

The building as it stands provides approximately 19,000 square feet of floor space whereas an internationally recognised formula for calculating standards of floor space for public libraries indicates that the desirable standard is 67,000. To allow for twenty years' expansion, on the same formula our requirements would be 82,000 square feet in 1969, 88,000 by 1976 and 92,000 by 1981. These figures provide convincing proof of the need for a new building.

The first problem to be settled in planning a new library is that of a suitable location. Although an area of 15,000 square feet was set aside in the Town Hall complex it is my opinion that this area would not only be inadequate but there is a considerable weight of evidence to suggest that the proposed location would be a costly error. There are many recorded examples of badly sited new library buildings so poorly used that the capital tied up in them is conspicuously wasted. All too often these new buildings have been sited in civic centres, with which they have little affinity. The qualities of a good library site are similar to those of the large department store, and it should therefore ideally be on or adjacent to an area of heavy pedestrian traffic which is that of the central retail shops. The library's major objective has been defined as the provision of the best materials and the best service to be used by the largest number of citizens at the least service cost. This objective cannot be achieved by ineffective location of the building.

If it is accepted that a new building is essential then the first step towards it should be the setting up of a sub-committee to go into the complexities of location, size of building, finance and timing. Whatever decision is taken on timing it must be taken now so that the immediate space problems can be looked at in the light of a definite term of occupancy. It would be unwise, for instance, to contemplate temporary extensions to the present building without knowing how much longer it is likely to be used as a library.

CENTRAL LIBRARY SERVICES :

The lending services of the Canterbury Public Library, based on the 'Free-and-Rental Plan' adopted in 1951 are generally in good shape, the policy being the most economical one for ensuring a stock that is probably higher in over-all quality and more intensively used than any other in the country. In recent years, however, spiralling book costs have depressed annual accessions. Annual increases in the book vote, estimated to compensate for price increases during the previous year have been swallowed up by subsequent increases and there has been a steady decline in the number of books purchased each year since 1961. Lending services depend on current buying for high use and to maintain current buying it has been necessary to curtail systematic checking to ensure that all the currently standard works in the fields covered by the Serious Collection are held in the Collection. These standard works are an essential part of a well-balanced stock.

It is in the field of Reference services that the Library fails to fulfill the full functions generally expected of a modern metropolitan library service. Because of an inadequate book vote the Library is forced to restrict its purchase of important bibliographic and reference aids, which are librarians' working tools in the answering of enquiries. The range of periodicals which are the first source of up to date information in the developing areas of knowledge, is severely limited particularly in the fields of industry technology and commerce.