

PROPOSALS FOR THE  
THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES

INTRODUCTION:

The resignation of Mr O'Reilly, City Librarian from 1951 to 1968, ended the most significant era in the Library's history. His appointment soon after the City had accepted responsibility for the control of the Library resulted in the fortunate combination of a brilliant and enthusiastic librarian and a Council which recognised the need to improve library service in the City.

The recommendations embodied in his Special Report to the Council adopted in December 1951 provided the basis of a policy which resulted in spectacular expansion for some years. But the struggle to maintain a reasonable rate of accessions in spite of ever-increasing book and operating costs coupled with the Council's natural desire to keep rate increases to a minimum has meant that, in recent years there has been little left over for the further development of an essential service for the benefit of the City as a whole.

In December 1967 Mr O'Reilly presented to Council a Special Report on the State of the Libraries. This searching Report surveyed developments since the 1951 Report and was intended as a basis for a libraries development plan. For various reasons (mainly Mr O'Reilly's resignation) little action was taken on the Report but it is now felt that, with a new Council, this is an appropriate time to consider further development of library service in the City. Much has been achieved since the City assumed control of the Library but there are many problems still to be tackled before every citizen's right of access to recorded knowledge is made fully effective through the City's library service as a whole.

For the information of new Councillors much of the material contained in Mr O'Reilly's 1967 Report has been re-emphasised or expanded in this report.

RATING AND FINANCE :

The 1967 Report showed that, whereas the City's total and general rating growth has been proportionate to the growth of property values during the present decade, this is not the case with the Library Rate. A Library Rate of the same proportion of the General Rate as in 1958/59 would amount, in 1968/69, to \$212,000 instead of the estimated \$178,913. A rate yield such as this would go some way towards keeping pace with the increasing cost of books and salaries and would allow for some capital development and a more energetic programme to arrest the declining use of the suburban libraries.

The Local Authorities Section of the New Zealand Library Association has compiled a summary of public library statistics as at 31st March, 1968, to enable members of the Section to assess the relative position of their library with other libraries of a similar size. The summary reveals that while the Christchurch local body grant was \$1.06 per capita, Wellington's was \$2.38, Auckland's \$2.53 and Dunedin's \$1.91. The N.Z. Library Association's provisional standard is \$1.40. Admittedly both Auckland and Wellington provide full branch systems but it is interesting to note that with no service to suburbs apart from a mobile service, Dunedin's rate per capita is nearly double that of Christchurch.