

all the same as saying that we are well off, as students or special readers. Add all our books and manuscripts together, add all the libraries in New Zealand together, and we still should not get more than a small fraction of a library of real size and scope. We should still have to send away for microfilms and xerox copies. We are of course an odd people. I do not need to adduce to you the history of the National Library to prove that; and you are acquainted with the fact that as our university population rises, together with the extension of research and the pursuit of higher degrees – which mean, or should mean, the satisfaction of special needs – our universities are being urged to spend less and less on books, while the huge rise in prices, added to by devaluation, makes it imperative to spend more and more. It is not much comfort to reflect that most peoples are in some way odd, and that the British Museum is chronically short of money. But how odd can we be, and still respect ourselves as a community? It depends, I suppose, on what we respect ourselves for. I suppose we could respect ourselves for having, not a healthy provincial, but a crudely unabashed colonial, mind. I hope, on the other hand, that we are past that point; that we do assume naturally that we are a healthy province. It is no use trying to persuade ourselves, even with the most painstaking snobbery in the world, that we are a metropolis – even if the Turnbull does have a Milton collection that a metropolis might envy.

Of course I do not think that possession of a large number of books necessarily makes us more than crudely colonial. But it does tend to help the health of the mind. It is, on the whole, an aid to the intellectual activity of the community. We do need more than the Bible and the Pilgrim's Progress and James Bond, even as an aid to our prose style. I was conversing a few weeks ago with Sir Harold White at the National Library of Australia at Canberra. You know they have a very good new monumental building there, in an expanse of lawn, overlooking a lake, with sculpture by Henry Moore outside, and a fountain, and a ring of fountains and trees in the distance; and I said to Sir Harold, 'What about expansion? Have you your plans for expansion laid down?' He answered, 'I don't think we need worry about that yet. There's room for ten million books underneath.' I understand the combined contents of our New Zealand libraries, of all sorts except school libraries, add up to something over ten and a half million volumes. We must not say combined resources, because two copies of the same book do not exactly double resources. Well: if you suggested a national library in New Zealand by the end of this century, in one place, of ten million volumes, would you get a very good reception from the financier concerned? Yet by the end of this century we expect to have our population attaining its third million. That would work out at three-plus books – or titles, in library terminology – per person. That