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LIBRARY & INFORMATION ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND AOTEAROA | TE RAU HERENGA O AOTEAROA

**LIANZA**

LIBRARY & INFORMATION ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND AOTEAROA

## Editorial

I dare say that change is something that we all have experience of, it is universally acknowledged as inevitable and the results of it almost always have both supporters and detractors. The library where I work is going through a merger with another local system leading to what seems like vast changes in every aspect of our workplace, but even if you don't go through seismic upheavals like that, think of the changes since you started working in Libraries – changes in the technology, personalities, customers – even the books! This issue of *New Zealand Libraries* celebrates and reflects change in many forms – our articles cover the growth of libraries, the growth of leaders, the roles of our colleagues and also facing loss while celebrating achievement. NZL itself is evolving, coming out this issue in digital form for the first time.

There will be a printed copy of each issue sent to institutional members of LIANZA to add to their collections however and if you wish to purchase one you might contact the LIANZA office. Additionally, this is the last issue of NZL to be collated in this style, from now on we will be aiming for two issues per year, in May and November; the November issue will be a roundup of the best papers from LIANZA Conference. Discussions are under way regarding the establishment of an Editorial Board to peer-review submissions. An announcement regarding the Editorial Board will be made in due course. It's a bold new age for *New Zealand Libraries*, just as in our own actual libraries – we are talking about e-strategies and professional registration, we renovating or building new libraries which push boundaries in every way and within each workplace we see things change seemingly every day. Take a look around and remember the ways things are today because the only thing which ultimately stays the same is our drive to improve, move on, to build up and change.

Glen Walker

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# Not Just a Smiling Face: An Analysis of the Job of the Public Library Assistant in New Zealand

**Sandra Haigh  
Rowena Cullen**

## **Introduction**

Public libraries in New Zealand have been suffering from budgetary cutbacks and increasing pressure on resources for some years. It is now common to find library assistants manning information desks throughout public libraries in New Zealand and being expected to assist members of the public with increasingly complex information needs. Much has been written about the changing roles of professional librarians but research into the role of library assistants has been neglected to the point where there is uncertainty about what it is they actually do, what they should be doing, and what education and training they should receive.

A survey by Joanne Dillon in 2000 found that library assistants perform a multitude of tasks under a variety of job titles, from circulation duties to reference desk work, copy cataloguing and IT/information literacy instruction, as well as the cataloguing of original material, and recruiting and training staff.<sup>i</sup> Both Dillon and McCahon<sup>ii</sup> showed that library assistants are performing tasks that previously were exclusively the domain of qualified professionals. As one of Dillon's participants noted 'we don't just ink date stamps, shelve books and mend torn pages anymore.' As Dillon points out, in New Zealand the titles of librarian and library assistant are used 'loosely.'<sup>iii</sup> Whereas in the United Kingdom a librarian must belong to CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in order to be employed as a professional librarian, and must therefore have a professional qualification, in New Zealand, that is not the case. As McCahon points out 'There is no consistent approach to qualifications at all, which is completely at odds with professions such as teaching and nursing.'<sup>iv</sup> It is therefore timely to look at the role of the library assistant in New Zealand libraries, and to help to bring some clarity to the job title and the tasks associated with it, in order to contribute to the current debate, and help create a focused career path for those new to the information environment

There are in New Zealand no benchmark qualifications or nationally recognised core competencies for the position of library assistant. There are inconsistencies in job descriptions with some public libraries demanding a tertiary qualification and others no more than

a school leaving certificate. The new recruit and the manager who hires him/her must rely on 'on the job' training given at the branch. This may result in an inconsistent service to public library customers. For many of the public, anyone who works in a library is a librarian, so if a member of the public receives poor service at the Information Desk from an unqualified, perhaps poorly trained library assistant, it must follow that the image of the entire profession will suffer. To set an appropriate benchmark qualification standard, the work of library assistants first needs to be analysed, to assess what it is they actually do in the library environment.

The primary aim of this study, therefore, was to develop an understanding of the role and training needs of library assistants in public libraries in New Zealand by establishing:

- the range of tasks which library assistants currently perform in New Zealand public libraries;
- whether there are variations in the role of a library assistant depending on whether the assistant works at a central library or in an outlying branch library;
- what qualifications public library assistants hold;
- job satisfaction levels of working library assistants in relation to the scope of their work and in relation to more senior and professional staff;
- whether the expectations of library assistants by senior staff and employers might be more clearly defined if nationally recognised competency training models were in place;
- whether or not the creation of a set of 'competencies' for library assistants would ease the current confusion regarding the nature of the information 'professional'.

### **The role of library assistants**

According to Wilson and Hermanson, a distinction between professional and 'para-professional' librarians has been well established for many years, and qualifications for 'para-professionals' well recognised. Technician courses in North America are by and large competency based, as they are in the United Kingdom. However, the lines between professionals and paraprofessionals are still blurred, and budget cuts exacerbate the problem as libraries seek to hire less well qualified staff to do the work formerly done by professionals. As Wilson and Hermanson point out, as automation becomes an entrenched part of library services, many of the tasks traditionally performed by librarians can now be very competently performed by paraprofessionals. They suggest that 'the system and its workings have become teachable, learnable technical skills. Faced with an eager and increasingly self-aware and networked majority of library workers, MLS librarians will

find it both unseemly and destructive to cling to duties that can be done as well by support staff”<sup>v</sup>

This view is confirmed by Howarth (1998) who outlines in some detail the growing role that paraprofessionals play in technical services in libraries in Canada. She defines paraprofessionals as belonging to one of two categories; those who hold a technical qualification in library science and those who hold an undergraduate degree but no formal library qualification. Howarth observes that paraprofessionals are filling roles that previously were performed only by professionally qualified librarians, since budget cuts have made hiring ‘lower paid, but well-skilled paraprofessionals’ more attractive.<sup>vi</sup> Howarth notes that little formal research has been conducted into the positioning of library assistants within libraries as a whole, but hopes that in future professionals and paraprofessionals will see each other as ‘related, but different’ in their roles within libraries.

### **Defining competencies**

Competency based management has been regarded as an increasingly effective way of achieving consistently high standards of productivity in the workplace in general and the information professions have in recent years begun to adopt the concept in a range of professional environments. Competencies for library and knowledge workers (both professional, non-professional and paraprofessional) have been developed by a number of very different professional bodies, including the Special Libraries Association of the American Library Association, the United Kingdom’s Library and Information Commission, the Council of Europe,<sup>vii</sup> and UNESCO.<sup>viii</sup> Many of these are advisory only, since they are designed to inform but cannot be imposed on the independent educational establishments offering undergraduate and graduate qualifications in the field of library and information services. Competencies specifically developed for library assistants have been adopted by a number of countries, and these are more likely to be mandatory where qualifications appropriate to library assistants are offered under some form of national vocational qualification structure. Countries with national competency standards for library assistants include the United Kingdom, Canada,<sup>ix</sup> and Australia.<sup>x</sup>

### **The role of library assistants in Australian libraries**

Library technicians have had a recognised role in Australian libraries for some years. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has a separate section, the Library Technicians Section (LIBT) with divisions in each Australian state. Library technicians have their own conferences and are seen as a separate entity from

professional librarians. There are 17 library technician courses throughout Australia which are recognised by the Australian Library and Information Association. The emphasis in these is on practical knowledge and technical skills, much like courses offered at this level in the United Kingdom and North America. The Library Technicians Section of ALIA encourages members to maintain and improve their skills through continuing education, attend conferences and workplace training schemes, and remain flexible and adaptable. However, Ross Harvey caused something of a sensation in the library profession in Australia when he drew attention to

the lack of distinction between the roles and tasks of technician and professional . . . Australian librarianship has done itself a major disservice—perhaps even inflicted a mortal wound—by allowing the development of technicians without reassessing thoroughly the role of professional librarians. Too few professional librarians have taken account of the time and energies released for higher work by the introduction and steady advancement of technicians, and upgraded their own professional activities accordingly.<sup>xi</sup>

In New Zealand, there is no clear distinction made between professional librarians and non-professional and paraprofessional librarians. Librarians without a post-graduate library qualification can be found working as Assistant Librarians, Senior Librarians, and Library managers (largely in public libraries) and holders of the Master of Library and Information Studies degree may be employed as library assistants. Amongst the ranks of library assistant are found school leavers, holders of non-graduate library certificates and diplomas, as well as holders of undergraduate or higher degrees in any subject. The only New Zealand qualifications available at present for a library assistant who has no university degree are the Level 5 and 6 Diplomas in Information and Library Studies, available through distance learning from The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand,<sup>xii</sup> but some graduates also enrol in these courses. The diploma papers may be credited towards a degree in Library and Information Studies, and are part of a national framework developed by the New Zealand Qualifications Association,<sup>xiii</sup> which consists of 10 levels of learning standards, levels 1-4 in the framework constituting entry level training, with levels 5 and 6 signifying national diploma level. Levels 7 to 10 encompass an initial degree and all postgraduate study programmes. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this diploma is being used as a benchmark qualification for library assistants.

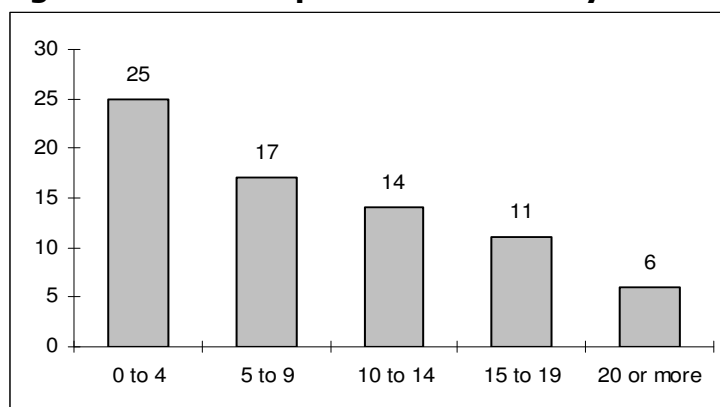
Library assistants in New Zealand are not required to belong to the professional body, LIANZA<sup>xiv</sup> and a professional qualification is not a pre-requisite for full membership of LIANZA, although the Association is currently considering the report of its Professional Registration Taskforce,<sup>xv</sup> which has recommended criteria for professional registration for the profession. LIANZA has well developed codes of practice for its members and member libraries to aspire to, however, since membership is voluntary, a person working in the library environment is not specifically required to adhere to LIANZA's codes of practice (LIANZA 2002).

Asking 'What is a Professional Librarian?' in *Library Life* in November 2003, Sue Pharo states: 'every professional person who works in a library is a professional librarian.' Her 'Checklist for Professional Librarians' includes leadership, budgetary and customer service skills as well as information literacy and information technology skills, "relevant qualifications," and "continuing education."<sup>xvi</sup> Pharo defines the core business of a professional librarian as "organising information and its access, and teaching people to be information literate."<sup>xvii</sup> According to Dillon's survey, some library assistants are now doing the very things that represent the core business of a professional librarian, and could be considered professionals.<sup>xviii</sup> They may or may not have appropriate qualifications, and appropriate competencies for this.

### The Study

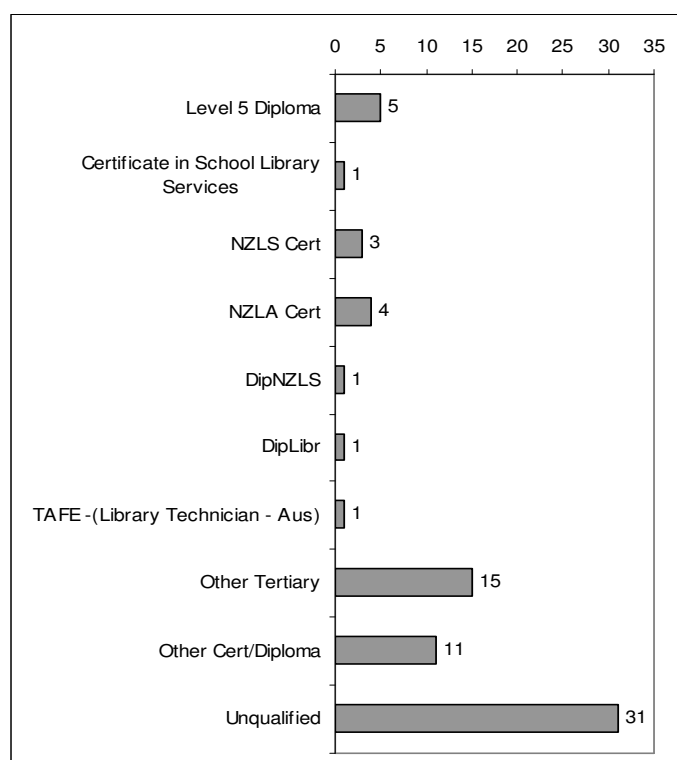
In this study, carried out in 2004, library assistants were contacted in a number of public libraries with the cooperation of library managers. A total of 120 questionnaires were sent out by post, and 73 usable forms were returned by library assistants from large and small public library systems throughout New Zealand, representing a 61% return rate. Participants were asked about their work experience and qualifications and the hours they worked each week.

**Figure 1: Work Experience of Survey Participants**



The 43 part time staff worked a wide range of hours, the minimum being 13.5 and the maximum being 37 hours a week. Bearing in mind the length that some of the library assistants had been employed in libraries, there were a wide variety of library qualifications represented in this survey. A number of library assistants were in the process of completing a library qualification.

**Figure 2: Qualifications Held by Survey Participants**



Twenty six participants also held non-degree qualifications unrelated to library studies, in fields such as Travel and Tourism, Building, Nursing, Business Computing and Teaching, and Marketing, and general arts and science degrees.

#### *Library assistants and their daily work*

In the survey, participants were asked to indicate what tasks they performed daily or at least regularly from a list of 22 activities. In analyzing the data, attention was given to questions such as:

- Was there a difference in their daily work depending on whether they worked in a main or central library, a branch library or both?
- Were there any differences between full or part time workers?
- Did library qualifications make a difference to the participants' job?

- Did participants' level of experience in libraries make any difference to their job?

A clear picture emerged which indicated that the staff who work in a central library spend more time on a smaller number of tasks. For example, there were a small number of library assistants who work in a central branch who focused almost entirely on deselection during their working day. In a branch, many more staff tended to spend a relatively smaller amount of time on deselection of stock. Branch staff were more likely to perform circulation duties in addition to other tasks, whereas the participants who focused on a single task in the central library indicated that they did not perform circulation duties at all.

**Table 2: Division of Tasks According to Work Environment**

<b>Tasks more likely to be performed by branch library staff</b>	<b>Tasks more likely to be performed by staff who work in both a branch and their central library</b>
Interloan responsibilities Deselection Ordering new stock In charge of special collection Computer instruction OPAC instruction Information Literacy instruction Internet instruction Participation in training new employees Housebound services Large loans Participation in organising speakers and/or events for their library OSH/Maori officer Budget management Other	Circulation Customer service Simple enquiries Complex enquiries Community outreach Childrens' and/or young adult work Till

Part time staff spend more time in direct contact with library customers (circulation, memberships, customer service, enquiries, till work and OPAC and Internet instruction). Full time staff are more likely to have specific 'off desk' tasks (ordering new stock, special collections, large loans, community outreach, speakers and events, or to hold a special position within the branch such as OSH, Maori officer, or budget management).

*Qualified and unqualified library assistants*

There is a small difference in the nature of tasks performed depending on whether or not the library assistant has a library qualification (Table 3)

**Table 3: Differences in tasks performed according to qualification**

<b>Tasks more likely to be performed by unqualified staff</b>	<b>Tasks more likely to be performed by qualified staff</b>
Circulation duties	Complex enquiries
New memberships	Deselection
Interloan	Ordering new stock
Customer Service	In charge of special collection (e.g.AV)
Simple Enquiries	Computer /OPAC & IL instruction
New employee training	Junior/YA work
Large loans	Housebound services
Community outreach	OSH/Maori etc. officer
Budget management	Till
	Other duties

Internet instruction and organization of speakers and events was evenly split between qualified and unqualified staff. Although there is a small difference in the nature of tasks performed by these two groups, the differences are slight with the exception of specialist positions such as OSH or Maori officer. This latter task was overwhelmingly performed by qualified staff.

*Experience in library work.*

Their experience in library work made a significant difference to the types of tasks performed by participants. The tasks which are more traditionally associated with library assistants—item issue, discharge and shelving (circulation), and processing new memberships, are not often performed by participants with 20+ years of experience. The only category of participants who all performed circulation duties were those with 5-9 years' experience. Participants who did not perform circulation tasks all either worked in a main library or had a specialised position, including those who had no contact with the public, and whose work involved acquisition, cataloguing and processing of new stock only. Those who worked in their main library tended also to be involved in acquisition and cataloguing. Other tasks performed by this group included clipping, photocopying and management of an on-line vertical file. Other respondents were attached to a specific collection within their library and only performed tasks which were directly related to that collection. In summary, staff who worked in the main library within their system tend to have more specialised tasks which do not necessarily involve dealing with the public.

Experience appears to make more difference to the tasks performed by library assistants than qualifications do. However, this may be because the more experienced library assistants are more likely to have qualifications and are more likely to perform tasks other than the traditional tasks associated with library assistants (Fig. 3)

**Figure 3: Library Qualifications According to Experience**

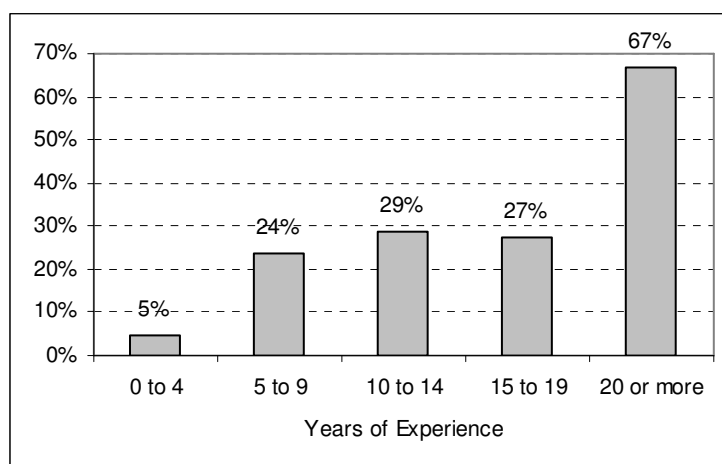


Figure 3 shows that the more experienced library assistants were the more likely they were to have library qualifications, although the largest group of library assistants who were studying for a qualification came from the 0-4 years experience group.

**Table 4: Tasks most likely to be performed according to level of experience**

0-4 years' experience	5-9 years' experience	15-19 years' experience	20+ years' experience
New memberships	Circulation	Children's and Young Adult's work	Housebound services
Simple enquiries	Simple enquiries	In charge of special collection	Large loans
Speakers and events	Complex enquiries	Deselection	Budget management
	OPAC instruction	Interloan responsibilities	Ordering new stock
	Information literacy instruction	Computer instruction	Community outreach
	Internet instruction		Other tasks
	New employee training		
	Till		
	Customer service		

The tasks regularly performed by the most experienced staff (Table 4) were quite different from those performed by the less experienced participants (Table 3). These pronounced differences were not found when the tasks were divided according to whether or not the participant had a library qualification. In addition, the more experienced and qualified staff spent more time performing specialized tasks such as copy cataloguing, serials management, and collation of library statistics and reports, in addition to more routine tasks such as mending and processing of stock. The less experienced staff, who were less likely to have a library qualification, spent more time on mending and processing, and updating notice boards and displays.

#### *In-house training*

Participants were asked to provide details on the training that they had received in their present job. In analyzing this data, consideration was given to the following questions:

- How consistent is on-site training given to library assistants?
- Does the on-site training complement the daily work of library assistants?
- Did the participants feel that their training enabled them to fulfil their role in a satisfactory way?

Training appears to be well matched to the tasks performed by most of the survey participants, especially in terms of customer service, circulation work and general library administration. Table 5 (next page) illustrates the comparison between tasks performed and workplace training received.

A number of the survey participants had also been given training in other aspects of library work, such as storytelling skills, mending and binding, processing, preservation and archive management, and cataloguing. There were also more general training sessions such as first aid courses, team building skills, and a number of safety and security training sessions such as armed hold up training, anger management and conflict resolution. Several of the qualified staff with many years of experience in libraries indicated that recent training had been useful in keeping up with the many changes within public libraries. One qualified participant had recently changed roles from being a member of a front line team to a cataloguing role which s/he had not done for many years and stated that the training s/he received as part of the new job was vital.

**Table 5: Workplace training and tasks performed – a comparison.**

<b>Tasks performed</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Workplace training received</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Circulation	64 (88%)	Circulation	66 (90%)
Customer service Till	63 (86%) 54 (74%)	Customer service	66 (90%)
New membership interloans processing	61 (84%) 29 (40%)	Library administration	54 (74%)
Simple enquiries Complex enquiries	68 (93%) 57 (78%)	Reference interview techniques Library classification training Boolean searching Electronic databases Council information	43 (59%) 36 (49%) 39 (53%) 60 (82%) 29 (40%)
Internet instruction for customers and/or staff	36 (49%)	Internet search techniques	57 (78%)
Computer instruction for customers (Word, Excel etc)	51 (70%)	Computer software applications	40 (55%)
OPAC training for customers and/or staff	47 (64%)	How to use the OPAC	58 (79%)
Special position e.g. OSH/Maori liaison	6 (8%)	OOS prevention Treaty of Waitangi	62 (85%) 34 (47%)

Most of the comments referring to the relevance and task-oriented nature of on-site training were positive especially in terms of the practical aspects of this training. Comments from unqualified staff and those who were studying for a library qualification at the time of the survey were generally favourable, not just in relation to 'basic' training, i.e. circulation, OPAC and policies and procedures training, but also with reference to more professional skills, such as customer service training, reference interview and search technique training. Other benefits of on-site training noted by participants included the identification of health and safety hazards and an increase in cultural awareness through Treaty of Waitangi<sup>1</sup> training.

<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand, signed by the first Governor of New Zealand, William Hobson and a number of Maori chiefs in 1840. For more details please see [www.treatyofwaitangi.govt.nz](http://www.treatyofwaitangi.govt.nz)

A deeper and more thorough knowledge and understanding of library resources and functions as a result of training was also noted by several participants.

Some participants felt that their training had not been rigorous enough, and that they had been forced to rely on a 'look and learn' style of on-the-job training. One participant stated that s/he had had very little on-site training and had relied on experience and library qualification skills. Others pointed out that refresher courses were needed, and that their training needed to be reviewed. One stated that while new electronic resources had been introduced into the library and that library assistants were expected to assist customers with using them, the library assistants themselves had received no training at all. In conclusion, although most of the replies to this question put on-site training in a favourable light, there are some considerable inconsistencies in terms of what training is offered, and not all library assistants are receiving it at the same level, or even at all.

*Library assistants' attitudes to qualifications.*

Survey participants were asked whether or not they would consider completing a library qualification if they had not already done so. Fifty four participants (74% of the total survey group) answered this question (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Would Participants Consider Qualifying?**

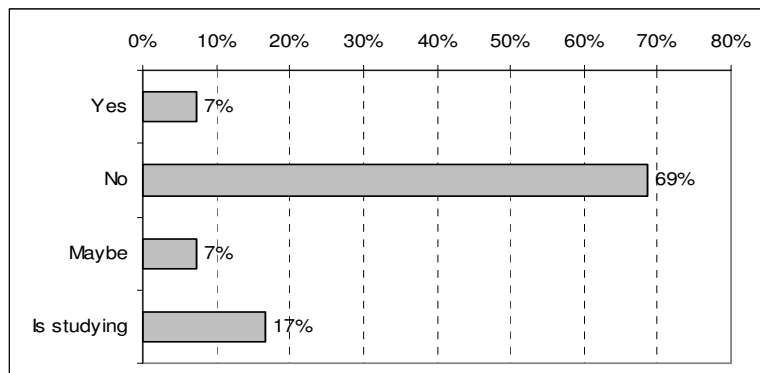
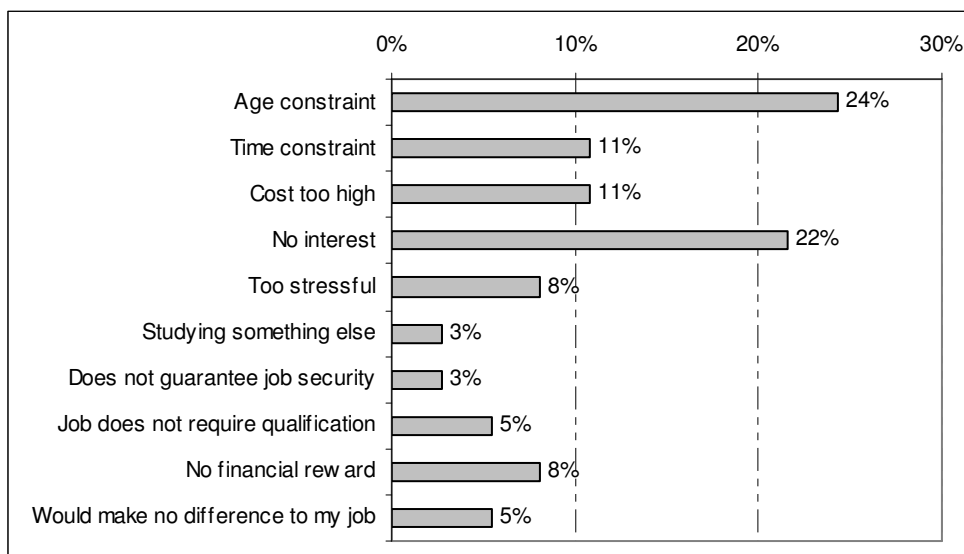


Figure 5 represents a breakdown of the various reasons given by participants for not enrolling for study.

**Figure 5: Disincentives to Studying**



The two major disincentives to studying are age and lack of interest in either pursuing a career in libraries or a lack of interest in qualifying. A significant number of participants (21% of the total) indicated there was little reason to study as their job did not require a qualification, there was no financial reward for achieving a qualification, and no further guarantee of job security. They felt that qualifying would make no difference to the nature of tasks undertaken in their employment. In short, there seemed to be a feeling that it was not worth taking the time and spending the money to gain any library qualification. Several of the respondents did voice an interest in qualifying but could not do so because of family responsibilities or circumstances. One participant expressed an interest in studying for a qualification but stated that the cost of qualifying was too high in comparison with the pay rate of a library assistant.

#### *Attitudes of qualified library assistants*

Those participants with library qualifications were asked whether or not they felt that their qualifications were useful and relevant in their job. Some of this group had achieved their library qualifications many years previously and some only recently. Participants with older qualifications such as the NZLS and NZLA certificates, DipNZLS and DipLibr, indicated that the most positive aspects of the qualification lay in its practical training such as cataloguing and classification skills and reference interviewing techniques. However, many respondents also commented on the broader perspective on libraries that their qualifications gave them and felt that even though they had completed these qualifications a number of years previously, many of the principles which they had

been taught were still very relevant to the job they did currently, especially when their qualification's skills were teamed up with the ongoing training that they received in their libraries. Only one respondent felt that the qualification they had completed was too abstract and irrelevant in library work.

There were also a number of participants who had completed the Level 5 Diploma in Information and Library Studies from the Open Polytechnic, and a number who were on their way to completing Level 6. They felt very positive about this qualification. Some of the respondents indicated that they felt more confident in using electronic resources and the Internet and felt that the skills they had gained from study had enabled them to conduct more effective searches than staff who had only had on-site training. Others commented that the study had broadened their working knowledge and understanding of libraries in and out of the public sector.

For the participants who had completed a library qualification, the effort seems to have been worth it in terms of the additional skills and the broader perspective on information work they gained while studying. However, this group of respondents did not mention financial reward or change to their position description, and this remains a stumbling block for those who might otherwise consider studying for what seems to be a very worthwhile and relevant qualification according to those who have completed one.

#### *Library assistants and their skills.*

Participants were asked to suggest ways that their skills could be put to better use in their libraries.

Staffing levels and pay rates were highlighted as a barrier. Many felt that the skills that they had could not be fully utilized due to the fact that their libraries were chronically understaffed, resulting in a constant backlog of work. Respondents also felt that there was never any time to develop and learn research and other skills and, more alarmingly, that they were not able to serve library customers to a satisfactory standard as there were always many people who needed their attention. There were several respondents who suggested a decrease in workload or an increase in staffing. A number of the respondents recognized that they worked under significant budgetary constraints, but also felt that a compromise in the standard of customer service was unacceptable.

Some participants suggested that their library qualifications and the skills learned through studying for a qualification could be better recognised by their institutions, although they acknowledged that staffing structures made the allocation of more challenging tasks and responsibilities in accordance with the achievement of a library

qualification difficult. Words like 'menial' and 'boring' were used by some to describe the work they were required to do.

Other participants wanted more say in policy decisions which would affect them directly, more opportunity to shape the collection in their library and more opportunity to evaluate the changes made in library procedures. A bigger involvement in events and projects was also suggested. One participant pointed out that there was a large skills base in staff working as library assistants which was not being utilised at all; those with non-library related qualifications.

Some of the respondents felt that library policy was very inflexible. An example given was that one of the participants could not answer even the most basic customer enquiries because library policy did not allow it even though s/he had received on-site training in searching the library's electronic resources and Internet searching techniques.

On the other hand, there were also a number of respondents who were more than happy with their work. The participants in this group were quite happy with the variety of tasks they undertook, and also satisfied with the new tasks they learned. Although they were in the minority (27%), they felt that their supervisors had confidence in their ability and were willing to let them take on new responsibilities. Several of these respondents commented that they worked in a branch library and enjoyed doing 'a little bit of everything' very much.

*Are library assistants valued as part of the library profession?*

The participants were asked if they felt that they were regarded as a valued member of the library profession by three groups: their peers, their superiors and the public they served. Responses were very positive on the whole (Table 6).

**Table 6: Library assistants as a valued part of the profession**

% of participants who felt valued by their peers			% of participants who felt valued by their superiors			% of participants who felt valued by the public		
Yes	No	No Answer	Yes	No	No Answer	Yes	No	No Answer
64 (88%)	4 (6%)	4 (6%)	58 (79%)	11 (15%)	4 (6%)	62 (85%)	6 (8%)	4 (6%)

The majority of participants answered yes to all three questions. Sixteen participants answered negatively to one or two of the three categories, but none answered negatively to all three. More

negative answers concerned how participants felt they were regarded by their superiors. A number of the participants made a clear distinction between their immediate superiors and senior library management when answering this question, stating that while they felt valued and appreciated by their immediate superiors, they felt that their council and senior library management staff regarded them as disposable and unimportant.

Six participants felt undervalued by the public they served. Among reasons given by participants, one concerned the poor stereotypical image of the profession as a whole among members of the public; others commented that they felt that they were only occasionally valued by the public.

Four participants answered negatively when asked if they felt valued by their peers. One participant felt that children's library staff were not taken seriously by other library staff, another stated that some of the older staff 'looked down' on library assistants.

### **Relating training to competency achievement**

One of the most obvious findings of the survey was that public library assistants perform a wide range of tasks. Most of the participants did not have a library qualification although many held non-library qualifications. Some performed a wide range of tasks on a regular basis; others worked on very specific tasks if they had been appointed within a special collection in their library.

Whatever their circumstances, the demands placed on library assistants, and the tasks that they perform, have changed with the introduction of automation, the Internet and electronic resources in public libraries.

Short, informal on-site training courses conducted by over worked supervisors who may or may not be experienced (or willing) trainers themselves are no longer enough for the sophisticated tasks which many library assistants now perform on a regular basis. Training, and the ability to demonstrate competency in these tasks needs to be formalised, specified, and recognised.

It is difficult to know how detailed and structured on-site training is at present. Some library assistants receive formal training in subjects such as Internet and/or Boolean searching techniques while others may receive only very cursory training.

The quality of on-site training is too often dependent on how much time and money can be put aside for this purpose. If a nationally recognized competency framework for library assistants was to be

put in place for all levels of public library workers, it would potentially:

- raise the levels of general competency
- improve customer service
- enhance workplace training
- make achievement of competencies part of the performance review process.

A record of training programs completed, and the level of competence achieved by the trainee indicates whether there are any 'gaps' in training which needed to be filled.

The lack of acknowledgement of staff holding library qualifications by public library management and local councils, mentioned by several participants in this study, is a concern. Lack of acknowledgement of a library qualification trivialises the qualification itself and the achievement of the student who completes it. While a qualification does not automatically make a person more competent, the lack of regard with which entry level library qualifications are held in some libraries may influence staff who are considering gaining a library qualification. All library qualifications need to be recognised as a demonstration of commitment to the profession and as an opening door for new opportunities within it. They need to be seen to make a difference to public library staff.

### **Conclusion**

The survey clearly demonstrated that it is difficult to define what it is that library assistants in public libraries in New Zealand do. Library assistants hold a wide range of qualifications, both library related and non-library related and a range of experience, skills and training. Their role is changing as is the place and function of public libraries. As their jobs become more complex, their training needs to be more comprehensive than ever before. Competency training, measured against well defined, and widely accepted norms, and active encouragement and incentives to study for a library qualification will give library assistants the skills they need to serve their communities to the highest standard. LIANZA should consider extending its work on professional registration to include the definition of competencies for library assistants, and relate these to the professional qualifications it is currently considering endorsing.

## Notes

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- <sup>iii</sup> Dillon, The Professionalism of New Zealand Library Assistants. p90.
- <sup>iv</sup> McCahon, A Reflection on Past and Future, p16.
- <sup>v</sup> Wilson, A M; Hermanson, R. Educating and training library practitioners a comparative history with trends and recommendations, *Library Trends*; 46 (3) Winter 1998: 467-504.
- <sup>vi</sup> Howarth, Lynne C. The Role of the Paraprofessional in Technical Services in Libraries. *Library Trends* 46 (3) Winter 1998: 526-539.
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- <sup>viii</sup> Moore, Nick, et al. *A Curriculum for an Information Society*. Bangkok: Information and Informatics Unit, UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1998.
- <sup>ix</sup> Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package – CD Rendition Competency Standards, Qualification Framework and Assessment Guidelines Training, CUL04 BCUL04C1 <http://www.bsitab.org/> [<http://www.ibisc.com.au/Bookshop.htm>]
- <sup>x</sup> Australian Qualifications Framework. AQF Qualifications. <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqfqual.htm>, accessed 16 May 2005.
- <sup>xi</sup> Harvey, Ross. Losing the Quality Battle in Australian Education for Librarianship. *The Australian Library Journal* 50 (1). Available at: <http://www.alia.org.au/alj/50.1/full.text/quality.battle.html>
- <sup>xii</sup> See [www.topnz.ac.nz/programmesandcourses/subjectarea/pcinformation.html](http://www.topnz.ac.nz/programmesandcourses/subjectarea/pcinformation.html)
- <sup>xiii</sup> For more information see <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/levels.html>
- <sup>xiv</sup> The Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (<http://www.lianza.org.nz/>)
- <sup>xv</sup> [http://www.lianza.org.nz/about/profile/committees/Prof\\_Registration/index.html](http://www.lianza.org.nz/about/profile/committees/Prof_Registration/index.html)
- <sup>xvi</sup> Pharo, Sue. What is a Professional Librarian? *Library Life: Te Rau Ora*. Issue 284: 1-3.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Ibid, p2
- <sup>xviii</sup> Dillon, The Professionalism of New Zealand Library Assistants, p.90.

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## Public Libraries and Access to Reading Materials in Early Colonial Nelson

**J.E. TRAUER**

In Britain and North America when public libraries emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries any financial support from the public purse was provided at the level of local authorities in the cities and towns. One minor exception was in the American state of Indiana, whose Constitution between 1816 and 1851 provided that 10% of the proceeds of land sales at any county seat should be set aside for the use of a "library company" for the benefits of the citizens of the county, but this was clearly administered at the level of the counties.<sup>xviii[1]</sup> However, in the British colonies of settlement in Australasia, from the beginnings substantial financial support for local public libraries was provided at the level of the colonial governments and later the states and, in New Zealand, the provinces and then national government.<sup>xviii[2]</sup>

The governments of the Australian colonies made ad hoc grants to selected 'public' libraries from as early as 1826, but policies to support public libraries in general appear only in New South Wales and South Australia in 1858, and Victoria in 1860. The Province of Nelson in New Zealand seems to have been the first government, by a narrow margin, to pay cash subsidies regularly and systematically to support its public libraries. These were not free public libraries funded by local taxation but social libraries, incorporated or unincorporated societies open to all who were prepared to pay the subscription, set up specifically to provide lending library services to their subscribers. They called themselves institutes, literary institutes, mechanics' institutes, schools of arts, athenaeums, mutual improvement societies, and public libraries. These subscription libraries were the dominant form of the public library in Australasia in the nineteenth century. They had flourished in Britain and North America in the eighteenth century but were in retreat in the second half of the nineteenth as the free public library movement strengthened.

Nelson began paying cash subsidies in to its libraries in 1855, only 14 years after the first settlers arrived in 1841, and three years after the creation of the provincial government, when there were four libraries in existence. They continued until the abolition of the provinces in 1876 by which time 26 libraries had been founded and funded, nearly all of which were still operative. The financial records in the annual Estimates and Appropriation Acts and the information required by the Nelson Provincial Council as a condition of its

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support are a valuable source of evidence on the extraordinarily rapid spread of lending libraries in a mid-nineteenth century British colony of settlement, the role of subsidies in their creation and survival, their membership and stock, and on the availability of inexpensive reading materials for its reading populations.

## Historical Development

In the Estimates of Expenditure for 1855 forwarded by the Superintendent to the Provincial Council on 19 January 1855 provision was made for a grant of £100 for the Library of the Nelson Institute. It had opened in 1842 only a year after the first settlers had arrived and was relatively prosperous, with some 100 members paying a high annual subscription of £1, and close to 1,000 volumes. To some it was seen as a club for the privileged classes. The immediate reaction on 8 February was a resolution in the name of Charles Parker (1808-1898), a carpenter by trade "less educated than some of his opponents and [who] had a lower social standing ... characterised by an opponent [in 1866] as a 'firebrand and a chartist' ... opposed to all forms of class privilege"<sup>xviii[3]</sup> The Council passed the resolution "That His Honour the Superintendent be requested to place in the Appropriation Bill the sum of £150 for distribution among the various public libraries in the country districts of the province, or such as may be established, and that the apportionment of the said sum be left to the Superintendent."<sup>xviii[4]</sup> There were three country libraries in existence at Richmond (1846), Waimea South (1853), and Hope and Ranzau (1854). Parker followed this up with a resolution, also passed, on 14 February "That an address be presented to His Honour the Superintendent, requesting him to place the sum of £200 upon the Appropriation Bill, to meet the like sum to be raised by subscription, to be expended in erecting reading rooms in the country district, and for the purchase of land on which to erect such buildings, to be vested in trustees elected by the subscribers".<sup>xviii[5]</sup> In due course the Estimates for 1856 provided £50 for the Nelson Institute, £100 for libraries in country districts, and £150 for the establishment of reading rooms to meet equivalent subscriptions. Thereafter the Province regularly appropriated money for such subsidies until 1876.

However, a number of further resolutions set conditions for eligibility for subsidies and provided for libraries to return statistical details, the names of subscribers and office-holders. In 1857 grants were restricted to institutions constituted as public libraries and, a sideswipe at the Nelson Institute, to those with a subscription not exceeding ten shillings. In 1859, after the Council had granted £200

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to the Nelson Institute for its new building, another resolution from Parker, aimed at the Institute's perceived elitism, was passed "That in the opinion of this Council any sums of money voted for public purposes, more particularly for grants for public libraries and reading rooms, the Government shall take special care that proper provision be made to ensure the benefit of any such grants to be properly secured for the use and advantage of the public generally."<sup>xviii[6]</sup>

The annual Appropriation Acts gave details of the monies allocated to libraries, but the Council wanted more information. In 1860 Mr Wills moved "That his Honour the Superintendent be requested to furnish the Council with returns of the sums paid in aid to the District Libraries; the amount given to each; also, as far as practicable, their mode of management, number of members in each, annual subscription fee, subscriptions paid and unpaid; also the number of volumes and periodicals in each library, for the years 1858 and 1859."<sup>xviii[7]</sup> These were provided for 11 libraries, with three more to come, in Message No.15 of 1 May, and Mr Wells immediately moved for the appointment of a select committee to consider the conditions for making grants, which reported on 2 May 1860. Unfortunately this was not printed, and no copy has survived in the Council's archives. The report was adopted on 3 May, and supplemented by a resolution that where a new library was established, and had at least 24 members enrolled who had paid up not less than 5 shillings, an additional grant of £20 was to be made.<sup>xviii[8]</sup>

In 1861, Alfred Saunders, an aggressive abstainer, struck a blow for the temperance movement with his resolution denying grants to any institution housed on premises selling intoxicating liquor.<sup>xviii[9]</sup>

On 17 June 1862, Mr Parker, concerned at the consequences for future library grants of a decision of the Council on 13 June "that past resolutions of Council do not have the effect of law, and do not bind the Council" moved "That this Council resolves itself into Committee to consider the resolutions passed in a previous Session for the distribution of Grants for Public Libraries, with a view to adopting the same."<sup>xviii[10]</sup> The Committee was clearly considering the recommendations in the 1860 Select Committee, no copy of which has survived in the archives, and these, with some minor amendments, were then adopted.

"1. That all Libraries eligible to receive aid from Provincial Funds shall have a Committee of Management, consisting of not less than five members, including a Secretary and a Treasurer.

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2. That the sum voted for Country Libraries be distributed in proportion to the amount of the annual subscription actually paid by members.
  3. That each library be placed in the most suitable and convenient location for the use of the members.
  4. That an annual return, properly audited, be made to the Superintendent on or before the 31<sup>st</sup> day of January in each year, stating number of members, subscription fee, amount of subscription income, also number of volumes added during the year.
  5. That all Libraries, minutes of their committees, and Treasurer's accounts, shall be at all times be open to the inspection of any person appointed by the Superintendent for that purpose.
  6. That compliance with the terms laid down in this Report be made a condition of the receipt of Government aid on the part of any library.
  7. That no Library shall receive any Government Grants for books unless they are constituted as public libraries, and that the annual subscription of each member does not exceed Ten shillings."<sup>xviii[11]</sup>

Two days later on the motion of Mr Dobson, paragraph 4 was amended to also require a return of the names of each paid up member together with the amount paid during the past year.

Money was regularly provided in the Superintendent's estimates both for grants to established libraries for books and for the erection of library buildings and reading rooms in country districts, with some additional prodding from the Council to encourage more libraries. An example is the resolution of 15 July 1865 asking for another £100 "for the purpose of erecting buildings for Reading Rooms and Libraries in such of the Country Districts as do not already possess suitable buildings for that purpose".<sup>xviii[12]</sup>

In 1867 the rules were tightened to require the annual election of committees of management, and for their names, together with those of treasurer, secretary and librarian, to be forwarded to the Superintendent. In 1868 a motion to place £200 on the estimates for a public library and mechanics' institute in Westport was amended to "assist the inhabitants of the West Coast in the erection of Public Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes"<sup>xviii[13]</sup> and later in the year an appropriation of £200 was made for the whole West Coast.

In 1869, with 21 libraries sharing the grants, a new approach was attempted. A Council request to the Waste Lands Board to reserve 1,000 acres as an endowment for the Nelson Institute provoked a flurry of requests for similar endowments for other

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institutions and public libraries. A Select Committee examined the whole endowment question and finally requested the Waste Lands Board to set aside 30,000 acres to endow public libraries and institutions. This the Board declined to do, arguing that there was not enough good land available, and to set aside "the tops of barren hills, or other almost useless country" would not achieve the objectives of the Council. This was debated at length by the Council until it finally decided that endowments of land was not an expedient solution.

Just before the abolition of the provinces a "Return of Amounts Allotted to Libraries etc" in 1875<sup>xviii[14]</sup> listed 20 public libraries which had received grants of between £52 (Charleston, with 130 subscribers) and £2 (Cobden, with 5 subscribers) with just over half (11) within the range £5-£10. It reveals that these 20 libraries, for a total population of 22,558<sup>xviii[15]</sup> at the Census of 1874, had 742 paid up members (3.29% of the population) who paid £250.9s.4d in subscriptions, to which the provincial government added £294.8s in subsidies. They spent £464.15s.6d on books during 1874. The value of these local returns is evident from a comparison with the Census of Population for 1873, the first to include statistics on public libraries. It recorded only 11 libraries for Nelson, with 339 members and 10,077 volumes. The library censuses throughout the nineteenth century severely underestimated the number of libraries, in the early years by as much as 50%.

### **The Documentary Evidence in the Papers of the Provincial Council**

The granting of subsidies required public financial records to be kept for the annual sums voted and spent from 1856 onwards, and these records, printed in the *Votes and Proceedings*, generally list the libraries by name and give the sum voted. Much more important for any analysis of the impact of Nelson's public libraries were the returns from each library required by the Council.<sup>xviii[16]</sup> The first was requested in 1860 for the years 1858 and 1859 and printed in the *Votes and Proceedings*, and this was followed by the annual returns required by the Report of the Select Committee adopted on 3 May 1860.

These handwritten returns give the number of members, the subscription rate, the subscription income, and the number of volumes added and periodicals held. From 1862 the names of all the subscribers were required, and from 1867 the names of the members of the committee of management, the treasurer, secretary and librarian. Unfortunately, not all of these returns since

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1861 have survived. There is nothing for the years 1863-1866 and returns from some libraries are missing, either not supplied or lost. Because of the gaps, the inconsistencies, and differences in interpretation about the information requested, a rigorous statistical analysis is inappropriate. However there is enough in these records when supplemented by local histories and histories of individual libraries to draw a useful picture of the place of these libraries in the spread of reading in Nelson in the early years of settlement.

### **The Spread and the Influence of Nelson's Public Libraries**

In the 12 years between 1842 and 1854, before the subsidies, four libraries were founded, the Nelson Institute in Nelson Town, and libraries at Richmond (1846), Waimea South (1853), and Hope and Ranzau (1854). By 1854 the total population was 5,858, giving a library for every 1,464. The populations in these country areas when their libraries were founded varied between 927 (Hope) and 577 (Richmond).

Three libraries were founded in 1856, the first year of subsidies, in areas with populations just under 1,000, and 16 were founded between 1856 and 1862. The population exploded from 11,091 in 1862 to 23,814 in 1867 as a result of the gold rushes, and eight libraries were founded between 1867 and 1874, five in the mining towns on the West Coast. In 1856 the ratio of libraries to total population was 1:1,073 and this ratio kept on rising to 1:616 in 1862. With the population boom the ratio fell sharply, but as the West Coast towns founded their libraries the ratio rose to 1:868 in 1874. Population figures for the country localities after 1857 are sketchy but it appears that libraries appeared once the population was between 700 and 1000. The boom towns in the mining areas are an exception; Westport had some 1,500 when its library was founded in 1868, the Grey Valley had a population of 8,275 in 1872 when libraries appeared in Brunnerton and Cobden. If one takes the 1875 return of libraries that had received a subsidy in that year, 20, when the population was 22,558, the ratio is 1:1,128.

If one takes the total number of libraries founded between 1842 and 1874, that is 26, the ratio is 1:868. To summarise: in the first 33 years of settlement, as the total population grew to 22,558, 26 public libraries were created; the rate of creation was boosted by the introduction of subsidies, and the population numbers per library more than halved between 1854 and 1862. In the country districts away from the mining areas a population of 700 to 1,000 was sufficient to lead to the creation of a library. These ratios are based on total population; if one takes into account the high level of illiteracy (in 1848 31.3% of the population could not read, falling to

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24.5% in 1858, but it was still 21.24% in 1874) and the numbers of children in the total population figures, it is clear that the reading community supporting each library was very small.

The most complete set of handwritten returns are those for 1874, from 21 libraries (four, Waimea West, Lower Moutere, Appleby and Foxhill had dropped out of the records earlier and were briefly in recess, and that for Westport, a substantial library with 69 members in 1869, is missing), with totals of 760 paid up subscribers, 23,695 volumes and 1,080 volumes added<sup>xviii[17]</sup> in the previous year. Based on a population of 22,558 this represents 1.05 volumes per head. Libraries fall into five groups; two large libraries with between 107 and 130 subscribers, seven with between 31 and 55, six between 20 and 35, five between 13 and 18, and one with only five subscribers. The majority (11) had between 13 and 25 subscribers. For all except the Nelson Institute (subsidy of £50 for a subscription income of £62.2s.6d.) the subsidy was greater than the income from subscriptions, in seven cases just over double. Other returns between 1858 and 1874 show the same pattern of dependence on the subsidies for over half the income. Without the subsidies a majority of these libraries would have found it difficult to survive.

By way of comparison an analysis of the 16 returns for 1867 yields 486 subscribers, 1,180 volumes, with some 800 volumes added during the year, a much faster rate of growth than in 1874. The population at the census of 1867 had more than doubled from 1862 because of the gold rushes. Most of the mining towns had not yet established their libraries so calculation of the ratio of subscribers to population and volumes per head are badly skewed. The libraries fall into five groups in 1867; one large library in Nelson Town with 171 subscribers, three with 34 to 36, five with 21 to 28, six with 15 to 18, and one with five. The majority (11) had between 15 and 28 subscribers.

It is difficult to estimate the monetary value of the books and periodicals actually received and available for readers in any one year. Most spent a very high proportion of their income on bookstock (only the larger libraries had paid librarians and buildings with annual running costs) but the amounts they report as coming to charge in a financial year had little relationship to the income available or the volumes received. Stock bought in London or Edinburgh took months to arrive and sometimes payments were made in advance, sometimes after receipt. In 1875 Charleston reported that it had spent £30.10.6 on books in 1874 but that no volumes had been added to the collection. Ngatimoti paid out £2 and reported 78 volumes; Cobden paid out £23.13.6 and received

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four volumes. In the 1875 "Return" libraries claimed that they had spent £464.15.6 during 1874 on buying new books.

The total income available from subsidies and subscriptions was £544.17.4. Six libraries spent under £10, three spent between £10 and £20, four spent between £20 and £30, four spent between £30 and £40, and three spent between £40 and £55, with an average of £23.4.9. The author has estimated<sup>xviii[18]</sup> that in the mid-1870s, when libraries were buying a high proportion of cheap popular fiction, they could purchase between 66 and 120 titles for £10. In the earlier period when more non-fiction was purchased, at a slightly higher price, it is likely that a title cost somewhere between 4s. and 6s., and that £10 would buy between 33 and 50 titles. In the period between 1858 and 1875 none of Nelson's public libraries had incomes below £10, and many had £20 or more. An average library with 20-25 subscribers and an income between £10 and £20 could buy between 66 and 100 new titles a year.

For a subscriber paying between 5s and 10s. a year this represented a good investment. No printed catalogues or archival records have survived for the early Nelson libraries and the nature of the initial bookstock and changes over time cannot be documented, but it is unlikely that the books and periodicals available to Nelson's readers differed greatly from those available elsewhere in New Zealand.

These conclusions for Nelson correspond closely with those outlined in "A Paradise for Readers?", a larger study of all public libraries in New Zealand, namely that public lending libraries were established very quickly after settlement, even in sparsely populated rural areas, and that New Zealand achieved a very high density of small public libraries within a very brief period. From the beginnings of organised settlement in 1840 to 1874, just 34 years, when the total population was some 300,000, 263 public libraries had been founded - 183 of them in the South Island.

The national library/population ratio in 1878 was 1:1,529, and library subscribers represented 2.9% of the total population. In sparsely settled country districts a population of 500 was sufficient to support a public library. Subsidies were strongly linked to the formation of public libraries and the suspension of subsidies forced many of the smaller ones into recess or dissolution. In Nelson, public libraries spread earlier and faster than elsewhere in New Zealand and achieved a density, that is the number of libraries to population, higher than the national average, almost certainly a consequence of the provincial government's early recognition of libraries as a public good worthy of financial support.

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The reasons for this extraordinarily rapid proliferation of small public lending libraries, modelled on the eighteenth century social library financed and controlled by its subscribers, which occurred not only in the British colonies of settlement in New Zealand and Australia, but also and on the goldfields of California in the mid-nineteenth century, are examined at length in the author's "A Paradise for Readers".

This paper is part of a wider study on libraries and reading in nineteenth century New Zealand assisted by grants from the Marsden Fund.

<sup>xviii[1]</sup> Haynes McMullen, *American Libraries before 1876* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000)

p.75.

<sup>xviii[2]</sup> See J.E. Traue, "Once Upon a Time in New Zealand: Library Aspirations and Colonial Reality in the Early Years of European Settlement", *Stout Centre Review* 3 (March 1993), 3-8; "Legislating for Un-Free Public Libraries: the Paradox of New Zealand Public Library Legislation 1869-1877", *Libraries & Culture*, 33 no. 2 (1998), 162-174

<sup>xviii[3]</sup> *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, v.1, 1990.

<sup>xviii[4]</sup> Nelson Province, *Votes and Proceedings*, Session 2, 1854-55, p.68

<sup>xviii[5]</sup> *Votes and Proceedings*, Session 2, 1854-55, p.75

<sup>xviii[6]</sup> *V&P*, 1859, p.65

<sup>xviii[7]</sup> *V&P*, 1860, p.9

<sup>xviii[8]</sup> *V&P*, 1860, p. 32, 33, 36 ,40.

<sup>xviii[9]</sup> *V&P*, 1861, p.21

<sup>xviii[10]</sup> *V&P*, 1862, p.52

<sup>xviii[11]</sup> *V&P*, 1862, p.175

<sup>xviii[12]</sup> *V&P*, 1865, p.41

<sup>xviii[13]</sup> *V&P*, 1868, p.37

<sup>xviii[14]</sup> *V&P*, 1875, p.88

<sup>xviii[15]</sup> The population figures throughout exclude Maori living in traditional communities.

<sup>xviii[16]</sup> National Archives. Nelson Province, series 2, item 3, Session 7, 1860, Library returns. Series 18, item 9, Library returns 1859-1876.

<sup>xviii[17]</sup> This total is unreliable. Most appear to have supplied the number of new books added, but some have clearly deducted books discarded. The number of titles is smaller because some titles appeared in more than one volume.

<sup>xviii[18]</sup> J.E. Traue, "A Paradise for Readers? The Extraordinary Proliferation of Public Libraries in Colonial New Zealand", *Script and Print*, 2006, in press.

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## Portrait of a Leader

### **Yolanda Drummond**

I was assigned to the cataloguing department. Judith Child was in charge. Cataloguing and classifying had alarmed me in Library School. Judith Child's academic record was now to alarm me further. This was when her first-class honours in French, her senior scholarship to the Sorbonne were related proudly by chief librarian of Auckland Central Library, Mr Duthie. We always called him Mr Duthie. Indeed, when I first ventured down into the cataloguing department I called Judith Miss Child. She called me Mrs Drummond. That must have been more than thirty-five years ago.

It was a frightening place, this engine room of the Auckland Central Library. Ordering of books, cataloguing, classifying, processing, it all happened here. As well, it was decided here in royal fashion what books and how many the ten branches were going to get (Central never being left out, no question).

Like most engine rooms, the location was down rather than up. Below the library? On Wellesley Street? Hardly, not in those days. The old central library had become too small for real work. Showy practices such as lending books and (reluctantly) allowing readers to finger reference volumes were all Auckland Central had room for. In any case, there was the looming threat of a complete take-over by Auckland Art Gallery.

Over on Upper Queen Street stood (and still stands) the town hall with its clock tower like the library's. A delightful old building. Typically it has a dark, cold, basement on a concrete floor. City Council traffic cops used to rev up their bikes down there. A desperate library worker might dare to park a car there. Near the revving bikes. Memory tells me that's where we worked. In reality we worked close by. In Pigeons Building. No connection with pigeons because no pigeon would put up with it, being dark and cold like the town hall basement.

Here perhaps twenty workers were accommodated at well-lit desks, each with a type-writer and the most essential type of equipment in the place, a foot-heater. We also moved about peering into card cabinets and Library of Congress volumes (our bibles).

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All but one of us worked out in the open, typing or peering. A glassed-in office was provided for one person. She was in charge, her opinion never challenged. This was Judith Child.

Arctic clothing was de rigueur for everybody. Some favoured woolly layers under the workaday covering of a smock. Judith had no such fancy ideas. She always wore her outdoor coat. She was not big in stature. In fact, unlike most managers she seemed to be intentionally shrinking. It was a process of shrinking into unobtrusiveness. She would come trudging in from her long bus trip, wearing a warm hat and of course her coat, head slightly down, expression saying, Please don't notice me, I won't notice you.

She checked what we did, never by looking over our shoulders as we valiantly pecked at typewriters, but somehow she inspected and corrected. She carried the catalogue cards from Queen Street to Wellesley Street and filed them in the big Central Library cabinets. After passing through her hands the cards were perfect. We trusted Judith. Thousands of cards. Maybe ten cards for one book, counting See, and See Also cards. But photocopying arrived. I have a memory of Judith the academic standing around the new machine and laughing helplessly as the cards browned and smoked and the fire alarm went off.

The coming of the computer. No, we were not suddenly given keyboard and screen to work with. Books came first. Books about this new subject. Special classification numbers. New headings on cards. Away we went with these, heads down, fingers pecking. Judith guiding us. But the big changes in our daily lives did arrive.

Catalogue computerised. New library built. No more cards. No more big motorbikes revving nearby. And Judith Child in retirement. Retirement of a kind. Judith immediately took a non-European language course at the University of Auckland. I went over there secretly to view results as shown on a pinned-up notice. I had to do this because Judith would never have admitted she received top marks. Amnesty International.

Before she left the library Judith mentioned with her usual diffidence that she hoped to start a group. I didn't know what the organisation was about but I joined up. This was in spite of having to drive across Auckland at night to attend meetings. And of course I had to regularly write letters which I hated. I followed Judith. I followed fearful Judith on to Auckland's Queen Street to protest against apartheid Rugby football. Judith had never attended a Rugby match. I had been to plenty. I followed conservative Judith

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into one of Auckland's main theatres, perhaps the Civic, to protest against the Vietnam War. Judith had to sit beside a hippy figure with long dark hair and wearing a long dark overcoat, Tim Shadbolt. Judith smiled faintly, looking nevertheless as if her worst fears had come to pass. I envied her absolutely.

Judith moved to Nelson. A few years ago she wrote on her usual Christmas card that she had been in hospital undergoing tests. Some kind of cerebral accident. I thought of head injury. So unfair, incongruous for this to happen to Judith's brilliant mind. I did not know until a year or so later that the happening was the most unfair and incongruous imaginable. I travelled to Nelson to see her a few months before she died of Alzheimer's disease.

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## John Philip Sage, 1921-2005

### **W.J. McEldowney**

John Sage, who died on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2005 at the age of 84, was one of the most respected and influential members of the library profession in New Zealand in the generation that emerged immediately after the second world war. After gaining the Diploma of the New Zealand Library School in 1946, he worked in the National Library Service until 1952, and then as Deputy City Librarian in Wellington until 1996, when he became University Librarian at the Victoria University of Wellington, a position which he held until he retired in 1981. From the earliest days of his professional career he devoted much of his time and talents to the work of numerous committees of the New Zealand Library Association, of which he was honorary assistant secretary from 1960 to 1962, honorary secretary from 1962 to 1968, and president in 1971. He was awarded a Fellowship of the NZLA in 1964.

That is John Sage's brief curriculum vitae but to understand the esteem in which he was held and his enduring reputation one needs to know more about the man than the list of offices he occupied, and it is hard to do justice to his special qualities in a brief tribute. Let me try, though.

Because of family circumstances, John had to go to work when he left school. He was a part-time student at Canterbury University College, but he completed the study and examinations for his MA in 1941, within the four years which was the minimum period at the time. He then joined the army, serving in the artillery in North Africa and Italy until the end of the war. Once, when he was asked whether he had been in the thick of it at Cassino, he said "No, thank God" – he was part of a spotting team on a hilltop (but surely the Germans would have been targeting such a troublesome unit). In his spare moment, out of action, he learned enough Italian to act as an interpreter for his unit, and in longer spells off duty he developed a life-long love of Italian opera. And, according to a surviving diary, he assiduously mended library books on loan to the unit.

Immediately after the war, John was selected for membership of the first graduate class of the New Zealand Library School; a class which its members have always maintained (with some justification) was never equalled for quality, bonhomie, and

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enthusiasm. G.T Alley, writing twenty years later to a prospective employer, described him as a student who was notable for 'ability, integrity and general excellence', and it would have been in the light of this judgement that in 1948 he chose John to take charge of the Orders Section of the National Library Service. In this position he reported directly to Graham Bagnall, who was an ideal mentor for a young professional librarian. In addition to selecting and purchasing books for the various parts of the NLS, the Orders Section was then taking over the additional responsibility of ordering Library materials for all other government departments, a task which involved much sorting out of chaotic records and establishment of careful procedures,. In his spare time in this period, John invented and implemented the regular *Books to Buy* list for small public libraries which continued to be valuable long after his time.

John's move to Wellington Public Library in 1952 was a good one, both for himself and for the library. He and Stuart Perry, the City Librarian were temperamentally suited to work together, both of them being judicious, level-headed, far-sighted and concerned for the well-being of the total library system of the country. One of John's special interests in this position was the planning and establishment of branch libraries, and Perry, with characteristic generosity ensured that John was given full public credit for development in this area. In addition, he encouraged John to participate fully in NZLA and other public activities. By 1958, John had sufficient experience and confidence to be a natural choice as one of the five New Zealanders who joined twenty-five Australians in a seminar conducted in Canberra by Keyes D. Metcalf, formerly of Harvard University, in which for ten days ranged widely over matters of concern to librarians in the two countries. It is hard to credit now, but before this seminar Australian and New Zealand librarians had known practically nothing of each other. The very cordial relations between librarians of Australia and New Zealand which have been a feature of the last half century had their origin in the Canberra seminar and in the friendship and mutual respect which the participants developed then.

John Sage, at this point, was becoming a librarian of note, and his public standing was consolidated by the way he handled the position of honorary secretary of the NZLA during the important years when the National Library Act was passed and discussions on a university future for education for librarianship began in the mid-1960s, a time when officers of the NZLA had to foot it with senior government and university officials. A couple of years after John had moved to the Victoria University librarianship in 1966, David

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Wylie, another of the recruits to the library profession immediately after the war, joined him as his deputy, so that another notable Wellington pairing followed the Perry/Sage one. This one was at the centre of the moves which led to the establishment of Victoria's library school in 1980, a year before John retired.

One of the unforeseen consequences of the assembling of the Library School's class of '46 was that John Sage and Mary Frankish, a fellow student, found that they had a lot in common and married in 1947. Mary, who returned to the School Library service until 1950, worked in the Victoria University Library from 1960 to 1966, and lectured in the Library School, was herself a considerable library personality, and their home in Karori was a haven for a number of librarians who sometimes found it necessary to visit Wellington. The Sages were also steady members of literary and artistic circles, including a picture group which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary recently, having, during its lifetime bought 115 pictures which were circulated around its members. Mary, unfortunately, suffered a long decline, when John helped her devotedly, before she died in 2001.

Before the war, John had done reasonably difficult mountaineering, and he was at it again in December 1945 when, as Paul Powell records in his *Men Aspiring* (p.30), a difficult crossing of the East Matukituki River was achieved when 'John Sage's long powerful legs made short work of this ford, though the rest of us were wet to the chest by the time he had brought us over on the rope.' Many librarians who have accompanied John breasting lunch-time crowds on Lambton Quay or walking from his Karori home to the University will understand this sentence. John listed his recreations in the *Who's Who in New Zealand* as 'reading, gardening, walking', and one should not underestimate the 'walking.' He was stronger physically than he seemed, more influential professionally than he would have claimed to be, and affectionately regards in a way that might have surprised him. One of the best tributes to him is the fact that the mood of his funeral service, when several members of his family spoke and music by Verdi was played, was clearly one of celebration for a life well lived. We, as well as they, are fortunate to have known him.

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## Book Reviews

**Collection management and strategic access to digital resources : the new challenges for research libraries : papers presented at the University of Oklahoma Libraries Conference / Sul H. Lee, editor. Binghamton , N.Y. : Haworth Information Press, c2005.**

Containing only eight papers, this book is quite a quick read. It provides a good overview of where scholarly communication is at, in the context of academic libraries. Although the book was produced in America, the issue of scholarly communication is a global one.

The first paper, *Collections of record and scholarly communications* by Fred M. Heath and Jocelyn Duffy, had some quite strong messages for librarians. Talking about open access the authors state that, "If resources flow away from traditional library investment in journal publication, the academy could develop sustainable models of information exchange that are open to all." They conclude by saying, "The business of scholarly communication is not about publishing, *or about libraries*. It is about science, and research within the academy. Publishing and libraries will only remain viable as long as they abet, in a cost beneficial way, research efforts of university faculty." Enough said!

Paul M. Gherman, in his paper, *Collecting at the edge – transforming scholarship*, issues the challenge to libraries, "to consider changing our role in the scholarly communications process by changing our collection development emphasis away from scholarly materials that are finished products and central to our legacy collections, and instead focus on cultural heritage collections that are mostly born digital, and are not part of the scholarly communication process. He also talks about establishing institutional repositories, "to attract faculty papers prior to publication so that we may eventually weaken the hold that commercial publishers have over our faculty's intellectual property."

In his paper, *Better mousetraps in turbulent times?* Dan Hazen talks about seven elements of collection development. The last of these is "Communities of peers". Of these he says: "Communities of colleagues ... enable endeavours that might otherwise remain difficult or impossible." He picks up on this further when he talks about champions. Champions are people who, "grapple with a common problem or theme" and then, "frame the initial responses that then energize everyone else ... Champions are

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crucial, and they require support". As New Zealand libraries embrace the issues embedded in the Digital Strategy, I thought that Hazen's comments were very relevant to us. Working collectively is very important and hopefully we will have some champions in our midst.

Karen Hunter, Senior Vice President, Strategy, Elsevier in her paper, *Access management : challenging orthodoxies*, describes the "death spiral" that serial subscriptions went into in the 1990s. During the late 1980s academic libraries had had to adopt a "cancel-to-add" policy. For publishers, "the task was to try and estimate how many subscriptions would be cancelled and factor that into your price increases for the remaining subscribers" which would lead to further cancellations. She presents readers with sixteen orthodoxies to consider. One that I think most of us could identify with is, "If I have paid for an electronic journal, I should have the right to access it forever."

This leads nicely into Kevin M. Guthrie's paper, *Ithaca and its incubation function*. Guthrie makes the point that in the electronic environment there is an "unbundling of preservation and access". He goes on to say: "Most journal publishers, who are the rights holders, are not in the business of long-term preservation; they are in the business of selling access to current issues of their journals, and increasingly to their growing backfile of electronic editions ... it is difficult to imagine that publishers will find it economically compelling to engage in the long-term maintenance and migration of data that will be required to insure that material continues to be accessible in 10,15, or 50 years." He talks about the library community placing pressure on publishers but concludes that, "to date this pressure has been ... expressed in terms of access not preservation". E-Archive and Aluka are responses made by Ithaca to addressing the need for archiving. Clearly individual libraries do have the means to address the archiving issue so Guthrie suggests, "a centralised approach ... the cost of which is shared by all." Again, this is very relevant in the New Zealand context.

Mary M. Case in her paper, *A snapshot in time*, presents the findings of an ARL survey of its members' electronic journal subscriptions. Embedded in her paper are some tips around the purchasing of electronic journals. These include, "the importance of consortial relationships". She suggests that, "libraries need to be tougher when negotiating the uses of the resources they need. Some libraries have been successful at negotiating for electronic ILL, electronic reserves, course packs and distance learning". She

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also suggests that, "If a subscription is up for renewal and the terms have not been negotiated for several years, it may be time to renegotiate the contract. Look at the licence that the publisher is currently using; it may have better terms than your original contract."

I think New Zealanders in the scientific community could identify with the comments made by Richard K. Johnson in his paper: *Open access : unlocking the value of scientific research*. He identifies the problem: "For as long as most of us can remember, journal prices have far outpaced the growth of Library budgets. As a result libraries can not afford access to the broad range of information needed by researchers. Rising journal prices have forced libraries to forgo the purchase of new journal titles, to cancel subscriptions altogether, and to reduce the purchase of books." He goes on to say that, "As access to journals declines, efforts may be duplicated, unproductive lines of research may continue, and innovation inevitably slows." He argues that open access publishing "is about the future of science and how best to maximise the societal benefits of our research investment." He concludes by identifying a number of roles that libraries can adopt to help eliminate barriers to open access. *Building bridges, filling valleys : the impact of digital resources on libraries, research, and learning in history and science* by Frank Menchaca talked about the uses made of online resources by students. "If authoritative and relevant reference content is made readily available online, accessible via links from the instructor's course notes and/or via Google, students will be happy to use it..." Of librarians, Menchaca says he sees, "a new and energized role for them and their institutions: as the bridge builders between the local activities of professors and the resources of publishers..."

The papers in this book raise the questions but do not offer the answers. The conclusion I reached is that we are at a point where we can very much shape our own destiny.

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**Austin, Brice (2004). *Reserves, electronic reserves and copyright: The past and the future*. New York: Haworth Information Press.**

This is a much more readable book than the title suggests. Although based on American copyright legislation the chapters on the history of copyright, and the use of closed reserves in libraries are relevant and thought provoking.

Brice discusses the various revisions of the Copyright Act, the significance of the "Fair use" policy, the past and future of electronic reserves, and the possible futures of Course Reserves in academic libraries. His brightest scenario is one in which libraries offer expanded course reserve facilities based on providing strong, leadership in the copyright arena. "Libraries as a whole are publishers' best customers (in some scholarly fields, perhaps their *only* customers) and as such do have the power to enact change" (p 49). He stresses the importance of flexibility and collaboration between libraries and publishers, particularly in the increasingly digital world. Recognizing the impact copyright law has on teaching and learning, it is important that legislation is relevant, allowing libraries "to react quickly and efficiently to the changing needs of both faculty and students and to the changing landscape of our information world." (p50).

Brice writes clearly and passionately about an issue which has been at the heart of academic libraries for many years, and throws out a challenge to librarians to be involved, or live with the consequences. The challenge is pertinent to all libraries and involves us engaging with copyright legislation to create a future that is workable and expansive rather than "narrow and tortuous"(p52)

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