

as the day for the official opening. The Honourable G. J. Anderson 'in the midst of a distinguished gathering' spoke briefly of the Library 'and of its great importance as a national historical collection'. Following afternoon tea, guests were shown over the three storeys of the building 'with its heavily stocked shelves'.²⁴

With pressure now on the Librarian to show the Library, if not to the world, then to a small but sometimes discerning public, the time available for basic cataloguing diminished. His hopeful expectation of completing the task within three years was no longer mentioned. Much staff time went in showing visitors around. There was no reading room and, so far as can be judged from complaints, no reading area, although from the early 1920s an increasing number of graduate students came to use its New Zealand resources. The limited number of staff and more critically, imperfect library organisation, defeated the Librarian who in the years at his disposal could make it neither a research centre nor a tourist attraction.

The Minister's remarks at the opening regarding its future as the national historical collection were not entirely uninspired. While this is not the place to detail the origin of New Zealand's National Archives some sections of the story have relevance, as the Turnbull, for a brief period, was regarded as the appropriate repository. With vigour and determination – and staff – it could have developed into a joint State Library- Archives administration. Proposals, to begin only with those of Edward Tregear, go back to the 1890s²⁵ and the first serious recommendations linked archival responsibility with the Dominion Museum. A press note in July 1909 reported that Cabinet had decided upon the Mount Cook site for the new Dominion Museum 'in front of the Barrack'. A three-storey building was to be erected with 'provision for state documents and papers'.²⁶ The following month a note on the New Zealand Company Embarkation Register then in the custody of the Museum, elaborated on the intention to house the New Zealand Company records collected by Dr Hocken with the state archives under Mount Cook.²⁷

This plan was taken a stage further by the Science and Art Act already mentioned which conferred responsibility for collecting historical materials on the 'Dominion Library'. However, because of the postponement of the Museum building plans the Board of Science and Art, at its annual meeting on 23 June 1920, approved the transfer of the historical collection to the Turnbull Library.

These measures had the full support of Dr Allan Thomson the Director of the Museum who in a report on the historical collections said 'I am strongly of the opinion that the collection should be transferred to the Turnbull Library . . . If the whole historical collections of the Government were concentrated in the Turnbull Library this could