

EARLY PRINTED BOOKS IN NEW ZEALAND: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ORIGINS OF INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIONS

IN 1979, WHEN WORK BEGAN on recording for the Early Imprints Project the holdings of early printed books in institutional collections in New Zealand, the identity of the main repositories was well known. There was, for example, little doubt that the collections at the Auckland Public Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington and the University of Otago Library would contribute most to the national total. But even given these known strengths it was difficult to estimate with any precision the total number of copies of pre-1801 imprints held in New Zealand libraries. In the event the most optimistic early expectations have been surpassed, and with the initial data collection stage of the Project now nearing completion it is apparent that the final total of copies reported will exceed 25,000.

For most purposes a statistic of this nature has little value. It is not the quantity of early printed books but rather the kind of material held which should excite interest. But in the case of New Zealand such a figure does hold a certain significance. For it should not be forgotten that European settlement began in this country in the nineteenth century. Not only were all the copies of books printed before 1801 brought to New Zealand but for the most part they arrived many years, often several hundred years, after they were first published. The extent of local holdings of early printed books, though modest by international standards, does consequently invite speculation about their origin. And it is the intention of this article to discuss, in a tentative fashion, the manner in which the books which have been catalogued for the Project found their way into local collections. A comprehensive survey of the origins of rare book collections in New Zealand has not been undertaken. Not enough is yet known of the early history of many of our collections to allow such a design. In its place an attempt has been made to identify the principal means of acquisition by drawing on the readily accessible evidence and that gathered recently by members of local Project teams and interested librarians.¹ The collections discussed have been strictly limited to those of the Auckland Public Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library, the universities and three theological colleges or seminaries.

The absence of established collections of early printed books in New Zealand inevitably encouraged benefactions. And in two remarkable cases, in Auckland and Wellington, such benefactions led not only to important collections being made available to all New Zealanders but also to the founding of new libraries to house and administer the materials received. The two benefactors themselves provide an interesting contrast, the one, Sir George Grey, a prominent public figure who had served the crown in three colonies, the other, Alexander Turnbull, a reclusive, reluctant merchant whose passion for collecting books finally consumed the greater part of his family's fortune. It is a contrast which extends even into the

manner of presentation. For Grey benefaction was a highly public act, announced and executed within his own lifetime. Turnbull, on the other hand, bequeathed his collection to an unsuspecting nation. But in each case their philanthropy was directed to a similar end, to provide the nucleus of a major library collection for public use.²

Sir George Grey first intimated in 1872 that he would be prepared to present a collection of books to the city of Auckland upon the founding of a public library. He was then in retirement on Kawau Island after a long official career which had included terms as Governor of South Australia (1841–1845) and of New Zealand (1845–1853 and 1861–1868) and as Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa (1854–1861). The proposed gift was not the first of its kind. In 1861, at the end of his term as Governor of Cape Colony, Grey had presented a valuable collection of manuscripts and books to the South African Public Library in Cape Town. It is apparent that it was his original intention to give the rest of his collection to the same library. But persuaded by his long residence in New Zealand and aware of the need for a well endowed free public library in Auckland, Grey finally bestowed his gift upon the younger and more needy colony.

A fledgling public library did exist in 1882 when Grey made his formal offer to the city, but it was unsuitable to house a collection of the size and quality that Grey proposed to confer upon it. As a result Grey was asked to retain his collection at Kawau until a new library was built. The new building was opened on 26 March 1887, with Grey's books providing 8,000 of the total stock of 15,000 volumes. Grey's collection was varied in character, including a strong New Zealand component, a large number of autograph letters and many very valuable illuminated manuscripts as well as extensive holdings of early printed books from the fifteenth century onwards. The catholic nature of the collection is perhaps best illustrated by the contrasting views of two recent commentators, the late Professor J.A.W. Bennett, who, in a radio talk broadcast in 1953, held that the collection was representative of three centuries, the fifteenth to the seventeenth,³ and E.H. McCormick, who, in a series of lectures on Grey, Alexander Turnbull and Thomas Hocken delivered in 1960, acknowledged the great value of the medieval manuscripts and early printed books but chose rather to emphasize the importance of the later, New Zealand holdings.⁴ It is difficult at this distance to determine the design Grey had as a collector towards the end of his life, but it does appear that from the outset he intended the Auckland collection to form some kind of public monument. It was a monument to which he added during the remainder of his life. The 8,000 volumes which comprised the Grey Collection in 1887 grew to 14,000 by the time of his death, in London, in 1898. It was also a collection which he was determined to continue using despite its new and public location. The gift of the collection was made with the single proviso that 'no one is, during my life time, to remove books from it, except myself, but that I am to have the privilege of taking any books out and keeping them as long as I require'.⁵

Unlike Sir George Grey, Alexander Turnbull was a New Zealander by birth. He was, however, educated in England and there began his career as a collector in the late 1880s. He returned to New Zealand finally in 1892 and in August entered the firm of W. and G. Turnbull, a company of general merchants which his father, Walter, had founded with George Turnbull on emigrating to New Zealand from Scotland in 1857. The younger Turnbull remained with the firm until June 1916 when, beset with financial problems, the business was sold to Wright Stephenson of Dunedin. Two years later, on 28 June 1918, Alexander Turnbull died, leaving his extensive library to the crown with the request that it be preserved 'as the nucleus of a New Zealand National Collection'.⁶

The collection which Turnbull bequeathed to the nation was much larger than that of Grey. It was also of a different kind, being the product of a stricter discipline. The principal strength of the collection was and remains, appropriately, in its New Zealand and Pacific materials. But Turnbull's library was also remarkable for its holdings of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English printed books and, in particular, for its very fine collection of books by and about Milton. It was not until 1900, towards the middle of his collecting career, that Turnbull was tempted to follow Grey into the pursuit of medieval illuminated manuscripts and incunables, a field of collecting which he does not appear to have entered with much enthusiasm. The collection bears more clearly the imprint of the collector, and although Turnbull decided as early as 1907 that his library should enter the public domain at his death, it was his own taste and not the assumed public good which established the shape of its contents.

The philanthropy of Sir George Grey and Alexander Turnbull led to the establishment of two important New Zealand libraries, the Auckland Public Library, for which a new building was erected as a consequence of Grey's gift, and the Alexander Turnbull Library, which opened in Turnbull's own house just two years after his death. The significance of both benefactions in the development of local collections of New Zealand and early printed material is obvious. But less clear, perhaps, is the part the two initial gifts played in encouraging subsequent, less spectacular yet nonetheless notable benefactions.

The most significant additions to Grey's collection of early printed books in Auckland were the result of a series of gifts by the two brothers, Henry and Fred Shaw, from 1904 to 1928. Henry Shaw, who for two years served as a curator of the Grey Collection and thereafter spent much of his time working on his own books in the Library, gave a total of over 2,300 volumes. Of the items printed before 1801 the most valuable were probably the 65 incunables, which greatly expanded Grey's original collection of 36. His elder brother, Fred, also presented a further eight incunables together with a number of other titles, many of which reflect his interest in English drama. But although no other single donation of early printed books since 1898 has matched in size or value the contribution of the two Shaws, the Library has continued to receive over the years a number of further titles by gift. It has also in the last ten years purchased additional material selectively from a modest budget.

A good illustration of the manner in which one major benefaction tends to attract others is provided by the subsequent development of Turnbull's collection of early printed books as administered by the Turnbull Library. The first major donation was that of the Mantell family, with whom Turnbull had himself been acquainted. The gift, in 1927, of over 1,000 books, of which more than a tenth were printed before 1801, followed some thirty years after the death, in 1895, of W.B.D. Mantell, the son of the noted English geologist, Dr Gideon Mantell, and himself a prominent politician and one of the founders of the New Zealand Society. Two years later, in 1929, Dr Montfort Trimble, a Masterton solicitor, presented his collection to the Library. The gift included 86 early printed books dealing with Italian politics, especially of the sixteenth century. The Sir Joseph Kinsey collection, at 15,000 volumes the largest donation the Library has ever received, provided a modest total of 41 early printed books, including one incunable.

In 1941 the daughters of Colonel Robert Trimble of Inglewood, a former judge of the Native Land Court who had died in 1899, presented to the Library his substantial collection of books relating to Irish history and English literature, a gift which was matched in the same year by the Robert Hogg bequest of a smaller collection of Scottish titles. After the war Alexander Turnbull's modest collection of incunables was enhanced by the donation of further items by Sir John Ilott in 1952 and 1958, and by the bequests of Percy Watts Rule, a Timaru architect, in 1953, and of T.L. Seddon, a former mayor of Feilding, in 1962. A year earlier, in 1961, the family of Matthew Cable, a prominent Wellington engineer, had donated his small but very specialized collection of books and associated items relating to Oliver Cromwell and the English Civil War. And in 1964 the Library received the collection of John Houston, a Hawera lawyer and horticulturist, which included a small number of early printed books, chiefly legal treatises.

In recent years the most notable donation has been that of 50, mainly sixteenth-century, bibles and prayerbooks from the estate of Sir Arthur Howard, a distinguished English book collector who died in 1971. A number of early printed books has also been received, both by donation and by purchase, from the collection of the late A.C. Brassington, a Christchurch barrister and solicitor. And two significant collections have recently been deposited in the Library on long-term loan, that of the Bible Society in New Zealand, comprising more than 100 bibles, prayerbooks and related works, and the early printed books, chiefly seventeenth- and eighteenth-century law reports, of the Wellington District Law Society. A rationalization of the holdings of pre-1801 imprints within the National Library of New Zealand has also led to the transfer to the Turnbull of many titles from the General Assembly Library.

It would be misleading, however, in the case of the Turnbull Library not to acknowledge the contribution which direct purchasing has made to the growth of the rare book collections. Although in recent times the purchase in 1974 of the G. William Stuart collection, comprising editions of the works of Milton and of

Miltoniana, has dwarfed in significance any other single purchase, the judicious acquisition over many years of items both at auction and from antiquarian book-sellers has enabled the strengths of Turnbull's original collection to be developed. Such purchases are now made by the Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust, whose funds derive substantially from the bequest of H.B. Fleck, a Wellington government architect who left the proceeds of his estate to the Library on his death in 1971.

With one exception the collections of early printed books which have developed in New Zealand universities have not benefited from major benefactions of the kind which established the Auckland Public Library and the Alexander Turnbull Library. Both Grey and Turnbull had the university colleges in Auckland and Wellington in mind when they considered the disposal of their collections. Grey recognized that a substantial free public library in Auckland would form one of the 'useful accessories' which should accompany the recent 'munificent gift' of a university. And Turnbull, in 1907, initially bequeathed his collection of books, manuscripts, maps and pictures to Victoria University College, a decision which he altered in favour of the nation towards the end of his life. Their failure to endow either university college has meant that as far as early printed books are concerned the university libraries in Wellington and Auckland, as also in Christchurch and latterly in Palmerston North and Hamilton, have gathered modest collections either through direct purchase or, more commonly, as a result of miscellaneous donation. And, in general, such gifts and bequests have been received not as a consequence of known strengths but because in the eyes of potential donors universities were seen to be appropriate repositories for books of this kind.

The heavy reliance on miscellaneous donation evident in the growth of the university collections outside Dunedin has produced collections very different from those found at the Auckland Public Library and the Turnbull Library. On account both of an erratic pattern of development and of a wide yet modest range of sources, it has proved difficult for the university libraries to form coherent collections able to support sustained research in a few carefully chosen fields. They do, of course, contain pockets of strength and there is also some evidence of judicious purchasing, on a small scale, in well defined areas. But in most cases age alone appears to have guaranteed the acceptance of offers of early printed books and as a result the collections may be regarded as largely antiquarian in nature. They are, nonetheless, on that account, valuable in themselves for the light they shed on the kinds of early printed material which was and still is in private hands in the community.

The holdings of early printed books in the Library of Victoria University of Wellington may serve as an example of a modest New Zealand university collection. It is, of course, a collection which since 1920 has developed in the shadow of the Turnbull Library but which has still managed to attract donations of some note. In general, the early printed books have arrived as part of larger donations,

as in the case of the two most valuable gifts received by the Library, the Fildes and Dr Robert Stout collections, which were both of New Zealand material but included some eighteenth-century editions of Cook's voyages and of other Pacific explorations. The collection of Horace Fildes, a Post Office official who bequeathed his 2,000 books and pamphlets to the Library in 1937, has rather more early imprints than the slightly smaller collection of Dr Robert Stout, a Wellington medical practitioner, whose books were donated in 1970 by the nephews and niece who had inherited them in 1960.

Other donors have presented collections of books more closely related to their own professional interests. Sir Robert Stout, Chief Justice of New Zealand from 1899 to 1926, a former Premier and also chairman of the Victoria University College Council, donated to the Library a number of law texts and works in political philosophy as well as many other books on topics of immediate personal concern. Sir Frederick Chapman, a Supreme Court judge, gave a collection of books which had belonged to his father, H.S. Chapman, New Zealand's first puisne judge and a friend of John Stuart Mill. The gift includes some notable early works in Anglo-Saxon studies as well as legal texts and books of history and literature. Another lawyer and member of the College Council, A.R. Atkinson, left some 1,200 books, including a number of early imprints, to the Library, part of a much larger collection which was divided among the four main Wellington libraries. The Victoria University share includes works of English and classical literature and items on the history of the Bible in English in addition to titles on history, politics and the law. The library was also the recipient of the collection of the prominent Wellington architect, Thomas Turnbull. The collection, which comprises many works on Scottish history and literature as well as on architecture, was presented by his son, John Urie Turnbull.

Some purchasing has been undertaken to strengthen the University's collection of early printed books, mostly by Harold Miller, who was Librarian from 1928 to 1964. In the 1930s the Carnegie Corporation of New York gave funds to improve the holdings of research materials in the Library and with these resources Miller bought major eighteenth-century editions of historical documents and literary works. Around 1960 he also negotiated the purchase of a considerable number of books from the old Nelson Diocesan Library. These books on church history, theology and ancient history included many which had belonged to Bishop Andrew Suter, Bishop of Nelson from 1866 to 1891. Although some further buying has taken place in recent years, rising prices and severely limited funds have meant that such purchases have been few and of minor significance.

A similar pattern of acquisition is evident at the University of Auckland, at Massey, and in particular at the University of Canterbury where, like Harold Miller, Clifford Collins, who was University Librarian from 1934 to 1971, pursued a very active policy of acquiring early printed books from individuals and institutions. A notable acquisition comprised books from Christ's College which, as a collection, date from the origins of the Canterbury settlement. Donations

were called for as part of the plan to establish a college upon the founding of the Canterbury Association's settlement, and several of the books now in the University of Canterbury Library bear plates indicating that they were presented to Christ's College by the Bishop-designate of Lyttelton (Thomas Jackson) and his friends in August 1850. In recent years the rare books collection at Canterbury has been strengthened not only by the acquisition of a collection of books originally begun by Bishop Grimes and subsequently presented to the Library by the Roman Catholic Church but also by the purchase of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French titles in the fields of literature and philosophy.

Among New Zealand universities the University of Otago has experienced the greatest success in attracting collections of early printed books either by outright gift or on long-term deposit. The most important donation occurred less than 25 years ago. In 1958 Dr Esmond de Beer and his sisters presented to the Library the valuable collection of editions of eighteenth-century English poetry which had formerly belonged to the English author and bibliographer, Iolo Williams. So highly regarded was this donation of nearly 1,000 titles that the Library subsequently named its rare books collection the de Beer Collection. As a result very largely of the continuing generosity of Dr de Beer and his sisters, who have family connections with Dunedin, the original gift has been added to and the collection almost doubled in size.⁷

Two other libraries on the Otago campus have also received gifts or bequests of early printed books. The Hocken Library, named after its founder, Dr Thomas Hocken, whose private collection of New Zealand and Pacific material rivalled those of Sir George Grey and Alexander Turnbull, contains a small number of pre-1801 imprints. In an act the fortunes of which appear to have been closely followed by Turnbull, Dr Hocken presented his collection to the University in 1910, the year of his death. Some 19 years later the Otago Medical Library received the Monro Collection of books and manuscripts relating to medicine which had originally been gathered by three Alexander Monros, father, son and grandson, who in succession held the Chair of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh from 1720 to 1846. Alexander Monro, the grandson, left the collection to the one son of six who had emigrated to New Zealand, Sir David Monro, a Speaker of the House of Representatives, who in turn bequeathed the books and manuscripts to his son-in-law, Sir James Hector. Sir James's son, Dr Charles Monro Hector, appears to have deposited the collection in the General Assembly Library in 1909, and it was only after some acrimonious exchanges with the Library Committee of Parliament that, at Dr Hector's wish, the collection was finally transferred to the University of Otago in 1929.⁸

The largest collection of early printed books at present held at the University of Otago belongs not to the University proper but to Selwyn College, both a University hall of residence and, until recently, a college responsible for the instruction of Anglican theological students. Known as the Shoults Collection, it was deposited in the University of Otago Library on long-term loan in 1965. It is

important not only on account of the wealth of its holdings but also as an example of what has become a rich source of early printed material in New Zealand, the collections of books which have developed in such theological colleges and seminaries as St. John's College in Auckland and Mount St. Mary's Seminary at Greenmeadows in Hawkes Bay.

The Shoult's Collection was created in the mid-nineteenth century by an English clergyman, Canon William Arderne Shoult's. On his death in 1887 the collection was initially promised to the University Library, Cambridge. Fortunately for New Zealand, however, Bishop Samuel Nevill, the first Anglican Bishop of Dunedin and a friend of Shoult's, was able to persuade his widow to give the collection to the new theological hall Nevill was planning in Dunedin rather than to her husband's old university. Bishop Nevill, who was at the time in England for the Lambeth Conference of 1888, managed to find another benefactor to meet the cost of shipping the collection to New Zealand, and once back in Dunedin succeeded within five years in establishing the hall, Selwyn College, for which he had acquired such a valuable library. The collection itself is strong not only in theology but also in the fields of science, medicine, language, history, philosophy and literature, reflecting in fact the interests of Canon Shoult's, the collector. It also includes one of New Zealand's finest collections of incunables.⁹

The two other collections belonging to theological institutions which have been catalogued for the Project have less spectacular origins. Indeed, at Mount St. Mary's little is known about the origins of the early printed books, although it is thought that some at least came to New Zealand in the middle of the nineteenth century with the early French Roman Catholic missionaries. Two more recent donations comprise some of the books of John Ambrose Story, an Oxford associate of John Henry Newman, and a collection of editions of the *Imitatio Christi* gathered by the Wellington journalist, Pat Lawlor.

The collection at the College of St. John the Evangelist in Auckland also has its roots in the mid-nineteenth century. St. John's was established as an Anglican theological college by Bishop Selwyn in 1842 at Waimate North in the Bay of Islands, and the present-day collection incorporates the Cathedral Library collection assembled by Selwyn from his own library and from the donations of well-wishers in England. Much later, in 1903, Dr John Kinder, who had been Warden of the College from 1872 to 1880, presented about 3,000 books, including many early printed items, to the College on condition that appropriate accommodation was provided, an act which led to the establishment of the present Kinder Library.

A number of other leading clergymen have also given books to the College. Prominent among these donors are Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, a talented linguist and the martyred first Bishop of Melanesia, William Charles Cotton, a lecturer at St. John's, and Dr Robert Maunsell, an early missionary who came to New Zealand in 1835 and thereafter became a noted Maori scholar. Other donors

include the Friends of Dr Bray, who set up a free library to support missionaries in the colonies, Henry Vincent Bayley and Andrew McFarlane. In addition, the recent amalgamation, in 1974, of the Trinity Methodist Theological College with St. John's has brought a small but valuable group of early Methodist items into the St. John's collection.

It is, of course, impossible in a selective survey of this kind to do justice to the variety of sources which have contributed to the growth of institutional collections of early printed books in New Zealand. Inevitably some important collections, such as those at the Dunedin Public Library, noted for its fine collection of bibles and related works given by Alfred Reed, and at Knox College, have been omitted from consideration. And the emphasis has been on the metropolitan rather than the smaller provincial collections. But the institutional collections which have been considered do provide examples of the principal ways in which copies of early printed books have been acquired by New Zealand libraries.

It is evident that the very important collections at the Auckland Public Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the University of Otago owe their pre-eminence to the receipt of substantial benefactions. Without such primary donations it has proved very difficult for libraries in New Zealand to build coherent collections of early printed books. And the known excellence of the major collections has served to attract a succession of minor donations which in two cases, and especially at the Turnbull Library, have been supplemented by judicious purchasing at auction and from antiquarian booksellers. The same pattern of miscellaneous donation is also apparent in the university collections, where in most cases donation has been encouraged not by known excellence but by a public acceptance of university libraries as appropriate repositories for early printed books. A similar attitude has fostered donation to the libraries of theological colleges. But these colleges, with their narrower professional concerns and on account, perhaps, of the zeal of those who founded them, appear to have possessed considerable collections from the time of their establishment.

A detailed history of the development of institutional collections of early printed books in New Zealand remains to be written. It is an exercise that will require much original research, but it is also possible that at least part of the material necessary for such a study will for the first time be readily accessible when work on the national Early Imprints Project file at the Turnbull Library in Wellington is completed. For this file will not only allow the provenance of items within an institutional collection to be recorded but also permit the identification of items deriving from the same source whatever their current location. In this way it will be possible, for example, in the local context, to reconstruct, at least in part, the contents of the private collections of such men as W.B.D. Mantell, Bishop Selwyn and Bishop Patteson, and also to establish the kind of books which those connected with the founding of the Canterbury settlement thought

appropriate for a new college in the colony. Such research would contribute not only to the historical study of libraries in this country but also in small measure to the social history of New Zealand.

The success of such investigations will depend on the degree of thoroughness with which copy-specific information and, in particular, details of provenance have been recorded during the data collection stage of the Project. Inevitably, greater priority has been given to establishing the edition to which copies belong rather than to noting copy-specific characteristics. EIP cataloguers have been instructed to record provenance where possible. They have not been encouraged to undertake exhaustive enquiries into the derivation of individual copies. Nevertheless, it has been recognized that the final product of the New Zealand project will serve as a national union catalogue and that information relating to individual copies forms a very proper part of its content. It has also been accepted that all such information, both obviously significant and apparently inconsequential, should be accorded the same respect. The potential value of copy-specific detail, whether relating to the early history of the copy or to its more recent New Zealand associations, is considerable. The uses to which these two levels of provenance may be put will differ appreciably, but the presence of such information in the database may eventually prove to be one of the more rewarding features of the Early Imprints Project in New Zealand.

June, 1982.

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NOTES

¹ The generous help received from the following librarians and Early Imprints Project team members is gratefully acknowledged: Mrs J.K. Bright, Mr F.T.H. Cole, Ms K.A. Coleridge, Mrs G.J. Dalziel, Ms H. Greenwood, Miss P.A. Griffith, Mr R.J. Low, Mr K.I.D. Maslen, Mrs G. Prince, Dr J.C. Ross and Ms J.M. Wright.

² For accounts of Sir George Grey and Alexander Turnbull, their collections and benefactions, see Wynne Colgan, *The Governor's Gift*, Auckland, Richards Publishing and Auckland City Council, 1980, and E.H. McCormick, *Alexander Turnbull*, Wellington, Alexander Turnbull Library, 1974.

³ The text of the talk, entitled 'The Grey Collection', was published in *New Zealand Libraries*, 16(1953), p.82-6.

⁴ The lecture on Grey appears in E.H. McCormick's *The Fascinating Folly*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1961, p.9-18.

⁵ Quoted by Colgan, *The Governor's Gift*, p.31.

⁶ Quoted by McCormick, *Alexander Turnbull*, p.286.

⁷ A checklist of the collection, *The de Beer Collection of the University of Otago Library*, was published by the Library in 1963. A supplement was issued in 1979.

⁸ For a detailed account and catalogue of the collection, see Douglass W. Taylor, *The Monro Collection in the Medical Library of the University of Otago*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1979 [i.e. 1980].

⁹ A brief account of the collection is given by D.G. Jamieson in 'Selwyn College Library, Dunedin', *New Zealand Libraries*, 28(1965), p.179-83.

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