

Alexander Turnbull Library

Report by the Chief Librarian for the year 1981/82

The Alexander Turnbull Library is a specialised research institution within the National Library, the primary objective of which is to contribute to the body of public knowledge by building on and preserving its research collections on New Zealand, the Pacific, early printed books, John Milton and his times, and the arts of the printed book, and by encouraging research and publication based on these collections. The Library has been assigned responsibility within the National Library for the long-term preservation of the national collection of library material relating to New Zealand and the people of New Zealand.

THE USE OF THE RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

The Turnbull's obligations under the National Library Act are threefold; to develop, maintain, and provide access to its collections and resources. The rapid growth in recent years of public demand to use the New Zealand collections, in a time of restraints on staffing, has affected seriously the Library's ability to maintain a proper balance between these three obligations. During the year it became imperative to redirect staff resources towards the development, organisation and maintenance of the collections, and the Minister of Education, on the advice of the Trustees, approved a temporary reduction in the hours of public access from 55 to 47.5 hours per week. Saturday and evening opening hours were maintained but on week days the Library opens to the public at 10.30 a.m. instead of 9.00 a.m. This reduction in hours has led to criticism from university staff and professional research workers. The Library is examining a number of alternative approaches to bring the available staffing resources and current user demand into a better balance, including the issue of readers' tickets.

For a research library, the most effective and appropriate means of making its resources available to the widest possible audience is by the promotion of research and publication based on its collections. During the year several hundred publications appeared containing materials derived from the Library's collections. The Research Endowment Fund made grants to seven people during the year, including a substantial sum to assist with the translating and editing for publication of the Library's microfilm copies of unpublished accounts of the French exploring expeditions to New Zealand from 1769 to 1840. The Endowment Trust made grants to assist the publication of an important manuscript on Pacific history held by the Library and a catalogue of Maori sound recordings. A national conference of musicologists was sponsored by the Library and the