</sup> by the brick building which still serves as the Librarian's residence. However, these were not the only additions, for, in 1897, at a cost of £315, a gallery was added to the reference room, and in 1901, at a cost of a further £4307, the original Mechanics' Institute building, on the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Hereford Street, was demolished and replaced by the

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45. B. of G. 1882.

46. *ibid.*

47. Collins & Harman, Architects.

48. *ibid.*



public reading room and an entrance porch in brick. In 1891, Mr. F. Stedman, who had acted in the joint capacity as Registrar of Canterbury College and Librarian since 1876, retired and was succeeded as Librarian by Mr. A. Cracroft-Wilson who retained the position until 1906.

Until 1896, almost the only money spent on the maintenance and expansion of the Public Library was that derived from subscriptions and that voted by the Board of Governors from the endowment. However, in that year, the death occurred of James Gammack, a farmer of Springston, who, in his will,<sup>(49)</sup> bequeathed 1678 acres of land to the Public Library, the revenue from which (averaging £600 to £1000 per year) was to be devoted to the purchase of books for the circulating department. Three years later, Arthur Postle of Papanui became the second benefactor of the Library. Under the terms of his will,<sup>(50)</sup> he left, for the benefit of the reference department, property from which the annual revenue was about £80. No doubt, largely from the additional money made available by these bequests, the number of books in the reference department increased from 11,537 in 1898 to 18,221 in 1908, while the corresponding figures for the circulating department were 17,925 and 23,933. In 1903, in a further attempt to improve the financial position of the Library, an application for a grant was made to Mr. Andrew Carnegie but proved unsuccessful. During the same year, a gallery was set apart for women but, because of the poor attendance and the con-

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49. Will of James Gammack, - copy deposited at Registrar's Office, Canterbury College.

50. Will of Arthur Postle, - copy deposited at Registrar's Office, Canterbury College.



siderable damage done, this was closed in 1905.

Figures are apt to make dry reading, but, used judiciously, they can also be instructive. It should now be apparent that, despite many assertions to the contrary, and despite the Board's professed lack of interest in any but the reference department, the whole library grew steadily during the period from 1874 to 1906. Not only did the amount of reading material increase both in volume and in variety, but the library building itself was also the subject of considerable expenditure. It would thus not be unreasonable to presume that the citizens of Christchurch, satisfied with their literary diet, were loth to sack the cook. "Better the devil we know ....!"

Although, on the surface, matters appeared to be quite satisfactory at the turn of the century, the financial position was by no means healthy. When presenting his annual statement for the year 1906, the Chairman of the Board of Governors said, with reference to the Library, that,

"I think the time has now come when this Board should consider seriously how far it is justified in withdrawing funds that were originally provided for 'the promotion of literature and science' (51) in order to provide the citizens of Christchurch with the most up-to-date novels and the magazines of the day."(52)

Further to this statement, the Chairman wrote to the City Council drawing attention to the financial position of the Library, and explaining that, as much of the money devoted to it in the past would

51. Preamble of 1870 Ordinance. Appendix A.

52. B.ofG. 1907, p.10.



be used for the establishment of a College Library in 1908, it would be necessary to balance the Library account, either by an increase in the subscription rate, or by a reduction in the expenditure on staff and conveniences, with regard to hours of opening, unless the Council could see its way to make a grant to the Library. (53) However, the Council replied that, at that time, it had no funds which it could devote to the Library.

On September 11, (54) the position was set out in a leading article, in the "Lyttelton Times," which criticised the proposed action of the Board and reminded them that their first duty under the Library trust was to the general public, and not to Canterbury College. The leader concluded by stating that, "It rests with the Board, surely, to justify the proposed departure from the practice and policy of so many years, and the public will be interested to hear on what grounds the chairman defends the proposal." Mr. G.W. Russell, the Chairman of the Board, made a statement in reply, which appeared in the newspaper on the following day. (55) He pointed out that, owing to its precarious financial position, the Board was compelled to retrench in one direction, and he felt that the Library was the one institution which should not be a burden on the endowment. If the people of Christchurch desired that institution to be maintained at the high level which it had attained, he suggested that they had the remedy in their own hands, as, if the City Council declined to provide the money out of its ordinary revenue, the

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53. C.C.C. September 9, 1907. Vol. 23. p. 453.

54. L.T. September 11, 1907.

55. *ibid* September 12, 1907.



Public Libraries Act of 1869 could be brought into operation. The provisions of the Act had been taken advantage of in Auckland and Wellington, and he saw no difficulty in doing the same thing in Christchurch. This would then allow the Board to devote an extra \$600 per year to the Museum and to purely educational purposes. In conclusion, Mr. Russell said that nothing would be done to disturb existing arrangements, regarding the conduct of the Public Library, until the estimates for the next year came up for discussion in the following October or November.

The matter does not appear to have been carried further until the next annual statement by the Chairman of the Board, on April 27, 1908.<sup>(56)</sup> The Library, he pointed out, had grown very greatly since it was originally endowed, and the fund, from which it was supported, was also responsible for the maintenance of the Museum and the School of Technical Science (i.e. the School of Art and the School of Engineering). His opinion was, that, in cultivating and promoting these latter institutions, the Board was acting far more in the spirit of the pioneers, who granted the endowment, than they would be in expending any larger part of it in providing fiction and light literature generally, for the people of Christchurch. He felt that the time had come, when the Board might well look to the City Council to realise, to some slight degree, its responsibilities for the education and intellectual life of the city, so far as those were concentrated in the Public Library, and he hoped the time was not far distant when the City Council would give a substantial grant

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56. *ibid* April 28, 1908.



towards the institution.

The Board of Governors met the City Council on May 28 (57) and Mr. Russell explained that the Library was one of which the city might well be proud, as it ranked second only to the General Assembly Library in Wellington, but the city had enjoyed the privileges of the institution "without one sixpence of the city funds having been spent upon it." Although the Board recognised the need to extend the library with the growth of the city, it had no funds to devote to the purpose. In the previous year, nearly £2000 had been spent on the Library (£500 of which came from the endowment), and yet, at the end of the year, the Library account showed a debit balance of £636. He was of the opinion that, if the City Council would undertake a municipal system of libraries by means of a small vote, (58) it could then contribute its share of the cost of maintenance of the central library. In the past, the Board had supported the Public Library at the expense of the Museum and higher education, and this was not right. The institutions under its control were growing without any corresponding increase in the Board's revenue, and he hoped the City Council would meet the Board in the matter. After the deputation had withdrawn, the majority of the Councillors appeared in favour of a grant towards the free portion of the Library, but the matter was referred to the Finance Committee. On the following evening, at a meeting of the Board, a resolution was passed that, in the event of the Council

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57. *ibid* May 29, 1908.

58. And thus serve the outer portions of the city such as Sydenham, Linwood and St. Albans.



providing an annual grant of £500 for the Library, the Board would be prepared to grant it representation, to the extent of three members, on the Library Committee. (59)

On June 22 the Council met to consider the proposed Library grant. (60) The Finance Committee explained that, if the Library had received an additional £208, to which it was entitled from the Gammack Trust, for the past year, it would have shown a profit instead of a loss, and, under the circumstances, it could not see its way to recommend a grant for the Library. However, under the terms of the Gammack bequest, the money derived from it had to be used for the purchase of books for the circulating department and for no other purpose (i.e. it was not available for maintenance work). As this branch of the library had been amply provided for by that bequest, the expenditure of an additional £200 would not have altered the position. It would appear that the Council realised the seriousness of the situation, for the report was referred back to the Committee, and Councillor Ottley gave notice of a motion that a grant of £300 be made to the Library providing that the Council received representation on the Library Committee. But, for some unstated reason, he received permission to withdraw the motion on July 6. (61)

The College Board of Governors have been much maligned concerning their attitude towards the Library, but, in fairness, it must be understood that theirs was a difficult task. For thirty-four years

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59. L.T. May 30, 1908.

60. *ibid* June 23, 1908.

61. C.C.C. Vol. 24, p. 203.



they had administered the three institutions to the best of their ability, but progress is not possible without money, and although the Museum, the Library, the School of Engineering, and the School of Art had to grow to keep pace with the growth of the City, the endowment, liberal enough in the first instance, did not increase with the years. In spite of their considered opinion, that the intention of the founders of the endowment was to promote education, the Board had continued to support and maintain the whole of the Public Library. On both occasions, when the financial question was raised, it was the Board that approached the Council. This suggests that the Board had the interests of the Library at heart, and, realizing also the importance of the other institutions depending on the endowment, justifiably considered that the citizens should make some contribution to its upkeep when finances were low. Even if, as was later proved, the Board's position was legally indefensible, they were still, through no fault of their own, in serious financial straits. The Council had, ready to hand, the Public Libraries Act of 1869, if they were worried as to the means whereby they could finance the Library - but made no attempt to implement it. Their attitude, although perfectly legal, both in 1883-4 and in 1908 savours distinctly of shortsightedness. The Council obviously was not prepared to face realities and to realize that, by handing over part of the endowment with the Library, the Board's position was not eased in the slightest. Nevertheless, it hardly seems possible to justify the Board's proposal to transfer money from the endowment for use in establishing a College Library, which could not, by any



stretch of the imagination, be considered as entitled to such money. This proposal no doubt stiffened the Council's determination to acquire a portion of the endowment, if the City took control of the Library.

Following a meeting between the Finance Committee and the Board on July 17, the Chairman of the Board submitted, to the Mayor, eight tentative conditions for the transfer of the Library to the Council. (62) But the Finance Committee recommended that the conditions were not acceptable, and advised the Council to express its willingness to take over the Library," subject to the trusts in connection therewith; any disputes to be submitted to arbitration by a Judge of the Supreme Court." (63) After further correspondence, (64) a letter was despatched, from the Town Clerk's Office, on July 22 asking the Board what their attitude would be in the event of the City claiming a share of the endowments, and also in the event of such a claim being abandoned. (65) In reply, Mr. Russell presumed that clauses one to five of his letter of July 17 were acceptable to the Council, but stated that the Board was not prepared to negotiate except on the basis of clause six :- (66)

"That the funds of the Museum, Library and School of Technical Science Endowment Account be devoted in future to the College Library and other purposes within the control of the Board of Governors."

On this condition the Board was adamant and refused point-blank to give the Council any further information with regard to the endowment. (67) When the Council met on August 3, a letter was received

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62. C.C.C. Files - Letter 4327. Appendix D. p.143.  
 63. C.C.C. Vol. 24, p.222  
 64. C.C.C. Files - Letter 4355.  
 65. *ibid* - Attached to letter 4355.  
 66. *ibid* - Letter 4392.  
 67. *ibid* - Letter 4466.



from the Mayor, absent in Auckland, with the information that his applications to the Board for permission to examine the papers, relating to the endowment of the Library, had been studiously ignored until July 31, when he had received copies of the wills of Gammack and Postle accompanied by a flat refusal to supply the other information requested. In the light of the revelations made by this letter, the Council resolved to discontinue the negotiations, unless the information asked for was supplied. (68) For the second time a stalemate had been reached, and the question was shelved.

A review of this second conflict would suggest that the Council now supported the letter and the spirit of the law. There can be no doubt that the Board appeared prepared to pass the responsibility of the Public Library to the Council while using the endowment to establish a new library, not mentioned in the original document. That there is no mention of the requirements of the Museum in the latter controversy would appear to represent a fundamental change of opinion on the Board's behalf. Under the changed circumstances, the Council would appear entirely justified in demanding a share of the endowment. However, in actual practice, the grant to the College Library never exceeded £20, and the Public Library's share of the endowment did not drop below £470. (69) Once more the solution that stands forth as obvious was not resorted to. It is a matter for wonderment that the Public Libraries Act was again overlooked or ignored, but any reference to it is conspicuous by its absence.

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Library finances suffered still further by a reduction in the

68. C.C.C. Vol. 24, p.247.

69. B. of G. 1906-16.



subscription, in 1909, in an attempt to popularise the institution, so that, in 1910, it was found necessary to return to the higher fee in an attempt to relieve the constant drain on the funds. (70) But the burden of maintaining all the institutions under its control with insufficient funds proved too great for the Board, and in 1912 they were once more compelled to approach the Council. The letter omitted the intermediate step of asking for a grant, and stated the desirability of the City Council taking over the Library "and all its real and personal property, including bequests ... subject to all its liabilities." (71) A special committee was set up to consider the matter (72) but the Council representatives insisted on a judicial interpretation of the Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance before any attempt was made to discuss the question of the Council taking over the Public Library. (73) and, on April 1, 1912, the Council received a letter from the Board agreeing to obtain a declaratory judgement. (74)

In delivering his judgement in the Supreme Court at Christchurch, on November 25, 1912, (75) Mr. Justice Denniston declared that the Library known as the "Canterbury Public Library" was that which the Board was supposed to maintain out of the endowment. But he stated that this did not answer the question as to whether or not the Board was obliged to allocate any particular portion of it to the maintenance of the Library. Furthermore, there was

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70. *ibid* May 30, 1910, p.10.

71. C.C.C. Vol 27, p.353.

72. *ibid* p.380.

73. *ibid* p.396.

74. *ibid* p.426.

75. "Press," November 26, 1912.



"nothing in the proclamation of those reserves to indicate in what manner or in what proportion the income from them was to be applied to the Institutions for whose benefit they were to be set aside as endowments."

There was, he said, certainly nothing to suggest that they were to be divided equally among the three, without regard to their respective importance or requirements. However, he felt that, because neither party had any power to carry out the transfer of the Library, it was doubtful whether the question was a proper one to be submitted under the Declaratory Judgements Act. Because of this doubt, he preferred not to give a decision but simply to state that it was entirely within the discretion of the Board to allocate the income from the Reserves.

At a meeting of the City Council the same evening, the Mayor, referring to the judgement, said that it seemed to him that matters were left very much as they were before, inasmuch as there was no sum clearly defined to be allocated for the upkeep of the Library. He hoped that, when the matter came officially before the Council, they would approach it with a full sense of responsibility, as it seemed to him a great pity that such a valuable institution should go begging for an owner. (76) Meanwhile the Board retained the Public Library, but made certain changes in respect of it to secure both greater efficiency and economy. (77) Speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors in June of the following year, the Chairman expressed regret at Judge Denniston's decision, as the revenue from the endowments was too small to enable the Board to

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76. C.C.C. Vol. 27, p.675.

77. James Hight Litt.D. and Alice Candy M.A. "A Short History of the Canterbury College," Christchurch, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1927, p.94.



allocate sufficient funds for each of the institutions that had to be maintained from that source. He felt sure that those who set aside the endowment had not realized what heavy demands there would be on the revenue, or they would have set aside much larger reserves, especially at a time when it had been comparatively easy to grant large tracts of land for special purposes. (78)

Although there was only a brief interlude before the Council and the Board were once more involved in library matters, this is a fit point at which to conclude this chapter, because, early in 1913, Mr. Howard Strong (who had replaced Mr. Cracroft-Wilson as Librarian in 1906) retired to give place to Mr. E.J. Bell, a young and talented Englishman, who took up his new position on June 1, 1913. Since this date the control of the Library has been in his capable hands and so his appointment is the natural starting point of a new period.

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78. "The Star", July 1, 1913.



CHAPTER IIIFROM COLLEGE COUNCIL TO CITY COUNCIL  
1913-48

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Although the Declaratory Judgement of 1912 did not completely clarify the position, it certainly established that the Library was the one contemplated by the 1870 Ordinance, and that it was entitled to a share of the endowment created in 1872. Thus the City Council had won its point, and it is not surprising that, at a meeting on June 9, 1913, it was resolved that the Bylaws and Finance Committee "should take into consideration the question of the taking over of the Public Library."<sup>(1)</sup> In accordance with this decision the Board, at its meeting on June 30,<sup>(2)</sup> received a letter from the Town Clerk asking if they would appoint representatives to confer with the Finance Committee on the matter. The Board agreed to the request and a conference took place on August 25. However, this was inconclusive and no action was taken. When Mr. Montgomery reported to the Board,<sup>(3)</sup> he stated that the Council's representatives appeared to have no suggestions to make except to refer the question of the Library's share of the endowment to arbitration. But the College representatives declined to accept this proposal, as the Court had already decided that the Board was the sole arbiter in the apportionment of the endowment,

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1. C.C.C. Vol 28, p.881.

2. "Evening News", Christchurch, July 1, 1913.

3. "The Star", Christchurch, August 26, 1913.



and it was not reasonable to suppose that the Board would hand over that right. A third of the endowments had been claimed by the city for the Library, but the Council's representatives had not been so ready to admit that a third would suffice to support the Museum. Although the Board had pointed out that, in other cities, the library was carried on by the City Council or out of the rates, and that it was the duty of the Council to maintain a library, the Council had not been prepared to take any action. When Councillor Sorenson reported on the same meeting to the City Council,<sup>(4)</sup> he stated that the Board not only refused arbitration but also refused to continue to spend the same amount (£470 from the endowment in 1913) on the Library if it was taken over by the Council.<sup>(5)</sup> While Councillor Sorenson said that the Board wanted to take but was not prepared to give, Councillor M'Coomb's accused the Board of starving the Library to fatten the Museum. He remarked that an attempt should be made to force the hand of the Board, although the same matter had been urged in the Council about twenty-five years ago. But this attitude appears indefensible, as the Council was in a position to relieve the Board's financial burden yet refused to regard both the Library and the Museum as valuable additions to the city, which it was a Council's duty to aid. Thus each body expressed dissatisfaction with the views held by the other, and it appeared as if a position of stalemate had again been reached.

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4. *ibid* September 2, 1913.

5. The Board was naturally not prepared to hand over the Library unless it was relieved of a liability. The Board also refused an offered grant of £470 because they felt that, if the Council thought that £470 was sufficient to keep a library going, the Board might as well do it.



However, the "Times" took the side of the Council, in no uncertain manner, in an article dealing with the subject on the following day ...

"The City Council has every reason to be dissatisfied with the position. After joining with the Board of Governors of Canterbury College in seeking a declaratory judgement ... it naturally expected the Board to abide by the judgement in dealing with the Library. Yet, when the Council's committee came to discuss the matter with the Board it was informed that the Board was not prepared to transfer the Library to the City except on terms that absolutely ignored the judgement of the Supreme Court ... There is the possibility of the constitution of the Board being brought into the controversy, and of its members being made much more amenable to public opinion than they appear to be at present." (6)

This outburst was grossly unfair to the Board which had merely refused to submit the endowment question to arbitration. It represents an attempt to enlist public support by a deliberate misinterpretation. However, nothing appears to have been done in the matter and the final decision was postponed for a further period.

Meanwhile, however, Mr. Bell soon began to implement a number of improvements in the administration of, and the service provided by the Library. One of the first improvements to be made was the installation of a case inside the entrance to the Circulating Department containing a number of reference books (year books, almanacs, directories, official lists etc.) which could be consulted quickly by business men and others without any formalities of writing down names and addresses. (7) This proved so popular that, later in the year, a shelf of books devoted to Current Affairs was also installed and was drawn on to the extent of about ten books daily. (8) Another early improvement was the introduction of adjustable

6. L.T. September 2, 1913.

7. "The Star", July 15, 1913.

8. L.T. December 31, 1913.



catalogues, in book form,<sup>(9)</sup> to replace the printed dictionary type of catalogue which was expensive to produce and was usually out of date by the time it left the printer's hands. The new catalogues, which combined all the advantages of a card catalogue as regards power of expansion and adjustability, were also appreciated and used more by the public.

After he had been at the Library about eight months, Mr. Bell said that he had had a chance to inspect the large stock of volumes during the process of classifying and reorganising, and that he was of the opinion that there was no circulating library in the Dominion that could equal the splendid collection to be found in the Christchurch Library.<sup>(10)</sup> In support of this statement Mr. Bell quoted figures which showed the relative stocks at the libraries in the chief centres to be Christchurch 28,000, Auckland 14,884, Wellington 12,520, Dunedin 11,134. Apart from the large collection of works of fiction the Library had a very fine stock of books dealing with travels, history, and biography, there being over 7000 volumes in those sections alone.<sup>(11)</sup> There was also a collection of about 2365 volumes dealing with drama and poetry, the most popular of which were those by Shaw, Wilde, Galsworthy, Bridges, and Masefield.

In July 1914 the electric light installation was completed and was brought into use in September.<sup>(12)</sup> This replaced the gas lighting, the fumes from which, in the past, had had a very deleter-

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9. "Evening News", October 29, 1913.

10. L.T. February 10, 1914.

11. Mr. Bell said that this collection was unequalled in many of the large English and Australian libraries.

12. B. of G. 1915, p.28.



ious effect on the leather bindings of many of the books. The new lighting system was described in "The Star" on July 6, 1914 as being the very latest, adapted specially for libraries, and operating on the same principle as the Carnegie Library at Fulham, London, which was considered to be a model institution. By the end of 1914 also, the classification of the Library, by the Dewey Decimal System, had been completed. Author catalogues for the whole of the stock and stock lists, and card catalogues of fiction titles were also compiled during the year. A fine year's work was completed with the opening of a new reading room and library for children who were thus provided with spacious and attractive quarters.

The Library continued to progress, and, in the Librarian's report in 1916,<sup>(13)</sup> he stated that another development had been completed. Each day, about two hundred volumes of the best examples of literature - notably travel, history, biography, sociology, and some of the most reliable literature dealing with the Great War - were placed upon a large table. They proved so great an attraction to subscribers that the circulation of the non-fiction works was greatly increased. In October of the following year, an additional section of the population was provided for, when the Library received a consignment of books for the blind, in Braille and Moon raised types, from the Jubilee Institute in Auckland.<sup>(14)</sup>

Following the lead of the Literary Association of Great Britain, the Board of Governors decided, in 1918, to establish a Technical

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13. *ibid* 1916, p.32.

14. L.T. October 10, 1917.



Library <sup>(15)</sup> to cater for the needs of the businessmen of the city, and granted £100 per annum for its maintenance. It was to form a special branch of the Public Library containing the standard works dealing with engineering, architecture, building, and chemical technology, commercial publications dealing with banking, advertising, and accountancy, and also tariff lists, trade directories, reports of Boards of Trade, and Year Books.

In April 1920, the Public Library, in conjunction with the Canterbury Progress League, instituted a system of travelling libraries for the benefit of the country districts, where no public libraries existed. <sup>(16)</sup> Under the original scheme, mooted by the Progress League in March 1919, libraries were to be established at Darfield, Hinds, Mayfield, Culverden, and Lismore, but, by the end of 1920, ten libraries had been established. The scheme permitted of a district having a box of books every three months, each box containing thirty to forty assorted volumes.

Since the last building addition in 1901 the Library had been growing steadily, and, in the early part of 1923, the Board decided to erect a new wing on the land available on the south side of the building. <sup>(17)</sup> This new building was completed in 1924, at a cost of £4800, and officially opened, by the Chairman of the Board, on December 3 of that year. <sup>(18)</sup> It consisted of a Children's Library and Reading Room, a very useful Lecture Room, and two large extensions to the Reference Library. With the shifting of the Children's Library

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15. "The Sun", Christchurch. May 16, 1918.

16. B. of G. 1921, p. 38. Reference to this ceases in 1930.

17. *ibid* 1924, p. 34.

18. *ibid* 1925, p. 35-6.





THE CANTERBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY.



to its new quarters, it was possible to establish a new central office, in the Circulating Department, which greatly aided the work of administration. At the same time, the old heating system was replaced by an effective modern steam plant which effectually ended the just complaints of readers in the building. There were two more important additions and innovations to the Library in the 1924-5 period. The first of these was the acquisition of a very valuable and unique collection of thirty two volumes, by H. Ling Roth, devoted to a comprehensive survey of the art of tattooing.<sup>(19)</sup> In May 1925, the Library held its first "New Book Day", and, probably for the first time in its history, a queue was formed, of people wishing to borrow books. Under this new system, all new books were placed on a special table, and, on the first day, over four hundred were distributed. As the scheme proved so successful, it was continued for some time, at regular intervals.

However, once again the Library was faced with financial difficulties, and in 1929 Mr. Bell wrote to the Carnegie Corporation in New York enquiring as to the possibility of a grant.<sup>(20)</sup> But the reply he received was far from encouraging, as it stated that, because of the limited funds available for expenditure outside the United States, the Corporation was unable to include assistance to existing public libraries in its programme. An article in "The Sun",<sup>(21)</sup> shortly after this announcement, stated that many public institutions, such as the art gallery, band rotunda, and clock tower, had recently benefitted by public bequests, but not so the Library, which, apart

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19. "The Sun", March 23, 1925.

20. "Wellington Post", Wellington, June 7, 1929.

21. "The Sun", June 8, 1929.



from a small subscription, was completely free and was practically the only important library, in New Zealand, not supported by rates. If it had not been for the generosity of Mr. James Gammack, it would have been in a very sorry plight indeed. The article also declared that the whole Library needed remodelling, being gloomy, badly lighted, and far short of modern standards of library architecture. Yet the Council made no effort to relieve the Board's burden; although the economic depression would no doubt have made a library rate unpopular or even impracticable.

In his annual report for the year 1933,<sup>(22)</sup> Mr. Bell stated that he had received the offer of a travelling grant, from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to enable him to visit the United States and Canada, in order to study their library methods, and that arrangements had been made for him to leave New Zealand in September. During the Librarian's absence, Dr. F.P. Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation, visited Christchurch and, on making a thorough inspection of the Public Library, expressed himself well pleased with what he saw, mentioning, in particular, the children's library.<sup>(23)</sup> Speaking at a young farmers' educational course on his return from America,<sup>(24)</sup> Mr. Bell, when emphasising the need for free public libraries, informed his audience that in England and the United States people were library minded, and it was the aim of all local authorities in the United States to raise a library rate of one dollar per head. Yet in New Zealand, Dunedin and Timaru had the only really free libraries, while in Auckland and Wellington there was a library

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22. B. of G. 1934, p.36.

23. "Press", February 9, 1935.

24. *ibid* July 26, 1935.



rate but subscriptions were still charged. However, in Christchurch, there was no library rate at all, and in this respect, he said the city was fifty to one hundred years behind the times.

One of the most useful and most popular innovations to date appeared, on December 19, 1935, with the first issue of the "Canterbury Public Library Journal".<sup>(25)</sup> A foreword, by Mr. C.T. Aschman, Chairman of the College Council, explained that the aim of the Journal would be to give to subscribers the best possible information about books and authors and so to act as a guide in the selection of reading matter. The first issue consisted of sixteen pages, containing selections of the best books of all kinds recently added to the Library, while "Books of the Month" were reviewed by members of the staff. Three thousand copies were printed and distributed free to subscribers. This Journal which is still in existence to-day, is the only one of its kind in New Zealand to have had an unbroken existence from its inception.<sup>(26)</sup>

But, in spite of the fact that the service provided by the Library was steadily increasing in efficiency and popularity, the financial position showed very little improvement. In 1935, when referring to the proposal for a new railway station in Christchurch, the Prime Minister (Mr. Forbes) said, "Christchurch, for some time past, has been fairly free with requests to the Government. Granted, it has the right to call attention to its needs, but while it has been doing that, it has lagged sadly behind the other cities in the matter of helping itself... Now you have asked me what the Government is going

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25. "Press", December 20, 1935.

26. Personal information from Mr. E.J. Bell.



to do about the new railway station. In my turn I will ask what Christchurch has done about giving itself a new library."<sup>(27)</sup> Mr. Forbes added that a municipal library was a necessity in any city, and suggested the incorporation of the existing library in a new one which would meet the needs of the city. As a new library would be a municipal institution, it would be the responsibility of the City Council to draft a proposal, for submission to the College Council, satisfying it that the library endowments would be put to their proper use and that the library generally would be conducted on improved lines. "Christchurch should have a library in keeping with its dignity and importance", said Mr. Forbes, "but it is for Christchurch to take the initiative, and I hope the first move will not be delayed."

Whether or not the City Council was duly impressed by the nature of the Prime Minister's speech, we do not know, but exactly one month later, on December 2, 1935, it was moved by Councillor Guthrie, "That a conference be sought between this Council and the Canterbury College Council with the object of reorganising the finance and control of the Canterbury Public Library and the Canterbury Museum, so as to bring these institutions into line with the requirements of the Province."<sup>(28)</sup> In accordance with this motion, a Special Committee was set up to investigate the situation. It held three meetings in March of 1936<sup>(29)</sup> and reported that the Children's and Lending Libraries were comparatively satisfactory, but that the Reference Library was a disgrace to the city and

27. "The Christchurch Star Sun", Christchurch, November 1, 1935.

28. C.C.C. Vol. 60, p. 17207.

29. C.C.C. Minutes of Special Committees p.1041-2.



required the expenditure of approximately £10,000 for rebuilding. At the next meeting of the Committee, it was reported that the Council had, in the meantime, made a grant of £250 of which £125 had been allocated to the Reference Library, £75 to the Children's Library, and £50 to the Reading Room. This was the first Council grant in the history of the Library. It was then resolved that the Board of Governors be asked if they would be willing to transfer the Public Library to the City, and on what terms as regards endowments etc. (30) When the Committee met again on August 26, a letter was received from the Registrar of Canterbury College advising that a Special Committee had been set up to report on the Public Library, and Councillor Guthrie was authorised to investigate the question of the extra maintenance costs involved in the event of the Council's taking over the Library. (31) He reported, on October 16, that, if the Council contributed not less than £1000 per annum, subscriptions could be reduced and more people encouraged to make use of the institution, with the result that the income would be in the vicinity of £5000 per year. On this sum, a really first class library service could be maintained, and co-operation with suburban libraries should be possible. Once the new Reference Library had been constructed, there would be little added expenditure. It was then resolved to meet the Board and recommend, subject to the Council's ratification,

1. "That the Council undertake to substantially increase (sic) its subsidy for one year."
2. "That combined steps be taken by the Council and the College Board to obtain legislation authorising the transfer of the Library property and the bequests to the Council."

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30. *ibid* p.1050.

31. *ibid* p.1063.



3. "That the Council undertake to erect a new Reference Library building." (32)

These resolutions can be regarded as the first signs of any real interest in the future of the Library.

When the two Committees met on November 26, the proposals, which the Board put forward, appeared to coincide with those of the Council, but the question of the allocation of a portion of the College endowments was discussed and held over. (33) Although the Special Committee recommended the Council to place £1000 on the Estimates for 1937-38 (34) as a subsidy for the Library, and resolved that a full and comprehensive report, upon the question of transferring control of the Library to the Council, should be prepared by the Committee, in conjunction with the Board of Governors, no action was taken and once more the matter was allowed to lapse. Although there is no definite information on the matter, it appears as if it was once again the question of the endowments that caused the deadlock. (35) The right of the Library to a share of the endowment was no longer challenged, but the amount remained in dispute.

It is an amazing fact that, although the Board of Governors had, since the early 1860's, been trying to rid itself of its responsibilities towards the Public Library, on the grounds of lack of finance, no satisfactory solution had been arrived at nearly sixty years later. This state of affairs suggests that either the financial position, in the first instance, was not as serious as was made out or else

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32. *ibid* p. 1081.

33. *ibid* p. 1087.

34. *ibid* p. 1095.

35. "Press" January 2, 1937.



that the Library could not receive its just due, because of the financial position. From the facts set out so far, it appears as if the latter alternative is more probable, and, as the twentieth century advanced, there can be no doubt that the financial position was becoming really desperate. Thus the matter was not allowed to lapse for long before the Board once more called attention to the position, when a deputation from it waited on the Finance Committee of the City Council in June 1940.<sup>(36)</sup> The deputation pointed out that the loss, for the preceding year, had been £412/10/4 and that there did not appear to be any hope of improving those figures, nor was it possible to carry on under such conditions. In stating its case, the deputation produced some interesting figures which showed that upwards of a thousand persons visited the Reading Room every day, while a daily average of four hundred made use of the Reference Library, and about one hundred children used the Juvenile Library. These figures showed that about 1500 people used the free sections of the library each day - and, it was pointed out, that three quarters of the floor space of the building was devoted to the free service. In 1939, the City Council's donation to the Library had been £400 and, with their own funds falling and the Library understaffed, the deputation was sure that the Council would realise the impossibility of attempting to carry on. The Finance Committee decided to hold over the question of a grant for consideration with the Estimates, and, in the meantime, to recommend the Council to approach the Board with a view to the Library being transferred to the Council.

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36. C.C.C. Vol. 69, p.21531.



At a subsequent conference, to discuss the question of transferring the Library, the College representatives tabled a copy of the proposals put forward by the College Council on October 6, 1936,<sup>(37)</sup> as a basis for discussion. These proposals stated that the College authorities would be prepared to transfer the Library to the City, subject to certain stipulations, one of which was that the College should be adequately represented on the new governing body of the Library. Because of the fact that the City would be acquiring assets valued (at a very conservative estimate) between £30,000 and £40,000, the College also insisted that, within a given period, substantial improvements and additions should be made to the Library. Recognising that certain difficulties might arise,<sup>(38)</sup> the College Council suggested that the best solution, for the immediate present, appeared to be that the City should contribute not less than £1000 per year towards the Library and should have a share in its control, and that, in the meantime, the general public should be educated to the idea that the Library should be rightly owned, supported, and administered as a City asset. In this case, the question of the allocation of the endowment revenue would not arise until the ultimate transfer of the Library, at some future date. With these proposals providing a basis, four decisions were made, as follows :-

1. "That the City Council be recommended to set up another Standing Committee, to be known as the Libraries Committee, with power to co-opt members of the Canterbury College Council."
2. "That the City Council be recommended to undertake substantial improvements after the war, and that, in the meantime, and as

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37. C.C.C. Minutes of Bylaws, Finance and Departmental Committees, p.4722-23.

38. viz, the City Council may, in good faith, have accepted the transfer on the above conditions, and have had the necessary legislation passed, and then found itself unable, after having acquired the Library, to carry out building improvements.



required, improvements be decided upon, details to be discussed at a further Conference and ratified by both Councils concerned."

3. "That the representatives of the City Council agree in principle to an annual grant being made by the College Council out of the revenue derived from the high country runs, the amount of these grants to be determined at the discretion of the College Council."

4. "That the City Council should give further consideration, during the year, to the possibility of increasing the grant from the City Council." (39)

When the matter again came under discussion, on December 17, 1940, a deputation from the College Council waited on the Finance Committee and presented a statement of the public library situation in Christchurch, as compared with other cities, with suggestions for improvements. (40) In the first place, it was suggested that the City Council should consider contributing a sum of money towards the maintenance of the free departments of the Library, with a smaller grant to the Circulating Department, to enable the subscription rate to be lowered. If this course was adopted, the City Council would receive representation on the College Library Committee. The second proposal suggested joint control by the two Councils, through the medium of a special library board. Under this system, the free departments would remain unaltered but, if the City raised a library rate of £6000, it would be possible to reduce the subscription for the Circulating Department. Also, if this scheme was adopted, it was proposed that the suburban libraries should become branches of the central library, with trained librarians in charge, and the existing library committees should be reduced to

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39. C.C.C. Minutes of Bylaws, Finance and Departmental Committees, p.4746.

40. C.C.C. Vol. 70, p.21912.



small sub-committees to represent each library. The final suggestion put forward, by the College, was for complete control of the Library by the City, but with adequate representation for Canterbury College on the managing board, because of the endowments. Under this system, it was proposed that the City should raise a library rate of about £12,000 and make all departments free at the central library. The suburban libraries should also be made free branches of the central library and the existing voluntary committees should cease to function, as soon as the branches were organised and brought into the system. This final proposal represents, of course, the ideal library set-up for a large city. After having made these proposals for the future control of the Library, the report proceeded to discuss the position with regard to the condition of the Canterbury Public Library at that time. In suggesting that the Library needed remodelling or partly rebuilding, it mooted the idea of the establishment of a new Reference Library on the Cambridge Terrace frontage, and the introduction of a stack room <sup>(41)</sup> in the old Reference Library. It was finally resolved that two alternative proposals should be placed before the City Council, for an expression of opinion on the policy involved. - (a) "That the Canterbury Public Library be handed over to the City Council which will assume responsibility for its future maintenance" and (b) "That the City Council make a grant of £2000 to the College Council for the Library, and the College Council will guarantee to carry on and give good service to the Public." In the event of proposal (b) being adopted, it was decided that adequate

41. The purposes of a stack room is to relieve the shelves by providing storage space for lesser used books. The shelf position of such books is indicated in the catalogues. Many American libraries have only 10,000 to 20,000 books on the shelves while their stack rooms often contain over 100,000 volumes.



representation, on the Library Committee, would be arranged for the City Council.

When the Finance Committee reported to the City Council on the following evening, <sup>(42)</sup> it recommended that, in the event of proposal (a) being adopted, the City Council should take the essential steps to have the necessary legislation prepared, and should submit it to the College Council for approval. However, when the City Council met to consider the matter early in 1941, it was decided "that suggestion (b) be adopted, pending the conclusion of the War." <sup>(43)</sup> After the inevitable delay, a letter was received, by the City Council <sup>(44)</sup> from the Registrar, stating that the appointment of three representatives of the Council on the Library Committee had been approved, and asking for their names to be forwarded to the College. Councillors G. Manning, M. Lyons, and H. Donald were appointed and, as the College Council had already received a grant of £2000 <sup>(45)</sup> from the City, the new scheme was thus completely established. So, after almost seventy years, the City Council had overcome its financial scruples and made a worthwhile contribution to the Library.

Until the conclusion of the War, there was no change in the system and the Library was subsidised by a grant of £2000 each year from the City Council. But this decision marks the end of the second phase in the history of the Library. With the Declaratory Judgement of 1912, there was no further disagreement over the legality

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42. C.C.C. Vol 70, p.21912.

43. *ibid* Vol. 71, p.21933.

44. *ibid* Vol. 72, p.22481.

45. Minutes of Bylaws, Finance and Departmental Committees p.4761.



of the Library's right to a share of the endowment, in the event of control being transferred, - but, at that stage, the City Council made no attempt to promote the Library by financial assistance, being content to let it deteriorate, because of the College's financial difficulties. The burning point, in the next generation, was the amount of the Library's share of the endowment, and, until this question was decided, no settlement was possible. Because of the difficulty of the problem, and the concern of the whole country with the fighting of the War, the two bodies entered into negotiations in a spirit of compromise with the result that a satisfactory working agreement was reached, until such time as it was possible to transfer the Library to the City. This spirit of compromise, unfortunately so often absent in past negotiations, lends to the scene a touch of cheerful optimism. After almost a century of financial difficulties, the Library could at last look forward to a future of ever improving service to the public, without fear of probable retrenchment every few years.

Meanwhile, there occurred a number of internal changes and events that cannot be omitted. In May 1942, a fire occurred in the Reading Room and many files of newspapers were burned. However, had it not been for a brilliant save by men of the Emergency Fire Service, who were billeted across the street in the Y.M.C.A., much more damage would have been done.<sup>(46)</sup> As it was, the fire was confined to the one room which was reopened in August. A music section, started with thirty eight volumes in 1905,<sup>(47)</sup> did not meet with much support but, in the

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46. "Press", May 4, 1942.

47. *ibid* August 28, 1934.



latter part of 1942, Dr. J.C. Bradshaw, the late organist of the Christchurch Cathedral and Professor of Music at Canterbury College, presented to the Library six hundred volumes of manuscripts and writings dealing with music,<sup>(48)</sup> thus making the music section one of which any library would be proud.

With the successful conclusion of the War in August 1945, it was possible to reopen the question of management, and the first step in the matter was taken by the Librarian, who, in his annual report in July 1946, briefly outlined the conditions under which he and his staff were working.

"For some time past we have carried on our work in a building quite inadequate, and a glance at the book cases will show that there is congestion everywhere. The main delivery desk is also inadequate to the increasing demands made upon it. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that in the near future substantial extensions to the building will be made or that a new and imposing library building will be erected. It is interesting to note that the lending library room was erected in 1875, the reference library in 1893, the public reading room in 1901, and the children's library in 1923, the whole building having cost about £13,000. A city of the size and importance of Christchurch deserves something better than this in these modern times." (49)

For once there was surprisingly little delay, for in March of the following year the Finance Committee<sup>(50)</sup> reminded the Council of the decision made in 1941,<sup>(51)</sup> and a sub-committee was set up to discuss with the College authorities the transfer of the Library to the Council.

When making his report for the sub-committee, Councillor Lyons referred to the suggested legislation and stated that the College authorities had allocated one half of the endowment revenue to the

48. B. of G. 1943, p.20.

49. *ibid* 1946, p.22.

50. C.C.C. Vol. 83, p.26723.

51. *vide supra* n.43.



Museum and the rest had been divided into five parts for divers purposes. He had suggested that some of these purposes had not been in existence when the bequests had been made. (52) But this extremely vague statement gave no accurate picture of the true state of affairs. In 1946 the endowment was divided between the School of Engineering (£535), the School of Art (£130) - these two being together the School of Technical Science - the Museum (£1652) and the College Library (£50). This was a representative year for the period after 1910 except that, until 1942, the Public Library had received an annual grant varying from £90 to £700, (53) while, until that date, the College Library grant had never exceeded £25 per year. Thus the only institution not contemplated by the founders of the endowment had received an almost negligible grant (approximately .5%). There can be no doubt that the Museum was being maintained at the expense of the Library, to a certain extent, but the Council's opportunities of relieving the College's financial burden, in that respect, have already been emphasised. Councillor Lyons informed the Council that he had asked for £800 per annum for the Library, but a compromise had been effected at £480 which represented two fifths of the remaining half of the endowment revenue. (54) This compromise was then ratified, subject to a similar ratification by the College Council, which was soon forthcoming, accompanied by a clause "That the Public Library, as a going concern, be transferred to the City Council, it being understood that considerable expenditure

52. C.C.C. Vol. 83. p.26879.

53. This amount had only been below £320 on eleven occasions, five of which had been during the depression of the early thirties.

54. The total endowment revenue was approximately £2400 during the 1940's.



would ultimately be involved in its proper development.<sup>(55)</sup> Although the Council had not foreseen the second clause it was resolved to accept the two clauses and inform the College Council that they accepted the responsibility of taking over the Library with the full knowledge that its future development would entail even greater liabilities than those then existing, and that April 1, following the empowering legislation, would be the most suitable date for the transfer to be made effective.

The work of preparing the draft copy of the bill to be brought before the General Assembly was detailed to Messrs J.J. Dougall, Son and Hutchison, the solicitors to Canterbury College, who, on March 16, 1948, wrote to the City Council enclosing the draft copy which had already been approved by the College Council.<sup>(56)</sup> In the main, there were no complications in the bill<sup>(57)</sup> but the second section of clause seven, which stated that "The Canterbury College Council shall from time to time pay to the Christchurch City Council all moneys received by it from the trustees, for the time being, of the Will of James Gammack, late of Springston, Farmer deceased, under the terms of his will, such moneys to be applied for the benefit of the Circulating Department of the Public Library", was opposed by the College authorities who suggested that, as they would have no further dealings with the Library, the revenue from the Gammack Trust should be paid to the City Council by the trustees. However, a further letter to the City Council from the solicitors stated that the trustees of the Gammack Estate preferred the retention of section two

55. C.C.C. Vol. 84, p.27109-10.

56. Minutes of Bylaws, Finance and Departmental Committees p.5292.

57. Appendix E. p.144.



of clause seven in preference to the additional clause (clause 8), as proposed by the College Council. But the Finance Committee recommended that the draft of the Bill be approved, subject to the inclusion of clause eight as recommended by the College authorities, and this course was adopted by the Council.<sup>(58)</sup> As the Bill, with the inclusion of Clause Eight, had now been approved by both parties concerned, it was ready to come before Parliament, but, before this took place, the Registrar wrote to the City Council asking if it would be convenient to change the date of transfer from April 1, 1949 to October 1, 1948 and to this the Council agreed.

Although the two Councils had agreed on the form that the Bill should take, Mr. A.F. Wright, the solicitor to the Gammack Estate, remained adamant on the inclusion of the disputed clause. However, the City Council, after having heard him state his case, decided to proceed with the Bill as drafted, and to send Councillors Tait and Manning to Wellington to give evidence, before the Committee of the House, in support of it, with particular reference to the Gammack Estate.<sup>(59)</sup> When the Bill had been approved by the Local Bodies Committee of the House of Representatives, a letter was received from Mr. S.G. Holland M.P. informing the City Council that Mr. Wright had, during the consideration of the Bill, raised the question of making the Library completely free.<sup>(60)</sup> It was pointed out to Mr. Wright that the Committee had no power to do as he suggested, and Mr. Holland promised to communicate with the City Council, requesting that the question of making the Library completely free should be

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58. C.C.C. Vol. 85, p.27814.

59. *ibid* Vol. 86, p.28271.

60. *ibid* p.28475.



fully and carefully considered. When informed that the Finance Committee had communicated with Mr. Holland stating that it was the Council's intention to review the whole position in regard to the Library system in Christchurch, including the relationship of the suburban libraries to the Central Library, and that the proposal, that the Central Library should be a "free" library, would be taken into consideration, the Council approved the action that had been taken. (61) As there were no further points in dispute, the Bill was passed in the second session of 1948 and became law on September 30.

Although the City Council took official control of the Public Library on October 1, the actual ceremony of handing over control by the Canterbury College Council was not held until October 7. In assuming control of the Library, the Council took over 72,600 books, valued at £21,000. Of this total, 30,500 were in the Circulating Department, 29,500 in the Reference Department, 5000 in the Juvenile Library, and 7600 in the School Library Service, while the total number of members was over 9000. (62)

"This is a big step in the life of the Library", said the Chairman of the Canterbury College Council (Sir Joseph Ward), who presided. "The Library has been part of Canterbury College for nearly seventy-five years. In handing over to the City Council, however, we know that we are taking a step which will ensure that the good record of the library will be maintained." (63)

And so, after a struggle lasting nearly sixty years, the control of the Library was finally decided. There can be no doubt that the change was for the better as, with all due respect to the work done by Canterbury College, lack of finance nearly always caused a break-

61. *ibid.*

62. Adults, 6059; Children 3500. These figures do not include users of the School Library Service.

63. "Star-Sun", October 7, 1948.





ALTERATIONS IN PROGRESS  
1950.



down in any large undertakings. The City, however, has much wider resources and can thus provide Christchurch with a Library such as befits a city of such high status, without the continual fear of lack of finance lurking in the background.

Without fear of contradiction, it can be said that the Library, when received by the Council in 1948, was not of a standard consistent with a city of approximately 124,000 inhabitants. Yet, in the early years of the Canterbury settlement, it would appear that Christchurch had a library of which it could well be proud. In making a final assessment of the responsibility for this lapse, two facts are extremely prominent. The College authorities, dogged with financial worries from the outset, were consequently unable to maintain all the institutions under their control at an adequate standard. They had to make a choice between keeping them all at a mediocre standard and ensuring that one or possibly two were maintained at the highest possible standard. Because they chose the second alternative, they have been strongly criticised by persons, many of whom have been in a position to familiarize themselves with the facts of the case. All things being equal a fair-minded person would tend to uphold these critics but it is at this point that the second outstanding factor assumes significance.

From 1869, before the Canterbury College acquired the Library, the City authorities had power to control the Library and to support it from the rates. The belated acquisition of the Library in 1948 plainly suggests chronic shortsightedness on behalf of many earlier Councillors. This view is certainly supported by the facts recounted



in the previous pages and is corroborated by Mr. Bell, the present Librarian, who, in nearly forty years service to the city, has, only in the last eight years or so, noticed a definite weakening in the apathetic attitude of the Council. Now that the City owns the Library, it is to be hoped that this new interest continues. Present signs of extensive building alterations and the installation of a modern reference library certainly augur well for the future. Given continued interest, there should be no reason to prevent Christchurch having a modern, well conditioned library at an early date. Unfortunately this does not provide a complete solution to the library problem for the existing suburban libraries, totalling fourteen in all have no organic connection with each other or with the central library.

Naturally this position has been aggravated by the delay in the acquisition of the central library by the City Council, for it has obviously been impossible to inaugurate a centralised library system until the main library has come under public control. No doubt the question that springs to mind is the reason for the protracted refusal of the Council to assume any share in the provision of an adequate library service. It is impossible to state any definite reason but, having studied all the facts, it would be feasible to suggest that a likely answer does emerge from the confused mass of discussions and debates. Stated plainly, it would appear that the City Councils over a number of years preferred to tolerate a poorly equipped library which involved no burden on the rates rather than to support an adequate library by an annual subsidy. Although this opinion would seem harsh to the casual observer it is, nevertheless, a truism, that New Zealand local bodies are notorious for the tight hold they maintain



on the public purse, and for their reluctance to have to show any rating increases at the triennial elections. In 1908 local bodies were given power to levy a library rate, not exceeding a penny in the pound, (64) while in 1938 the upper limit was raised to twopence. (65) Yet the Christchurch City Council, since taking over the Canterbury Public Library, has levied a library rate of only .17256 of a penny in the pound while the amount collected (£6364/8/10) represents only .00848 per cent of the total rate. (66) And so, for the want of a very small library rate, the Canterbury Public Library was allowed to deteriorate to a mere shadow of its former magnificence, and the suburban libraries were allowed to develop in a haphazard manner which militated against their rendering the best possible service to the public. Now that the City Library has been acquired by the people of Christchurch, it should be possible to take immediate steps to rectify this situation, but, until the library system is centralised or at least co-ordinated, the position will, perforce, remain far from satisfactory. It is to an understanding of the growth and inadequacy of this system that we must now turn our attention.

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64. Statutes of New Zealand, 1908, No.124, Section 90. "Municipal Corporations Act." This applied to all public libraries. The "Public Libraries Act" 1869. (vide supra Ch.2 p.24) applied only to free libraries.

65. Ibid, 1938, No.3, Section 8. "Municipal Corporations Amendment Act."

66. C.C.C. Rating Department.



CHAPTER IVCHRISTCHURCH SUBURBAN LIBRARIES

On May 24, 1867 the residents of St. Albans and Knightstown met at the house of Mr. Tom Lewis to consider the formation of a Mutual Improvement Association. From this small beginning the Christchurch suburban library system developed.<sup>(1)</sup> Hailed with enthusiasm, the scheme made rapid progress and, less than a month later, the newly formed society received the title deed of section 311 on the map of the City Surveyor, as a gift from Mr. William Moor,<sup>(2)</sup> to be used as a site for a Reading Room and Library. It should be pointed out at this stage that the library was not the only objective of the Association which aimed at the mutual improvement of its members by means of classes for special studies, lectures readings, and discussion. A comparison with the definition of a mechanics' institute, appearing earlier, will show very little difference.<sup>(3)</sup> Like its counterpart in the City, it was intended to be essentially a working-men's organisation, the subscription being a half-crown per annum.<sup>(4)</sup> When the Association was formally opened on October 28, 1867, Mr. Cutler declared that the Christchurch Mechanics' Institute had been created for and not by the working-men and in that fact he saw the cause of its failure.<sup>(5)</sup> He felt certain

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1. Minutes of St. Albans Mutual Improvement Association. May 24, 1867. (at St. Albans Public Library)
  2. *ibid.* June 17, 1867.
  3. *vide supra* Ch.1, p. 4.
  4. Minutes of St. Albans Mutual Improvement Association.
  5. L.T. October 29, 1867.



that the new Institute would meet with a much greater measure of success. But disillusionment came on November 12, 1869 when the committee, in view of the unsatisfactory state of the Society's affairs, agreed, by motion, to adopt the only alternative of handing over the deeds, books, building, and all other property to the trustees.<sup>(6)</sup> Following this startling disclosure, the committee resigned in a body leaving a debit balance of about £10. Ironically enough the Christchurch Institute still continued to exist, although, admittedly, its financial position was precarious.

After a lull of just over a year, a public meeting was held in the Reading Room, on December 28, 1870 to reorganise the Society by electing new officers.<sup>(7)</sup> It would appear from the Minute Book that a continuous existence was maintained from this date. This is substantiated by a letter to the Editor of the "Times" in July 1873,<sup>(8)</sup> which expressed surprise at a proposal, brought forward at a meeting of the St. Albans Wesleyan Church, to establish a library for the district in a building used for the district school, which was soon to be vacant. The writer declared that, for six years past, St. Albans had boasted a public library, in a room built by the Mutual Improvement Association, which had received two liberal grants from the Provincial Council. On the following day J.L. Wilson, one of the promoters of the new scheme, wrote denying the existence of a public library in St. Albans, declaring that the existing institution was in Knightstown.<sup>(9)</sup> In order to prevent confusion, it is advisable to clarify the nomenclature question now. Knightstown was merely a

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6. Minutes of St. Albans Mutual Improvement Association. November 12, 1869.

7. *ibid* December 28, 1870.

8. L.T. July 7, 1873.

9. *ibid* July 8, 1873.



part of the St. Albans district and the Knightstown library was that founded by the St. Albans Mutual Improvement Association in 1867. At a meeting of residents in August,<sup>(10)</sup> it was decided to abandon the name of Knightstown and to become simply a portion of St. Albans.

When a public meeting was held to consider the establishment of a reading room and library on July 8,<sup>(11)</sup> the Chairman (Mr. J.L. Wilson) said that doubtless the meeting was aware of £5000 voted by the Provincial Council to assist old and establish new reading rooms and libraries. He felt that the Institute should take advantage of this grant, as, in his opinion, the library at Knightstown was not centrally situated. However, the Knightstown librarian, Mr. Fowler, argued that they had over 300 volumes, a comfortable room, and everything paid for; but in spite of this the meeting set up a committee to establish a library. Stating the case for the Knightstown library, the Chairman, in a letter to the newspaper about a week later,<sup>(12)</sup> declared that as far as amalgamation was concerned they would be glad to receive the promoters of the new society as members of their own association but, as the land, building, and its contents were public property, they felt that they would be doing an injustice to the inhabitants of their part of the district if they gave their sanction to removal to the schoolroom or to any other place. A joint meeting between the committees of the two societies proved fruitless, the Knightstown people remaining adamant in their refusal to amalgamate.<sup>(13)</sup> Their attitude appeared to be justified by the apparent lack of interest of the St. Albans people evidenced by the

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10. *ibid* August 6, 1873.

11. *ibid* July 9, 1873.

12. *ibid* July 17, 1873.

13. *ibid* July 19, 1873.



very small attendance at a further public meeting, and it even seemed likely that it would be difficult to raise enough money to claim a portion of the government grant.<sup>(14)</sup> However, by October 15, it was reported that £110 had been collected although it was remarked that an unpleasant feature was the apathy of those for whose immediate benefit the library was projected.<sup>(15)</sup> When the Mutual Improvement Association held its annual meeting a few days later, Mr. Moor, a vice-president, remarking upon the high standard attained by the library, said that not only was it the pioneer of such institutions in country districts in the province, but it was also the best suburban library in Canterbury. He declared that an attempt to start a rival library in another part of St. Albans would only serve to excite members to renewed energy.<sup>(16)</sup> But the rival society continued in pursuit of its goal and, in mid-December, it was announced that a site had been acquired, plans were to be drawn, and the building commenced in the near future.<sup>(17)</sup>

Here we leave the St. Albans district for the present and turn to the other districts surrounding Christchurch. The month of July 1873 witnessed a tremendous quickening of interest in the library sphere, with public meetings at Papanui, Sydenham, Woolston, Addington, Waltham, and New Brighton. At Papanui the question was whether to erect a new library and reading room or whether to improve the existing one which had been established in the Church of England schoolroom about seven years earlier, but which, after a somewhat precarious existence, had been compelled to close, being revived during 1872.<sup>(18)</sup>

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14. *ibid* September 18, 1873.

15. *ibid* October 4, 1873.

16. *ibid* October 7, 1873.

17. *ibid* December 20, 1873.

18. *ibid* July 16, 1873.



In Sydenham (or the Colombo Road District) a meeting was called by the School Committee who considered it their duty to extend the advantages of education to the adults of the district rather than to confine their efforts solely to children. Even at this early stage in Canterbury's history some of those present spoke in favour of the establishment of a free library but it was eventually decided to levy a subscription of two shillings and sixpence per annum.<sup>(19)</sup> It would appear from the report of the meeting at Woolston that a library already existed and, as at Papanui, the question was one of location.<sup>(20)</sup> The meetings held at Waltham,<sup>(21)</sup> Addington,<sup>(22)</sup> and New Brighton<sup>(23)</sup> all envisaged the establishment of new libraries in their respective districts although the first was called largely as a protest against the earlier meeting in Sydenham.

The question which immediately springs to the reader's mind is, surely, the reason for this sudden zeal. The impetus, it would appear, was the availability of financial assistance. Many of the provinces, especially in the North Island, were in grave financial straits by 1873 but Canterbury, although beginning to feel the consequences of a period of inflation, was still probably the richest province in the colony, and, like Otago, was widely renowned for its grants to education. This fact supplies the answer to the question, for on June 14, 1873 the Provincial Council made a grant of £5000 "for aiding in establishing new and assisting existing Public Libraries Book Clubs, and Institutes in country districts."<sup>(24)</sup> Hence the rush

19. *ibid* July 17, 1873.

20. *ibid*.

21. *ibid* July 25, 1873.

22. *ibid* July 24, 1873.

23. *ibid* August 1, 1873.

24. Journal of the Canterbury Provincial Council. Session XXXIX, June 14, 1873 p.115.



to divide the spoils - hence, also, a scathing letter in the "Times" at the end of July.

"Every issue of your valuable paper contains a report of a meeting held somewhere or other, for the purpose of taking steps towards the establishment of a library in such and such a district, and, in nearly every case, we find a resolution 'carried unanimously', to the effect that the sum of £200 or £250, and in some cases £300 or £400 be applied for, etc. from the grant of £5000, towards establishing libraries in country districts ... I should think the Government will have at least seventy applications for aid to consider, ... and one feels a little curious to know how all are to receive the aid applied for ..." (25)

As this account is only concerned with those libraries now in the metropolitan area it would be irrelevant to digress with regard to the numerous small districts throughout the province which clamoured to feed at the public crib, but it is of interest to record that four days after applications closed the number of applicants had reached seventy-five. (26) Faced with the colossal task of ensuring that every district should be treated according to its merits, the Provincial Council set about dividing its grant in a workmanlike manner, laying down a definite principle for library grants. All sites for library buildings were to be vested either in the Superintendent or trustees with the declaration that they were for the purpose of public libraries and that the books or other property would not be alienated, but held for the benefit of the inhabitants of the respective districts. When these conditions were complied with, the Government was prepared to grant a pound for pound subsidy, varying in amount according to the population of the district, together with a grant, not exceeding £50, for the purchase of books. (27) When the final distribution figures were announced, Papanui

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25. L.T. July 29, 1873.

26. *ibid* August 8, 1873.

27. *ibid* August 20, 1873.



received £100 and St. Albans, Waltham, and Addington £200 each, while all four received grants of £50 for books.<sup>(28)</sup> Woolston was not included because it had already been decided to abandon the idea of establishing a library,<sup>(29)</sup> while nothing further was heard of the Addington scheme so that it may be assumed that this was also abandoned through lack of popular support. It would also appear that the Government did not consider that the Colombo Road District merited two libraries and decided in favour of one at Waltham. Of all the libraries mentioned earlier, New Brighton was the only one which did not apply for a grant. Thus when the provincial system was abolished in 1875 there were five suburban libraries in Christchurch - at Papanui, Waltham, New Brighton, and two at St. Albans.

Although there were a number of libraries established, especially in main centres, before 1875, their growth after that year was greatly facilitated by two Acts of the General Assembly. The first of these, the "Public Libraries Powers Act," 1875,<sup>(30)</sup> provided that any group of people not less than ten in number, having subscribed not less than £20, could make a declaration of their intention to establish a public library or a mechanics' institute at a place to be named in the deed. It laid down the necessary procedure for establishing such an institution and made provision for existing libraries to become incorporated under the Act. On its own this Act is of little significance but it was followed two years later by the "Public Libraries Subsidies Act"<sup>(31)</sup> which set aside an annual govern-

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28. *ibid* September 3, 1873.

29. *ibid* July 19, 1873.

30. Statutes of New Zealand, 1875. No. 88, p. 373.

31. *ibid* 1877. No. 47, p. 363.



ment grant to those libraries supported by either the 1869 Act <sup>(32)</sup> or the 1875 Act. This grant was to be apportioned among the several provincial districts according to population. To those libraries, necessarily completely free, supported under the provisions of the former Act there was to be payable a sum equal to that raised under the library rate, while the amount received by those supported under the latter Act was in the discretion of the Education Boards. Admission to all libraries established or supported under this Act of 1877 was to be open to the public free of charge, provided that only those persons contributing at least five shillings a year should be entitled to take books out of any such library. Under this system it became customary to open a small reading room to the public while the remainder of the library was run on a subscription basis. These three acts of 1869, 1875, and 1877 set the pattern of New Zealand library growth. They appeared to be very adequate in that they provided a government subsidy and also gave the opportunity for the establishment of free libraries if and where desired.

In accordance with the provisions of these Acts, the first government grant of £5000 was made in 1878 and the Christchurch libraries which benefitted from it were New Brighton, Papanui, St. Albans, St. Albans Mutual Association, and Waltham. <sup>(33)</sup> It had been stipulated in the 1875 Act that all libraries formed or incorporated under it should deposit with the Registrar of the Supreme Court in their province a copy of the declaration of their intentions, and until this was done they should not be eligible for a government grant. On these grounds, it would be reasonable to expect to find such records at

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32. "Public Libraries Act." vide supra Chapter 2, p.24.

33. N.Z. A to J. 1878. H-1F.



the Supreme Court, and, furthermore, to establish the exact date of the founding of each library from them. Unfortunately there is no trace of the relevant declarations in the files of the Supreme Court at Christchurch.<sup>(34)</sup> Because of the absence of these or other records it is impossible to fix the date of formation of a number of the libraries (in this instance, New Brighton), but this is not as serious as it might appear at first sight, for the adequacy or inadequacy of the system is really of much greater import. This lack of reliable sources makes it impossible to give a precise and detailed summary of the growth of each of the fourteen suburban libraries in the Christchurch metropolitan area. However, even if the necessary information was to hand such an account would be nothing if not tedious, for almost without exception, the libraries have followed a definite pattern of growth.

When the Canterbury settlement completed its first fifty years, there were still only five suburban libraries - but not the original five. By a special local act in 1893, the old Knightstown Library was transferred to the people of St. Albans for the purpose of establishing a new library,<sup>(35)</sup> so that thenceforth St. Albans has had only one library. In 1886 the New Brighton Library received its last government subsidy until 1912;<sup>(36)</sup> presumably the library was closed in the interim. However the balance was maintained by the appearance of two new libraries, one at Sumner in 1883,<sup>(37)</sup> and one

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34. The only explanation that the Registrar can suggest is that in the earlier colonial days there were a number of District Courts which have since gone out of existence and whose records have apparently disappeared. The only suburban library filed appears to be Sydenham in 1907.

35. Statutes of New Zealand, 1893. p.498. No.23. (Local)

36. N.Z. A to J, 1883 et seq.

37. *ibid.*



at Woolston in 1899.<sup>(38)</sup> Also during the period before 1900 a library at Spreydon received government grants from 1884 to 1886.<sup>(39)</sup>

There was no diminution of activity with the turn of the century and the first new library to appear was that at Sydenham. Although a public meeting had been held to discuss the matter in 1883,<sup>(40)</sup> nothing eventuated until 1903 when the Sydenham Reading Rooms and Recreation Club were opened in the old Borough Council Chambers.<sup>(41)</sup> After about four years a motion was passed that, because of hooliganism amongst the younger members, the assets of the club should be handed over to a committee for the purpose of forming a public library.<sup>(42)</sup> Accordingly, on November 26, 1907, with a membership of about 150,<sup>(43)</sup> the Sydenham Public Library was incorporated "for the purpose of providing suitable reading, recreation and entertainment for the members." Annual subscriptions were fixed at eight shillings for men and six shillings for women, the men to have access to the billiard room.<sup>(44)</sup> The manner of formation of this library diverges somewhat from the general pattern, but that which follows can be regarded as typical of those which have been formed in more recent years.

On the last day of April 1909 a meeting was called by the Linwood Citizens' Association to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a public library.<sup>(45)</sup> Mr. G.W. Russell M.P. informed those present that the City Council had put the sum of £40 on its estimates for the

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38. *ibid.*

39. *ibid.*

40. L.T. June 1, 1883.

41. Old minute book at Sydenham Library.

42. *ibid.*

43. Personal information from Mr. C. Pollard.

44. *ibid.* This is the only library in which the subscription is not uniform for all adults.

45. L.T. May 1, 1909.



purpose of stocking a library at Linwood and had offered the use of the old Linwood Council Chambers at a peppercorn rental, but that the £40 offer had lapsed as it had not been taken up by March 31, the end of the financial year. However, although he could not speak definitely, he felt sure that the £40 would still be available, together with the usual annual grant of £25 from the City Council. This, together with a portion of the annual parliamentary grant (probably about £10), would be sufficient to establish a good library concluded Mr. Russell. At a further meeting, a set of rules drawn up by the provisional committee was adopted and advice was received from the Council that the building would be available for library purposes in approximately one month's time.<sup>(46)</sup> Thus was established another suburban library, which by 1917 had 792 members and a book stock of 5969 volumes.<sup>(47)</sup>

It will have been observed that, at the inauguration of the Linwood Library, Mr. G.W. Russell spoke of the usual annual grant from the City Council. This was first made in 1908 when the Sydenham Library wrote requesting financial assistance.<sup>(48)</sup> When recommending a grant of £20, the Finance Committee advised that it should not be taken as a precedent as they were of the opinion that such institutions should be self supporting.<sup>(49)</sup> However, in 1910 the Finance Committee recommended that a similar sum to the previous year (£200) be placed on the estimates by way of a pound for pound subsidy on the subscriptions of suburban libraries. This recommendation was adopted.<sup>(50)</sup> Here then we have the incongruous position of

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46. Minutes of Linwood Public Library p.8.

47. *ibid* Annual Meeting 1917.

48. C.C.C. Vol. 24, p.141.

49. *ibid* p.159.

50. *ibid* Vol.25, p.341.



a City Council which, while steadfastly refusing to devote one penny of public funds to the maintenance of an adequate city library, was quite willing to spend £200 (and later more) each year on grants to suburban libraries! Such inconsistency does not reflect credit on the city rulers.

In 1912 the New Brighton Library was revived,<sup>(51)</sup> and in September 1914 a library was opened at Redcliffs in a vacant butcher's shop.<sup>(52)</sup> The government subsidy ceased in 1915, except in those districts with less than 1000 inhabitants, and, under this new system, Redcliffs alone continued to participate, but this grant was also ended in 1917<sup>(53)</sup> and Redcliffs - like Sumner, New Brighton, and Papanui - being outside the city boundaries, received no subsidies, having to manage entirely on subscriptions and voluntary labour. With the conclusion of the war, a third attempt was made to establish a library in Addington, this time with more success.<sup>(54)</sup> A site was bought and paid for by the people of Addington and the City Council erected a building for the library.<sup>(55)</sup> Thus by 1922 the City Council was subsidising libraries at Addington, Linwood, St. Albans, Sydenham, Waltham, and Woolston, in addition to carrying out building renovations and alterations when required. In fact, in 1922, a completely new library building was erected in St. Albans on the sole condition that the building and books were to be insured by the Council, the premiums being paid by the Library.<sup>(56)</sup>

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About the end of 1923 Mr. J.E. Jones convened a meeting of the

51. N.Z. A to J. 1912 et seq.

52. Personal information from Mr. S. Betteley.

53. N.Z. A to J. 1915 et seq.

54. For first attempt vide supra p. 86. The second attempt in 1914 was postponed on account of the war.

55. Personal information from Mr. R.M. Flintoff.

56. Christchurch City Council Officers' Reports. 1922, p.15.



residents of St. Martins with the object of applying to the City Council for a hall for the district. The Council replied that they could not see their way clear to build a hall, but, if a site was secured, they would consider building a library. A committee was formed forthwith and, as the result of a canvass, enrolled 161 subscribers. Several members advanced the necessary amount to pay the deposit on the site and on February 5, 1927 the official opening took place. (57) Two years later the residents of Beckenham started a library in an empty shop but, in 1931 the Council obtained a free section from the Government, and let a contract for the erection of a library in brick and reinforced concrete, at a cost of £995. (58) This building was officially opened on September 12, 1931.

Meanwhile, in 1928, about half a dozen people had met in the Bowling Pavilion at Spreydon to discuss the possibility of starting a library. As Strange and Co. were giving up business in the city and were desirous of disposing of their staff library of 1000 books, it was agreed to purchase these, each member lending £5. (59) In 1929 a grant of £120 was received from the City Council to convert the old Spreydon Council Chambers into a library, with the result that it was possible to hold the official opening on June 13, 1930. (60)

In 1936 the City Council made a grant of £250 to the Canterbury Public Library; the first farthing of public money ever to have been expended on that institution. (61) Yet, in 1935, besides subsidies

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57. J.E. Jones and F. Holland "St. Martins Public Library", Christchurch Whitecombe & Tombs Ltd., 1948. p.4-5.

58. C.C.C. Officers' Reports, 1932.

59. Personal information from Mr. H.C. Eaton.

60. Minutes of Spreydon Library.

61. vide supra Ch. 3, p.64.



to ten suburban libraries the Council financed alterations and repairs at Sydenham, St. Albans, Waltham, Linwood, and Beckenham, spent £540 on enlargements at St. Martins, and approved plans for the erection of a library at Opawa at an estimated cost of £1500. A library for Opawa had been mooted by the Hillsborough Burgesses' Association in 1929 but the Council refused to make any immediate promise of a building. However, the erection of the city's youngest suburban library was commenced in January 1936 and was opened for the issue of books on June 1,<sup>(62)</sup> increasing the number of suburban libraries dependent on Council grants to eleven.

Criticism by some of the suburban libraries of the amount of financial assistance received from the City Council was answered by Cr. E.H. Andrews (Now Sir Ernest Andrews Kt.B., C.B.E.) in "The Press" of April 8, 1936.<sup>(63)</sup> He stated that in the period 1925-35 the Christchurch City Council had spent £7262 in subsidies, £383 in repairs, and £4561 in the erection of new library buildings - an average expenditure of £1220 per year. But these figures should have given the Council no cause for self-satisfaction as a leading article in the same issue pointed out, when the editor observed that Wanganui, with one fifth of the population of Christchurch and Palmerston North, with one sixth, each spent more than £1000 per year on their libraries, while Timaru, with a population of less than 19,000, spent £2000 per year. He continued that the library rates in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin produced £10,000, £7000, and £5200 respectively, and concluded by claiming that even Christchurch's small sum was spent wastefully.<sup>(64)</sup> By 1945 the subsidy to suburban libraries had been

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62. Personal information from Mr. H. Jackson.

63. "Press" April 8, 1936. (news item)

64. *ibid* (editorial)



- SUBURBAN LIBRARIES -



ST. MARTINS



ST. ALBANS



OPAWA



SYDENHAM



SPREYDON



LINWOOD



ADDINGTON



BECKENHAM



WALTHAM



increased to £1700, although, with the admission of New Brighton to the city in 1941 and of Sumner and Redcliffs in 1945, there were fourteen libraries to be catered for from this amount. The grants were graded according to the size of the libraries so that the largest ones received £150 each while the smallest received £60.<sup>(65)</sup> It seems pertinent to ask whether the City Council considered that the service provided by the suburban libraries was equal to that provided by, or which ought to have been provided by, the central public library.<sup>(66)</sup> No matter what the Council thought, it is obvious that, in comparison to other centres, the amount devoted to the library system each year was entirely inadequate. However, as the Council considered the suburban libraries worth over £20,000 of public money in the period from 1925 to 1945, it is imperative that we discover the real value of the service being rendered.

First let us consider the nature of the system. With the exception of Woolston, each library is maintained and serviced entirely by volunteer labour,<sup>(67)</sup> each having, on an average, seventeen librarians of whom approximately fifty per cent. are women. All but Redcliffs and Woolston are open six days a week for an average of an hour and twenty minutes each day, although some of them are open for three hours a day.<sup>(68)</sup> Considering the volunteer nature of the system these figures are, indeed, very creditable and the suburban libraries are commendable from the standpoint of civic interest and neighbourly co-operation. However, as Munn and Barr point out, they

65. "Press" February 10, 1947.

66. By 1945 the Council subsidy to the Canterbury Public Library was £2000 per year.

67. Although most pay small honorariums to the President and Secretary.

68. The figures in this paragraph have been compiled from a table prepared by Mr. F.H. Dephoff J.P. in 1948, a copy of which is at the Opawa Library.



are, like volunteer fire brigades, quite inadequate to the needs of a large city.<sup>(69)</sup> It is only to be expected that volunteer workers are little interested in accurate and elaborate cataloguing and card-indexing. Moreover, they have had no training in buying the better class of literature or in culling out the old, disused works which serve only to occupy valuable shelf space. When the City Library adds 5000 new volumes to the shelves of its circulating department skilled hands rapidly weed out 4500 volumes which are no longer in demand.<sup>(70)</sup> In this manner it is possible to ensure a steady supply of new books without being cramped for space. But figures and personal inspection show that many of the suburban libraries, while ensuring a steady supply of modern literature, neglect the equally important task of discarding the out-of-date. Hence they find themselves continually cramped for space and carrying a large stock of books which may not have been in circulation for two, three, or even five years.

The second important consideration must surely be the question of membership. This question involves the number of members in relation to the population of the area served and the qualifications for membership. Apart from a subscription varying from six to ten shillings per year,<sup>(71)</sup> there is no check on membership and, if one so wished, it would be possible to belong to every library in Christchurch. It will be observed that these figures compare more than favourably with those for the City Library, which, starved through municipal shortsightedness, is compelled to levy a subscript-

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69. Munn and Barr. op. cit. p.22.

70. Personal information from Mr. E.J. Bell.

71. These are 1948 figures. The average is 7/0<sup>2</sup>d.



ion of ten shillings per year. The effectiveness of the system is best illustrated diagrammatically and a study of the attached map (72) is very revealing. Suburban loyalty ensures, at any rate to a large extent, that the majority of residents prefer to patronise their own library, even if another is slightly more accessible. (73) This means that the effectiveness of any one library can be analysed with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Of course it must be realised that it is the total population figures for each area that are shown so that the position is not quite as disgraceful as it might at first seem. That these figures show a variation from 1 in 2.1 at St. Martins and 1 in 3.6 at Opawa to 1 in 23.6 at Linwood, 1 in 26.6 at Spreydon, and 1 in 47.5 at Woolston, is itself a commentary on the system.

However, it is not possible to deal adequately with this side of the question without dealing also with the problem of distribution. One glance at the map is sufficient to reveal not only the ridiculous nature of the present arrangement but also how impossible it is to ensure an effective coverage of the city. The very fact that libraries in St. Martins and Opawa serve 1551 and 2385 persons respectively while those in St. Albans and Linwood have to attempt to cope with approximately 42,000 between them (74) should be sufficient for any enthusiastic supporter of the existing system to hang his head in shame. It would be beyond the scope of this work to suggest improvements for the future but a brief comparison with the Auckland system will give some idea of the basic needs of a city such as Christchurch. In Auckland the library system, in 1934, provided a building for each

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72. See inside back cover.

73. Suburban librarians are in agreement on this point.

74. These two libraries have to serve, besides their own districts, North Richmond, Richmond, Avonside, North Linwood and East Linwood.



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.



library is not in a position to acquire many volumes that are essential in any library worthy of the name.

These remarks with regard to a branch system have, so far, been of a general nature, but it is only necessary to spend a quarter of an hour in almost any suburban library in Christchurch for them to become hard and undeniable facts. It is unfortunately true that many of these libraries do not even possess a good dictionary or an up-to-date set of encyclopedias. No one but a pedant would expect to see there the Encyclopedia Britannica or the Complete Oxford Dictionary. But likewise, no one would expect to find nothing at all. Many of the libraries speak with pride of their non-fiction sections and, should you ask, will hasten to assure you that "they are not one of those libraries which has nothing but westerns, thrillers and love-yarns." However, a further glance round the shelves shows that reference sections are almost non-existent while the non-fiction sections usually consist of only the lightest types of biography and travel.

Before proceeding to analyse a reason for this weakness, it would be unfair, in justice to those concerned, to overlook the attempted reform suggested in 1928. The impetus came from a letter, from Mr. G. Manning (Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association) to the chairman of the District Council, suggesting that the suburban public libraries should be of greater assistance to adult education, and advocating a conference of library delegates to consider the matter. (77)

As the true purpose of a public library has already been emphasised,

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77. Minutes of the Workers' Educational Association, Canterbury District Council, July 3, 1928.



it is only necessary to state here that, at the resulting conference, Mr. E.J. Bell outlined this purpose to the assembled delegates.

Continuing in similar vein, Mr. G. Manning dealt with the manner in which libraries could be utilised; by securing standard educational writings and books of an authoritative nature on modern problems; by guiding readers in their choice of books; by organising periodic lectures and discussions within the library; by supplying a list of books of an educative nature with a view to the establishment of an inter-loan service. Before proceeding further it is my considered opinion that these suggestions could have provided an excellent nucleus for reform on the basis of a centralised or semi-centralised system.

However, in the general discussion that followed there was no unanimity of opinion. While the Linwood delegates averred that many of the suggestions already applied in their institution those from Sydenham declared that they could not support the idea of guiding readers in their choice of books. Furthermore, the representatives of the St. Martins Library stated that, while the financial position would not permit the expense of non-fiction, lack of time would prevent voluntary helpers being present to advise readers. Although the meeting adjourned on an unpromising note Mr. Manning, in summarizing the discussion, pointed out that three definite and practical suggestions had been made; the displaying of selected books on a prominently placed table; the issue of selected magazines to encourage the use of non-fiction; the establishment of a special non-fiction department. If the suburban libraries adopted these suggestions, the speaker felt sure that they could confidently approach the City Council



for further financial assistance, but if they continued to make the provision of light fiction their only purpose, he expressed doubts as to whether the City Council would continue to be impressed with the nature of their work. (78)

When the conference resumed after the delegates had reported to their respective committees, the matter seemed no further advanced. Although many of those present showed an intelligent understanding of the nature of the problem, their very speeches showed also the hopeless inadequacy of the existing system. While looking to the setting up of a non-fiction department as an essential feature in the evolution of a suburban library, Mr E. Parlane of Addington said that the fact that all the work was purely voluntary and that the wants of the members had to be catered for impeded the development of such a section. This of course is one of the gravest defects of a subscription system. In order to maintain a high membership it is necessary to supply, not what the readers should read, but what they want to read. However, the Linwood delegate, after having admitted the difficulty of enticing readers into a non-fiction section, added that, when once established, its popularity increased by leaps and bounds. Nevertheless, a further difficulty was raised by Mr. F. Holland and Mr. J. Jones from St. Martins who, although realising that the evolution of any library was towards providing books of an educative nature, reiterated their woeful lack of finance. That all the delegates were not possessed of such sound commonsense was shown by one gentleman declaring that, although the majority of reading was of light fiction, he felt it must be of some educative value! (79)

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78. *ibid.* October 18, 1928.

79. *ibid.* November 29, 1928.



It is now apparent that four forces obstructed the committees; shortage of finance; the necessity for voluntary service; the knowledge to choose non-fiction; the subscription system and its attendant evils. Because of these difficulties no action was taken, and the City Council continued to dole out its annual subsidy regardless of the fact that public money was being squandered on third rate literature. The educational value of the suburban libraries remained practically nil.

One reason for this, and possibly the chief one, is undoubtedly the subscription basis; and these following remarks apply also, though to a slightly lesser extent, to the Canterbury Public Library. While on a visit to Christchurch in 1947, Mr. L.R. McColvin, librarian to the city of Westminster and a noted English authority, contended that the system was founded on a series of false basic principles, and chiefly, that it should be a free library service and not a subscription one. "Libraries have to be free and open to everyone. What is being done in Christchurch now is to offer a limited service to a limited number of people." Furthermore, he pointed out that public libraries should provide all classes of reading not better supplied by commercial and technical libraries, and that subscription libraries are inclined to cater for the lower denominators in reading tastes and, as a result, come into competition with the cheapest purveyors of books.<sup>(80)</sup> A substantially similar criticism of the city library service had been made thirteen years earlier when Munn and Barr declared that the suburban libraries were, in effect, nothing more than voluntary groups of neighbours engaged in

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80. "Star-Sun", February 8, 1947.



supplying themselves with pleasant reading matter, partly at public expense.<sup>(81)</sup> It is indicative of the general lack of interest that the majority of the people showed such apathy in the face of exploitation by a few of their fellows. Worthy councillors would hold up their hands in horror if it were suggested that a charge should be made for admission to Hagley Park and the other city reserves. They have never been reserved for subscribers or even for ratepayers. It is a great pity that with such a worthy concept of the needs of the body these same men were prepared to overlook the needs of the mind.

The longer the subscription system continues the greater the danger that the literary taste of the public of Christchurch will be permanently impaired. This danger was emphasised by the editor of "New Zealand Libraries" in 1938 when commenting on the rapid growth of the shop libraries throughout the country. In suggesting that a good many libraries in New Zealand, particularly those in the larger and medium sized municipalities, would be faced with the unpleasant duty of recording a substantial decrease in issues, he made the following challenging comment.

"This is due to the activities of the shop libraries which have taken away a large part of the light fiction reading public ... This part of the public, since it is the part which pays the most, received far more attention than it has deserved, and in libraries where the free system is the ideal the financial loss will be regretted, but the reduction of the proportion of fiction lending to other parts of library work will be realised as being largely a help and not a detriment. It is a fact that for years past our libraries have been relying on revenue received from the readers of ephemeral reprint fiction rather than on subsidies, which as educational institutions striving against difficulties to fulfil their proper functions, they might reasonably have expected from the rates. The necessity for providing light fiction, coupled with the fact that this has been a moderately lucrative enterprise, has enabled library committees to rely on the revenue received from this source and to feel satisfied that a library has been

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81. Munn and Barr op. cit. p.22.



discharging its full responsibilities to the public if it has been able to show a large fiction issue.

This is a position which would not for a moment be tolerated either in Great Britain or the United States where the function of the public library is realised as educational, vocational and only to some extent recreational. The order in New Zealand has tended to become reversed. Indeed things have come to such a pass that public libraries are coming into actual disfavour with some sections of the community, because their light fiction service is not as slick, fresh and up-to-date as that supplied by shop libraries." (82)

This passage has been quoted in full because to my mind it gives a perfectly clear and concise account of the dangers of the subscription system. Christchurch suburban libraries which complain of competition from the commercial book clubs are obviously not fulfilling their proper function.

But it is not only the libraries that have mistakenly believed that their service to the community has been all that it should be. A similar attitude has been characteristic of many City Councillors, and so has militated against any satisfactory reform. The first major stir occurred early in 1937 when, at the annual meeting of the Addington Library, the Mayor (Mr. J.W. Beanland) renewed his assurance that, as far as he was concerned, the suburban libraries would not be "absorbed into the central system." Since this course had never been suggested, the Editor of "The Press", in a following editorial, suggested that it might seem reasonable to ask Mr. Beanland to go beyond negations and explain his views on the library situation in Christchurch. The Editor outlined the system which operated in Wellington and Auckland and opined that, as arrangements for the transfer of the main library to municipal control were in the offing,

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82. "New Zealand Libraries" (Official Bulletin of the N.Z. Libraries Association) Wellington, April 1938. N.S. Vol. 1, No. 9, p.1.



the Council would soon be in a position to provide, through each suburban library, a vastly improved service. He concluded on the enquiring note that it would be interesting to know whether the Mayor's promise to prevent suburban libraries from being "absorbed" was a promise to oppose this very necessary degree of centralisation. (83) The Mayor's silence on the matter was eloquent.

Three weeks later, speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Waltham Library, Councillor Andrews expressed the opinion that the suburban libraries were doing a very noble and useful work in serving their respective localities and it would be a disaster if they were allowed to go out of existence. This statement showed an even greater dread of some unknown peril than did that of the Mayor. In order to safeguard myself from any suggestion of misrepresentation I prefer to quote the remainder of his speech verbatim.

"Many people complain that they cannot obtain books of reference from suburban libraries and for that reason would do away with suburban libraries altogether. They forget, however, that suburban libraries are for the most part unable to provide the expensive books such as are required for reference purposes. A reference library is a library to which professional men - doctors, lawyers, scientists and engineers - can have access, and from which they may be able to obtain those works that will help them in their separate studies. A thoroughly well equipped reference library in the centre of the city would meet those requirements. People would not mind travelling some distance to avail themselves of the opportunity for self education that such a library would afford. But I do not think that people would travel some distance simply for the sake of light reading. Light reading is best supplied by the suburban libraries, and I, for one, hope that the suburban libraries will continue to exist." (84)

Surely this attitude shows complete and utter ignorance of the meaning of the words "public library". It would seem apparent that the speaker regarded such an institution as synonymous with a commercial

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83. "Press" February 12, 1937.

84. *ibid* March 4, 1937.



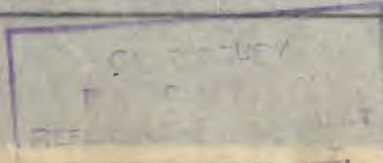
book club. His ideas with regard to the users of a reference library would also have received a rude shock if he had spent a few hours in the one in the city, where the diversity of callers is amazing.

In his leading article of the following morning, the Editor overlooked this mistaken conviction in his eagerness to reiterate the advantages which would accrue from a centralised system.<sup>(85)</sup> The Councillor, in reply, said that, unfortunately, only his reference to the continuation of the suburban libraries was reported and that the rest of his speech dealt with the very subjects mentioned by the Editor. Evidently he also had stressed the advantages that would accrue from bulk buying and the interchange of books.<sup>(86)</sup> But this still does not excuse his apparent woeful ignorance of the functions of a public library.

Here the matter was allowed to rest pending the completion of negotiations for the transfer of the Canterbury Public Library to the city. But, just over twelve months later, Mr. E.J. Bell, speaking at a meeting of the Canterbury branch of the New Zealand Libraries Association, said that a library rate of a farthing in the pound would bring in about £12,000 per year, the cost to the average ratepayer being approximately four shillings and twopence. In support of this, Dr. J. Guthrie (a member of the City Council) declared that it was the duty of every local body to supply education and instruction wherever possible together with occupation for leisure time. He for one would not be happy until there was a free central library and a number of

85. *ibid* March 5, 1937.

86. *ibid* March 6, 1937.





suburban libraries much more thoroughly nourished.<sup>(87)</sup> These gentlemen showed realisation of the point, overlooked by many others, that it is useless to educate a child to the age of fifteen if there are going to be no further provisions made to enable him to continue his education. In this modern age of specialisation and internationalism, it is more than ever essential that a wide range of good literature and popular reference works should be readily available to all members of the community, in order that they may understand how the other half of the world lives. Understanding and toleration are two of the first essentials of world peace and good books are a first essential of their development.

Another year passed with nothing done. The subject was, however, brought to public notice once more when, speaking at a meeting of the Spreydon Library, Councillor Andrews said that it was a question as to whether or not the suburban libraries should be supported by a rate. By emphasising that he was not much in favour of libraries being entirely supported by a rate, and that people should be prepared to pay something for their recreation,<sup>(88)</sup> he showed that his knowledge of the correct function of a library had not advanced. However, it was made obvious that there was no unanimity on the Council when, speaking at the same meeting, Councillor E. Parlane considered that the time had arrived when the City Council should strike a special library rate. He continued that the general rate was very modest when the return received by the people was taken into account, and he expressed the wish that, when the time came to strike a rate, the people would regard it as necessary to improve the social amenities of

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87. *ibid* May 20, 1937.

88. "Star-Sun" July 22, 1938.



the city. (89) The first speaker apparently overlooked the fact that a library supported from the rates is still paid for by the people who use it - the difference being that more people pay less for it and that more people can use it.

Nevertheless the library grant for 1938 included only £700 for the suburban libraries and £400 for the city library. The Museum also received a miserable pittance. While it is a recognised duty of the Council to husband the ratepayers' money, this provides no excuse for the neglect and financial starvation of institutions which should be rendering essential educational service to the community. The case was admirably summarized by Dr. Guthrie in a letter to "The Press".

"The duty of civic authorities to provide their citizens with the means of intellectual culture is recognised in every civilised community. Christchurch seems to be the only exception ... Is it the people or their rulers upon whom we are to fasten the blame for this intellectual poverty?" (90)

This concluding sentence merits careful consideration.

Yet the City Council and the ratepayers of Christchurch sat complacently by while civic funds continued to be expended on recreational literature for a small section of the community. When addressing the Town Clerks' Institute of New Zealand at Christchurch in March 1939, the Director of the Country Library Service (Mr. G.T. Alley) usefully commented on the example of the Dunedin Public Library which, having become a free library, abandoned the attempt to "satisfy the people who clamour for the current literary rubbish", and pursued the policy of building up a valuable stock of books. (91)

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89. *ibid.*

90. "Press" August 16, 1938.

91. *ibid.* March 16, 1939.



As the book clubs seem to have beaten the subscription libraries at a game they need no longer play the opportunity is open to make public libraries provide a public service worth paying for as such.

It would no doubt be expected that such sharp criticisms, as have been detailed in preceding pages, would have had some effect on the policy - or at least on the civic pride - of the most slothful municipal council. But at the annual meeting of the Spreydon Library in 1938, Councillor Andrews said that, although criticism was still fairly frequent about the constitution of libraries and the library system in Christchurch, he personally considered that the system was "on the whole pretty fair".<sup>(92)</sup> This prompted strong editorial comment from "The Press" which, although a notoriously conservative paper, has taken an enlightened view of the matter throughout. While admitting that it was only fair that an efficient suburban library, measured by prevailing standards, should be praised, the Editor declared that Councillor Andrews lost, among praises and regrets, the opportunity to promote an advance in library organisation and service in Christchurch. In contrast to the councillor's opinion, the Editor considered that "on the whole, however, what we are doing is disgracefully bad, and when Councillor Andrews went on to forecast, 'a change in the system of subsidies' enabling the libraries to 'get some more funds to carry on their good work', he seemed to forecast nothing but a more liberal extension of the present bad system. Christchurch stands far behind Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin and it will never catch up till the central principle is adopted and until a library rate frees library policy

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92. *ibid* July 22, 1940.



from subscriber control. Councillor Nuttall saw this and said so too. Councillor Andrews, though he was saying something very like it two years ago, turned his back on reform. It will not come unless every occasion is taken to explain and recommend the system which is still misunderstood and distrusted by too many suburban library workers and subscribers." (93)

For stark realism and profound common-sense it would be difficult to find a better analysis of the situation. The Editor's fears were justified when, speaking at the annual meeting of the St. Albans Library a few nights later, Mr. F.H. Dephoff, a prominent suburban library worker, declared that if free libraries were introduced it would be just as sensible to give everyone free rides on the trams, free tepid baths and free electricity. "It would cripple the suburban libraries to be put on a paid staff basis." (94) This attitude shows what a vast amount of educational propaganda will be necessary to convince people of the basic faults of the system, and it was strongly attacked by Councillor E.A. Sharp who said that "people who are busy fighting a new idea don't see how it could fit in with their own." The speaker deprecated the suburban outlook of Mr. Dephoff and many of his fellow workers.

At this same meeting, Councillor Andrews, whose comments to date have been largely of a negative nature, laid down a definite policy. "I am not prepared to admit that the present system is bad. I support the voluntary system - (cries of 'Hear, hear') - and I have never said anything different." He continued that "The Press" pointed

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93. *ibid* July 23, 1940.

94. *ibid* July 26, 1940.



to the success elsewhere of paid staffs, but he would be sorry to see libraries here like one he saw in Wellington. "There was a paid librarian sitting there and not a bit interested in the subscribers. Now you wouldn't catch volunteer librarians doing that." In conclusion, he advocated City control of the central library, but not control, by the central library, of the suburban libraries. The battle of words concluded with a leader in "The Press" which pointed out that if the Councillor's suggestion, in July 1938,<sup>(95)</sup> that a library rate of one eighth of a penny in the pound would yield £6000 per year, was not "something like the advocacy of a library rate", then Spreydon was in Siberia. In conclusion, the Editor suggested that his contrastive picture of the indifferent, lazy, paid librarian and the alert, busy, voluntary librarian was "pretty but pointless." (96).

Here the matter rested for seven years, possibly because, with all efforts being concentrated on winning the worst war in the history of the world, people were too occupied to wage battle on the home front as well. This, at any rate, is the more charitable view-point although, having regard for this history of the library service, another reason also springs readily to mind. Whatever the reason, the Editor devoted his leading articles to the state of the war and the Councillor (shortly afterwards elevated to the Mayoralty) devoted his speeches to patriotic exhortations.

However, by 1947 the war was over and once again people could turn their eyes to home affairs. In a special newspaper article

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95. "Star-Sun" July 22, 1938.

96. "Press" July 26, 1940.



entitled "Public Libraries in Christchurch," N.H. Buchanan reviewed the history of the service.<sup>(97)</sup> When dealing with the suburban libraries, he commented, "With all their shortcomings they are healthy institutions." He pointed out that under the existing system there was an unfair distribution of the money among the various libraries,<sup>(98)</sup> and that it also appeared doubtful wisdom to hand out so much money without any suggestion that, as public money, it should be spent on certain types of books of lasting value. Although he considered that the libraries should be helped, he believed that obligations should be required of them in return, and that it should be possible to fit them into a more comprehensive scheme which would give them more and better books without robbing them of their independence. But, as in the past, nothing was done.

It has already been stated that the suburban libraries have their association but otherwise have no organic connection.<sup>(99)</sup> Until 1947 all the suburban libraries belonged to the New Zealand Libraries Association whose chief service to them was to negotiate with booksellers for discounts. However, the libraries were dissatisfied with the service which they were receiving and, with the exception of Opawa,<sup>(100)</sup> resigned and formed a local association. This association has encouraged friendship among the various libraries but does not interfere domestically. In fact, its main function appears to be to keep the financial position of its members before the

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97. *ibid* February 7, 1947.

98. The present yardstick is the amount of money received in subscriptions, whatever the subscription charged. The City Council subsidises £1 for £1 up to £50 and 12/6 for £1 thereafter with a maximum subsidy of £150.

99. *vide supra* p. 97.

100. Opawa belongs to the local association also.



City Council. Besides being staunch supporters of the existing system, the members are even opposed to mass importation of books through the central library on the grounds that overseas buyers are not familiar with their individual tastes! One could readily write a number of poignant comments on this attitude. Another tenet of their belief is that loss of individuality would mean loss of interest, which, together with the previous argument, suggests that, if they were no longer able to purchase the books which they wished to read, they would not read those which were purchased for them. It may seem a harsh criticism, but to a disinterested observer it would appear that a number of people in the city are so determined to be big frogs in their own small ponds that they are willing to see hundreds of tadpoles die for the want of a larger pond.

The suburban libraries claim that they have saved the City Council thousands of pounds over the years. Unfortunately, the City Council over the years has apparently been too blind or too parsimonious to see the fallacy of this assertion. "Travel and reading are the two main agencies by which a nation attains culture and breaks the shackles of parochial thought. The average citizen must depend upon the latter, and his need for continuous cultural development demands efficient and up-to-date libraries."<sup>(101)</sup> The value of culture cannot be measured on the monetary scale, but if, as I consider likely, it can be measured by the standard of a city's libraries, then Christchurch is very heavily in debt. The practice of making public libraries free to the public is justified by exactly the same principle that has made public education free. The

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101. Hon. Robert Masters, M.L.C. Minister of Education, 1934. In Munn and Barr. op. cit. p.41.



Canterbury Public Library has, in the past, been debarred from fulfilling its appropriate function through shortsightedness and stinginess. In the suburbs, a similar state of affairs exists. One way, public funds are being used to enable suburban libraries to compete with commercial book clubs; the other way, public funds are being uneconomically used to satisfy the tastes of less than six per cent. of the population. Now that the city library has been acquired by the city authorities, there appears to be no adequate excuse for the prolongation of this unhappy state of affairs.



CHAPTER VJUVENILE LIBRARIES

Few of our other gains will be of much consequence if we lag behind in our cultural pursuits. In this modern age, labour saving inventions must have the ultimate effect of reducing the work-a-day week and creating more and more leisure time for the average man. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the youth of to-day are educated to make the most advantageous use of the increased leisure that may well be theirs when they reach adulthood. Mere literacy is insufficient in any country that claims to be to the forefront in advancing civilization and culture. It has been said that, "Of all the human relaxations that are free from guilt, none so dignified as reading."<sup>(1)</sup> With increased leisure it should be possible to ensure increased reading; it is as true in the twentieth century as it was in the sixteenth that "reading maketh a full man."

However, it is essential that the reading habit be acquired when young for it is only by instilling good reading habits into children that a permanent appreciation of books is likely to be developed. In many of the adult libraries in New Zealand the quality of reading is adversely affected by the subscription basis,

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1. Egerton Brydges. "The Ruminator" No. 24.



for they must attract the largest possible number of subscribers because they need their fees. With few exceptions, this is achieved by offering the lightest and most exciting novels, often to the exclusion of books of greater merit.<sup>(2)</sup> One disastrous result of this system is that the public libraries are not, as overseas, generally accepted as a natural and necessary extension of the education scheme. Fortunately, it would appear that a change of attitude is in the offing as, for a number of years, the libraries in the four main centres have been operating free juvenile libraries and this idea is gradually extending to smaller centres. Alongside this promising development is the rapid growth of school libraries throughout the country, aided largely by the Country Library Service. If the children of to-day grow up accustomed to free libraries and good literature they should, in the logical course of events, demand free libraries and good literature in adulthood. And when the public libraries of the future are free they will then be in a position to fulfil their correct function in the life of the community.

It has already been suggested that the Board of Governors of Canterbury College, although often in desperate financial straits, had the interests of the Canterbury Public Library at heart. This suggestion assumes even more substantial proportions when it is realised that, as early as 1908, a juvenile section, which, by 1911, had a membership of 253,<sup>(3)</sup> was established.<sup>(4)</sup> Although at first it consisted of some books transferred from the main library, it contained by 1914, 2175 volumes. In that year a new reading room and library for the children gave them a spacious and attractive room, the

2. Munn and Barr, *op. cit.* p.13.

3. B. of G. 1912, p.29.

4. *ibid* 1909, p.10.



popularity of which was so great that even this accommodation was often taxed to its utmost limits, while in one year the total of 11,731 books was issued for home reading.<sup>(5)</sup>

When the juvenile department was established in 1908, all children between the ages of ten and fifteen years of age were admitted free. Although the membership did not increase as rapidly as at first expected, it soon began to progress, and by 1916 had reached 530, while the 16,020 volumes circulated in that year represented the encouraging average of thirty per member.<sup>(6)</sup> This junior service was extended in 1917 to those between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years on the payment of an annual subscription of two shillings and sixpence, and by the middle of that year almost 200 volumes had been added to this section, over sixty of which dealt with subjects ranging from history and travel to nature-study, science, and biography.<sup>(7)</sup> Making a statement to the press on the question of the children's library, Mr. Bell said that the object was to teach the children to read only the best literature. In general, he said that it was recognised both in the United Kingdom and the United States that adult use of libraries was dictated largely by training in youth. A public library without a juvenile section was the exception rather than the rule in both of these countries. It had been shown that, if children did not have access to good books, they almost invariably read rubbish, and children had far too many opportunities to read literature that blunted and vulgarised their taste. As the public library was the natural extension of the public school, he pointed

5. *ibid* 1915, p.28.

6. *ibid* 1917, p.36.

7. L.T. July 27, 1917.



out the importance of placing children in close connection with it, before they left school, by encouraging them to attend at the library like other citizens and to learn to use and appreciate their own institutions.<sup>(8)</sup>

By 1918 the membership of the juvenile library had increased to 850 and twenty-three intermediates were taking advantage of the reduced subscription.<sup>(9)</sup> Unfortunately, the early twenties showed a decline in membership due, no doubt, to a large amount of post-war sickness, especially the influenza epidemic of 1918, and to the fact that lack of finance resulted in a reduced supply of books and insufficient room. However, on December 3, 1924 a new juvenile wing, forty-two feet long by thirty-two feet wide, was opened with a lecture room of the same size directly above. The library was surrounded with low shelves to accommodate 3000 books and with reading desks to seat from thirty-five to forty children. At that time there was probably no finer children's department in any library in the Dominion.<sup>(10)</sup> The opening of this fine new building was described by the Librarian as "the most significant event in the history of the Library."<sup>(11)</sup> When it was opened, 300 children hastened to take out books, but by the end of the first month this number had doubled.

This proved to be the turning point in the history of the children's library. During the following twelve months 24,319 volumes were issued to about 1200 children while large numbers patronized the reference books and the splendid magazines provided. Towards the

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8. *ibid.*

9. B. of G. 1918, p. 39.

10. "Press" November 25, 1924.

11. B. of G. 1925, p. 37.





THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY 1924



end of 1925 a campaign for books and money was inaugurated resulting in the collection of £330 and the gratifying number of 1000 books suitable for boys and girls.<sup>(12)</sup> Membership continued to flourish and the year 1931 saw the 2000 mark passed for the first time<sup>(13)</sup> and, in succeeding years, it has only once fallen below that figure.

Another popular innovation, resultant on the increased area made available by the building additions, was the series of weekly story hours during the winter months. Although an established custom in other countries this was a novel introduction in New Zealand and, when inaugurated in 1925, the series was attended by approximately 900 children, the average attendance being eighty.<sup>(14)</sup> However, in the following year, these Saturday morning sessions drew only an average attendance of thirty.<sup>(15)</sup> and, although the 1927 story hours were slightly more popular, attendances fell off so drastically in the early winter that it was considered fruitless to attempt to keep the scheme functioning. In a further attempt to stimulate interest, a Children's Reading Club was formed in 1930 under the guidance of Miss E. Chaplin B.A., and, although the attendance was not particularly large, the members proved very keen and good progress was achieved during the winter months.<sup>(16)</sup> But, like its predecessor, lack of sustained interest proved an immovable stumbling block and after the winter of 1933 nothing more is heard of it. Commendable as these introductions are, it would not appear that any stimulus was necessary for throughout the early thirties membership remained steady about the 2000 mark. What would appear to be of more permanent importance was

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12. *ibid* 1926, p.37.

13. *ibid* 1932, p.37.

14. *ibid* 1926, p.37.

15. *ibid* 1927, p.36-37.

16. *ibid* 1931, p.38.



the appointment, in June 1926, of Miss R. Ray M.A. as children's adviser to aid children in the selection of books and to give a series of talks to boys and girls on using the library. (17)

That a creditable standard had been attained in this important sphere of library work was indicated in the Carnegie Report in 1934 where it was stated that the Remuera branch Auckland, the Newtown branch Wellington, and the Canterbury Public Library all contained children's rooms which did not suffer by comparison with overseas collections. (18) Moreover, it was pointed out that lending privileges to children in Christchurch were free, this being at the time the only large subscription library in which that feature was found. (19) The report continued,

"Too frequently, however, there is no effort made to serve the children, or the attempt is so feeble that it deserves no credit ... This failure to grasp the importance of service to children seriously detracts from the value of New Zealand libraries." (20)

In the light of this statement the Librarian and staff had every reason to be justly proud of their work in the children's section. It would certainly appear that it was second to none in New Zealand.

In spite of financial difficulties, the library continued to progress and by 1937 there were 2203 children enrolled on its books, the large majority of whom were active readers. (21) The enthusiasm of the children was typified by the fact that, when shortage of money presaged economies, a number of senior members were co-opted as volunteer "Helpers" in 1936 (22) and continued in this capacity for a

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17. *ibid* 1927, p.37.

18. Munn and Barr, *op. cit.* p.14.

19. *ibid* p. 21-2.

20. *ibid* p.14.

21. B.of G. 1937, p.36.

22. *ibid* 1936, p.38.



number of years. When the School Library Service was established in 1939 it would be expected that there would have been a large decrease in the membership of the juvenile library yet, although eighteen schools joined the new scheme, only 787 less books were issued from the city library where the membership was maintained at 2600. (23)

By 1937 it was apparent that many schools had definitely accepted the value of library facilities as an aid to education for, in that year, classes commenced to visit the Public Library to learn the use and value of catalogues and reference works. (24) These visits had become a recognised part of the school curriculum by 1942 and the Librarian reported that they were looked upon by many scholars as one of the most interesting features of school life. (25) A further interesting development appeared with the introduction of the first children's "Book Week" in November 1945, as a result of which a markedly increased interest was shown in books dealing with travel, science, aircraft, radio, and "how to make things". (26) Much of this increased interest in the children's library was due to the work of the librarian, Miss H. Cowey, who gave displays and talks to classes and encouraged children to read better class literature. Largely as a result of her efforts membership steadily increased till, in 1947, the 3000 mark was passed, while the issue for the year reached 50,167, an unprecedented figure. (27) These figures speak volumes for the work of Miss Cowey for, by this date, the service provided by the

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23. *ibid* 1940, p.17.

24. "Star-Sun" July 22, 1937.

25. B. of G. 1943, p.20.

26. *ibid* 1946, p.23.

27. *ibid* 1947, p.22.



School Library Service was so vastly improved that it would not have been at all surprising if the membership of the juvenile section had shown a considerable decrease. Yet, by the following year, another 500 children had been enrolled, many becoming members when their classes visited the library for instruction. (28)

As has already been stressed, it is essential that the closest connection should be maintained between the school and the library. Although it is impossible to trace the establishment of school libraries in Christchurch, it is likely that a number of them started in the years following the introduction of the Government subsidy in 1913. (29) This grant, which commenced at £527, showed a steady increase until it reached £3494 by 1931. However, it was reduced in the following year to £1431 on account of the commercial depression and, when conditions did not improve, it was discontinued in 1933.

Although the Chief Inspector of Primary Schools reported in 1930 that the teaching of reading in Canterbury was in some respects improving, the most pleasing feature being the increased use of school and class libraries, (30) this should not be construed to suggest that the library service was by any means adequate. When the Munn and Barr report was published in 1934, it declared that most elementary schools had collections of books which, only by courtesy, could be called libraries; the exceptions that they noted did not include Christchurch. It was pointed out that, under existing conditions, the schools generally were without funds for library purposes with the consequence that they had to depend almost entirely

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28. *ibid* 1948, p.21.

29. N.Z. A to J 1914, E.1. p.65.

30. *ibid* 1930, E.2. p.21.



on their own efforts to provide library facilities. (31) Until the depression the subsidising, by the Department of Education, of local efforts to provide book collections had inspired many school committees and masters to form school libraries, but when the subsidy was withheld library development evidently almost ceased.

However, a number of factors combined to bring about a change. In the first place, the passing of the commercial depression made possible the reintroduction of the government subsidy in 1936, (32) and coupled with this was the advent to power of a government pledged to safeguard the interests of the common man. But possibly most momentous of all were the overseas tours of Dr. G.H. Schofield, Parliamentary Librarian and Mr. N.T. Lambourne, Director of Education. On their return, these gentlemen considered that the library and the workshop should become the central features of the schools, and that juvenile libraries should be well stocked with books attractively arranged, and staffed with assistants competent to guide young people in their choice of reading matter. (33) With this stimulation of interest, a number of schools commenced to increase and improve their library facilities although, when speaking at a meeting of the Canterbury School Committees' Association in 1937, Mr. Bell said that some teachers were antagonistic to the introduction of libraries into schools on the ground that it meant more work for the staff. On the other hand, in schools where the teachers had offered assistance willingly, the scheme had proved a great success. (34)

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31. Munn and Barr *op. cit.* p.44.

32. N.Z. A to J 1936. E.1. p.36.

33. "Press" September 11, 1935.

34. "Star-Sun" July 22, 1937.



As has already been shown, the work being done by the Canterbury Public Library was very encouraging, but hardly anything was being done to provide primary schools with their own libraries. There was no organised effort to cultivate the reading habit in Christchurch, nor did the Public Library work with the schools to the same extent as in Auckland and Wellington. (35) That the Government was also aware of the deficiencies of the existing system was made apparent in the report of the Chief Inspector in 1938.

"Libraries are a very essential part of school equipment... If the pupil is to continue his education in after school days he must, while at school, have opportunities for experiencing the delight a well stocked library can give. Books in the mass must fascinate rather than repel him ..." (36)

Of the many people who appreciated the inadequacy of school library facilities in Christchurch, one person in particular stands forth as the precursor of better times. He was Mr. H. Wilson, headmaster of Phillipstown, who, seeing the existing libraries as lacking or inadequate, induced the Canterbury Headmasters' Association to sponsor improvements. Accordingly, a meeting was held on November 16, 1938 to inaugurate the Christchurch City and Suburban Public Schools' Library Association. Delegates representing the City Council, Canterbury College, School Committees, the Headmasters' Association, the Canterbury Public Library, and the Canterbury Education Board were present and the constitution was adopted. (37) The object of the Association was, eventually, to supply books to children of Standard 111 to Form 11 inclusive on the allocation of of a book and a quarter per pupil. When a school joined there was

35. *ibid.*

36. N.Z. A to J 1938. E.2, p.4.

37. Minutes of Christchurch City and Suburban Public Schools' Library Association November 16, 1938.



to be an initial charge of two shillings per head on all children, exclusive of Standard 111, which was to be found by the School Committees. This was reducible to ninepence in succeeding years. (38) The scheme, which was introduced (for Standard 1V, Form I, and Form 11) on February 1, 1939, met with immediate success and the first annual report recorded that seventeen schools, representing 1730 pupils, were participating, while the librarian reported book issues of 15,220 (of which 5025 were non-fiction) from a stock of 2212 books for the first six months operation. (39) Small wonder that in his report for 1939 the Senior Inspector of Primary Schools said, when obviously referring to Christchurch, that

"At present the best scheme in operation is in one education district where a Schools' Library Service operated by a Municipal Library in collaboration with the Board provides a fine range of books not only to town schools but to most of the country schools as well." (40)

At the annual meeting in 1940, it was decided to reduce the levy to ninepence per head (although the initial entry fee of two shillings was maintained) and to extend the service to Standard 111, provided the financial position was not jeopardised by the change. (41) However, it was not lack of finance but lack of books that was destined to be the cause of greatest concern. Although indent orders were placed with London firms, shipments coming to the Dominion were often lost by enemy action but, in spite of all and thanks to the men of the Merchant Marine, 808 volumes of good fiction and 280 of non-fiction were secured, bringing the total book stock to 3084. An added strain was placed on the book stock by the extension of the service to

38. Personal information from Mr. N.P. Lory.

39. Annual Report of Christchurch City and Suburban Public Schools' Library Association, July 10, 1939.

40. N.Z. A to J 1940, E 2, p.4. This refers also to the Travelling Library for Rural Schools. vide infra p.130.

41. A.R. of C.C. and S.P.S.L.A. June 11, 1940.



Standard 111 children and, owing to the scarcity of books in that grade, many had to be hurriedly obtained from other New Zealand centres. (42)

Despite difficulties caused by war conditions, the service continued to grow, aided financially, no doubt, by a share of the Government grant for public school libraries which, in 1942, was increased from £5000 to £15,000. When announcing this increase, the Minister of Education said that, although one or two districts already conducted excellent school library schemes in co-operation with municipal libraries, there was, in general, no greater educational need in the schools than the provision of good, well illustrated books. (43) In spite of a further rise in the price of books (from an average of six shillings and threepence per volume to eight shillings and ninepence) and the delivery of only fifty to seventy-five per cent. of orders, the scheme was extended during 1942 to a further five schools, bringing the total to twenty-three, 3417 pupils being active members. (44) No praise can be too high for the resourcefulness and determination of the organisers who, throughout the difficult war years, not only managed to hold their own in the face of rising book prices and uncertain supply, but also managed to accept the even greater responsibilities involved in widening the scope of the service under such conditions. That there were adults in the city of Christchurch sufficiently concerned with the reading needs of their young charges to ensure that they would not be deprived of the chance of future cultural benefit was a good omen for the post-war period.

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42. *ibid* June 16, 1941.

43. N.Z. A to J, 1942 E 1, p.2.

44. A.R. of C.C. and S.P.S.L.A., May 31, 1943.



By 1945 the number of children participating exceeded 5650 and twenty-five schools belonged to the scheme; but the librarian reported that the past year had been the most difficult period the English publishers had experienced during the war years. The publication of children's books had been considerably reduced and, although indent orders had been placed through the Education Board and the local booksellers, the results had been disappointing. To aggravate the position, the wear and tear on war time productions had been excessive and 266 well worn and dirty volumes had had to be withdrawn. Nevertheless, two more schools were admitted during that year but, when a third applied, it was advised that owing to shortage of book stocks it would have to be placed on the waiting list.<sup>(45)</sup> In six war years this was the first time that it had been necessary to refuse admission. Although the book stock continued to increase, many of the volumes could not be circulated because of the problem of binding. In 1946 only a hundred were bound while a further 350 were waiting to be done. "Book Week" held in November 1945 created added interest and another large city school clamoured to join the scheme. When the librarian resigned in that year, her place was filled by Miss Cowey whose work in the Children's Library has already been mentioned.<sup>(46)</sup>

With the successful conclusion of the war, it was possible to extend the service to five new schools, although the two Lyttelton schools withdrew to join the Country Library Service, leaving the number of participating schools at twenty-eight. Mr. Bell reported that, as a result of a talk with Mr. H. McCaskill of the National

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45. *ibid* June 23, 1945.

46. *ibid* July 15, 1946. Miss Cowey continued in both positions.



Library Service, an offer of 1000 books had been made, which the committee gratefully resolved to accept. Supplies of books continued to come to hand in very fair numbers and in improved bindings, especially from the United States. In addition to books from this source, others were secured locally and also from Dunedin, Australia, and England, with the result that there were more than 5000 books circulating among the twenty-eight schools, while a further 2000 were held in reserve.<sup>(47)</sup> This survey ceases in 1948 by which time the book stock of 8435 books was serving thirty-three schools. As a forerunner of a future free service, the per capita levy had been reduced to sixpence and the extension of the scheme to children in Standard 11 was under discussion. Furthermore, in the approved plan for the remodelling of the central library, the City Council had made provision for a bright and roomy portion on the ground floor for the school service.<sup>(48)</sup> It would thus appear that the scheme should have a rosy future.

This detailed account of the growth of a school library service in Christchurch has perhaps impressed the reader with the growth of library consciousness and the library spirit amongst city education-  
alists during the last decade. In general this is true in post-  
primary schools also. When investigations were carried out in this  
field in 1934, it was revealed that, with one or two exceptions,  
library facilities in both secondary and technical schools were  
extremely scanty, and in no case reached an approved standard of  
library service.<sup>(49)</sup> This charge was admitted by the Chief Inspector

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47. *ibid* July 21, 1947.

48. *ibid* July 12, 1948.

49. Munn and Barr. *op cit* p.43.



of Secondary Schools in 1938 when he stated that, "when compared with the library equipment provided in other countries, that obtaining in our own secondary schools is strikingly and disappointingly meagre."<sup>(50)</sup> However, the year 1940 saw the first Government grant (of £1000) to post-primary libraries, and by 1948 this had been increased to £19,225 which was the equivalent of a library capitation of five shillings per pupil.<sup>(51)</sup> As a result, the majority of secondary schools are now equipped with adequate or reasonably adequate libraries and the Chief Inspector reported that, in range and quantity, book stocks were showing the valuable results of the firm capitation allowance since 1945.<sup>(52)</sup> It is essential that the reading habit now being fostered in the elementary schools should not be allowed to die in its infancy through lack of nurture at the post-primary level.

This early acquisition of the reading habit is surely the crux of the whole matter. But the reading habit alone is not enough. The ordinary working man is denied the pleasure and the opportunity of building up his own collection of good literature by prohibitive prices. For him the library habit is an essential supplement to the reading habit. On these grounds it is of paramount importance that juvenile tastes should be a first consideration of those in whose hands the organisation of library services lies. A commendable lead in this direction has been given by the City Library which, unfortunately, has no power to influence the policies of suburban library committees, while they, either on account of parochialism or lack of

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50. N.Z. A to J 1938. E 2, p.10.

51. *ibid* 1948. E 1, p.30.

52. N.Z. A to J 1949, E 2, p.24.



interest or failure to appreciate to the full the responsibilities of a public library, have failed to keep pace with modern trends. This failure may well be attributed to a widespread belief that children's reading is adequately catered for by school libraries, but it is highly desirable, if not imperative, that a school library service, no matter how efficient, should function in close co-operation with a public library service, to which it is merely supplementary.

The failure of suburban libraries to face up to their responsibilities in this direction is well illustrated by the fact that only six of the fourteen have juvenile subscribers enrolled (53) but two others Addington and Opawa, have collections of children's books on which parent subscribers may draw for their children's reading. The largest juvenile membership is ninety while, in contrast, two libraries have six and seven juvenile members respectively and the total for the six libraries is 226. Yet the City Library, where adequate facilities are provided, can boast a juvenile membership of 3500. That there are difficulties to be overcome before an adequate suburban service can be established is undeniable, but the essential point is that those difficulties are not insurmountable.

Although at first sight it might seem beyond the scope of this thesis to incorporate the outlying schools, the reason will appear obvious when it is realised that, with the large drift to the city so apparent in New Zealand since 1900, it is essential that children coming from country districts should also have acquired the library habit during their primary school education. If they have not acquired it then, there is very little likelihood that they will take



advantage of the wider facilities that the city has to offer them. In one of his messages to the people of New Zealand, during his visit in 1935, Bernard Shaw told them to live down the bovine idea that the Dominion was destined to be a dairy for the rest of the universe. He added the constructive suggestion that, because of its remoteness, New Zealand should strive to make itself a cultural centre. (54) This ideal underlies the very practical scheme, formulated in the same year by the Canterbury Association of English Teachers, and sanctioned by the Minister of Education, to supply books to children of country schools by means of a travelling library. (55)

This service, which existed for six years from 1935 to 1941, provided a good supply of books with the emphasis on a personal link between the librarian and the children wherever possible. There were 164 schools using the service by September 1941 and they were able to draw on a stock of 7717 books which ranged from primer level to Form II. During that year there were 2347 children using the service, while the book issue, the highest on record, reached the excellent total of 16,438, an increase of almost 1000 on that of the previous year. (56) The reason for the disappearance of the scheme was the increased Government interest in rural library requirements as shown by the establishment of the Country Library Service.

The Country Library Service, which was inaugurated in 1939, was a social and cultural experiment which, within its own sphere, showed promise of great value. The first annual report showed that,

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54. "Star-Sun" September 11, 1935. (editorial)

55. *ibid* (news item)

56. Annual Report of Travelling Library for Rural Schools of Canterbury and Westland September 25, 1941.



although barely a year old, it was clearly obvious that useful work had been done and the foundation of still wider usefulness laid. (57) Here we are only concerned with its work in the schools of Canterbury. After full consideration the Committee of the Travelling Library decided that it was in the best interests of Canterbury schools for the existing organisation to be amalgamated with this new service. This amalgamation took place early in 1942. Briefly, the new service offered to supply primary, intermediate, and district high schools with books equal in number to the children on the roll from Standard I upwards. Schools would be required to pay a levy of one shilling per child participating; this not only had the advantage of being cheaper than a half-crown per child from Standard 111 upwards but also meant that the number of books received would be greater than in the past. (58) This scheme, which has greatly improved in recent years, has of course, all the advantages of national organisation and is a pointer to the advantages of centralisation.

When the first Government grant to school and class libraries was made in 1913, it consisted of £527 for the whole of New Zealand. In 1948 that sum had been increased to £80,462. (59) It is apparent that, not only in Canterbury but throughout the whole of the Dominion, there has been a complete reversal of the appreciation of the value of juvenile libraries, and, in many instances, the vast improvements that have been effected have originated in Christchurch. Whether it has been with respect to the Public Library's children's section,

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57. "Press" August 15, 1939.

58. Letter from G.T. Alley (Director of Country Library Service) to Secretary of Travelling Library October 31, 1941, at the Vocational Guidance Office, Christchurch.

59. N.Z. A to J 1948, E 1, p.30.



or to the Schools' Library Association, or to the Travelling Library Service, Christchurch has always been to the fore. While this very fact suggests that the future citizens of Christchurch should be very library conscious and interested in the establishment and maintenance of a good library service, it is also a matter for present amazement. Why, it is natural to ask, does a city that takes almost no interest in decent library facilities play such an important role in educating its children to have the very interest lacking in their parents? Is it because of a feeling of regret that their own opportunities have not been so great? I think not: but rather that it is more probable that parents, although having no library interest themselves, will respond at once to any agency which is contributing to the welfare of their children. This is the natural parental instinct, but if the parents of tomorrow have, in addition, acquired the library habit in their youth, the future of the Christchurch library service should be assured.



CHAPTER VICONCLUSIONS

It has been the purpose of this work to evaluate the worth of the Christchurch library service in the light of the history of its development. Now that the conclusion has been reached the reader is in a position to share with the writer any misgivings or expectations for the future. As suggested in the preface, and emphasised throughout the entire work, good library facilities are a first essential of a high standard of culture, and the use made of those facilities must be entered to the cultural credit or debt of the citizens concerned. With the increasing complexity of the pattern of human life it becomes more than ever imperative that each and every one of us should make a sincere and determined effort to understand our fellow humans throughout the entire world. Without understanding, tolerance is impossible. Without tolerance, war and destruction are not only possible but highly probable. In numerous instances, that indispensable tolerance can be acquired by reading, and the necessary books should be available in any public library worthy of the name. If those books are not available, if, in other words, a public library service is not fulfilling its correct function, then it is of the utmost importance that the deficiencies are brought to light. From this I mean to suggest that the history of a library service that is functioning as it should is only of interest to those closely connected with library administration.



But the history of the library service which is insufficient and inadequate should be the concern of everyone connected with it, from administrators to members. This is the principal value which I place on this thesis. If only the people of Christchurch can once be brought to a realisation of the deficiencies of the present system and an appreciation of the value of an adequate one, their future cultural nourishment should be assured and they would be in a position to understand the outlook of their fellow humans - whether black, white or yellow.

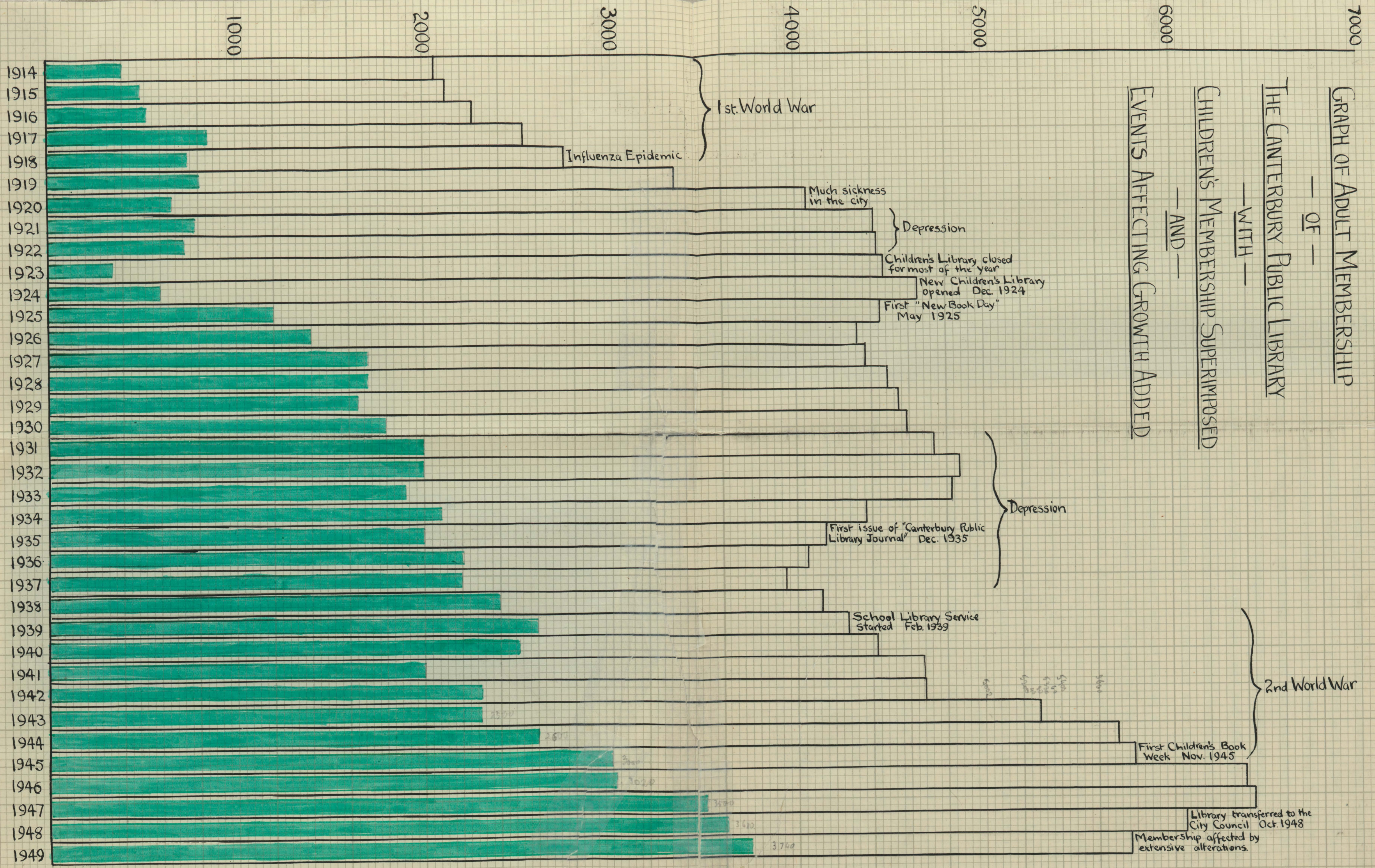
The early citizens of Christchurch, realising the futility of attempting to maintain the Mechanics' Institute because of its precarious financial position, charged the Board of Governors of the newly established Canterbury College with establishing and supporting a public library. It would appear that in those early days there was an appreciation of the true function of a public library - else why would its control have been vested in a body concerned with education? Likewise it would appear that some at least of the early suburban libraries were founded with a similar appreciation. Almost from the outset financial difficulties became the cause of greatest concern, but throughout its period of control the Board kept its ideal firmly in mind and steadfastly objected to spending large sums of money on "trash". However, until recent years, the City Council has refused to face up to its obligations and has been content to let a valuable institution moulder away to comparative uselessness. It seems a great pity that the City Council, insisting on its "pound of flesh" and an exact interpretation of the letter of the law, demanded a share of the endowment from an already impoverished College.



To-day the incongruous position exists in which all the ratepayers of Christchurch contribute towards the upkeep of the Canterbury Public Library and of the suburban libraries yet only subscribers have the right to borrow books. However, the most important point that must be made is that there has been a change in outlook on the part of the citizens. Whereas there was once an appreciation of the purpose of a public library, this has been replaced by a frame of mind which regards "public library" and "book club" as synonymous terms. This has been emphasised even more markedly in the suburban library sphere.

What is necessary is a return to the former conception. The solution is in the hands of the people and of the Council. Proof is not lacking, both in New Zealand and overseas, that there should be a definite liaison between city and suburban libraries, if not complete centralisation. Although it is a comparatively easy task to point out the deficiencies in the present system and to deduce the requisite reforms, the great difficulty is to educate the people of Christchurch to a degree at which they will be prepared to act. In a city whose very future is jeopardised by parochialism ( I refer, of course, to the question of the amalgamation of outlying areas with Greater Christchurch ), a solution to this problem would appear even more remote. Nevertheless, the encouraging interest which has been taken in juvenile libraries throughout the country, and especially in Christchurch, during the last decade, gives reason for believing that the future of the Library is assured. The accompanying graph of the membership of the Library, with the membership of the Children's Library superimposed, strengthens this belief. The rapid increase in adult membership after 1937 should be compared with the





GRAPH OF ADULT MEMBERSHIP

— OF —  
THE CANTERBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

— WITH —  
CHILDREN'S MEMBERSHIP SUPERIMPOSED

— AND —  
EVENTS AFFECTING GROWTH ADDED

1st. World War

Influenza Epidemic

Much sickness in the city

Depression

Children's Library closed for most of the year

New Children's Library opened Dec. 1924

First "New Book Day" May 1925

Depression

First issue of "Canterbury Public Library Journal" Dec. 1935

School Library Service started Feb. 1939

2nd World War

First Children's Book Week Nov. 1945

Library transferred to the City Council Oct. 1948

Membership affected by extensive alterations.



comparatively stable membership of the preceding seventeen years. This increase cannot be wholly accounted for by the passing of the depression, nor by the growth of the city population, because that growth has been a steady one over the whole period under review. Is it unreasonable to presume that the greater membership of the Children's Library since 1925 is reflected in this rapid growth of the adult membership? If such a presumption is justified, it is equally justifiable to expect a further increase in adult membership to follow on from the more rapid growth of the Children's Library membership since 1944. Even if the adults of today are merely interested in the welfare of their children, it would at least be reasonable to suggest that those children will, in their turn as parents, have also an appreciation of the value of good literature and the spirit of tolerance.

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APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A.

The Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance, 1870. (1)  
(February 18, 1871)

Whereas the specimens of Natural History and other public property deposited in the Museum of the Province of Canterbury have now become of considerable value and whereas it is deemed expedient for the promotion of Literature and Science that a Public Library and a School of Technical Science should be established and that the specimens of Natural History Books Pictures Manuscripts Statutes and other objects now deposited in the said Museum which now belong to the Province of Canterbury or which the Province may hereafter acquire by gift bequest purchase or exchange should be deposited in the custody of trustworthy persons.

Be it therefore enacted by the Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury with the advice and consent of the Provincial Council thereof as follows:

1. A Board of Trustees composed as hereinafter mentioned shall be and is hereby constituted a body politic and corporate by the name of "The Trustees of the Canterbury Museum and Library" by which name such body corporate shall have perpetual succession and shall have a common seal and shall by the same name from time to time sue and be sued implead and be impleaded in all courts and shall be able and capable in law to take purchase and hold to them and their successors all goods chattels and personal property whatever either now deposited within the precincts of the Canterbury Museum or hereafter to be acquired by gift bequest purchase or exchange and shall also be able and capable in law to purchase take and hold to them and their successors not only such lands buildings hereditaments and possessions as may from time to time be exclusively used and occupied for the immediate requirements of the said Museum but also any other lands buildings hereditaments and possessions whatever situate in the said Province or elsewhere which may be purchased by or granted to them and they and their successors shall be able and capable in law to grant demise alienate or otherwise dispose of all or any of the said property real or personal belonging to the said Museum Public Library or School of Technical Science and also to do all other matters and things incidental to or appertaining to a body politic and corporate.

2. Provided always that it shall not be lawful for the said Trustees to alienate charge or demise any lands tenements or hereditaments to which they may become entitled by grant purchase or otherwise unless with the approval of the Superintendent and Provincial Council of the Province of Canterbury for the time being except by way of lease for any term not exceeding three years from the time when such lease shall be made in an by which there shall be reserved and made



payable for the uses of the said Museum and Library during the whole of the term thereby granted the best yearly rent that can be reasonably gotten for the same without any fine or premium.

3. The said body corporate shall consist of twelve Trustees ...

4. All vacancies which shall occur by death resignation or otherwise ... shall be filled ...

5. At every meeting of the said Trustees five Trustees shall form a quorum and ...

6. The said Trustees shall have full power to appoint all officers and servants of the said Museum and shall have the entire management and superintendence of the affairs concerns and property of the said Museum and Library and in all cases not provided for by this Act it shall be lawful for the said Trustees to act in such manner as shall appear to them best calculated to advance the objects of the said institutions.

7. The said Trustees shall have power and authority to make and also to repeal or alter all such by-laws rules and orders touching and concerning the management and good government of the said Museum Library and School of Technical Science and the income and property thereof and any other matter or thing relative to the same as to them may seem fit for the effectual attainment of the objects of the institutions, the security of the property and the administration of the affairs thereof.

8. The said Trustees shall once at least in every year report their proceedings and the progress of the institutions ...

9. Accounts of the expenditure of the said institutions shall be annually furnished ...

10. This Ordinance shall be intituled and may be cited as "The Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance, 1870."



## APPENDIX B.

An Act for promoting the Establishment of a Public Library in the City of Christchurch, in the Province of Canterbury (1)  
(September 22, 1873)

Whereas it is expedient that a Public Library should be established in the City of Christchurch: And whereas sections four hundred and five and four hundred and six in the said city, with the buildings thereon, and also certain books and other chattel property, are now vested in certain persons as Trustees for the members of an undertaking entered into for literary and scientific purposes, formerly called "The Christchurch Mechanics' Institute," but now known as "The Christchurch Literary Institute", and hereinafter called "the said Institute," and such land and other property is now held by the Trustees subject to the direction and control of a Committee of Management to be annually elected by the members of the said Institute: And whereas the said Committee, with the consent of the general body of members of the said Institute, have signified their willingness to hand over the said land and property for the purposes of a Public Library: And whereas doubts have arisen as to the power of the Trustees to dispose of the said property for such purpose, and some of the Trustees are absent from the Province of Canterbury, and it is expedient that power should be given to the Trustees in the said Province to transfer such property to the Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury for the purpose aforesaid:

Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :-

1. The Short Title of this Act shall be "The Canterbury Public Library Act, 1873."

2. It shall be lawful for any two of the Trustees of the said Institute, at the request in writing of the persons acting for the time being as a Committee of Management of the said Institute, or of a majority of them, by deed to convey and assign all such estate and interest as is now vested in the Trustees of the said Institute, all and singular the real and personal property so vested in the said Trustees in trust for the members thereof, to the Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury for the purposes of a Public Library, on such terms and conditions as may be hereafter agreed upon between the said Trustees and the said Superintendent; and upon the execution of such deed, the land conveyed thereby shall vest in the Superintendent and his successors in fee.

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1. Statutes of N.Z., 1873. p.83, No.24.



## APPENDIX C.

On December 15, 1873 the Trustees of the Christchurch Literary Institute conveyed the half-acre of land at the corner of Hereford Street and Cambridge Terrace, with all buildings thereon, together with the books, furniture, chattels, and effects, to the Superintendent of Canterbury, "upon trust for the purpose of a public library, to be established and maintained under an<sup>d</sup> in pursuance of the provisions of 'The Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance, 1870,' subject nevertheless to the conditions expressed of and concerning the same - that is to say, that a reading-room and circulating library of at least equal dimensions, both as regards space and number of books and periodicals to those conveyed and assigned, shall be constantly maintained in the said buildings, or in any new building to be erected upon the said land in the place of the existing building and that such books and periodicals shall from time to time be supplemented and increased, so as to satisfy future requirements, and generally the institution maintained in accordance with the usual and recognised standard of a public circulating library and reading-room; provided always that the Superintendent and his successors, or other the acting trustees of the institution continue to exercise the discretion enjoyed by the present management of determining upon the books which shall be retained solely for reference; and that the advantages of such reading-room shall be opened to the public free of charge, and that the advantages of the circulating library shall be open to the public either free of charge, at the discretion of the management, or at charges not greater than the charges following - that is to say, 20s. per annum, payable either yearly, half-yearly, or quarterly, in advance." (1)

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1. Document of transfer of Literary Institute to Superintendent of Province of Canterbury. (relevant portions)



## APPENDIX D.

Canterbury College  
17th July 1908

His Worship the Mayor of Christchurch

Dear Sir,

With reference to the Conference that took place this day between the Board of Governors and the Finance Committee of your Council, in order that the matter may assume a concrete form, I now beg to submit tentative proposals subject to the approval of the Board of Governors, as follow :-

1. That the City Council take over the Public Library including the buildings, Librarian's House, Books, etc., as from date of the agreement being entered into.
2. That the Gammack Trust (now producing £400 per year, and estimated under certain circumstances to produce from £800 to £900 a year), and the Postle Bequest £1666, become the property of the City Council under the conditions of the respective Trusts.
3. That the accrued balance of the Gammack Estate £408.5.10 be also handed to the Council, subject to the Trusts therein.
4. That the accrued Sinking Fund of the Public Library Buildings Account, amounting to £168.11.2 be also handed to the Council.
5. That the Council pay the Debit Balance on the Public Library Maintenance Account, which at 1st January 1908, stood at £636.14.10, also the accrued and accruing Liabilities on the Library Maintenance Account at and from the date of the exchange.
6. That the funds of the Museum Library, and School of Technical Science Endowment Account be devoted in future to the College Library and other purposes within the control of the Board of Governors.
7. That in consideration of the handing over of the Library to the City, the Council agrees to pay to the Board of Governors the sum of £6000, this Board giving the City the property free of all debt as far as the buildings and site are concerned.
8. That the Board of Governors have the right to withdraw from the Reference Library, books to a number not exceeding 2000, which are specially required and adapted for the purposes of the College Library.

I may add that the books in the Library at 31st December 1907, were, Reference 17,182, Circulating 24,469, Total 41,651.



The actual cost of the Buildings, fittings, etc., to the Board has been nearly £12000. The cash paid for books from 1874 to 1907 is £14,210, the Site may be estimated as of the value of £2600. Taking the value of the Buildings, Site, etc., at £12000, and estimating the books as of an average value of 5/- each, the cash value of the Institution would stand at £22,413, whilst the Bequests are now returning £466 per year, with a prospective value at an early date of at least £400 more. The income of the Library last year from Subscriptions etc., was £1006, and the revenue for the first half of the current year is in excess of that received for the same period of 1907.

I trust the basis which I have now suggested may be of assistance to the Finance Committee in coming to a decision with regard to the proposal of your Council that the City should take over the Public Library. (1)

Yours faithfully,

G.W. Russell

Chairman of the Board.



## APPENDIX E.

An Act to transfer the Canterbury Public Library from the Canterbury University College to the Corporation of the City of Christchurch. (1)  
(September 30, 1948)

Whereas the Canterbury Public Library is controlled by the Canterbury University College, and the assets of the library are vested in the College: And whereas it is now anticipated that considerable expenditure will be involved in the proper development of the Library and it has been agreed by and between the Canterbury University College Council and the Christchurch City Council that it is desirable that the Library as a whole be transferred to the Corporation of the City of Christchurch

Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled and by the authority of the same, as follows :

1. (1) This Act may be cited as the Canterbury Public Library Act, 1948.

(2) This Act shall come into force on the first day of October nineteen hundred and forty-eight.

2. (1) On the first day of October, nineteen hundred and forty-eight, the vesting in the Canterbury University College of all that parcel of land containing two roods, or thereabouts, situated in the City of Christchurch, being Town Sections 405 and 406, and being all the land comprised and described in certificate of title, volume 364, folio 261, Canterbury Registry, shall be deemed to be cancelled, and the said land shall, as on and from that day, be deemed to be vested in the Corporation of the City of Christchurch.

(2) The District Land Registrar ... is hereby empowered ... to transfer the title to the said land into the name of the Mayor, Councillors, and Citizens of the City of Christchurch.

4. All the land and other assets referred to in sections two and three hereof shall be held by the Corporation of the City of Christchurch upon the trusts and for the specific purposes contemplated in respect of a library by the Canterbury Museum and Library Ordinance 1870, and by a certain deed dated the fifteenth day of December, 1873, whereby the said land and then-existing assets of the Library were conveyed by the Trustees of the "Christchurch Literary Institute" to the Superintendent of Canterbury, and subject to any special trusts affecting any of such assets.

7. The Canterbury University College Council shall annually pay to the Christchurch City Council for the purposes of the Public Library one-fifth of the net income available from its Museum, Library and School of Technical Science Endowment.

8. The trustees for the time being of the will of James Gammack, late of Springston, farmer, deceased, shall from time to time pay to the Christchurch City Council, to be applied for the benefit of the



circulating department of the Public Library all moneys which would be payable to the Canterbury University College for such purposes if this Act had not been passed ... (2)

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2. This clause replaces section 2 of clause 7 referred to on p.74.



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Mr. S. Betteley, Redcliffs.

Mr. H.C. Eaton, Spreydon.

Mr. R.M. Flintoff, Addington.

Mr. H.W. Friedman, Linwood.

Mr. H. Jackson, Opawa.

Mr. N.P. Lory, Secretary, Christchurch City and Suburban Public Schools' Library Association.

Mr. C. Pollard, Sydenham.

