

1858.

—
VICTORIA.

PUBLIC LIBRARY.

REPORT OF TRUSTEES,

ACCOMPANYING

ESTIMATES FOR THE SERVICE OF THE YEAR 1859.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

By Authority: .

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

No. 22.



REPORT.

Public Library,
November 1st, 1858.

SIR,

In compliance with the request contained in your letter of July 5th, the Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library have the honor to submit the proposed estimates for 1859.

It may be desirable that you should be informed of the progress and present state of the Institution, in order that you may satisfy yourself that the sums suggested do not exceed those necessary for efficient management, and for the protection of the valuable property in the custody of the Trustees.

Moreover, that the liberality of Her Majesty's Government and of Parliament are legitimately invoked to assist in enlarging the building, expanding the objects of the Institution, and diffusing its benefits amongst those portions of the community now unable to partake of them, being beyond the limits of its immediate influence.

The Library was opened by His Excellency Major-General Macarthur, Acting Governor, on Monday, the 11th of February, 1856.

As the establishment of the Institution was an experiment, the success or failure of which would depend on the principles on which it was conducted, the Trustees resolved to adopt rules which would impart its benefits to the largest number of persons.

All needless and arbitrary restrictions on free access to the building and the books, and the combination of minute checks, which in other libraries only operate as vexatious obstructions to the student without ensuring corresponding advantages or the expected security, were therefore removed.

Admission was granted to all classes of residents and strangers alike, without the necessity for any letter of introduction or authorisation. Each visitor, having written his name and address in a book, who complies with the few and simple rules prescribed (for which see Appendix A.), has hitherto been at liberty to take from the shelves any volume he wants, and to pursue his studies as much at his ease as he might do in his private chamber.

By some it was feared that the privileges thus offered would not be appreciated, by others that they would be abused. The Trustees, however, rejoice to be able to say that the success of the course they adopted has been completely proved by the result.

The public have not been slow to estimate the advantages held out to them, and it has been found that the generous confidence reposed in the honor of the visitors has not been misplaced.

At its opening the Library contained only 3,846 volumes. It was not until May 24th, 1856, when the arrangements for lighting the building with gas were completed, that the Trustees were able to admit readers in the evening.

The success of this measure has been so decided as to justify a further extension of the hours of admission, and it is conceived that the small increase of expenditure thereby incurred will be richly compensated by the increased advantages given to the public.

Hitherto perfect order has on all occasions prevailed; a readiness to conform to the regulations has been evinced. The books, now numbering 9,600, many of which are costly and rare, have not received any injury of which complaint may be reasonably made, and but a few instances of the irregular abstraction of volumes of small value have occurred. Of those so taken, some have been returned, others recovered by the officers aided by the police.

It may be incidentally observed that for the protection of the property due precautions have been taken.

Each book has stamped on the outside the device and motto of the Library in gold; inside, on the title page and elsewhere, the name of the Library in ink. There is also a private mark different in each volume, unintelligible to those unacquainted with its purport; so that in case of theft, should the former means of detection be removed or obliterated, sufficient for identification remains whatsoever changes in appearance the book may have undergone.

The Trustees announce this with the desire that it may be generally known, as a warning to any who may be so ill-disposed as to abstract any of the volumes, and as a caution to those who deal in second-hand books.

The tables subjoined (for which see Appendix B.) furnish returns of the numbers of visitors to the Library during two years and ten months; they also show the numbers attending the Library of the British Museum during five years.

From the former may be learned the remarkable ratio of increase. A comparison of both will exhibit in a favorable degree for this community, the extent to which the inhabitants of Melbourne avail themselves of the means of rational enjoyment and mental improvement when placed within their reach.

The various salaries are set down at the same rate as for the present year. An increase of one attendant only to the staff of the Librarian is proposed. The additional number of books received and expected to arrive, the progressive increase of visitors, the intention to keep the Library open longer in the evening, and the probability of readers being admitted to the new building early next year, justify the Trustees in asking for this assistance.

A sum of £11,000 would complete the wing now in progress. The importance of this addition is urgently pressed upon your attention on the following grounds:—

It will supply—

1. Chambers for the Librarian, which formed part of the terms of the original agreement of the Trustees with him. He now receives a small equivalent in lieu of house rent. His presence on the premises becomes daily more indispensable.

2. A reading room for ladies. The want of such accommodation has been the subject of frequent complaints. At present they are virtually excluded except as casual visitors.
3. A hall for the exhibition of statues, casts, and works of art.

The sum of £5,000 is suggested for books.

The Trustees beg leave to impress upon you, that £3,000 voted by the Legislature in 1854, and £3,000 in 1855, unfortunately lapsed; but for these calamities the collection would now reach nearly 20,000 volumes. With regard to the proposal to devote £2,000 to the purchase of Works of Art, the Trustees hope it will meet with approval.

The association of these with books which treat of such subjects, is an obvious and most desirable alliance.

In cultivating the taste and maturing the judgment on these subjects, much is to be gained by the education of the eye.

Opportunities now exist for procuring, at a comparatively trifling expense, casts of the productions of the most renowned masters. It cannot be expected that the majority of the youth of this country, and of those who have made this land their home, will have opportunities of visiting the seats of these great works. Bringing together into one forum the best representations of such distinguished and rare productions of genius would afford a source of rational amusement, and at the same time contribute to the elevation of the public taste. But not with the object of furnishing means of amusement, or the indulgence of elegant recreation alone, is this purchase recommended. The British Government has tardily, but in the most ample manner, recognised the use of this most powerful auxiliary in popular instruction, and its reflected benefits on the ordinary mechanical operations. Large sums are now annually devoted to supply Schools of Design with costly works illustrating the choicest productions of the Fine Arts, and with, as it is everywhere admitted, the best effect.

Similar consequences may be hoped for here; and if, from amongst our young men, some propose to adopt the profession of artists, sculptors, architects, or to follow occupations requiring the development of genius, they may claim to be allowed to pursue their studies with at least such advantages as they might have in the Mechanics' Institute of a country town in Great Britain.

Such a provision would seem to recommend itself on grounds of public policy, as it would enable the youth of this country to select from a wider range of pursuits than they now possess. It would at the same time supplement the existing means of instruction confessedly inferior to those in the mother country, compensate the defects in taste, and introduce those graces which characterise the civilisation of older communities.

The past presents such encouraging prospects for the future, and the Library has established itself so firmly with the public as an intellectual necessity, that the Trustees look with confidence to your administration and to the Legislature for a favorable consideration of these estimates. One comparison having been already instituted, the Trustees beg leave to present another.

The tabular statement annexed (for which see Appendix C.) shows the sums voted during five years in aid of the Melbourne Public Library and the British Museum.

It is far from the intention of the Trustees by so doing to disparage the liberality which has always marked the spirit in which the estimates for this department have been received, or to undervalue the necessity for providing for the numerous pressing demands upon the revenue, their wish is to bring into prominence the obligation by which the British people consider themselves bound to maintain suitably their great national establishment, enriched as it has been during the last hundred years by munificent donations of the curiosities of nature, literature, science and art, profusely contributed by succeeding generations, and to show that though England was oppressed with the weight of debt, and the extra taxation imposed to support distant and most expensive wars, Parliament was found ready to acknowledge the duty of making extraordinary exertions to advance the interests of that magnificent institution which is but one of the countless number of which the mother country is so justly proud.

There are some other questions connected with the Institution to which the Trustees request to be allowed to draw your attention.

Hitherto they have dealt with only one bookseller in London. He has recently informed them that he has retired from business, leaving a large portion of their last order unexecuted. This disaster will not involve any pecuniary loss, as due precautions were taken to guard against any such contingency, but it causes much disappointment and will occasion considerable delay. Occurring now, it confirms the opinion for some time entertained by the Trustees, that it is highly expedient to despatch an agent to Europe to establish new relations with booksellers, and they are satisfied that by so doing they will advance the best interests of the Library and study the truest economy.

They have observed that the prevailing anxiety on the part of visitors is, that the collection should be enriched with works of the highest standard in science and the practical arts, and as the Trustees now proceed beyond the field of common literature, they feel convinced that their orders cannot be so satisfactorily supplied by one person, however large his operations, as by several. Different classes of books being obtained from those who confine themselves to different departments of the book trade, the best editions may be insured, the rates of charges checked, and instead of commission being paid, either directly or indirectly, for the procurement of books not in the hands of the sole bookseller, liberal discount may be demanded, and what is of chief moment a regular and expeditious supply of books kept up.

An agent sent by the Trustees might also perform at the same time useful offices for other libraries which have at the present time funds available.

The Public Library (assumed for next year)	-	£5,000
Houses of Parliament	- - -	6,000
The University	- - -	1,000
Supreme Court Library	- - -	500

These sums might be made infinitely more productive if employed under combined investment than left to separate direction, and as each establishment would require a somewhat distinctive literature, co-operation would prevent the needless multiplication of copies of particular works.

The agent might, moreover, solicit donations from learned and scientific societies in the United Kingdom and on the Continent of Europe,

and obtain, if not gratuitously, on moderate terms, state papers, records, and documents of the highest value from the British Museum, the Houses of Parliament, the Universities, the Board of Trade, the Board of Control, the India House, the Board of Ordnance, and in particular from the Patent Office.

One of the trustees, Mr. Childers, is now in England; he would give material assistance to the agent.

No special sum has been suggested to defray the agent's expenses, as it is confidently expected that the saving in the purchase of books will counterbalance the outlay, and that the charges may therefore be legitimately borne by the vote for books.

A mission of this nature directed by the Parliament of Canada, in the year 1855, succeeded beyond expectation.

The agent at whose disposal the sum of £7,500 was placed, was so fortunate as to procure, by purchase and otherwise, nearly 20,000 volumes. A report of the Librarian on the subject appears in the Votes and Proceedings of the year. It is a document well worthy of attention.

The Trustees propose for the consideration of Her Majesty's Government the advisability of introducing a Bill vesting in them and their successors the property under their control, enabling them to sue and be sued, and providing for succession when vacancies occur. In the Bill provision might be also made to direct each author (or publisher) to present to the Library a copy of each of his works published in this country, and to oblige each inventor to supply in like manner a description of his invention. They also venture to suggest that by inviting the mutual action of the Governments of the different countries in these seas, similar measures might be introduced into their respective Legislatures, whereby reciprocal interchanges might be enforced, extended circulation given to the efforts of deserving literary genius, and much wasteful expenditure of intellectual labor economised by full information being afforded of the advance already made in mechanical and scientific improvement.

The Trustees further submit for consideration a project which they are extremely desirous to be enabled to carry out, without trenching on the resources of the establishment as a library of deposit and research. It is that they may have it in their power to lend such duplicate works as they possess, and as may be obtained suitable for the purpose, and such only.

The system they would adopt has long been in use in Germany and elsewhere, and has been partially adopted, and is with increasing approval extending itself in the United Kingdom. Selections of 200 or 300 volumes might be sent out to such towns as possessed Mechanics' or Literary Institutes, to be kept for a stated time at such Institutes for the public use, under judicious restrictions, and upon sufficient security being given to cover loss and undue injury; on being returned they would again issue in the direction in which required.

Thus in a few months a comparatively small number of volumes would circulate through the hands of many thousands of readers, and those who live in remote districts, unable to reap any of the benefits exclusively enjoyed by residents in Melbourne, would have facilities for literary improvement which they could not command by their own resources.

It may be said without intentional injustice to the local Institutions, that since the withdrawal of direct Government aid, some have not maintained the progressive impulse so essential to their usefulness and vitality. Assistance of this description, costing but little, would give encouragement to the prosperous, and a new stimulus to such as suffered from the discontinuance of the support formerly received, and it would be singularly favorable to the healthy growth of those societies which may otherwise languish.

It would also mitigate the inconvenience of centralisation in the capital of all the literary wealth, of which complaint is sometimes made, and would diffuse throughout the community a feeling of laudable ambition to see this Institution become what it ought to be, and which, from its auspicious commencement, there are strong hopes it will in due time become.

The Trustees will be pardoned for alluding, in conclusion, to one other subject, the outlines of which they had the honor of submitting when favored with an interview not long since. It is as to the advisability of reserving the entire block of land on which the Library stands for the erection of a National Institute, which would comprise the library of printed books, together with collections of antiquities, works of art, and objects of natural science.

It does not appear that the land is required for any other special purpose, and there is not any other situation so suitable. Being contiguous to the present Library, progressive enlargements of that structure will supply the want of accommodation for the Institution as the resources at the disposal of Her Majesty's Government admit.

Economy in building and maintenance of establishments, public convenience and readiness of access, of themselves sufficiently demonstrate the propriety of concentrating rather than dispersing these collections; but these are not the only inducements to such an assemblage.

The proximity of the various objects would attract attention to them more prolonged and instructive than that bestowed during a hasty visit, and create and preserve a sympathy between the different branches of literature and science, the continuity of which would not be so adequately maintained were the illustrations of each in isolated buildings, and the repeated and associated impressions thus produced would assist in unfolding the design of the Institution and effectually advance the general interests of learning.

It may be allowable, finally, to allude to the political exigency upon which this recommendation may be supported. The history of all ages displays the danger arising to freedom from the prevalence of ignorance and vice, and the experience of other countries shows the necessity for providing for the expansion of the public mind in proportion as it is charged with the exercise of additional political privileges.

We have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servants,

WILLIAM F. STAWELL,
J. F. PALMER,
REDMOND BARRY,
D. C. McARTHUR.

The Honorable
The Chief Secretary.

APPENDIX A.

REGULATIONS OF THE MELBOURNE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

1. The Library will be open every day from Ten A.M. to Nine P.M.
2. No Book is to be taken from the Library.
3. Every Book taken from a shelf must be returned to the place from which it was taken.
4. Writing in or upon, marking, folding down a leaf, defacing, mutilating or otherwise injuring any Book, is strictly prohibited; any Visitor so doing will be excluded from the Library.
5. Children under fourteen years of age are not admitted.

APPENDIX B.

NUMBER OF VISITORS IN 1856-7-8.

1856—February to December, from Ten A.M. to Four P.M.	-	23,769
1857—January 1st to December 31st	-	49,226
1858—January 1st to October, open from Ten A.M. to Nine P.M.	-	63,281
TOTAL	-	136,276

NUMBER OF VISITORS TO THE READING ROOM OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

1853	-	67,794
1854	-	56,182
1855	-	53,562
1856	-	53,442
1857	-	94,370

The New Building in the British Museum was opened for Readers on the 18th of May of this year.

APPENDIX C.

SUMS voted by the Legislature of Victoria in aid of the Melbourne Public Library.

Year.	Voted for Building.	Expended.		Lapsed.		Voted for Books.	Expended.		Lapsed.	TOTALS.			
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.		£	£		£	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
1853	10,000	10,000	0 0	...	...	3,000	3,000	...	...	13,000	13,000	0 0	...
1854	10,000	9,114	11 4	885	8 8	3,000	...	3,000	...	13,000	9,114	11 4	3,885 8 8
1855	...	...	...	...	...	3,000	...	3,000	...	3,000	...	3,000	0 0
1856	...	...	...	...	...	3,000	3,000	...	...	3,000	3,000	0 0	...
1857	...	...	...	...	...	5,000	1,000 & 4,000 under contract	...	...	5,000	5,000	0 0	...
1858	20,000	Under contract		...	...	5,000 In Treasury	...	...	...	25,000	Under contract 20,000 0 0 5,000 0 0 In Treasury		...
TOTALS	40,000	39,114	11 4	885	8 8	22,000	11,000	6,000	62,000	55,114	11 4	6,885	8 8

SUMS voted by the Imperial Parliament in aid of the British Museum.

Year.	Grants.	Buildings.	Purchase of Antiquities.	Salaries.	TOTAL.
		£	£	£	£
1853	16 & 17 Vict., c. 110	22,700	1,500	55,840	80,040
1854	17 & 18 Vict., c. 121	101,142	1,500	55,225	157,867
1855	18 & 19 Vict., c. 129	27,520	4,000	56,180	87,700
1856	19 & 20 Vict., c. 105	25,643	...	60,000	85,643
1857	20 & 21 Vict., c. 69	29,314	944	46,400	76,658
					£487,908

PROPOSED ESTIMATES FOR 1859.

SALARIES.				£	s.	d.
Librarian (including House Rent)	-	-	-	600	0	0
Sub-Librarian	-	-	-	300	0	0
Clerk and Housekeeper	-	-	-	250	0	0
Three Attendants at £150 each	-	-	-	450	0	0
				£1,600	0	0

CONTINGENCIES.				£	s.	d.
Building (completion of South Wing)	-	-	-	11,000	0	0
Gas	-	-	-	300	0	0
Stores	-	-	-	50	0	0
Stationery	-	-	-	50	0	0
Books	-	-	-	5,000	0	0
Furniture	-	-	-	1,000	0	0
Incidental Expenses	-	-	-	100	0	0
Insurance of Books	-	-	-	50	0	0
Works of Art	-	-	-	2,000	0	0