



Giving Radio to Flat-Dwellers and People in Boarding-Houses

Leading Librarians Applaud Idea for "Listening Rooms"

TIME was when a library was a place where grey-beards dozed over the Encyclopaedia Britannica in rooms smelling strongly of disinfectant, and elderly spinsters crept in, mouse-like, to exchange a copy of Marie Corelli for something new by Ruby M. Ayres.

But all that is rapidly changing. To-day sun and fresh air are welcome visitors in libraries—the rooms are warm and pleasant, with colour and flowers. If a library is to be a force in the cultural life of the community—and any librarian should make that his prime object—it must be attractive. A suggestion for an addition to the facilities already being provided was made in last week's "Radio Record"—the installation of radio sets in special rooms.

"That idea seems an excellent one to me," said the Librarian of the Central Public Library (Mr. J. Norrie), when asked for an opinion by this paper. "It could be used in a dozen different directions—I visualise a group of people interested in one particular subject listening to the lecture put over the air, then furthering its knowledge by consulting books in the library."

"The scheme could be carried further by a system of definite study before the broadcast takes place. Say, for instance, a man is going to talk on the music of Beethoven. By consulting the programmes in the 'Radio Record' a group could have at least a clear week before the broadcast took place. In that week notes could be prepared and the group add considerably to its knowledge of the composer and to its enjoyment of the broadcast.

"The W.E.A., too, could be assisted by the provision of radio rooms in public libraries. This asso-



Both Dr. Guy H. Scholefield, Chief Librarian of the Parliamentary Library (top of page) and Mr. J. Norrie, Librarian of the Wellington Central Public Library, commend on this page, the suggestion for special rooms for radio in libraries.

ciation is doing splendid work, but much of the knowledge that it imparts is lost because of a lack of radio sets in flats and boarding-houses. In Wellington this is particularly noticeable—there's probably not another city in New Zealand where so many people board or have a flat, and consequently have no means of listening in. A radio set in a library would be of inestimable benefit to them.

"In our new library building, which we hope will be opened in about a couple of years, very special provision is being made for children. One of the senior assistants is at present in America studying the latest methods of running children's libraries. A radio set in this department could add greatly to its value. There are many interesting stories put over the air, and, while it might be necessary to shut the set off while little Tommy's birthday greetings were broadcast, the general children's hour programme is very suitable—entertaining and instructive—for small listeners."

"The installation of radio listening rooms in libraries is, I think, only in its infancy; but it is a very obvious development in connection with the public library," said the Chief Librarian of the Parliamentary Library (Dr. Guy H. Scholefield). "One realises when travelling away from home what deprivation is involved in not having access to a radio. It is hardly to be expected that the broadcasting corporations will provide free means of listening to their broadcasts. There are, of course, two ways in which libraries make use of broadcasting, and vice versa. In the United States and also in Great Britain there are regular series of library talks broadcast with the object of making the libraries and their contents better known to the public. That is one side of the picture. The other is the co-operation of libraries in the organisation of listening groups throughout the country. The listening group, to be of most value, must be provided with the requisite reading to enable members to pursue what

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