

people one quarter of the world's known languages. Historically, there are political, religious and commercial ties which link the Pacific peoples with Britain, USA, France, Japan, Germany, Spain, Australia and New Zealand.

The focus of this paper is on publications in the languages of the South Pacific. The recent acquisition by the Alexander Turnbull Library of a collection of papers and publications from the Cook Islands has forced a re-evaluation of the Library's Pacific Island languages collection, and led to consideration of practical ways by which its role can be extended beyond bibliophily into that of an active research library. Such libraries are, according to Ian Willison, 'involved in a grand collaborative enterprise whereby the techniques of writing, of publishing, of critical scholarship are brought to bear on the progressive ordering of the world's experience of itself'.² Willison supports the idea of a library's collection as an archaeological stratum acting profoundly on the intellectual ordering of experience in its own right and with others.

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The Cook Islands is a self-governing state in free association with New Zealand. Its fifteen islands lie scattered between Samoa and the Society Islands. In 1821 the Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society left two Tahitians there to begin the task of converting the people to Christianity. From 1827 permanent mission stations were established and villages formed as the people were encouraged to imitate a European way of life based on Christian legal codes.

As elsewhere in the Pacific, the chief means of missionary instruction was the distribution of vernacular literature. Vocabularies and grammars, catechisms and Biblical texts, hymnals and prayerbooks were followed by the full translation of the Bible and, almost invariably, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Printing in Cook Islands Maori was carried out at the London Missionary Society press in Tahiti; then in 1834 Charles Barff's cast-off press and a few fonts of type were sent to the Reverend A. Buzacott in Rarotonga. With the arrival of the French in Tahiti the station declined and Rarotonga became the centre for their Eastern Pacific mission work. This included printing. As in most mission fields, a belief that literacy gave access to European material culture fuelled a period of intense interest in reading and writing.

In September 1987 Miss Dorothy Hall wrote to the Turnbull Library offering to donate some papers and books belonging to her father, the Reverend Percy Hall, who had been in charge of the LMS School in Rarotonga in the early 1900s. Miss Hall expected that the Library would want to dispose of most of the collection. In fact the three cartons which arrived contained extraordinarily exciting material covering the early mission period, and the difficult time for the missions which followed the introduction of Consular administrations. The collection was also truly varied: manuscripts³, books, printed ephemera, sketches, maps, song-books and glass negatives have all fascinated Library staff.