

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### *The Beverley Randell collection of infant readers*

Hugh Price, co-editor and publisher with his wife Beverley Randell of the P.M. story books, presented to the library ninety-nine infant readers widely used in New Zealand as the nucleus of a collection of particular interest to educationalists and historians. The library, in recognition of Beverley Randell's considerable contribution to the writing and publishing of contemporary children's readers has designated this as the Beverley Randell collection.

These books, written specifically to help young children to learn to read, span a period of eighty years from 1882 and fall into twelve series. The earliest, the *Royal readers*, were published in England and widely used throughout the Empire until the outbreak of World War I. The first reader in the collection to be published in New Zealand is the third standard reader in the *Southern Cross* series published in 1888 by Whitcombe and Tombs who were also responsible the following decade for the *Imperial readers*. Whitcombe's third series, the *Pacific readers*, appeared in 1911 and with the restrictions imposed by World War I were in almost nation-wide use by 1919. These early primer readers were phonic exercises without meaning or story and it was not until the advent of the London-published *Beacon readers* in the 1920's that scientifically prepared basic readers were introduced into New Zealand schools. Whitcombe's followed with the publication of *Live readers for the modern child* which they in turn replaced in 1929 with the *Progressive readers* to support the new primary school syllabus. These readers were used throughout New Zealand for more than twenty years with some revision about 1940 but had become very dated by the time they were replaced by the *Janet and John books* published by James Nisbet and Co. of London which have now been superseded by the *Ready to read* series prepared by the School Publications Branch of the Department of Education.

This representative collection gathered over a number of years adds another dimension to the country's social history and is described by Mr Price in an article entitled *Lo! I am an ox!* to be found in the book supplement to *Education* vol. 24, number 3, 1975. The intriguing title is taken from the first page of a Whitcombe's *Imperial reader* of the 1890's where the young reader is carefully introduced to only two-letter words including the lovely question: Is my ox to go in as we go by?

### *Rare maps purchased from National Library of Australia*

The Library's map collection has benefited recently from a neighbourly gesture by the Australian National Library. Duplicates from the Tooley