

PUBLIC LIBRARIES—A SUBMISSION:

At the recent sitting in Wollongong of the Committee of Inquiry into Public Libraries, the following submission was presented by Mr. W. A. Bayley, F.R.A.H.S. (Hon. Secretary) on behalf of the Society. The points raised are, we think, of great interest to members and to all who may be engaged in historical research:

INTRODUCTORY:

This society is based upon Wollongong and its influence permeates some 60 miles along the coast and a similar distance inland, bringing manuscript, literary and photographic material to its collection, which is housed by a special arrangement in the Wollongong City Public Library.

The society has not been and is not likely to be in a financial position to administer the material it collects without the present arrangements, either in preservation or provision of access and study facilities for students.

A considerable portion of the local history collection in the Wollongong Public Library belongs to the Society, which is deeply concerned with provision for its use and preservation.

LIBRARY STAFFING:

Lack of adequate staff militates against the use of study facilities in the library, which appears to be staffed on Saturday afternoons and evenings with insufficient staff to meet the demands, and with staff either too junior or from other departments of the library, and thus without adequate knowledge of the collection to be able to give a satisfactory service to students.

Skeleton staffing denies access to certain materials which must be brought from security, which cannot be done when only one is on duty, unable to leave the reference section without supervision.

Undercurrents from time to time suggesting that the library be closed on Saturdays and evenings because of insufficient available finance in the hands of the Wollongong City Council cause very real concern that facilities will be denied to the greater number of students, who are either at lectures or at work during ordinary working hours.

Similarly, during normal hours, it is noted that the officer-in-charge is not sufficiently free to deal with urgent matters of acquisition and receipt of material when it comes to light, showing the need for further staffing for the normal routine in the library.

One SENIOR staff member should always be available in such an important section, which is not the case at present.

The need for additional staff will be apparent in submissions which follow.

STORAGE FOR ACCESS AND PRESERVATION:

There is always need for additional filing cabinets for newspaper clippings, pamphlets and photographs, maps and large sheet materials, so that they may be filed alphabetically for quick location and not so jammed together that damage will result.

Photographs need plastic covers for filing and further protection. Funds are needed for purchase of the costly materials for this purpose. Mounting of maps by qualified firms, and of diagrams and drawings on linen to prevent damage, even with small use, needs funds.

Provision of copies of old photographs and other materials by the various processes is necessary so that originals can be stored safely to prevent wear and tear, a costly process indeed. Adequate mounting again adds to

the cost. Unique illustrations demand preservation.

Increased emphasis on local history by authorities, and which the general public is urging, together with the tremendous emphasis being given to the genealogical field by citizens today, is demanding attention almost in inverse proportion to the funds available.

A multiplicity of copies is being necessitated by general use plus the demands of educational institutions from the top down to primary school level. Where else can anybody secure material so rare as much of ours for student regular use? And how else can the material be preserved beyond the foreseeable future without funds for the purpose indicated?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER ARCHIVES:

Local Government archives become the special area of archival preservation for the City Council Library. There are masses of these. Students in depth, whose researches are made available to all types of authorities, should be provided for, necessitating preservation, rebinding (or multiple microfilming), storage space in cabinets, arranging, indexing and provision of access on call.

Other archival material from a wide variety of sources is available from time to time and could be lost if staff and facilities are not at hand to deal with it. Citizens irked by the lack of immediate acceptance find it very easy to send it to the tip.

INDEXING:

The indexing of the most frequently used books on local history or incorporating topics treated in a card index system is very time consuming. One author finds that ten long days are taken to index one 200-page book.

A library, just as a book, is not of maximum value without adequate indexes. In that field increased staff and provision of materials are vital to effective operation of the library.

ENQUIRY ANSWERING:

The telephone constantly demands answers to enquiries over every field. Without indexes a librarian's worth to the community is minimised.

(To be continued)

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(Continued from September Bulletin)

XEROXING AND MICROFILMING SERVICES:

Xerox copying of extracts for students and officials is essential in a modern city library whilst microfilming of photographs for negatives and reproduction is also essential for use in many fields, especially in the schools.

Funds are needed for provision of those pieces of equipment and rooms in which the work can be carried out with suitably trained staff.

MICROFILM READER:

Every city library and some other libraries serving large areas such as Sutherland Shire and Shoalhaven Shire should be provided on issue by the Australian government of a suitable microfilm reader which will screen a FULL PAGE of the largest sized SYDNEY MORNING HERALD at one time, i.e. Recordak Motormatic Reader, model MPG-TL made in Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A., by Eastman Kodak Co. Serial 374, the turret lens taking three different focal areas. Under no circumstances should the use of machines requiring three or four moves to scan one newspaper page be continued: students have already and long since showed their disdain for those impracticable machines.

At present the machine costs approximately \$2000 plus costs of the lenses.

TRAVEL COSTS FOR STUDENTS:

Decentralization of services is essential. Capital cities should not have a monopoly of source material, a practice of necessity developed in post-colonial days but now inadequate to meet the needs of the whole Australia.

Travel is costly if students must go to the capital cities to read in local history. Accommodation is costly beyond the resources of individuals and societies. Travelling time occupies hours which can be better spent on research and writing.

That indicates the need to eliminate the drawbacks by making copies of the material available in the local reference libraries, rarer materials and newspaper and similar files being microfilmed for the purpose.

MICROFILMING NEWSPAPER AND OTHER FILES:

Ancient files still exist throughout the country, the owners of which, although they may not part with them, will readily lend them for micro-filming. Two that come to mind are KIAMA INDEPENDENT and ALBURY BANNER, complete at the office of their owners.

Microfilming will have a reverse effect for the capital cities and libraries away from the local area (where access is always being required)

will thus be able to secure copies.

Wollongong needs microfilm of Kiama Independent, Bulli newspaper files, Wollongong files additional to the Mercury, including the South Coast Times (at Wollongong University complete); Albion Park files, Shoalhaven News and Berry newspapers.

MICROFILM OF GENERAL NEWSPAPERS FOR LOCAL COLLECTIONS:

In addition to microfilming local newspapers the local city libraries need microfilm of general newspapers, Sydney Morning Herald being already held at Wollongong.

But periodicals such as Sydney Mail and Town and Country Journal carried paragraphs on almost every locality in New South Wales in almost every issue together with general items of inestimable value. Microfilm of those, the Bulletin and similar valuable periodicals becomes an essential to the city libraries at least.

MULTIPLICITY OF COPIES:

Provision of a multiplicity of copies is not desirable: it is *essential* for the survival of historical material, especially the rare old one-copy newspaper files.

Darwin's destruction suffices to emphasise the need for wide distribution of a multiplicity of copies, whilst a multiplicity of negatives widely distributed and stored in destruction-proof or nearly-so shelters is also highly desirable at a national level.

FACSIMILES OF OLD WORKS, JOURNALS, DIARIES:

Facsimile editions should be published in increasing numbers: a project which has barely begun because of lack of funds.

When published funds should be made available for regional public libraries to acquire them for their shelves.

PICTURES OF REGIONAL INTEREST:

In libraries in the capital cities and also in regional centres are old pictures of local and general interest.

Work should be undertaken on microfilming on negative such pictures with provision of copies on paper and/or microfilm positives to the libraries most concerned and to a wider general field for student reference. So much history comes out of a picture: so much error can be corrected simply by a picture.

FINANCE:

In every one of the submissions above finance beyond the means of the local community is vital. Only by the provision of same will positive progress be made possible.

(This submission was presented to the Committee of Inquiry into Public Libraries by Mr. W. A. Bayley, F.R.A.H.S. [Hon. Secretary] on behalf of the Society).
