

THE GENERAL TRAINING COURSE

AN NZLA ACHIEVEMENT

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THE General Training Course is a part of the revolution in library service which began in New Zealand in the 'thirties, and which can be traced back, in large part, to the wise generosity of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in taking key persons away for up-to-date training.

When the librarians who trained overseas under Carnegie Fellowships returned to New Zealand, for the most part their viewpoint was national, not local. They were out to raise the standard of libraries, to improve the training and status of librarians throughout the whole country. They did not hope to be efficient in a vacuum. We can never be thankful enough that it was so, nor honour sufficiently those of them whose efforts to that end have been persistent and unflagging. The 'reformers', and others of like mind, were well aware that little could be done for libraries in New Zealand until there were enough people with a modicum of training in the country.

What was the situation that faced them? The Munn-Barr report had said, 'With occasional exceptions, such as Hawera, the librarians of the small town libraries are entirely without training.' Affairs were little better in the larger centres. Some city libraries required matriculation for staff appointment, others did not. A few assistants sought to equip themselves by taking the examinations of the Library Association, London. Chief librarians gave what training they could, but even then there was a great disparity of standards, and no integration. Obviously the situation was deplorable and chaotic.

DISCUSSIONS IN THE ASSOCIATION

What was to be done? At first there were several local attempts at training. Then, at the 1937 conference, a Committee on Training was set up. It was particularly active, and by the end of the year copies of its report had been circulated to branches for consideration. In its final form the report was submitted to Council in October, 1938. As the recommendations of the committee involved considerable expense, Council decided to postpone judgement until the result was known of an appeal which was then being made to the Carnegie Corporation.

The CCNY again was generous, and Miss E. J. Carnell was appointed Liaison Officer between the Association and the Country Library Service. Training Committee, reconstituted in 1939, was instructed to collaborate with her in formulating a working scheme of library training on the lines laid down in the appeal to the CCNY, but as Miss Carnell did not arrive in New Zealand until December, 1939, affairs were temporarily at a standstill. When she did arrive, she had much to say on training, and said it with the clarity, felicity and pungency that we came to expect of her. At the 1940 conference she described and compared the systems in vogue in Britain and America. I like to remember that she affirmed, 'As regards technical qualifications, there is a lot to be said for getting them while

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actually working.' She found, however, that in England there was far too high a proportion of young, and hence cheap, assistants. 'In a sound system the number of juniors employed who are encouraged to qualify themselves for higher posts should not be more than, allowing for wastage, there are likely to be senior posts available in the future.'

In the November issue of *New Zealand Libraries*, Miss Carnell listed four suggestions which had been made to her with regard to training in New Zealand, and pointed out that it was impossible to make a decision until a definite syllabus had been approved.* Meantime she had drafted a scheme for general training; it was submitted to branches and to individuals for comment, and discussed fully at the Assistants' Session of the 1941 conference. As I remember it, we were over and again asked to express ourselves on the matter of training. If policy has in any way erred, it is not through failing to take each man's censure.

All this time, *New Zealand Libraries* showed signs of the training ferment. Instructional articles continued, overseas trainees recounted their experiences. Mr F. A. Sandall† and Mr H. G. Miller‡, both university librarians, expressed themselves strongly against university control of a New Zealand course of training. Both were fully conscious of the issues involved, and both gave reasons for their stand which seem to me operative today.

THE COURSE GETS UNDER WAY

The final syllabus and conditions of training were approved in November, 1941, and thereafter published in *New Zealand Libraries*.§ The course was to be under the control of the Association. There were to be two parts, five sections (to be exact six sections, but there was an option in the second part). The first two sections constituted the syllabus for the General Certificate, the last three that for the Diploma. The Association was never able to conduct the Diploma course, and it was because two groups of students had embarked on their training expecting to be able to go on to higher studies that, in 1948 and 1949, the Library School was opened to those of their number who had gained the General Certificate and were approved by the Selection Committee.

The keynote of the course was struck in the descriptive notes: 'The primary object of this syllabus is not to set up a system of examinations but to provide a course of training.' One had to observe, do projects, examine critically the technique of one's own library. Its 'actuality' has been, and is, one of the great merits of the General Training Course.

Miss Carnell was asked early in 1942 to write the first part of the correspondence course, and in August of that year forty-two students began to train under six tutors.¶ Miss Carnell had been faced with an extremely difficult problem. There was a huge variation of opportunity and attainment among the candidates. On the one hand there were assistants with several years' experience in urban libraries, and, in some cases, university education; on the other hand there were the librarians of small libraries struggling along without bibliographical tools or any other means of information and instruction. To make the course stimulating and profitable for the one group, while keeping it possible for the other, would have

**New Zealand Libraries* 4:41 N '40.

†*New Zealand Libraries* 3:141 JI '40.

‡*New Zealand Libraries* 4:30 O '40.

§*New Zealand Libraries* 5:101-113 D '41.

¶The course for the Children's Librarian's Certificate had begun in June of the previous year.

taxed anyone's ingenuity. As one of the original forty-two, I should like to pay my tribute to the masterly way in which Miss Carnell achieved her object. Her notes, re-edited and adapted, were published by Grafton in 1947, under the title *Library Administration*. Others, too, wrote lively and interesting papers for the course, notably Miss M. Campbell, Miss A. Minchin, Mr C. W. Collins and Mrs J. Munro. Then, in the background, were the indefatigable tutors, adding onerous duties to their busy lives. Sometimes the machine slowed down: the wonder is that it went at all.

At first a certain number of students were allotted to each tutor, but in 1944 the work began to be divided by subject. This seems to me a much superior arrangement, and has allowed the distribution of valuable mimeographed notes. In passing, however, I must remark that I shall never cease to be grateful to the tutor I had for the first part of the course, nor to marvel at the pains he took. Another improvement, in my opinion, is the giving of relative merit symbols to papers. We, the guinea-pigs, received only comments.

Two other points should perhaps be mentioned before we leave this historical sketch, the object of which has been to clear away misunderstandings and to give the background to young assistants struggling with their monthly assignments. The first is that it has been found impracticable, in the meantime, to have a full-time tutor-organizer for the General Training Course. The second is that the NZLA has approached the Library Association, London, with the request that our General Training Certificate be recognized in Great Britain as a qualification for registration as a Chartered Librarian. The request has been refused, although the LA has subsequently accepted our certificate as equivalent to the Entrance Examination. Naturally this is a matter for regret and concern to New Zealand librarians. In May, 1945, Mrs Joyce Monro had compared the two courses: 'On the surface there seems little difference between the two syllabi, but the Training Course has aimed at providing training suitable to New Zealand conditions. And there are two important differences which make the New Zealand course more valuable. The first of these is that it is not an examination, but a course of training . . . The second is that a reading record takes the place of a paper on the history of English literature. . . '*

THE LIBRARY SCHOOL

In 1946 the School started. The Association had shown its usual praiseworthy flair for squeezing every drop of advantage out of every opportunity which offered! At the beginning of 1945 an ambitious Planning Committee had hoped that a school, for the preliminary period at least, would meet the following needs: the tutoring of the General Training Course and the writing of the sections for the Diploma; intensive short course for librarians of small country libraries; training for special librarianship and for librarians in charge of school and children's libraries.

The full programme has proved impossible with the present small staff and cramped quarters. That the Director and her assistants have been able to achieve so much must entitle them to our admiration. Short courses have been given to special groups, and now, somehow, General Training Course people are being fitted in. Truly wonderful, but where?

Comparisons are generally odious, but it may be profitable to say one or two things in view of certain misapprehensions which seem to exist. † As one who has taken both courses, I should say that all topics treated in

**New Zealand Libraries* 8:63-4 My '45.

†*See New Zealand Libraries* 11:162 Jl '48.

the General Training Course are studied much more fully at the School, with the possible exception of 'The Book' (typography, etc.). In addition, many subjects are taught which are not touched on in the Training Course. In the latter there is nothing comparable to the excellent series of lectures by specialists on the literature of their own subjects. Graduates are expected to know and to be capable of judging books! The School course inculcates a knowledge of libraries at the national and international level, covering different types of library and different library systems. Thus a greater breadth of vision is fostered than is usual in assistants who have gained all their experience in one or two libraries, or with one or two book stocks.

On the other hand, the strength of the General Training Course is that theory and practice are wedded as fast as book and bell can bind them. A holder of the General Training Certificate who has in addition a thorough general education, including preferably some university study, habits of wide reading, and experience with a good book stock under a progressive chief librarian, can be a very good person indeed. Moreover, mere certification—of any kind—is only part of the story. So much depends on personal qualities. He or she may be, in addition, practical, observant, able to work harmoniously with others and to organize people as people and not as units, to meet the public with tact, understanding and courtesy. In a few cases these desiderata obtain, and the people concerned are among the best public librarians in the country. Unfortunately, there is a wide variation of opportunity and attainment among the holders of the Certificate. From the beginning it has been the policy to make allowances for those working by themselves and without adequate bibliographical tools. The time has now possibly come for GTC passes to be graded, as a spur to students and as a guide to employing authorities.

THE DEMAND FOR TRAINED LIBRARIANS

In the remarks that follow I am setting aside entirely the university and special libraries, and the National Library Service, which, as Mr Wylie pointed out last month, has many public library functions. Public libraries are offering the work and the salaries for only a limited number of Library School graduates. It is my opinion that at present a city library is well staffed with five or six assistants of Library School calibre, and five or six times that number of good GTC assistants or potential GTC holders. The same proportion could obtain in the smaller towns. No strict division of staff into professional and clerical seems to me possible—or desirable—at the moment. The position may change if regionalization develops. The point of all this is that there is room in public libraries for both types of trainee. We need both. Both are valuable, and we should do what we can to establish status and prospects for both. Mr John Harris, in his extremely capable article on training policy published in December, 1948*, pointed out that the School was gaining for the profession a number of fine and much-needed recruits. I would not dispute that. However, I think we should ask ourselves if we are not also discouraging desirable recruits of another kind.

To conclude, I think the Association was right to initiate a New Zealand course of training. I'm glad it was not a mere examination hurdle. In my opinion, it was wise to substitute a reading record for an elementary examination in English literature. To me it seems also that the School is a great asset, and that there is room for the two types of training, side by side. Such have been the decisions of the past. I hope the decisions of the future may be equally happy, equally realistic. But that is up to us!

**New Zealand Libraries* 11:273-7 D '48.

SOME GENERAL TRAINING COURSE STATISTICS

Two hundred and fifty-one students have embarked on the General Training Course in the eight courses which have been completed. Sixty-three have been awarded the Certificate. That is one of the most interesting facts shown by the summary of admissions and passes given below:

Course	No. admitted	Passed Part I	Passed The Book	Passed Cat. & Classn.	Certificates Awarded
1	45	27	18	17	16
2	15	5	4	2	2
3	36	20	14	13	12
4	33	19	14	13	10
5	15	8	} 12	8	8
6	24	9		8	8
7	54	36	26	21	12
8	29	19	16	8	3
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Total, courses 1-8	251	143	104	82	63
<i>Per cent</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>57.0</i>	<i>41.4</i>	<i>32.7</i>	<i>25.1</i>
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9	32	22			
10	36				

There is a slight overlap in those figures, caused by students being transferred from one course to another, but it would not be enough seriously to affect the proportions.

CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

The following table shows where the successful sixty-three were working when they started the course, and where they are now:

Started course when working in	At present employed in						TOTAL
	NLS	Public libraries	University libraries	Govt. Depts.	Other libraries	Left library work	
NLS	6	1	1	—	3	1	12
Public libraries	2	23	2	1	1	14	43
University libraries	—	—	2	—	—	3	5
Govt. depts.	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Other libraries	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
TOTAL	8	24	5	2	5	19	63

Summarized, the totals are:

	LOCATION WHEN STARTED COURSE		PRESENT LOCATION	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
NLS	12	19.0	8	12.7
Public libraries ..	43	68.3	24	38.1
University libraries ..	5	7.9	5	7.9
Government departments ..	1	1.6	2	3.2
Other libraries	2	3.2	5	7.9
Left library work ..	—	—	19	30.2
TOTAL	63	100.0	63	100.0

Of the twenty-three who started the course while working in public libraries, and who are still working in public libraries, no fewer than 19 are in the same libraries in which they started; four have moved on to other libraries. Of the total twenty-four who now work in public libraries, 8 work in one library, 5 in another, 2 in another, and the remaining 9 each work in a different library.

PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

MAVIS PEAT

THE SEMINAR for Children's Librarians at the 1950 conference recommended to Council that the local and national Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations be approached with a view to co-operation with children's librarians, especially in making children's literature of a good standard better known. It is probably as well, therefore, for members of the NZLA to know what these organizations are.

A Parent-Teacher Association is formed for the mutual interest of parents and teachers in the welfare of children. More often than not teachers are the first people with whom parents will discuss the reading problems of their children; therefore it is the responsibility of teachers to become aware of the maximum library service available, and equally it is the responsibility of librarians to have constant contact with teachers and Parent-Teacher Associations in their own areas.

Individual Parent-Teacher Associations, however, must necessarily remain parochial in their endeavours, which allows for tremendous

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