

On this occasion, the launching by the Library's Endowment Trust of the biography of Alexander Turnbull, we are gathered together for a twin purpose—to congratulate the author, Eric McCormick, on a fine piece of sustained research and presentation on a subject fraught with many challenges to the biographer's skills, and to honour Alexander Turnbull's public spirit in bequeathing his library to the community.

The two, the man and his library, are inseparable, and Dr McCormick has managed with great skill to relate the man and his times to the building of his library; to show how an otherwise ordinary man, once fired with the passion of the collector could create a quite extraordinary library.

It is a big book in all senses—five years of research and writing, 350 pages, a detailed catalogue of a great private library in the making, and a thick slice of New Zealand's social and intellectual history. But if one has the courage, as the Endowment Trust had, to bring together a scholar with Dr McCormick's reputation and New Zealand's greatest book collector, then one must expect a big book.

In his lifetime, Alexander Turnbull built a superb library of 55,000 volumes plus thousands of pictures, prints, maps and manuscripts most of them relating to New Zealand and to the Pacific, but with other strong collections, particularly in English literature. On his death in 1918 he willed the collection to 'His Majesty the King ... to constitute a reference library in the City of Wellington ... to be kept together as the nucleus of a New Zealand national collection ...'

It is a Wellington library, but national in its scope and interest, and it was fitting that in 1966 it became a research and reference arm of the National Library of New Zealand within the Department of Education, and that it will be housed in appropriate surroundings with the rest of our national collections in the new National Library Building, the first stage of which has just begun in Molesworth Street.

Alexander Turnbull has had to wait 56 years for his biography (a lengthy period in this more 'abrasive' age when biographies can be summoned to appear within a day of one's achieving greatness) because his reputation has been created by his Library. If it had been dispersed on his death, this biography would never have been written. This Library and its growing reputation have constantly enhanced the standing of its creator.

One of the fundamental principles which the Educational Development Conference has suggested should inform and shape educational policies is that 'The search for meaning, purpose and identity in life is necessary for the health of both the individual and society.'