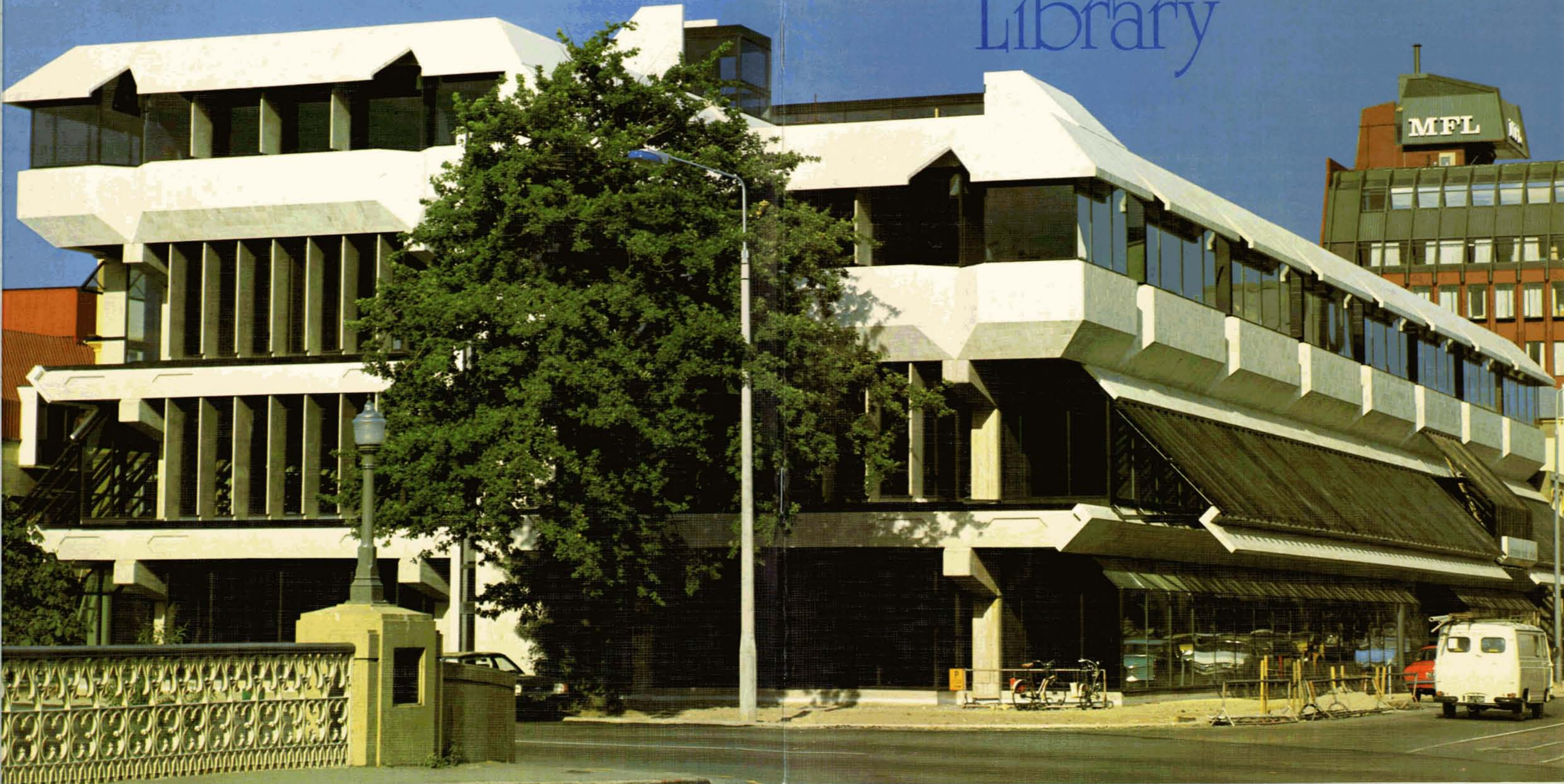




Canterbury Public Library





CITY OF CHRISTCHURCH

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

P O. BOX 237 CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

FOREWORD

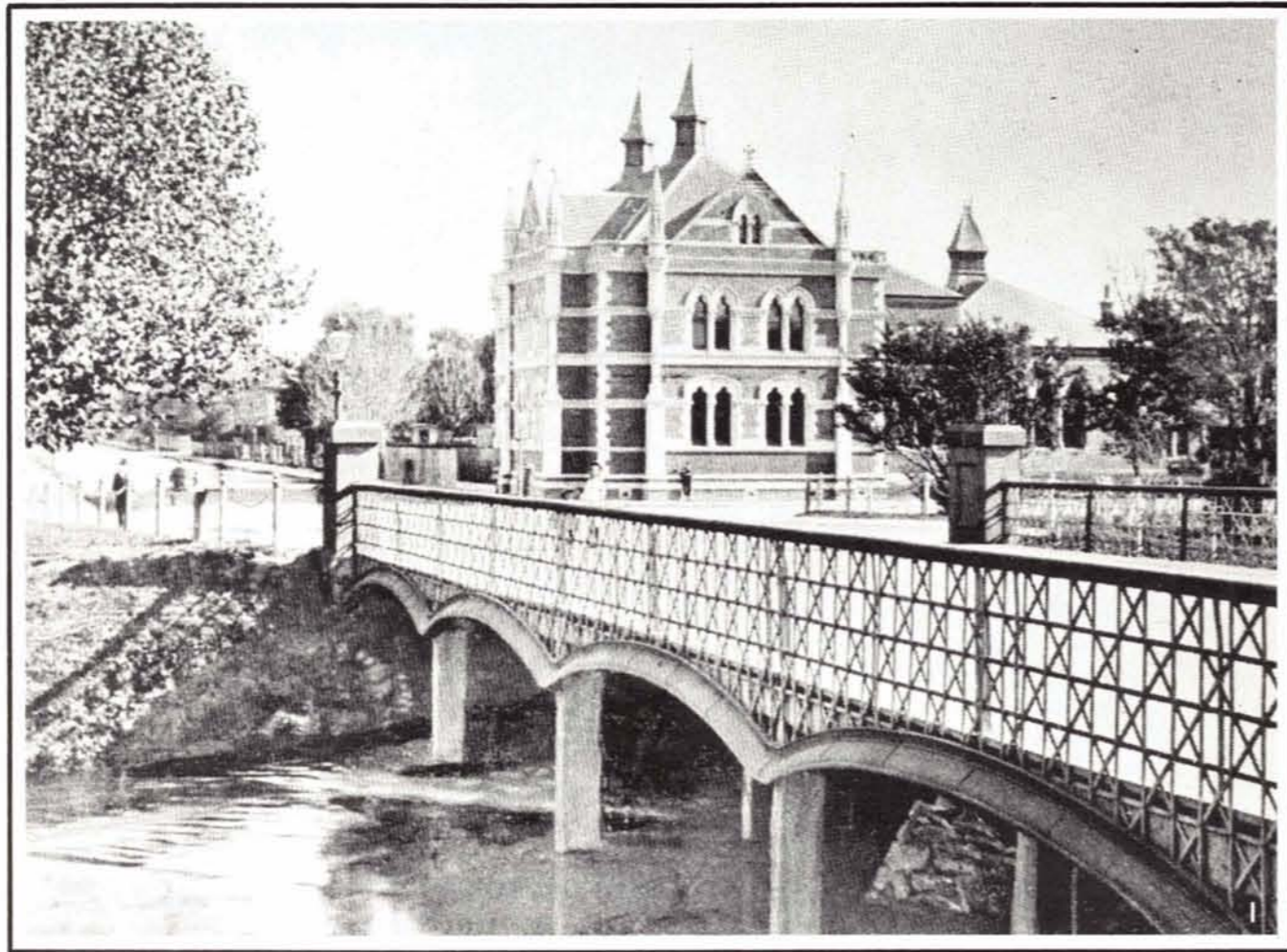
The opening of a major new civic amenity such as the new Canterbury Public Library is a most important event in the history of our City and I know will be greatly welcomed by the thousands of patrons of the Library. For many years, the facilities which both Library users and staff have been obliged to use have been totally inadequate, but now the City possesses a building of distinction which I am confident will be very well used and appreciated by citizens of Christchurch and further afield.

I congratulate all who have been associated with its planning and construction, and I wish the staff who work in it much satisfaction as they carry out their duties in serving the public of Christchurch. We are all fortunate that we now possess one of the finest library buildings in the Southern Hemisphere which is a credit to the architects and contractors and to the Library staff who have worked so dedicatedly with them in the planning.

I am sure that the completion of this well located and well planned building will lead to greater use being made of our library service by all sections of the community and this will constitute the most satisfying return on the considerable investment of Christchurch City ratepayers' funds.

HAMISH G. HAY
MAYOR

Details of historic photographs on pages 2, 3, 4 and 5 are on the inside back page.



RIP 1859-1982 Goodbye To All That

The services available at Canterbury Public Library have changed a great deal since the library was founded in 1859. These changes have reflected changes in society — in the complexity of social life, the rise of educational standards, the technology of book production, the expectations of the public of what a library ought to be like. In the 19th century these changes may have been so gradual they were barely perceptible. Today they are so rapid they often seem a blur.

Originally the library was a collection of serious literature and a place for study and reflection. Eventually a second collection was added, available for lending to subscribers, consisting of more popular types of literature made possible by new inexpensive printing technology. Later, these collections were largely integrated into one, and the idea of serious books interfiled with more popular ones, almost all available for loan, became a reality. Finally, membership of the library became free.

All this took place over more than a century of service by the library. In all but four of its 123 years of existence these changes have occurred on the same site. That site has seen construction and reconstruction, alterations and demolitions. Yet until now, no one could really say the Canterbury Public Library building was adequate.

It has never been big enough. Shelf space has always been at a premium. Too hot in summer, it was cold and draughty in winter. When gas was used for lighting the fumes were overpowering, and when gas gave way to electric light, parts of the building were still gloomy.

Now, as the library moves into new premises designed to fit its service, the people of Canterbury can at last say "Good bye to all that". Yet it seems fitting to combine a look at the new building with a review of the developments that have made it possible — and necessary.

Early History



The library began as the Mechanics' Institute in 1859, when 100 subscribers leased temporary premises in the then Town Hall. The collection consisted of a few hundred books.

By 1863, with the help of a grant from the Provincial Government, the Mechanics' Institute opened a building on a half-acre of freehold land on the corner of Cambridge Terrace and Hereford Street, purchased the year before at a cost of £ 262.10.0. This site was to remain the home of the library until 1982.

Debt, dwindling subscribers and other problems forced the Institute to hand over the building to the Provincial Government in 1873. By this time the collection numbered some 5,000 volumes, and was placed by the Province under the control of the new Canterbury College (later University). With the abolition of the provinces in 1876, the library became the property of the College, ratified by an Act of Parliament in 1878.



The College Years

Canterbury College controlled the library for over seventy years. Despite continual financial problems the bookstock and service continued to develop during most of that time.

Mr Francis Stedman was the first official librarian (1876-91), although he divided his time between the library and the College, where he was also registrar. By 1881 Mr Stedman had increased the

bookstock to 15,000 volumes. By 1898 when Mr A. Cracroft Wilson was librarian (1891-1906) the stock had increased to nearly 30,000. Ten years later, under Mr Howard Strong (1906-13), the stock numbered over 40,000 volumes.

This dramatic growth was partly due to the gift of James Gammack, who donated the income and rents from some 1,600 acres of land to the library in his will in 1896. This enabled the College to demolish the original wooden Mechanics' Institute building in 1901 and replace it with a permanent material structure.



Truly modern library service began under the librarianship of Mr E. J. Bell (1913-51). Bell classified the entire collection under the new Dewey Decimal system (still in use) by 1914, and opened a children's section that same year.

In 1918, with the support of the Canterbury Progress League, a Technical Library was opened. Two years later a travelling library service to country districts began, a service that continued until the establishment of the nationwide Country Library Service in 1938.

In 1924 a new wing of the library was opened including a separate children's room. A new heating unit, somehow made to last until 1981, was installed that same year.

The 1930s saw a decline in the service to the public due to the Depression, although in 1935 the *Canterbury Public Library Journal* was started. If in 1940 some 1,500 people a day were using the library, the bookstock had scarcely increased since the 1920s.

Canterbury College was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain the library in any form. Ever since the 1880s it had held discussions with the City Council with a view to handing over control of the library to the Council, but it had proved impossible to reach final agreement.

In 1936 the Council agreed in principle to take over the library, and made its first grant towards its upkeep. The war delayed the transition and negotiations took longer than expected, but finally in 1948 the City Council, by Act of Parliament, took over the Canterbury Public Library.

Council Control

What the Council had not done in the years before 1948 it quickly made up for in an energetic programme of modernisation and expansion.

Under a new librarian, Mr R. O'Reilly, (1951-68), the sheaf catalogue was transferred to a card system. The library became free in 1952, although a modest charge was retained for some popular books.

The bookstock expanded rapidly, and new services became available for the first time. In 1953, the library began purchasing prints and original works of art for loan. This collection now includes original works by some of New Zealand's best known contemporary painters, including Colin McCahon, Sir Toss Will Woolaston, Rita Angus and Doris Lusk.

In 1942 Dr J. C. Bradshaw had bequeathed 600 volumes of music manuscripts to the library. Under Mr O'Reilly this collection was expanded, and in 1955 the library began purchasing and lending recordings, a collection that is now an outstanding catalogue of serious music.

The dramatic expansion of services and stock required extensive alterations to the buildings. A floor was added to the old Reference Library and the New Zealand room was opened in 1956. A bindery was opened in 1952 to repair existing stock and stiffen new books and periodicals.



To supplement the collections of existing volunteer suburban libraries the Suburban Extension Division was started in 1958. The first branch library, at Spreydon, was opened in 1971, and has since been followed by branches at New Brighton, Papanui, Shirley and a mobile library. A further branch is planned for Linwood to complete the suburban network.

Following Mr O'Reilly's departure in 1968 services continued to expand under his successor, the current City Librarian, Mr John Stringleman. The stock has grown to nearly 400,000 books, used by over 90,000 registered borrowers. Subject areas include Children's, Social Sciences and Humanities, Commerce, Science and Technology, and a fine New Zealand collection.



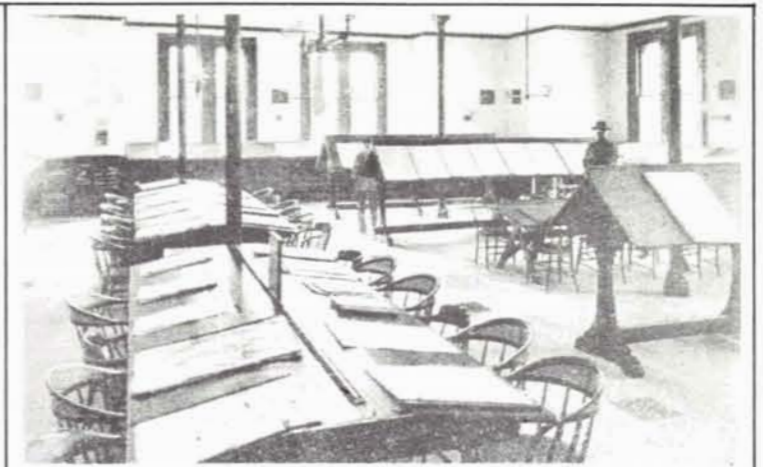
New services continued into the 1970s. Paperbacks were introduced in 1973, along with a housebound readers' service (Storyline) and a collection of books for adult new readers. SATIS, a technical information service for business firms, was begun in 1977 as a cooperative venture between Government and city.

Technology has become sophisticated. The library was the first public library in New Zealand to use a computerised lending system (1975) and this system has been updated for the new building. A telex machine has been added and an on-line computer data base search service is operating.

The library also uses a variety of microform equipment and materials, including a complete microfilm of the *Christchurch Press* from 1861 and the *Times of London* from 1975. A microfilm edition of the *Star* is in preparation, and other newspapers will be transferred to film in the coming years. Microfiche has become a feature of the Commerce, Science and Technology Division.

End of an Era

By the late 1960s it was obvious that the library could not continue on its present site, although some temporary accommodation was achieved with the addition of a mezzanine floor in 1970 and a prefabricated annex in 1975. In 1974 a site was chosen on the corner of Gloucester Street and Oxford Terrace, and Messrs Warren and Mahoney chosen as architects. The next seven years saw the planning and development of this new home and finally, in early 1982, the new building was opened to the public.





Canterbury Public Library 1982

Christchurch City Council's new Canterbury Public Library was designed by Messrs Warren and Mahoney — who also designed the nearby Town Hall — and built by Charles S. Luney Ltd at a cost of \$5.8 million including the site. Its light tiled exterior, highlighted by dark window trim and facings, is in keeping with the modern city centre yet sits comfortably next to the placid Avon River and the historic gothic Provincial Council Buildings on the other side.

The interior of the building is dominated by a large light well decorated with brightly coloured banners designed by Quentin Macfarlane. An escalator runs from the ground to the first floor. Other floors are served by a lift opposite.

Exposed concrete pillars contrast with the overall red decor. The pillars also allowed the architects to use all outside walls for windows, giving the interior a spacious quality and providing pleasant views, especially from the West end.

The first two floors have an open-plan format designed to meet current and future needs. The upper floors include technical and administrative departments as well as a fully-equipped public meeting room and comfortable staff facilities and a bindery.

Public facilities throughout have been designed to suit everyone including the handicapped.

Ground Floor



Childrens Library



The Childrens Library has a full range of books, fiction and non-fiction, for young people up to the teens. School groups use the room for projects, and staff organise a variety of activities, especially during the holidays. A feature of the room is a recessed pit for storytelling in the round.

Adult Section

The Adult Section of the ground floor includes the circulation area — records and art prints are issued and collected at a separate desk — language and literature, the fine arts and the sports collection.

A separate newspaper room holds current files of New Zealand daily papers and a selected overseas range.

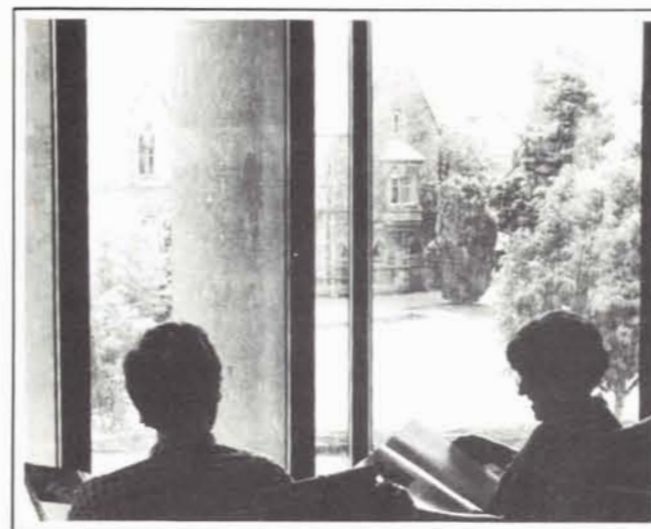


Fiction has now been shelved with other types of literature and literary criticism, a convenient feature of the new building



Also on the ground floor is the first stop for service in the library, "Ask here." Aside from directing members of the public to the area that most suits their needs, this desk is a source of quick reference in its own right.

First Floor



The first floor includes the Commerce Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities and New Zealand collections.

Commerce, Science and Technology



This division features a range of subjects for everyone from the home handyman or motor mechanic to the shareholder and scientist. A recent innovation in on-line searching of computer data bases.

Associated with this collection is the specialist Scientific and Technical Information Service to commerce and industry (SATIS) sponsored jointly by the City Council and central government.

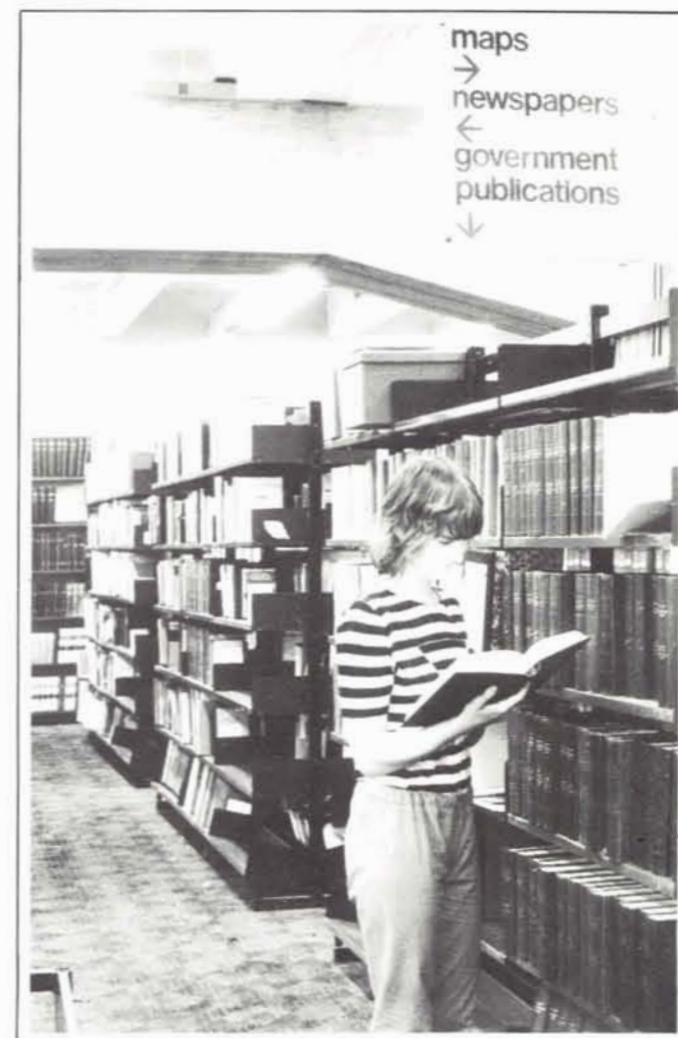
Social Sciences and Humanities

History has now been brought into this section and, with its related fields of politics, sociology and economics, now make possible a unified reference service.



New Zealand Room

The only collection in the library not available for lending, the New Zealand Room offers a comprehensive reference service covering all aspects of New Zealand life. A current and retrospective newspaper indexing system provides access to the wide range of daily newspapers from 1844.



Second and Third Floors



An archives room with special temperature and humidity control and a preparation room for treating fragile material are also on the third floor.



Other features of these floors are spacious stack areas for low-demand stock and a seminar room for staff meetings and training sessions.

These floors house the administrative and technical services of the library. Though the public does not usually see these services at work, without them the library could not function.

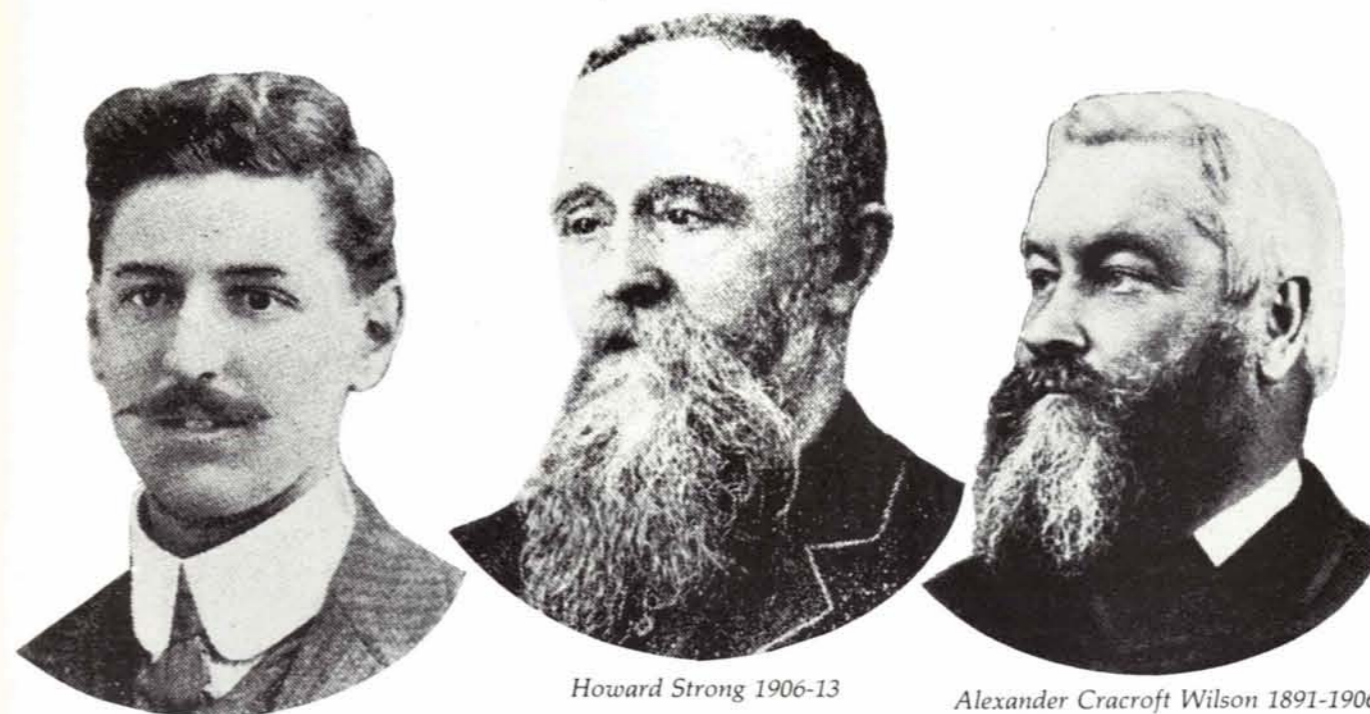
The Administrative Division, which co-ordinates and directs the complex functions of the library, is located on the second floor. It consists of reception and general administration area.

The Technical Processes Division is responsible for the cataloguing and classification of books and serials.

Also on the second floor are the work rooms of the Suburban Extension Division, and the comfortable staff facilities.

The Stringleman Room is a public meeting room with seating for 200 and features a fully-equipped kitchen.

The third floor includes a bindery, where paperbacks and magazines are stiffened and worn stock repaired, carpenter's workshop, and an art room for displays, signs and printing.

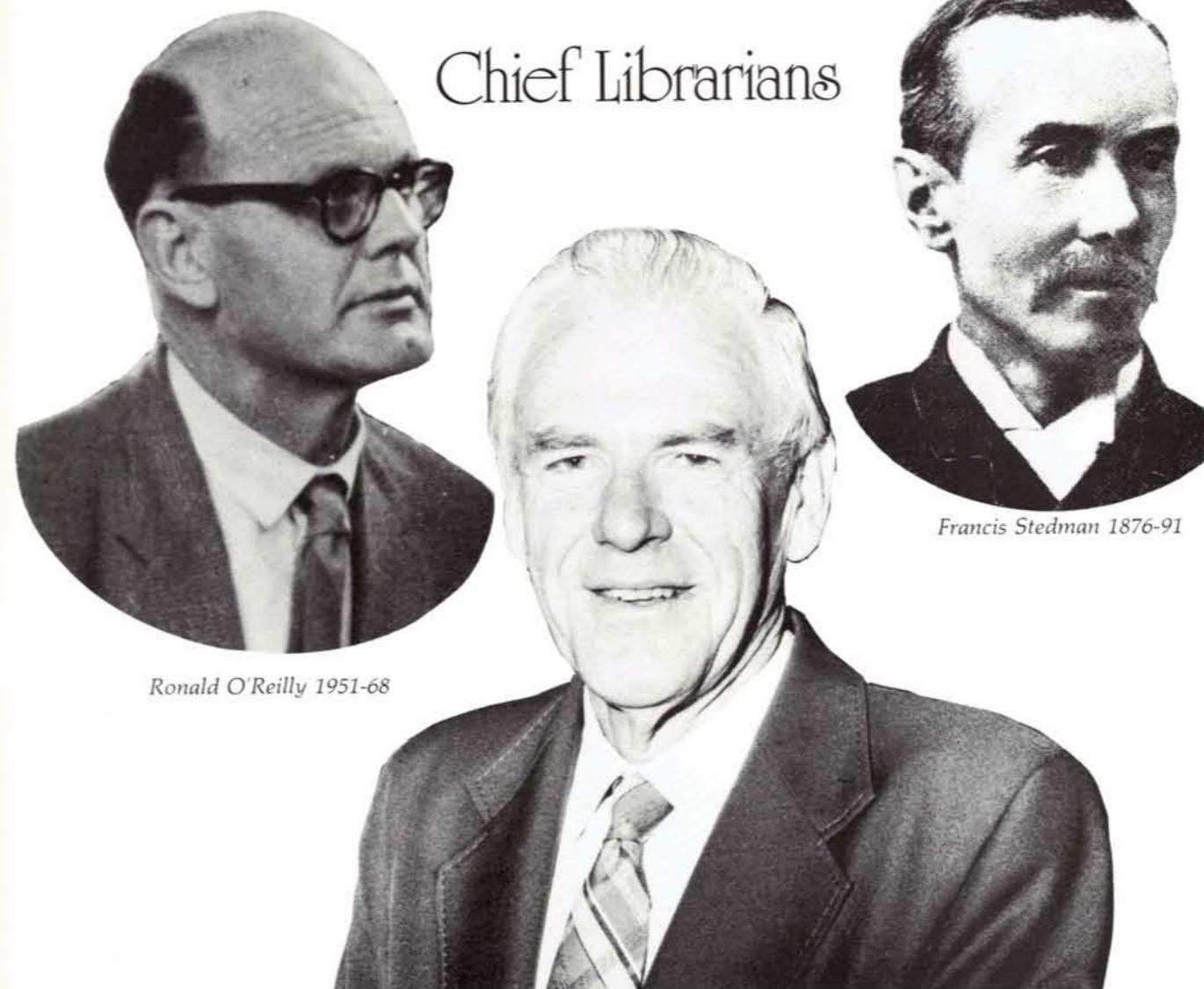


E. J. Bell 1913-51

Howard Strong 1906-13

Alexander Cracroft Wilson 1891-1906

Chief Librarians



Ronald O'Reilly 1951-68

Francis Stedman 1876-91

John Stringleman 1968 —



Staff 1981

Historic Photographs

1. The library around 1910. In the 1920s a new building was added behind the one shown here.
2. The Mechanics, then Literary Institute between 1880 and 1890. The Institute was demolished in 1901 and replaced with the building shown in photograph 1.
3. The reading room in the 1920s.
4. The library staff in 1914.
5. The circulation area around 1950.
6. A busy day in the same period.
7. A later view of the Institute.
8. The upstairs reading room around 1958.
9. An earlier view of the same room.
10. The library around 1925.
11. Circulation area around 1900.
12. Taking out books in 1958.
- 13-14 Children at the library in the 1950s (left) and 1930s.

Acknowledgements

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