

THE
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT
1951.

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND LIBRARY

REPORT OF THE JAMES FORSYTH LIBRARIAN
FOR THE YEAR 1951

The Chairman,
Library Committee,
University of Queensland.

Sir:

I have the honour to submit my report on the operation of the University Library for the year 1951.

This report follows the pattern set by that of last year in indicating, I hope, that whatever have been the achievements of the past twelve months, they should be regarded only as steps towards the objective of a well-organized and efficient Library, taking a vital part in the University programme and offering, perhaps alone, an opportunity to gain that balanced measure of knowledge and culture which one likes to think should characterize education at the tertiary level.

HARRISON BRYAN.

JAMES FORSYTH LIBRARIAN.

1. GENERAL

It would be fair to say that this year has been one of positive advance especially in the direction of improvements in processing and in general along the lines suggested in last year's report.

Unfortunately however, world conditions continue to be unfavourable to that continued expansion which alone can allow the Library to play a proper part in the life of the University. For instance, as a result of inflationary increases in the price of books, the Library was forced to spend in 1951 an average of 36/- for each book purchased, as opposed to 21/- per book in 1950 and the price of periodical subscriptions rose to a corresponding extent. It seems certain, further, that at least an equal increase in price will have to be borne in 1952.

An even more worrying effect of recent price increases is seen in the perceptible deceleration of the building programme at St. Lucia with the inescapable inference that soon there will be nowhere to put the books that will cost us so much to buy.

2. STAFF.

During 1951, Miss G. Hassell joined the staff as a junior assistant in place of Miss A Meyers who was the successful applicant for the extra cataloguer's position to which reference was made in the 1950 report.

In the professional examinations conducted by the Library Association of Australia in June 1951, no less than six of the Main Library Staff were successful. Misses B. Anderson, B. Bygott, A. Meyers and A Muir and Mr. B. Scott passed the Preliminary Examination, Miss A Meyers gaining a Merit. I myself succeeded in both parts of the Qualifying Examination. In addition Mrs. M. Taylor of the Physics Departmental Library and Miss G. Hampton of the Thomas Thatcher Memorial Library also passed the Preliminary Examination.

The candidates for the Preliminary Examination, with the exception of Mrs. Taylor all received instruction at the classes conducted in the Main Library of which mention was made in last year's report.

Of the twelve members of the Main Library Staff at the end of 1951, ten had gained recognized professional qualifications and five held in addition a University degree, two of them with honours.

The scheme of appointments also mentioned in the 1950 report was approved in principle by the Committee on Staffing during the year, but no agreement has yet been reached on the actual salaries to be paid. In this regard, comparative figures on staffing and salaries of all University Libraries in Australia are now being prepared and when complete will establish a rather firmer basis for discussion.

3. THE CENTRAL COLLECTIONS

It is satisfying to report that the Main Library is in much better shape than as recorded in the previous report. Sufficient seating, for instance, is now available and a reader use survey is in progress.

The reserve periodical collection and in fact the complete periodical holdings have been reduced to order by the completion of a Periodicals Location Box and the housing of old runs from Departmental Libraries has been continued to a considerable degree.

The Assistant Librarian has been working steadily at overcoming the binding lag occasioned by the war. By the end of the year those series which had previously been bound were practically up to date and during 1952 it should be possible to make a start on the large number of runs as yet completely untouched.

4. LIBRARY ROUTINE

The most important advance during the year was the introduction of Subject Cataloguing as presaged in the last report. All current material now receives full processing and the central author catalogue is being expanded gradually into a Dictionary Catalogue. Subject Cataloguing will be extended to old stock as far as considered necessary when time is available. Subject Catalogue Cards for the books they select are distributed to all departments desiring them in addition to the normal author card.

It is proper however that you should be aware that this very necessary innovation has been responsible for a considerable increase in the extent and cost of central processing. The full cataloguing of 5,000 books a year requires the typing and filing of 10,000 extra cards each year, bringing the total to some 25,000, apart from the extra time taken by the cataloguers in the subject cataloguing process.

Continued attention has been paid to the importance of reducing the time lag involved in central processing to the minimum consonant with efficiency. Two statistical studies are in progress to determine with some exactness the suspected rhythm of the work in the Library. It is hoped that an analysis of the results of these studies will suggest ways of ironing out irregularities in the processing pattern by removing the causes of periodic bottlenecks in various departments. The value of central processing of periodicals is being carefully studied against the background of the inconvenience it causes Departments and attention is being paid even to such small details as the possible modification of typewriters to speed card production.

5. RELATIONS WITH THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

With regard particularly to delays in the supply of books, while it would be fair to say that the University Press has given good and prompt service on the whole, it is nevertheless apparent that it has not as yet any system of automatic checking of unfulfilled orders. This fact has given rise to a number of instances of overlong delay which tend to reduce the general standard of service and so cause considerable dissatisfaction among the users of the Library. As the largest single customer of the Press, I feel it is reasonable Sir, for your Committee to enquire whether some improvement can not be made in this regard.

As well as being the object of attack on this count, I am repeatedly troubled by Departments on the question of the relative price of books obtained through the Press and direct from overseas agents. I have always taken the view that in this matter I am under instruction from your Committee to route orders through the Press and that accordingly it is useless to

try and convince me of the potential advantages of any rival scheme.

However as, after some research I have been unable to discover any positive instruction to the Librarian to this effect, I would like to suggest that the time has come for the Committee to discuss this matter openly, to decide whether insistence on routing orders through the Press is desirable or even legal, and, if this thought desirable, to issue a statement for circulation among departments.

6. THE MAIN LIBRARY BUILDING

In my last report I suggested that your Committee might support the proposal to extend the Main Library by the addition of the three planned floors as soon as possible, even at the cost of alienating temporarily from the Library the top two floors.

I would like now to re-emphasize the need for this extension. I would remind you Sir, that some months ago I conducted a careful survey of the capacity and present occupation of the existing building. While the results of the survey are complicated by the differing rates of expansion of various sections of the stock, the overall picture is as follows,

<u>Maximum capacity of present Shelving</u>	<u>Present Occupation</u>	<u>Maximum possible expansion.</u>	<u>Present rate of expansion.</u>
<u>Vols.</u>	<u>Vols.</u>	<u>Vols.</u>	<u>Vols. per year.</u>
88,587	74,033	14,554	3.4 4243

That is, in less than four years, at the present rate of expansion the existing shelving, more than two miles of it, will be jammed tight.

Some relief can be gained by temporary expedients such as the substitution of more capacious steel shelving for the present wood in shelving on the lower floor, but the central fact remains that, unless extra accommodation is provided within five years, the Library will suffer that decrease in efficiency which is an inevitable consequence of over-crowding. Beyond this, of course, there looms the time at which the building literally will not contain the collection.

7. DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES

This, the perennial problem of the University Librarian, continues to contribute its share of difficulties, but it is fair to state that the expensive duplication of records referred to in last years report has been further reduced during 1951.

In this connection it is only practical to realize that there is little to be gained from carefully applying or rather insisting on the application of, technical process to small book collections. With Departmental Libraries as small as Pathology, Bacteriology and even Anatomy, for instance, there is little that the Librarian can do.

Accordingly I have devoted a considerable amount of the time of my trained staff to the larger Departmental Libraries and am pleased to report a definite improvement in co-operation

between them and the Main Library. This year particular attention has been paid to the Medical School Library, where a plan for reorganization has been approved and is being implemented, and to the Geology Library where extensive reclassification has been undertaken.

It is particularly satisfactory to see Departmental Libraries gradually being staffed by officers either supplied from the staff pool at the Central Library (e.g. Physiology) or whose professional qualification or experience is of a recognized order (e.g. Physics, Zoology). It makes the task of the Librarian much easier if he can advise Departmental Librarians in terms of mutually understood concepts which they can then apply to their practical problems.

8. VISITS TO OTHER UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

While attending the first conference of the Library Association in Melbourne in July, I took the opportunity of inspecting briefly University Libraries in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. I might also say in anticipation that during the long vacation 1951/2, I spent some time in the Barr Smith Library of Adelaide University.

These visits, while brief, were nevertheless very stimulating and to some extent at least gratifying, in that I came away convinced that on a comparative basis your Library measures up fairly well. I do not feel however that this gives any grounds for complacency. On the contrary, I am only too well aware of the considerable deficiencies in our service which it will continue to be my object to reduce.

9. THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA.

As the University is a corporate member of this Association and as you Sir, as Chairman of the Library Committee, are its representative on it, it may not be out of place to refer, in this report, to certain activities of the Association which have affected the Library during 1951.

In July, I was privileged to attend in Melbourne the first conference of the reconstituted Association and gained considerably from personal contact with other Australian Librarians. While in Melbourne I participated in moves to establish a University Library Section within the Association and since that time the section has proceeded with the first of its objects, namely, the collection and correlation of data relating to University Libraries in Australia. I am now in possession of this data as far as it has been collected. I think much is to be hoped for from the opportunity offered by this section for the more intimate association of Librarians in our particular field.

The Queensland Branch of the Association took an active part in organizing the Queensland Section of the visit to Australia, under the Smith-Mundt Act, of Professor John Ely Burchard, Dean of Humanity and Social Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a world authority on University Library architecture.

The Branch had much pleasure in sponsoring an instructive and well - illustrated talk by Professor Burchard on current trends in the design of American University Libraries. During his visit, Dean Burchard also inspected the Main Library Building at St. Lucia and, as a result of his stimulating criticism and suggestion, I was able to report to your Sir, in some detail on what I consider to be desirable modifications of the building, as at present and as planned, in the interests of increased efficiency.

I understand that the construction authority has already considered these suggestions.

It is worthy of note, I think, that the University is a considerable supporter of the Association. As well as through its corporate membership, a considerable number of the staff and officers of the University in their personal capacity lends the weight of authority and learning to it. As well as yourself as the President of the Queensland Branch, Mr. A.A. Morrison of the History Department and myself are members of the Branch Council, all the members of your Library Staff are full or student members of the Association and a number of members of the teaching staff are affiliate members.

I think it significant and right that the University should so support a body devoted to the improvement of Librarianship and library services within the State and that as the operator of an extensive library system itself, it should forward so actively a movement to establish and further the free public library as an essential factor in community education and culture.

10. THE BOOK VOTE

With regard to the financial provision made for library services within the University, there a few points which I feel I should mention in this report.

At the outset however it is important that I should state that I am very well aware of the financial difficulties that beset this institution, in common with, others at the present time. Moreover I should like to record my very real appreciation of the fact that the Library Vote has been more than doubled in the last two years.

Nevertheless it would be wrong of me to appear to accept the present vote as adequate. Quite apart from the fact that inflation has robbed the generous increase in the vote of much of its purchasing power, it is quite disproportionate, by overseas standards, that a University and especially a young University should devote less than 4% of its available funds to Library purposes.

Carlyle's statement that the true University is a collection of books may appear exaggerated, but I submit that an adequate library must be the foundation of any institution of higher learning and it might well be further true that access to superior library facilities might be responsible for the difference between adequacy and distinction in the University's product. Without your Library Sir, students must rely entirely on the utterances of lecturers and the contents of text books, thus, it seems to me, stultifying the University purpose; without it research workers are forced to proceed in uneconomic ignorance of the efforts of their colleagues elsewhere; without it, finally, the University can produce if it can do that, no more than efficient technicians each in his own specialist sphere.

It seems regrettably true however that not all members of Academic Staff are as completely convinced of the essential nature of the Library. It is the failure of many Departments to spend their section of the vote that, I am sure, being interpreted as lack of interest, has prejudiced the chances of an adequate all round increase while funds permitted.

Granted that the Vote as a whole is insufficient, there is to my mind the further point that there exists within it a disproportionate distribution especially as

between the humanities and the Sciences. It is idle to repeat that the Library is the Arts laboratory and books the only equipment in this sphere, when it is found that despite the higher prices prevailing in the technical book sphere, more books came into the Library in 1951 on medicine than on English Language and Literature, even though it is generally understood that books are of less importance than periodicals in the former field due to the rapidity with which this Science advances. In the same period twice as many books were bought on Engineering than on Education, as many on the Technologies as on French and German combined and for 168 books on Agriculture only 65 came in on the Fine Arts, including Architecture.

I would not be bold enough to suggest that this unbalance could be corrected within the limits of the existing vote, especially as I do not agree that any section of it is at present over generous, rather do I urge strongly that attention be paid to it in the course of pressing for a considerable all round increase at such a time as it appears even vaguely possible for the University's financial position to allow it.

II. STATISTICS

(i) Summary of Expenditure on Book Vote

		1950	1951
£	Payments for the year were:	£	£
5299	Books	6656	
2307	Periodicals.....	3509	
1455	Binding.....	1645	
<u>271</u>	Sundries.....	<u>417</u>	
	Total Payments.....	£12,227	
	Against which receipts were:		
<u>9668</u>	Book Vote.....		£14,278
336	Resulting in a credit balance of:.....		2,051

(ii) Accessions

		1950	1951
	Books		
4791	Purchased.....		3647
<u>944</u>	Donated.....		<u>1344</u>
5735	Total.....		4991
-----	Less, Withdrawn.....		<u>6000 +</u>
5735 (INCREASE)	Total Decrease.....		1009

+ Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Q'ld Branch) Library returned to the Society.

(iii) TOTAL BOOK STOCK AT 31 DECEMBER 1951

31/12/50

103,383

31/12/51

102,374

1950

Main Library

Librarian

1

Assistant Librarian.....1

1

Senior Library Assistant.....1

3

Cataloguers.....4

1

Orders and Accessions Officer.....1

1

Periodicals and Exchange Officer.....1

5

TOTAL-----6

4

Library Assistants.....3

-

Junior Library Assistants.....1

11

TOTAL-----12

Departmental Libraries

3 3

Library Assistants.....3

14

Total-----3

TOTAL STAFF

15

NOTE:

In addition fourteen further Departmental Libraries are supervised by Departmental Academic or Secretarial Staff, full or part-time.