



WA SETS GOALS

THE STATE REFERENCE Library in Western Australia serves as a reference library for the whole State both in its service direct to users and through loans to public libraries through the Board's Request and Information Service.

These joint functions were taken into account when the Library Board recently confirmed that the desirable ratio of reference stock per capita should relate to the **whole** population of Western Australia.

In addition, the Board agreed that because of its lending function to public libraries, the stock in the State Reference Library should allow for that function.

Its function is similar to that of state libraries in the United States of America and his move reflects Standard No30 of the *Standards for Library Functions at the State Level* (American Library Association, revised edition, 1970.).

It states: 'an important component in statewide resources should be a general collection of sufficient size and scope to supplement and reinforce resources of other libraries'.

While a standard for the provision of volumes per head of population for public libraries has existed since the 1950s, there has until now been no standard for the stock of the State Reference Library.

In agreeing to the figure of 0.5 volumes per head of population the Board accepted that the stock of the State Reference Library, by the year 2000, should be 900,000 volumes.

This figure is based on a projected population of 1,800,000. The target could be achieved by the addition of 28,547 volumes annually over the next 19 years.

In researching the data for the paper on which the Board based its decision, Mrs Megan Sassi (Divisional Librarian, Commerce and Technology Division) examined the levels of adequacy maintained in some western English-speaking countries with long traditions of publicly funded library services.

Additionally she considered the special conditions existing in Western Australia such as geographically-large administrative units and the State's demographic pattern.



'Levels of adequacy' are usually measures of services and resources which equal or surpass predetermined nationwide averages.

Adequacy in both resources and services is important. Naturally there is a strong relationship between availability of resources and the provision of services.

Although some libraries can transform their resources more effectively into services, it is a fact that minimal resources must be available before adequate services can be provided.

The level of reference stock provision in large public libraries in Britain is very high.

The following table gives statistics of the stocks of large British public libraries at the end of 1979-80.

state libraries in Melbourne and Sydney were modelled on them.

The Melbourne Public library (later Public Library of Victoria and now State Library of Victoria) is a case in point. Its changes of name over the years have indicated clearly a gradually changing revenue base, and a parallel change in focus and responsibility of service.

In the absence of predetermined nationwide averages for Australia, it is reasonable to assume that the level of adequacy for Australia should be based on improvement over the existing average of the various State Libraries.

continued on page 4

LIBRARY	POPULATION SERVED	TOTAL STOCK	REFERENCE STOCK		
			TOTAL	% OF TOTAL STOCK	PER CAPITA
MANCHESTER	479,100	2,200,000	908,000	41	1.9
LIVERPOOL	520,200	2,167,000	813,000	37.5	1.6
BIRMINGHAM	1,033,900	2,233,000	1,136,000	50.9	1.1
BELFAST	358,000	1,315,000	636,000	48.4	1.8
GLASGOW	794,316	2,635,000	1,070,000	40.6	1.3

Source: Public Library Statistics, 1979-80 (London Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, 1981).

Adopting the lowest of the above per capita ratios would give the State Reference Library a total of 1,980,000 volumes by 2000. Obviously, it is quite unrealistic to aim for that figure which would mean an annual intake of 85,260 volumes.

Using public libraries in the USA as a model would give the State Reference Library a total book stock of 864,000 by 2000. In 1974, the latest year for which composite figures are available, the number of volumes per capita in public libraries in the USA ranged from less than .5 (2.3 percent of libraries) to 4 or more (38.4 percent of libraries) (the *Bowker Annual* . . . 1978, p254).

Using the model figure of 4, a population of 1,800,000 would require a stock of 7,200,000. However, this refers to the total stock of a large public library.

Reference stock in American public libraries generally accounts for 10 to 12 percent of the total stock.

That model would give the State Reference Library a stock of between 720,000 and 864,000 in 2000. The former would require an annual intake of 19,074 volumes, and the latter 26,653 volumes over the next 19 years.

The above figures demonstrate that it is difficult to make direct comparison with overseas libraries.

The great metropolitan public libraries, financed largely or perhaps entirely by local government revenues, have never appeared in Australia, though doubtless the libraries which formed the nucleus of the present-day

NSW State Library closes

FOR THE FIRST time in 23 years the State Library's general reference collection will close its doors to the public for a major stocktake.

The General Reference Library will be closed from Monday 8 to Sunday 28 February inclusive, while nearly one million books and magazines on over 25 kilometres of shelving are checked.

Mr Russell Doust, State Librarian, said that the aim of this massive operation is to improve service to readers.

'The stocktake of the General Reference Library will greatly reduce staff time spent tracing books and other items not on the shelves.'

Mr Doust added that the stocktake was essential for the introduction of a new system for supplying readers with books and magazines stored in the bookstacks.

The following services will be closed for the three week period: General Reference Library Main Reading Room, Newspaper Room, Rare Books and Special Collections, Research Service, Sale of Publications, Extension Service (except for Foreign Language Boxes).

The Mitchell Library, located in the same building in Macquarie Street, will be open as usual to holders of Reader's Tickets.