

Library of the University of Sydney

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THE nucleus of the library consisted of a number of volumes, chiefly ancient classics, originally in the possession of the "Sydney College," which was a college established by a joint-stock association to provide for higher education in New South Wales, but was superseded by the University of Sydney upon its establishment in the year 1850, and the books and scientific apparatus belonging to the college were then transferred to the university.

After the commencement of the university's operations, in the year 1852, grants were from time to time made from the general funds for the establishment of the library, and an excellent selection of standard works was made under the advice of a sub-committee of the Senate, whose chairman was Sir Charles Nicholson, the then vice-provost of the university.

Up to the year 1885 the library was maintained chiefly by similar grants from the general funds of the university, but of smaller amount and by donation.

In the year 1885 the late Thomas Fisher, Esq., of Sydney, bequeathed the sum of £30,000 to the university, "to be applied and expended by the Senate in establishing and maintaining a library for the use of the university, for which purpose they may erect a building and purchase books and do anything that may be thought desirable for effectuating the purposes aforesaid." This handsome bequest enabled the Senate to bestow much more attention upon the library than was previously in their power, and considerable purchases were made to fill the vacancies in many of the teaching departments.

During the past six years the library has increased by purchase and donation at the rate of 3000 volumes per annum, and it now contains more than 45,000 volumes.

The ordinary library grant for the purchase of books is £600, of which about £250 is expended in the purchase of serials, chiefly scientific, special grants for various departments having been made from time to time.

The opportunities of obtaining manuscripts or rare works in Australia are not very frequent, but the university is fortunate in possessing some Hebrew MSS. presented by Sir Charles Nicholson, the complete works of John Gould, Lepsius' *Denkmaeler*, Kingsborough's *Mexican Antiquities*, and others.

The room in the university building originally set apart as a library now proves entirely insufficient for the purpose, and the collection is distributed in a number of different rooms, where many of the books are difficult of access.

An extension of the university buildings is in contemplation, in which it is proposed to make ample provision for the library. It is proposed that the new building should contain a reading-room capable of holding 200 readers; a stack for books with five or six storeys in an adjoining chamber, capable of holding 200,000 books; separate rooms for periodicals and the transactions of learned societies, for Australian books, and for rare books.

It is also proposed to transfer from the main building to a special room to be provided in the new building the Nicholson Museum of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan antiquities, which is unique in the Southern Hemisphere.

The system of cataloguing adopted in the library is the decimal classification of Mr. Melvil Dewey. I have long been of opinion that the time has arrived when there should be more co-operation in cataloguing and classifying than has hitherto been the case. The only way to accomplish this and to create and preserve some uniformity of working is to adopt a system that commends itself to general use. The decimal classification seems to meet this requirement and to answer admirably both for catalogues and readers, and accordingly it was adopted here some four or five years ago. A complete catalogue of the library is gradually being made in accordance with the system.

I hope that the attention of the Conference will be specially directed to this matter of co-operation in cataloguing, and that valuable results will follow its deliberations.

H. E. BARFF.