

a substantial capital investment the potential of which cannot be realised with such a small staff.

The conservation of the nation's newspaper collections is being continued by the programme of microfilming in Wellington, Dunedin and Hamilton. In Wellington the library staff prepare work for three cameras stationed on library premises and operated by the Government Printing Office. Outside Wellington the staff of the Dunedin and Hamilton Public Libraries prepare work for the Government Printing Office but production has been disappointing and the overall results support the conclusions of the Management Services of the State Services Commission, namely that the most effective and efficient method for preserving newspapers is to set up a greatly expanded central microfilming unit under the control of the National Library. Further delays in the recommended expanded microfilming programme for rare and brittle New Zealand newspapers will result in a small proportion deteriorating beyond recall and an increasingly larger proportion requiring time-consuming and expensive treatment before they can be microfilmed.

#### *The Early Printed Book Collections*

The 55,000 volumes of printed books bequeathed to the nation by Alexander Turnbull in 1918 included several thousands of early printed books. Over 1,500 were sixteenth and seventeenth century English books and the collection was strong in works by and relating to John Milton and in English prose, poetry and drama. The Library's early printed books (titles printed before 1801) now total in excess of 9,000 volumes and provide the most significant research collection of its kind in New Zealand. In recent years the growth of the collection has accelerated to such an extent that it now accounts for over sixty per cent of all known early printed books held in libraries in New Zealand. Regular expenditure has been supported since 1971 by an annual grant of \$1,000 from the funds of the Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust. The purchase of some 600 early printed books relating to John Milton in 1975 and the bequest of 60 sixteenth century Bibles and prayer books from the estate of Sir Alexander Howard in 1973 has been supplemented by substantial purchases of minor seventeenth century Milton related items in the United Kingdom this year. The Library has accepted national responsibility for the bibliographic control of early printed books in the country since 1967 when it began the Union Catalogue of Pre-1801 Imprints in New Zealand Libraries, a card catalogue showing the location of such books. Earlier, in the 1950s with the assistance of a \$9,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, Turnbull accepted a national role in the acquisition of early English books by subscribing to the series of microfilms for items listed