



YOUR BOOKS ARE IN THE MAIL:  
Fifty Years of Distance Library  
Service at Massey University

BRUCE WHITE



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA



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# Foreword

The history of the Distance Library Service at Massey University is very much a history of distance education at Massey, and the changing attitudes as this mode of learning has increasingly come to be regarded as a virtual campus of the University.

From small beginnings in 1960, when the first librarian was appointed and 1691 books were lent, the service now lends some 90,000 a year, offers a wide range of e-journals, e-books and databases over the internet, and provides one-to-one research consultations, including computer screen sharing using Adobe Connect software. In addition to research skill tutorials offered by the library during contact courses, since the 1990s the new Massey libraries in Auckland and Wellington have provided a personal service to distance students residing in those urban areas.

Throughout these years, the Library has worked very hard to have the distance library service recognised as equivalent to the library service provided to internal students in every respect.

The Library responded well to student needs when Massey's distance offerings were expanded to 300 level papers in 1976, and then to postgraduate qualifications. The University surveys student satisfaction on a very regular basis and the Distance Library Service consistently receives the highest scores. At the same time, the Library has not stood still and has reassessed and redeveloped its services for changing times.

As the Distance Library Service enters its 52nd year, I am confident that the strong customer service and empathy with student needs will continue.

Professor Ingrid Day  
AVC (Academic & International)  
28 March 2011

# Introduction

When I was asked in late 2010 to write a history of distance library service at Massey University my immediate reaction was enthusiastic acceptance. Had I known at the time quite what a major undertaking it would become I might have thought twice, but by the same token it has proved to be considerably more interesting and thought-provoking than I had expected. My major concern now is whether I have done justice to the topic.

My own awareness of Massey Library's service to distance students dates back to the 1960s when my sister, who was working part-time in the library while studying for her degree, described how she was sending books to prisoners who were studying extramurally. At that time I had not the least notion that I would spend the major part of my working life as a librarian, most of it at Massey, but this snippet of information has remained with me and probably served to enlarge my view of what library service might involve. By the time I joined the library staff in 1982 the distance service was very well-established, and I soon became aware that every discussion of new developments had to involve considerations of how they would play out for the extramural constituency. From 1984 to 1997 I was directly involved with the distance service, firstly as Head of Circulation and then as Associate University Librarian, and since that time my work as a Liaison Librarian has kept me in constant contact with distance students and the library staff serving them.

However this is in no way a personal memoir. I have based my research on the relevant documents in the Massey Archives, largely consisting of various annual and occasional reports, minutes of committees, and the numerous surveys that have been carried out into the service. I have avoided relying on my own, or other people's, memories unless they could be backed up from documentary sources and I hope that where I have been forced to do so this is reasonably obvious. Time has precluded a deeper search of the very extensive minutes of library Heads of Department meetings or those of the Board of Extramural Studies which may have yielded further insights, but I feel that I have been reasonably successful in outlining the significant developments that have occurred within the service over half a century.

One factor that has made my task easier has been the library's fine tradition of report writing, going back to the very earliest years. This has allowed me to let the participants to speak for themselves, and I make no apology for the extensive quotes that have been used. If these sometimes seem to be repetitious this is significant in itself – that the same things *have* been said by different people writing decades apart has been a source of some interest and amusement. Readers should be aware, however, that the documents have been quoted selectively and this very selection no doubt reflects my own instincts and biases; while I have tried to present the truth about the service it is in the end my own truth and not *the* truth. I believe it will be reasonably clear when the opinions expressed are mine but this is less obvious in the case of choosing passages to quote and aspects of the subject to highlight.

One outcome of the documentary store I have used is that it has sometimes been quite difficult to identify individual staff and even dates of employment. The practice in writing annual reports was that individuals were often referred to by their job titles rather than by name and sometimes attaching titles to names has had to involve a certain amount of guesswork. Similarly, the practice has been that only Heads of Department and other managers are mentioned in reports so that scores, even hundreds, of front-line workers are effectively invisible. While many of these people are known to me, I have taken the decision not to highlight those I know at the expense of those I do not. This is in the end a history of the distance service and not of a particular section in the library.

As is perhaps inevitable the project underwent some redefinition as it went along. One of my original aims was to place the Massey distance library service in its international context, but I soon realised that it would not be possible to do this fairly without carrying out a good deal more research. I occasionally had to remind myself that I was writing a brief history and not a doctorate and that some things had to be done either very well or not at all. Readers can be grateful that I chose the second option. I have also excluded detailed descriptions of the technicalities of the various library systems involved. This would also have required a great deal of additional work without adding much of general interest. I had also intended to include more detail on the service from the student perspective and interviewed a small number of students with



this in mind. In the end it proved to be more difficult than I had expected to weave this material into the narrative so I have not included it directly, although the email conversations I had were a useful first step and I believe they have made a valuable contribution.

I would like to thank Heather Lamond and Linda Palmer for thinking that a history of the distance library service was a good idea and, more particularly, thinking that I could write it. They, and John Redmayne, also provided a good deal of encouragement as it proceeded to come out in instalments. Louis Changuion, the University Archivist, has been immensely helpful and I applaud the work he and his fellow archivists have done. Lucy Marsden and Nicola McCarthy both deserve credit for their help with names and dates and Lucy was, of course, the Archivist for a number of years as well. I would also like to thank Mary McKenzie for her very thorough editing of my hastily-produced text and the very sensible suggestions she made about its shape and flow.

# Beginnings

“True university education,” wrote the authors of the 1925 Royal Commission Report on University Education in New Zealand, “consists ... in co-operation in study and investigation between students and able teachers. This involves much more than attendance at lectures, and includes ... related reading in a well-equipped library.”<sup>1</sup> They were aware of the recommendation of the 1922 Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities that extramural instruction should be accepted “in all universities as an established and essential part of the *normal work* of a university,” but felt that what was needed in New Zealand was “a student life rich in student activities and ... a system of education not confined to the lecture room, but reinforced by close and intimate intellectual companionship with cultured men giving individual instruction as tutors.”<sup>2</sup>

This, without the emphasis on gender, was still the official view in December 1959 when the Committee on New Zealand Universities stated that “Extramural studies cannot in any circumstances be rated as equivalent to intra-mural university education ... The student working in isolation does not get the personal contacts with teachers and fellow students, the advantages of library and union facilities, and the whole-hearted immersion in student life that is so essential in a full and adequate university education.” They went on to grudgingly concede that “When permission for extra-mural study is granted, it should be seen that the student is provided with adequate facilities, including reading lists, lists of essay subjects, a library service, and a system of general advice on how to study.”<sup>3</sup>

If a well-equipped library service was an essential element of extramural university education, then by January 1960 one was being rushed into existence. The commencement of distance university education in New Zealand began with the appointment of staff to Palmerston North University College (PNUC) in August 1959 for classes beginning in early 1960.<sup>4</sup> Dr Stanley Culliford, the Principal, had ordered £10,000 worth of books shortly after his arrival, but Margaret Hall, the first Librarian, did not begin work until 21 January. Initially she was the only member of the library staff, with the

result that the Principal himself worked late into the evening taking books into stock.<sup>5</sup> At this point PNUC, based at Hokowhitu and largely, though not exclusively, providing distance instruction, was a separate entity from Massey Agricultural College, and Margaret Hall was immediately faced with the task of creating a library from scratch in Caccia Birch House, begging essential items like catalogue cards, a typewriter and bibliographic aids from friendly local institutions. Massey cooperated by lending a copy of the cataloguing rules while their cataloguer was on holiday. Hall was assisted by some unpaid voluntary help from lecturers' wives and later by paid assistants, "none of whom had any experience or training in library work, and most of whom could not type."<sup>6</sup>

By the beginning of 1961 these efforts had led to the establishment of a postal library service that is still recognisable in its essentials as the one that operates fifty years later. As the first handbook for extramural students announced –

“In building up the library particular attention has been paid to the needs of extra-mural students. All students, naturally, are expected to possess their own textbooks and the cheaper editions from the recommended list as well. Multiple copies of many of the more expensive recommended books are available from the College library.

As wide reading is so important for extra-mural students, every effort is made to help them get the books they need. Most books may be borrowed for at least two weeks, with the possibility of renewal where a book is not in demand. The library pays postage when books are sent out, but students are responsible for return postage.”<sup>7</sup>

There was considerable emphasis on the use of set texts and reading lists – “In general the factual material of each course is covered adequately in the texts and those books specifically recommended for reading during the year” – as well as an acknowledgment of the need for university students to range beyond the specific recommendations of lecturers – “Wide reading is essential.”<sup>8</sup> This ambivalence in part reflects the range and level of subjects taught – English, History and Education at the first and second year – but it also points to an aspiration towards a full academic learning experience for the school teachers who made up most of the early intakes of students.



Caccia Birch in the 1960s

When Margaret Hall resigned in early 1962 she had not only established a collection which she, at least initially, had singlehandedly classified and catalogued, but had also set in place a postal book lending service that seems to have remained remarkably stable for at least the next decade and is the foundation of the service that has continued to the present. It was based on the system used at the Thatcher Memorial Library, University of Queensland, and in the first year of operation a total of 1,691 books were issued to 264 individual students. The loan period was 21 days including postage time, and in the third term this was extended for history books to allow students to use more books for comparative purposes. Hall commented on the Thatcher system that “each [request] card which we have adopted has proved its usefulness in a number of ways when information was required.”<sup>9</sup> Full borrowing figures are not available for 1961 or 1962 but we do know that it was accelerating rapidly in early 1961<sup>10</sup> and, as we shall see, this trend continued over the next three years.



The new Palmerston North University College which housed the library, 1961

Margaret Hall was replaced by Adrian Turner who wrote of her – “... she brought into being for the first time in New Zealand a genuine library service to extramural students, a service that from the beginning has brought in a ceaseless stream of tributes from grateful users.” He went on to describe her achievement as “nothing less than heroic.”<sup>11</sup> How much the stress of this heroism contributed to her early departure is not known, but during 1962 help arrived in the form of additional professional staffing – a head of circulation, a cataloguer and a deputy librarian.

In 1963 Palmerston North University College joined with Massey Agricultural College to become Massey University of Manawatu and the PNUC Library at Hokowhitu became the General Studies Library. This is the first year for which full borrowing figures are available and they show that extramural loans accounted for 10,278 out of a total of 31,116 books lent by the library.<sup>12</sup> As the Faculty of General Studies was extensively engaged in extramural teaching the first figure (10,278) presumably refers to the number lent by the

postal service, while the balance of loans would have been made to internal students or distance students attending vacation courses. As a report on library staffing made clear, running a postal service was a demanding undertaking – “Circulation [i.e. the Circulation Department] has problems unique in this country in that it has to cater for the needs of some 800 extra-mural students scattered over the entire country – and beyond it. Each extra-mural loan is of course very many times as time-consuming as an internal loan, because the book has to be found, packed and addressed.”<sup>13</sup> In 1964 the University’s quinquennial estimates commented that “extramural teaching has necessitated considerable multiplication of essential texts and the development of a large postal system.”<sup>14</sup>

The second half of the 1960s saw the coming together of the two libraries into the current building on the Turitea campus. Lloyd Jenkins was appointed as University Librarian in 1965 and Adrian Turner became Deputy Librarian before departing for a position in Adelaide in 1968. Like Margaret Hall, his time with the various libraries was relatively short but he was a forceful advocate of the extramural service, not backward in pointing out the value of the postal library service while at the same time keeping the funding authorities aware of the extra demands that it made on both library bookstock and staffing. Although he left before the amalgamation of the two libraries was complete, Turner’s transition from the role of PNUC Librarian to Deputy Librarian of Massey University probably contributed to the firm embedding of the extramural library service within its new context. Throughout this period there was of course no formally constituted department devoted to distance service provision, and all lending took place through the Circulation Departments of the respective libraries.

By 1964 annual lending through the extramural service had reached 11,138,<sup>15</sup> but the succeeding years saw a decline, reaching a low point of 7,010 in 1968 when the Annual Report explained that “this trend began in 1964 and results possibly from greater emphasis by teaching staff on the use of available paperback editions.”<sup>16</sup> This may be true, but one wonders whether Adrian Turner’s departure and the library amalgamation meant that there was some lessening of the founding vigour that characterised the early years at PNUC. There may also be good reason to question the commitment of the university itself to its

responsibility to provide a direct service to extramural students. The Library Committee was chaired through much of this period by Professor Bill Oliver of History who, notwithstanding the fact that his department contributed to a major chunk of the extramural programme, characterised it as “a low level intellectual activity” which compared badly to “a certificate in poultry keeping,”<sup>17</sup> although he was to modify this view somewhat once he had direct experience of teaching vacation courses. Certainly there was no discussion of the service during this period at Library Committee, which was much more concerned with questions of collection building as Massey sought to establish a library of university standard.

Even those with a more positive attitude to distance learning may have been slow to see the importance of a strong direct service from the library and there was a persistent belief in the ability of students to use public libraries, and those of other tertiary institutions, to support their study. It was also considered that they could, and should, buy for themselves more than just their textbooks – hence the emphasis on cheap paperbacks. Professor John Dunmore of French was an enthusiastic proponent of distance learning from the time of his appointment in 1961 and there is strong evidence of this ethos in advice he gave to extramural students some twenty years later in a chapter entitled *Books: Yours and Other Peoples* – “But you don’t have to rely entirely on the university library. To some extent you should regard it as your last resort. First of all, when planning your course of study, you should decide which books you will *buy*.” He goes on to point out to students that “the entire library system is available to fill in the gaps” and in this he includes not only public libraries, but foreign embassies, large firms, government departments and other universities. Only when he reaches the point of advocating use of the national interlibrary loan system (presumably through the public libraries) does he concede that “at this point it would be easier and quicker for you to borrow through the university library’s extramural lending service.”<sup>18</sup> A 1968 report to Library Committee on the services that other university libraries provided to Massey students is further evidence of this mindset and is a rare instance of the committee taking an interest in extramural matters.<sup>19</sup> Only Waikato and Canterbury offered borrowing privileges, while the others regarded Massey students much as they would any other member of the public.

From the perspective of a competitively funded tertiary education model and tightly-controlled local body funding, this belief in the ability of students to graze widely on community library resources, including those of other tertiary institutions, is a little difficult to understand. The belief in university education as a shared national good was certainly stronger in the first few decades after the war and we should remember that until the late 1950s New Zealand universities were all part of an integrated University of New Zealand. It is also worth noting that the Open University in the United Kingdom, which opened in 1971, provided students with no direct library service (and still does not). Instead they received a letter of introduction to their local library which may or may not have defined tertiary educational support as one of its roles.<sup>20</sup> In fairness to the Open University, and to Massey as well, much of the written material that students needed was provided in the set texts and in the study guides that were sent to them, and as long as extramural teaching was confined to the first two years of study then the need for a full distance library service might not have been as critical as it was later to become. The later 1960s seem to have been a time when this mindset prevailed at Massey. The advice in the 1968 Extramural Handbook that “the factual material of each course is covered adequately in the texts and those books specifically recommended” remained unchanged from its initial appearance in 1961, but the further encouragement that “wide reading is essential” was, for the first time, quietly dropped.<sup>21</sup>



## Growing Pains – the Seventies

The library did not necessarily share this view of its own comparative unimportance. Extramural lending rose slightly in 1969, but when it fell back again in 1970 the Annual Report suggested that “this was to be expected, indeed desired. The Library has nothing like the resources of books and staff to give a really satisfactory extra-mural service, and students are encouraged to buy paperbacks and to exploit their local resources.”<sup>22</sup> A passive-aggressive approach to delivering bad news is an essential part of the administrator’s repertoire, and Lloyd Jenkins was no doubt keen to point out that the service had achieved as good an outcome as could be expected with the limited resources available. At the same time he was also maintaining that a *really* satisfactory service was a possibility and that he was not going to pretend that one had been achieved, or that putting the problem back to the students was a good solution. Like Adrian Turner before him he was aware that distance library service did not come cheaply, but neither was it a luxury. This had been recognised by the students themselves because at some stage in the 1960s the Extramural Students’ Association (ExMSS) had begun donating money for the purchase of multiple copies of books in heavy demand, as evidenced by the donation of \$200 in 1968.<sup>23</sup>

The 1970 Annual Report also contains details of two student surveys, one of internal and the other of extramural students. The extramural survey was only two pages in length and was sent to all students, receiving a response rate of 15% and revealing that 86% of them were satisfied with the service. In itself this was nothing remarkable but the mere fact of a survey may be further evidence of a newly-proactive approach to the service. The survey also revealed some confusion about postage and a weakness in the library’s liaison with one major department, an early instance of finding out about the real-world operation and effectiveness of the service from the students themselves.

If there *was* a new attitude towards the extramural library service in 1970, it found expression in the 31% increase in loan figures in 1971. This reflected an increase in the student roll but also, as Mary Green, Head of Circulation, commented, “a heavier rate of duplication of most wanted titles. Some of the

increased duplication is due to the generosity of the Extra-mural Students' Association."<sup>24</sup> This brief formulation achieved three goals – to demonstrate the efficacy of increased spending, to give credit where it was due and to mildly shame the university for not providing more of the money itself. Growth continued through the first half of the 1970s and in 1974 ExMSS donated a further \$1,000 which went towards a separate extramural collection held within the Reserve Book Room collection. This close linkage between the extramural service and the reserve operation, which provides high use material primarily to internal students, lasted for nearly two decades. By 1975 loans had increased to 14,658 and then the following year they surged ahead to 19,011.<sup>25</sup>



Staff of Massey University Library hard at work in 1972

Mary Green's contribution to the 1973 Annual Report<sup>26</sup> gives a real insight into the operation, beginning with an analysis of the extramural service's users

–

“Out of 2,954 extramural students, 711 or approximately 24% borrowed books. This compares with 25% or 628 students in 1972. Of the 711, 467 were studying at the 100 level, 179 at the 200 level and 65 were Dip. Ed. candidates. The heaviest use was made by 100 level history students (178; 101 in 1972) and 100 level education students (80; 59 in 1972).”

She continued with a detailed description of the service –

“This is the only library in New Zealand, except for the Correspondence School, that offers a postal service to individuals. The work is handled by one full-time staff member – when possible, a graduate with the part-time help of a junior assistant and a postal assistant. Service is given to all extramural students in New Zealand, except those domiciled in Palmerston North who have direct access to the library, and in the Pacific Islands.

Request cards are received from students in the morning mail, and all books that are available are posted out the same day. When a book is not immediately available, the student is advised. A close check is kept on extramural demand and additional copies of titles are bought where pressure is seen to be building up. The donation annually made by the Extramural Students’ Association goes a considerable way towards financing this.

The library is keenly aware of the disadvantages suffered by extramural students, and every effort is made to help. Generally, these students are most co-operative and conscientious in their use of the library. Lecturers who teach extramurally are always ready to suggest alternative titles when the library cannot supply those requested.

A major problem is the slowness of the mails, it takes from 7 to 10 days for a parcel of books to reach most parts of the country. With our allowance of two weeks for reading, this means a book is in actual use only half the time, which is an important consideration in calculating the numbers of copies required.”

Following the tentative start that had been made four years earlier, a major survey of extramural students was undertaken by systems librarian Valerie Thompson in the second half of 1974.<sup>27</sup> As Lloyd Jenkins explained in the introduction “It is widely recognised that extra-mural students, because of their situation, face difficulties which are not encountered by internal students.

But how far and in what ways these difficulties affect their use of the library has been largely a matter of speculation ... Many of the students who do read a significant amount in the course of their studies have access to other libraries. We are therefore concerned to have more precise information about the proportion of students who use Massey library, and the proportion who use other libraries.”

The survey was an ambitious undertaking, with a total of 598 replies being received, and the picture that emerges is of a student body making use of a wide range of libraries out in the community in addition to the Massey service. Of the respondents 32% had used the postal service while 82% had borrowed books from non-Massey sources including public libraries, high school libraries, other universities, teachers colleges, the Country Library Service and friends. Oddly enough, in light of later developments, students were not asked if they had borrowed from polytechnic or community college libraries, the use of which would have been hidden under the 23% who used “other sources”.

Two interesting things emerge from the report that point to the growing professionalisation of the service as library staff sought to develop it beyond a simple title request operation. The perennial difficulty of too many students chasing the same titles from reading lists was being addressed by the provision of alternative book selections when the requested title was not available. Students were able to indicate on the request cards if an alternative would be acceptable, and 60% of them had done so, with 43% of the books sent proving useful. Of greater significance, however, is mention of the subject request service which had probably been in operation since the early 1970s.<sup>28</sup> Of the sample 16% had requested books by subject rather than title although the service was not well publicised and a number of students commented that they did not know it was possible to make such requests.

As has often been found, much of the value of surveys of this kind lies in the comments that respondents make, and these raised a number of familiar points. A substantial amount of praise was received for the courtesy and efficiency of the staff, but there was significant dissatisfaction around the availability of recommended books, loan periods, postal delays and reading lists. A number of students commented that “they only fully appreciated the place of the library

in their studies after a vacation course when they had the opportunity to visit the library, see the collection, and meet the library staff.”<sup>29</sup> As the report noted, “To all university librarians teaching students to use the library is a very important part of the job, and I am sure more could be done in this regard for extra-mural students.” The final comment related to the availability of study-related books in public libraries and recorded that, in response to a request from one library, a list of books had been prepared that had been made available to “interested public libraries.”<sup>30</sup>

An alarming increase in extramural enrolments in the first half of 1975 heightened concerns about resourcing, and Lloyd Jenkins wrote a submission on the library implications which pointed to the need for dedicated and qualified staffing for the service which had hitherto been provided by staff of the Circulation Department - “... we have constantly sought to improve the quality of this service. We are convinced that a necessary step in this direction is the appointment of a qualified library assistant to take charge of this service ...”<sup>31</sup> He referred back to the 1974 survey and recommended an increased duplication of titles and an approach to the Postmaster General “to seek speedier transmission of materials sent on “Library Rate.” He referred to the use of public libraries by Massey students and to the booklist that had been prepared - “In response to a request from one public library we have ... prepared a very select list of books in the various disciplines which could be of use to extra-mural students and which public libraries could usefully consider for purchase. The list is being made freely available to public libraries.” Notwithstanding this nod in the direction of interlibrary co-operation Jenkins was nothing if not a realist, and he went on to make the argument for Massey taking responsibility for its students’ library needs in the clearest possible terms - “It has to be recognised, however, that with their [i.e. the public libraries] limited resources and the wide range of demands they are called upon to meet they cannot be expected to move far into this field. Provision of library service to extra-mural students must continue to be our responsibility.” In order to allow Massey to accept this responsibility and to provide support to other libraries it appears that the first “deposit collection” of high-use Massey titles was established at Hawkes Bay Community College in 1975.

By 1976 the request for a qualified person to run the service had been fulfilled and the Annual Report records that “the appointment of a senior library assistant to take charge of the service to extramural students has been amply justified by the results.”<sup>32</sup> The first appointee in 1976 was Julie Smee, a graduate with a library qualification, and although she reported to the Head of Circulation she was given effective control of the day to day management of the extramural operation as well as taking personal responsibility for the purchasing of multiple copies and, when they were established, books for the deposit collections. With an eye to co-ordinating the use of high demand materials between internal and extramural students she was also in charge of the Reserve Book Room where the extramural collection had been placed. The report was optimistic about her appointment, noting that “there will be lasting benefit from the refining of procedures and the establishment of better contact with both the lecturing staff ... and the students.” To further this goal “a library newsletter to all extramural students was sent out regularly during the year.” About 27% of enrolled extramural students used the library and “as usual the majority of them were studying English, history, sociology and education.” The report also records that \$1,500 was donated by ExMSS.

Although she was in the position for a relatively short time, Smee was responsible for a remarkably detailed report on the service which she presented as an Investigation for her Diploma of Education in 1978<sup>33</sup>. Basing her ideas on an analysis of library use in the second half of 1976 and a pilot survey of students attending vacation courses in August of that year, Smee ranged widely over a number of models of distance library provision including a number from Australia and also the Open University. She concluded with a number of interesting recommendations, several of them involving closer cooperation between library and academic staff in the production of study guides and reading lists and in the purchase of recommended books – “Closer liaison during September would ensure that reading lists for each extramural paper are submitted to the library’s Acquisitions Department in time to order, receive, and process texts and supplementary material before the beginning of the next academic year”. On the subject of library and research skills she recommended – “Assignments involving literature searches (e.g., locate ten

relevant journal articles and/or books on a set or optional topic) could be set by lecturers in 200 level papers to stimulate students' initiative in the direction of personal library usage. The Country Library and Inter-library loan facilities would make such bibliographical work possible for most extramurals, except those living in very remote areas."<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, as Smee reveals, the reading list for public libraries had met with a disappointing response and this was a telling indication that the deposit collections could face some barriers –

“The titles included for each subject were those most likely to be of general interest to the reading public as well as being supplementary extramural texts (i.e., not the basic texts that students are expected to buy). Attention was drawn to the availability of this list, upon request from Massey Library, in New Zealand Libraries – well before the end of 1975, yet by December 1976 only nineteen libraries ... had written to obtain copies.

Hopefully, this is not an indication of lack of interest on the part of those library administrators who have not responded to the invitation, for it is possible that many libraries throughout the country are not used by extramural students, hence their need for a small special collection of Massey texts may not be realistic.”<sup>35</sup>

In addition to these ideas the investigation also gives us a glimpse of the range of activities in which the extramural librarian was engaged –

“to promote greater familiarity and cooperation between the library and the teaching departments of the university with regard to extramural study needs; to conduct reader education programmes for extramural students during vacation courses; to communicate regularly with the students both through the extramural newsletter and informal visits from local extramurals as well as some of the distant folk who occasionally pass by Massey.”<sup>36</sup>

Smee also gives us more detail about the operation of the subject request service –

“As well as requesting material by author and title, students can ask for relevant information on a particular topic. It is then up to the staff to locate the topic in the appropriate study guide, if more direction is needed regarding the

essay question, and to use their bibliographical skills to find pertinent books or journal articles. In certain instances where information can be found only in a reference book or a journal, the student is notified by letter and asked whether or not he/she is prepared to pay for the extract or article to be photocopied. If information is available in books and journals, the books are sent immediately with an explanatory note indicating that the journal items will be copied and despatched upon receipt of the processing fee. For some Stage I and many Stage II or Diploma Students, this is a much appreciated service. It can also be a very interesting aspect of extramural library work for the specialist staff member.”<sup>37</sup>

Julie Smee was followed as Senior Library Assistant by Lachie Shea, and then from the beginning of 1978 to late 1980 the position was occupied by Nicola McCarthy. By the mid 1970s the Massey extramural programme was firmly established and was entering a phase of strong growth, moving well beyond the original emphasis on teacher training. In 1976 the Ad Hoc Extramural Committee concluded that there was no reason that the size of the extramural enrolment could not continue to increase if proper planning was in place, and recommended an extension of the programme to 300-level papers. The library was not mentioned in its report.<sup>38</sup> Massey’s “dual mode” method of simultaneously teaching the same material internally and extramurally allowed for rapid growth and gave distance students a real university experience but, as Tom Prebble has pointed out, it “does not lend itself easily to central planning or control.”<sup>39</sup> For the library, this increasingly meant that it was necessary to liaise with individual lecturers to ensure that the books recommended to students were available in sufficient numbers to satisfy the sudden surges in demand for titles needed to complete assignments.

A paper presented to Library Committee in 1976 on the implications of the proposal summarised the concerns that staff had about the extension of the extramural programme into areas that involved extensive individual research rather than simple instruction.<sup>40</sup> There was “an essential qualitative difference in the programmes offered at 300 level ... the use made of the Library by students working at this level indicates a more research-oriented approach and involves the use of periodicals, abstracting and indexing journals, and bibliographies, as well as wide-ranging reading.” It went on to argue that



“it is at this level that students require a good deal of instruction in the use of Library resources ... [which] already occupies a significant proportion of available staff time in the Reference Department.”

The need for internal students to develop these skills had been acknowledged at Massey as far back as 1959 when it was reported that “the Library Committee thinks that, while the brief introduction of new students to the library in the course of their orientation is useful, it is not adequate for them to acquire familiarity with the library resources and their efficient use. The Committee recommends, therefore, that one period each year be devoted to the instruction of degree students in small groups.”<sup>41</sup> While this initiative failed to get off the ground in 1960, when it was reported that “we regret that our idea of holding library classes has broken down completely this year,”<sup>42</sup> by 1968 there was a small programme of classes in place. Margaret Rodger wrote a brief account<sup>43</sup> which included the following – “History II extra-mural students – 6 groups of 10. 30 minute tour of the library, concentrating on use of the subject catalogue, periodicals and one abstracting journal, one bibliography and the reference collection. Each student was given a printed list of major historical reference works in the library. Emphasis was placed on using such works while attending Massey vacation courses.” This programme continued through the 1970s and is evidence of a growing concern that the simple provision of books from lists provided by lecturers did not provide an adequate service to students who were ultimately in training to become independent researchers. As Valerie Thompson had noted in 1974, a library was much more than just a place where books were stored, it was a core element of the research experience and real research could not be learnt or carried out without some time being spent in the library.

The 1976 paper went on to report that it had already been necessary to appoint “a qualified librarian ... to provide assistance to students by way of advice and the provision of alternative titles where those requested are not available,” but the gap between the existing service and one of a truly acceptable standard was spelled out in no uncertain terms – “It is one thing to provide a service of this kind to extramural students however; it is quite another matter to devise and develop a service which will provide for students at a distance from the university a satisfactory substitute for direct access to the Library.”

It is clear that the use of public libraries was regularly invoked as a means by which extramural students could access materials and gain library experience but library staff were equally clear that this was not a satisfactory option – “students working at this level will make even more extensive use of public libraries than they do now but it must be recognised that the primary responsibility rests with these institutions which are providing the courses. Moreover, with the possible exception of those in metropolitan centres, few public libraries could meet the needs of these students.”

Augmented reading lists were seen as a partial solution but they would also need the involvement of library staff – “The idea of providing book lists with full descriptive annotations which give extramural students a clear idea of the scope and quality of the books and thus make it easier for them to select the most appropriate titles is one which finds some favour with members of the teaching staff. The preparation of such lists would obviously involve close cooperation between members of the teaching staff and professional library staff, whose strength would have to be considerably increased to keep up with the additional work involved.” In the end the employment of more librarians was seen as inescapable and “indeed, it seems likely that if the present growth continues, the extramural service will eventually have to be set up as a separate part of the Library.” The document concludes with an expression of stubborn realism – “our concern is not to inhibit new developments. Indeed, the present proposal can be seen as offering a new challenge to the Library but, because as professionals we are concerned to cooperate with the teaching staff in maintaining the highest academic standards in the institution, we feel an obligation to spell out quite clearly the implications of the proposals presently being discussed.”<sup>44</sup>

Library Committee’s formal response to the Ad Hoc Committee’s proposal echoed these concerns – “... the 300-level papers will generate a demand for comparatively modest duplication of a large range of expensive titles rather than extensive duplication of a few titles.”<sup>45</sup> It then went on to address the provision of library and research training to distance students. As long as extramural teaching had been confined to lower level courses it had been acceptable merely to ensure that they were supplied with the required books but, as the Committee observed, “there is seen to be a more serious problem in meeting

the qualitatively different demands generated by 300-level teaching: in many disciplines there is a marked difference in approach at 300-level. The meeting of this need for extramural students is seen as a major problem.” To this end it was suggested that “consideration be given to requiring students taking papers extramurally in certain disciplines to spend some time on campus early in their course so that they can become familiar with the Library’s resources and services.”

The Committee’s next recommendation was another attempt to address the same question, this time through the use of other university libraries – “Formal negotiations be undertaken to provide access for students taking 300-level papers to the library of the university nearest their home centre. Some of the universities already provide this ... others are reluctant to do so.”<sup>46</sup> The third recommendation, however, was one that was to have a more positive outcome – “Following the precedent already established ... at the Hawkes Bay Community College ... collections of recommended readings and reference sources should be provided at all community colleges.” This first deposit collection had been in place by about 1975 and the use of polytechnics and community colleges as venues for small collections of Massey books was another appeal to the communitarian ethos and one which had perhaps more chance of success than the appeal to the universities. The community colleges had been established as centres of community education and might have been expected to see support of non-enrolled students as part of their missions. Critically, however, the expectations that Massey had of these institutions were not spelled out. Were they supposed to serve only as venues for the collections of recommended readings that Massey provided or would extramural students be granted borrowing rights to their entire collections? How would the polytechnics and community colleges provide borrowing facilities to a group of non-enrolled students? What were they expected to do when Massey students asked for help with finding information for their assignments? If these questions had occurred to those involved they were not addressed at this initial stage and over the next few years deposit collections were set up throughout the country. By 1983 there were “bulk loan” collections in Whangarei, Whakatane, Gisborne, Napier, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Rotorua, Nelson, Oamaru, Invercargill and Blenheim.<sup>47</sup>

The final set of recommendations made by the 1977 Library Committee in response to the Ad Hoc Extramural Committee's recommendation on extending the programme to 300-level students related to the planning difficulties that this would create –

“... it is recommended that all departments proposing to offer courses extramurally at 300-level should submit to the Librarian an outline of the courses being offered indicating ...

- (i) The library materials which will be required for the courses;
- (ii) The ways in which it is anticipated they will be used;
- (iii) Any ways in which the problems likely to be encountered by extramural students in using the Library may be overcome.

This information will be needed by the Librarian both in estimating the budgetary provision ... and in planning the kind of service that will be required.<sup>748</sup>

The third recommendation is especially amusing. That busy academics were likely to anticipate and proactively solve the library's problems seems unlikely, but this was presumably a means of making the point that academic developments often had unanticipated outcomes for the Library. It was important, however, that the Library was made aware of the need for new materials as early in the planning cycle as possible. This continues to be a major focus of the Library's relationship with academic departments.

It has been necessary to address the events surrounding the 1976 proposal to extend extramural teaching to 300 level at some length because this really was a watershed event, not only for the library but for the university as a whole. As long as distance education was confined to the first two levels of study it was possible to maintain the fiction of “instruction” – that students were undertaking a carefully guided course of reading and writing that could be provided through study guides, reading lists and carefully chosen collections of books. Once the prospect of “research” and, shortly afterwards, postgraduate papers entered the frame it became necessary to provide students with the opportunity to find and select their own materials, to follow individual paths

of enquiry and to develop a critical and autonomous approach to recorded knowledge. The challenge of doing this has occupied those involved with distance library service from that time until the present.

The extent of the library's extramural services is apparent from the greatly expanded entry that suddenly appeared in the 1977 Extramural Handbook, which had until then changed only slightly from the one that first appeared in 1961 –

“Surveys are carried out from time to time in order to keep up with the changing patterns of extra-mural library usage ... Students are advised ... to plan their essay/study programmes as far ahead as possible ... It is virtually impossible for anyone to obtain material in less than two weeks, allowing for postage time ... In situations of extraordinarily heavy demand essential chapters or sections of a book may be photocopied at the student's expense. Requests for photocopies of journal articles and airmail postage to students of such copies follow the same principle – the Library will oblige with both as long as the students send money with the request. Current photocopying charges are 10 cents per page. ... Books can be sent airmail to any student who agrees 1. to pay an annual sum (the exact amount can be discovered from the library) towards outward posting and 2. to return all Library material by airmail.” After these strictures the section ends on a slightly pleading note – “In time of doubt remember that the Library is there to cater for your resource needs – every effort is made at all times to fulfil your resource needs.”<sup>49</sup>

Loans to distance students continued at a high level through the latter part of the 1970s, with about half of them being issued through the postal service and half over the desk to students attending vacation courses or otherwise visiting the library in person. As already noted, the deposit collection network was taking shape, with Nelson, Rotorua and Taranaki being added in 1978. Then in 1979 there was a sudden slump in loans and the Annual Report pointed out that “the limitations in the service we are able to provide may be a major factor. The maintenance of a satisfactory service to extramural students depends ultimately on the level and quality of staffing available to provide it.”<sup>50</sup> This decline was reversed in 1980 when “three and a half staff members were able to cope with this extraordinary increase, helped in large part by the production

of computer-printed address labels which saved a good deal of clerical work.”<sup>51</sup> The extramural staff were still working within the Circulation Department under the supervision of Mary Green and, after 1980, Linda Hughes and then Bruce White who occupied the position from 1984 to 1993. Although they constituted a separate work team they still shared many of the department’s routines, including shelf tidying and regular desk shifts.

## Maturity – the Eighties

At the beginning of 1981 Nicola McCarthy was replaced in the extramural role by Philippa Auger who occupied it for the remainder of the decade and played a major role in shaping its future direction. She quickly developed good working relationships with members of the Centre for University Extramural Study (CUES), most notably Alison Rowland and Marianne Tremaine, and became a powerful advocate for distance education and the extramural library service. Use of the service continued to rise through the early 1980s, from 19,729 extramural loans in 1981 to 31,772 in 1986, an increase of 61%. No statistics had been kept on the other operations of the service until 1983 when it was recorded that 3,398 photocopied articles were sent out. Only in 1985 was it recorded that 592 subject requests were received and 10,227 individual book requests processed by the service. By the time Philippa Auger left Massey Library in 1990 the service was annually processing more than 15,000 book requests as well as nearly 1,400 subject requests and around 6,000 photocopied articles.<sup>52</sup> The services that had been set in place in the 1970s had all continued and although the systems had required regular maintenance and modification they had survived. The library automated its circulation system in 1984 and although this ultimately led to an increase in efficiency it was also the occasion of numerous teething troubles which were inevitably more difficult when the students were not physically present. It should also be recalled that, as Adrian Turner had pointed out in 1964, the actual issuing of books is a relatively minor part of the operation of a postal service.

In addition to overseeing this dramatic increase in the service's outputs, Philippa Auger was active in both promotion and evaluation of the extramural service. The 1982 Annual Report records the establishment of four new deposit collections, and in 1985 Auger held discussions with the Extramural Students' Society as a result of which she participated in their Area Communicators' weekend as a means of familiarising this important group with the library's services. From the following year she began travelling with ExMSS staff to speak to students at regional workshops, a practice that still continues. Her relationship with CUES was sufficiently close for her to appear in their own

publicity with the designation “Extramural Librarian” as if she had been one of their own staff. However, her most lasting contribution was undoubtedly the major survey of use of the extramural library service that she undertook with Marianne Tremaine in 1984.

It is beyond the scope of a brief history to describe more than a small portion of the information contained in the classic report *Users and Non-Users*.<sup>53</sup> This survey probably remains the single most detailed piece of research carried out on Massey University Library and set the standard for a tradition of user surveying that had begun in 1970 and continues to the present. Bill Blackwood had replaced Lloyd Jenkins as University Librarian in 1982 and he clearly had concerns about the level of use of the extramural library service by students, as well as ambitions for its improvement. As he explained in the foreword to the report – “year after year the library’s statistics have shown that the use of the library by extramural students is significantly less than that by internal students. Any consideration of the reasons for this must raise questions as to whether there are any measures which could be taken that would facilitate its use.”<sup>54</sup>

The original survey had been conducted in 1984 but analysis of the data and writing of the report took some time. There were further delays in the actual publishing process with the result that the report did not appear until 1987. Its introduction directly addresses the question as to whether awareness of the service was the major contributing factor to perceived low use levels and goes on to explain some of the other factors involved –

“The assumption that lack of knowledge of the library would be the main reason why students did not use its service was not borne out by this study. Over 95% of respondents knew about the extramural library service but only 43% had used the service to borrow material.

However only 27% of those surveyed knew about the full range of services the library offers including photocopying, compiling bibliographies and sending material in response to a request for information on a particular subject. Other findings were that students living in university centres tended to make less use of the Massey Library but the longer students had been enrolled, the more likely they were to have used the service. The main reasons given for non-use



of the library were that libraries in local areas had sufficient material or that study guides and readings issued in postings were sufficient without any need for further reading material.

The study recommends closer liaison between teaching staff and the library as a means of improving students' knowledge and use of library resources."<sup>55</sup>

The report went on to make a number of recommendations. Although a direct question about postage costs had elicited only a small response they commented that "Cost of postage was frequently mentioned by respondents in the general comments section. If the aim of a library service is to provide extramural students with access to the collection equal to that enjoyed by internal students, the policy of charging for the return postage of books needs to be examined. Ideally, students' access to library resources should not be limited by their ability to pay. At some distance teaching institutions overseas, the university pays for the return postage of material. With the recent increase in postal rates students will be forced to reconsider the extent of their use of the postal service. Lobbying of central government for the return of the library rate is desirable." They recommended that "The policy of students' paying for the return postage of books borrowed should be re-examined to see if the burden of cost to the student can be alleviated in some way."<sup>56</sup>

On the subject of the deposit collections the report was very positive and advocated an extension of the network - "figures for students living in main and secondary urban areas indicate that these collections are receiving a considerable amount of use. These figures indicate that the collections are justifying their existence and further expansion of the network of libraries holding Massey books should be planned. Many students expressed interest in the establishment of a collection at a local library in their area in the general comments section in this part of the questionnaire."

The only slight note of caution was that "the majority of students wanted to see the inclusion of more course-related material ..." As a result it was recommended that, in addition to an extension of the deposit collection network, "Regular means of communication with librarians in charge of libraries holding deposit collections should be promoted. Consultation would

avoid duplication of material already held in the library within the deposit collections, and could give feedback on students' needs."<sup>57</sup>

As we have seen, it had been an implicit assumption of the Massey extramural programme that students would have access to library resources in the broader community and the survey had asked students about their use of public libraries and those of other educational institutions in their local area. They found that "Thirty-five percent of survey respondents said that they did not use the postal service because they relied entirely on their local libraries for material to fulfil their study needs."<sup>58</sup> As they explained – "Because of proximity and familiarity of local libraries, students often go there first when assembling material needed for assignments. When material is not available in the local area, they approach Massey University Library as a last resort. Thus it is evident that local libraries provide material and other services that would otherwise cause a much higher demand for the postal library service. If all students relied totally on the postal library service for their study requirements, it is doubtful whether the Massey University Library could meet their needs without a substantial increase in staff and resource materials." Students were able to browse the collections, material was immediately available and there were no return postage costs. They concluded that "As these local libraries are providing valuable resources for extramural students, ways of giving them practical assistance to support extramural students should be investigated."<sup>59</sup>

Because the survey had originated out of concern about levels of use of the distance library service, the subject of communication was dealt with at some length –

"The vast majority of students indicated that they were aware of the service but when the depth of their knowledge was tested it became clear that many students were not aware of the subject request service or the photocopying service.

The problem, then, is to identify the best means of conveying library information to extramural students. Some would argue that it is preferable to keep all the general information students need to know about the university in one publication. However few students will read all the information sent

to them by the university and there is no guarantee that students will find the information on library use in one of these publications.

Although a separate library guide is just one more piece of paper from [the] university there is an advantage in having a publication that is readily identifiable as coming from the library. Students may not sit down and read the library guide from cover to cover but are likely to keep it and read it when they need to borrow material from the library.

Lecturers could help by giving their students more specifically course-related information on using the library as part of the study material sent out in extramural postings. Many students turn straight to their study guides without first reading details of administrative procedures from the university. A brief mention in the initial study guide of the library and the services it offers would reinforce other sources of information and would also encourage library use. Lecturers could build on this in later study guides by giving details of relevant material available from the library and how to borrow it. (Photocopying of journal articles etc.)

Respondents identified the *Extramural Library Guide* as the most useful publication detailing library procedures that they had received. However students indicated that they needed more detailed information on the use [of] the deposit collections and other libraries.”<sup>60</sup>

The report’s recommendations on the subject of communication included annual publication of the extramural guide, the inclusion in the guide of more detailed information about the deposit collections, and also the integration of course-specific library information in the administrative guides of each paper. The also recommended that “an investigation into the feasibility of using alternative means of providing library information e.g. videos, audiotapes etc. should be carried out ...”<sup>61</sup>

A final section of the report dealt with the needs of 300 level and postgraduate students and raised concerns about their access to information and the development of their research skills –

“Although students studying at three hundred and postgraduate level indicated that they made more use of Massey University Library very few students were

making use of the more specialised services designed to help compensate for their lack of access to bibliographical tools needed for individual research ... actual knowledge of the existence of the subject request service was very low ... On the whole students studying at this level felt that their library skills had developed during their period of enrolment. Vacation courses were seen by students as the best opportunity to learn about the library. This further underlines the importance of providing extramural students with library training at the beginning of their university careers ... All extramural students receive the same information on library use regardless of the level of papers they are studying. The majority of students enrolled in papers at three hundred and postgraduate level felt that there was a need for specialised library guides outlining services available and user education.”

As a result it was recommended that

- i. The library provide a more specialised library guide for students studying at this level ... with more detailed examples of the use of abstracting and indexing journals. Students make considerable use of local libraries and those living in major cities would have access to reference tools. Some familiarity with reference material available would help students use library collections more effectively. This information would also be beneficial when students attend vacation courses.
- ii. All students studying at this level should have a lecture on the bibliographic material available for their subject while attending vacation courses.
- iii. Detailed information on library use specifically related to the paper concerned be included in all study guides at the three hundred and postgraduate level.”<sup>62</sup>

The conclusion of *Users and Non-Users* raises some fundamental questions about the role of libraries within distance education and, in addition to stressing the need for better information and publicity about services, throws out a challenge to teaching staff –

“The lack of in-depth knowledge demonstrates the need for a change in information provided on using the library. There is an obvious need to stress the specialised services available. A major information drive is required for first year students as good library use habits need to be established early on. Even if students do not need to use the extramural library service in that first year, knowledge of the types of services will help them in future.

Students’ use of the extramural library service is a conscious choice. Many extramural students indicated that they found study guides written by lecturers and the recommended textbooks to be adequate for their study needs and therefore chose not to use the library. If lecturers are not satisfied with students’ total reliance on these materials, they need to stress the importance of library resources to the study of their subject. Including library information in study guides would reinforce the importance of reading widely. Students look to academic staff for direction and if staff do not stress the importance of library use, students will not bother to use additional material. Liaison between the library and academic staff would enable library information to be linked to particular subject areas.

Changes of this kind have already been initiated by several lecturers working together with library staff, and as the University Librarian mentions in the following implementation section, a working party is planned which will examine the recommendations of this report and discuss future policy for the library.”<sup>63</sup>

Having rehearsed the argument in favour of library use and the development of library skills as “a good thing in itself” Auger and Tremaine went on to sound a note of caution –

“Naturally as the only library in the country with responsibility for servicing extramural students, the Massey Library sets high standards in the service it provides. To some extent because of these high standards, there has been a tendency to feel that if students are not using the library there must be some sense in which the library is failing them. During the course of this investigation the authors of this report have begun to question the implicit assumption that the university library tends to make that it should be used by every student. The library provides an extramural service which is impressive

in its efficiency and is responsive to those who use it. As long as all students know about the service, the decision to use the library must be theirs. Instead of worrying about nonusers, the library should concentrate on extending and intensifying the excellence of its service to users. No commercial service organisation would set itself the goal of meeting the needs of every individual in its target population.”

University Librarian Bill Blackwood’s response<sup>64</sup> to the detailed recommendations made by Auger and Tremaine is included with the report. He was very supportive of the majority of them, in particular the emphasis that had been placed on close liaison with teaching staff in promoting the library and tailoring its services, but was sceptical about a number of the recommendations, especially as they touched on the spending of more money. Although he undoubtedly wanted to use the survey as a weapon in the ongoing argument for more library funding, calls for additional expenditure would not have been entirely welcome. On the subject of payment of return postage on books he pointed out that the library could not afford to do this and would need more support from the university, but added that “recognising that so many of the issues raised in this study involve the allocation of additional resources, I do not find the evidence on which this recommendation is based sufficiently convincing to justify a change in the present financial climate.” He agreed that more information was needed about the operation of the deposit collections and that better consultation with both teaching staff and the host libraries was needed, but his support for the scheme was lukewarm – “Whilst I can accept the idea of some increase in the allocation of funds to this purpose the evidence from the survey does not seem to me to justify any major extension of the scheme. My feeling is that there is a limit to the number of deposit collections we can maintain and service to a level where they are providing a service that is cost-effective.”

In light of future events his reaction to the suggestion that Massey provide support to local libraries to assist them in serving Massey students is particularly interesting –

“On the one hand it is generally accepted that an institution which generates specific library needs has the major responsibility for meeting those needs. On

the other hand, it is also widely accepted that public libraries endeavour as far as possible, within the limits of the resources available to them, to provide for the diverse needs of the population they serve ... New Zealand has a strong tradition of interlibrary co-operation and sharing of resources in which the university libraries have played a leading part. The growth of extramural teaching is part of a wider development towards the concept of lifelong education. As such it presents new challenges to librarians. If the problems involved in meeting the needs of extramural students can be addressed in the tradition of library co-operation in this country, I am confident that practical solutions can be found.”

Blackwood took the educative role of public libraries seriously, believing that their responsibilities extended to providing, at least in part, for the formal education needs of their clients - “important and sensitive issues of resource-sharing among institutions controlled and funded by different authorities are involved. I see a need, therefore, for consultation with representatives of the libraries concerned, particularly the public libraries, and with ... the National Library of New Zealand to consider the most appropriate means of strengthening the service available to extramural students at the local level.” He was not, in other words, of a mind to give them money to do what he thought they should have been doing all along!

A working party was to be set up “which will help examine the implications of the report from the perspectives of all those concerned and coordinate their contribution to improvement. The objective, as I see it, should be to have in place by the end of 1987 policies and procedures that will enable us to provide, as efficiently as possible, the optimum library service for students studying extramurally.”

In fact the committee did not begin to meet until early 1988 and its minutes appear to be no longer in existence. A leading part was taken by Dr Andrew Trlin who had assisted with the design of the original survey and was a major proponent of the view, already expressed by Bill Blackwood, that distance education was a key element of a national education strategy and that access to library resources for distance students was a central government responsibility insofar as it would form part of this strategy. Among the working group’s

recommendations was one relating to the inclusion of library information in study guides by CUES word processing staff, and this was in fact implemented, but much of the discussion relating to the national education strategy came to nothing. The Rogernomics revolution was in full flood in the late eighties and there was little chance that the communitarian approach to library service that the committee favoured would bear fruit.<sup>65</sup> However, many of the recommendations concerning communication and liaison were put into effect and in the late 1980s a video was made promoting the distance library service and broadcast as part of Massey's short-lived television venture.<sup>66</sup>



A meeting of Library and CUES staff in the late 1980s – left to right, Bill Blackwood, Philippa Auger, Janet Whines, Andrea McIlroy and Bruce White.

Philippa Auger left the library in 1990 and Bill Blackwood retired in 1991, and it is fair to say that by that time interest in a survey conducted seven years previously had waned. It would be easy to see the outcome of this major undertaking as a disappointment and indeed many of its recommendations had been rather overtaken by events, as money for tertiary education became tight at the same time as Massey's extramural programme continued to grow. As we shall see, however, at least one of its recommendations was to be put into effect within a few years and at the very least *Users and Non-Users* provided a mass of information about the behaviour of Massey students out in the real world. This account has only skimmed across the surface and it remains to some more careful scholar to make full use of its resources.



The growth of the extramural operation during the 1980s had placed a degree of strain on its positioning within the Circulation Department which really dated back to its days as a simple book lending facility within Palmerston North University College. While they were part of a larger department extramural staff could still be required to work shifts at the lending desk, tidy book shelves and so on. On the other hand the growth of “reference” activities like subject requests sat less well within a very functionally oriented department. This was duly noted in the library’s five year plan put out in 1989 –

“The Extramural Section of the [Circulation] Department has grown over the years in line with the growth in importance and scope of Massey’s extramural operation. Extramural service within the Library was initially very circulation-oriented, basically a book-provision service and this is still a large part of its role. Over the years, however, as more advanced level courses have been available to extramural students, there has been an extension of the services provided to cover functions carried out for internal students by the Reference and Serials departments... It may be worth giving serious consideration to the question of making the Extramural Section a separate department of the Library.”

This document also noted that –

“At present the Extramural Section is working on an establishment of one Senior Librarian ( the Extramural Librarian) and 4.5 Library Assistants. This is really insufficient to cover the existing workload if subject requests are to be carried out to a high standard and if a fast turnaround is to be maintained.”<sup>67</sup>

The deposit collection network had been in place since the late 1970s, and in 1987 four more collections were established in Auckland to deal with concerns raised by the *Users and Non-Users* survey.<sup>68</sup> As already noted, Auger and Tremaine had indicated a need for more spending on these collections and better liaison with the host institutions, but Bill Blackwood had been sceptical that their value to Massey would justify this. It may have come as some surprise then when the issue flared up in an unexpected quarter – Library Committee. For a number of years ExMSS had had a representative on the committee and in 1990 it was Celia Gallie, who also happened to be Librarian of Nelson Polytechnic which was host to one of the bulk loan collections. Gallie was not averse to wearing more than one hat and in a paper entitled “Massey Extra-

Mural Students Using Polytechnic Libraries”<sup>69</sup> she revealed a few home truths about the deposit collections –

“For a number of years polytechnic libraries have been supporting Massey University Extra-Mural students by allowing them access to these libraries and in most cases giving them free access to all services.”

Not only was the stock of the deposit collections dated, it was not synchronised with current student enrolments in the region. Polytechnic libraries were giving Massey students access not only to their own collections but to interlibrary loan and other services as well. The communitarian argument was no longer enough –

“In the new education climate, some libraries are being asked by their administrations to justify the use made of their libraries by Massey Extra-Mural students ... The feeling is that Massey University receives fees from these students and if the students are directed to other libraries for support, the libraries concerned should receive some financial assistance from Massey University.”

Furthermore, as Gallie pointed out, “it appears there has never been any clear policy covering this arrangement.” Nursing books were in particularly high demand and this was an area in which the polytechnics were in direct competition for students with Massey. While some libraries were charging Massey students, “most libraries allow free access with full library privileges.” She went on to detail the costs that the polytechnic libraries were having to bear – “interloan charges, database searches used to identify holding libraries, postage, processing Massey stock so it is compatible with local systems, staff time helping with research topics and coping with the assumptions Massey students frequently have regarding the service being offered to them.” It was not a pretty picture, even though she ended on a conciliatory, and even communitarian, note – “We realise that they [the students] are at a geographical disadvantage and fully understand their needs. Massey Library sometimes cannot help them and we feel the need to help where we can.”

Massey Library’s response was a paper<sup>70</sup> that defended the library’s performance but acknowledged difficulties in running the service and a lack of clarity

around expectations. It revealed that the average size of each deposit collection was only 125 books and acknowledged that “the ongoing agreement between Massey Library and the Deposit Collections is rather an informal one and there may be a need for a clear statement of the expectations that both parties have of the arrangement.” At best though it was a lukewarm defence and it finished with an implied threat to walk away from the game – “If it is widely believed that the deposit collections no longer serve a useful purpose it may be that Massey Library needs to reconsider their future ...” This was not a great piece of diplomacy.

Not surprisingly, Gallie was undeterred by this riposte and undertook a survey<sup>71</sup> of the polytechnics’ charges – out of thirteen libraries with deposit collections five of them charged to a maximum of \$15 per term while the remaining eight gave free service. She went on to make three recommendations –

1. that students in the main centres could use the public library system,
2. that those in secondary centres could use the polytechnics but with a better service from Massey and a clear agreement of expectations,
3. that those in rural centres should use the postal service but with free return postage.

Then she suggested a more far-reaching alternative – “provide a service such as 3 for all students.” This was the free return postage that had been recommended by Auger and Tremaine.

The response to this was a paper<sup>72</sup> conceding that charging by the polytechnics was probably the best option, and that a clear written agreement was important. The library was not able to avoid, however, giving the communitarian argument one last outing by claiming that any charging regimes should be “consonant with the individual Polytechnics’ charter obligations to enhance educational opportunities in their regions.” Meanwhile on the subject of free return postage it pleaded poor – “this additional cost should not come from the Library’s budget.” And there, for the time being, the matter rested.

# Everything Changes – the Nineties

After Philippa Auger's departure in May 1990 the Extramural Library Section went through a somewhat complex interregnum as the library reorganised itself. The Annual Report for that year records that "From May to October the Extramural team was ably and efficiently led by Annette Holm" and then "in October Andrea Blackmore took up the position and enthusiastically set about the task of upgrading the Extramural Section's reference skills to cope with the increasing number and complexity of subject requests."<sup>73</sup> Bill Blackwood retired at the beginning of 1991 and was replaced in September by Helen Renwick. Use of the distance service was running at an all-time high, and in 1991 photocopied article requests increased by 90% over the previous year, reflecting increased use of the service by postgraduate students and changing patterns of enrolment and study. In 1992 a fax machine and direct dial line were introduced to the section in order to make it more responsive to user demand, and a computer-based tracking and charging system was introduced for the photocopying service. After Andrea Blackmore's departure to work in the newly opened Albany Library, Linda Palmer was in charge of the operation from February to June 1993, at which date a new structure came into effect.

The 1990s were a period of massive change. The university reinvented itself as a multi-campus operation with an aggressive approach to growing student enrolments and developing new modes of study. Helen Renwick proved herself to be a university librarian who questioned everything, changed the things she didn't like and, if the changes didn't work, changed them again. She had a vision of the library as a strongly responsive organisation and displayed a limited tolerance for the notion of doing things as they had always been done. Under her oversight the extramural service went through a number of reorganisations before emerging as a "distance library service in a multi-campus, multi-modal environment".<sup>74</sup>

The departmental structure of Massey Library had remained unchanged for many years and was a fairly standard one – Reference, Circulation, Serials,

Acquisitions and Cataloguing. The Interloans section had moved from Circulation to Reference in the early 1980s but Extramural had remained within the Circulation Department, although its linkage to the Reserve Book Room had weakened somewhat over time. One of Renwick's first actions was to undertake a complete audit of activity within the library which was then restructured along lines which were intended to reflect more accurately both functions and service groupings. She was also faced with the task of providing a library service to Massey's new Albany campus. As she stated in the 1993 Annual Report –

“The internal reorganisation followed an audit of the services offered by the Library's various sections and had the primary goal of efficiency. It was hoped to achieve this by bringing like functions and operations together and by avoiding duplication of services.”<sup>75</sup>

What this meant for the extramural operation was a move from the Circulation Department (renamed Lending) to become part of the new External Services Department –

“The [External Services] Department was created to provide library services to patrons who are off campus. Mainly extramural students, they also include other libraries through the interloan system and Albany staff and students. It was the intention that these services be integrated but this has been hampered to an extent by separate physical locations.”

There is probably no good time to carry out a reorganisation on this scale (and therefore, perhaps, no good reason to delay) but 1993 proved to be a very difficult year to bed this new structure in. As the report noted, “extramural requests increased by 22% with the most marked increase being 68% for subject requests.” A report written in September<sup>76</sup> commented on this – “Extramural subject requests, which had declined slightly in 1992, reached a level of demand quite beyond our expectations. In retrospect, we can see that the information going to students on enrolment had emphasised this service and made it much easier for students to use.”

The new section was managed by Lucy Marsden, with Celia Bockett taking up the position of Extramural Librarian. Joan Pitchforth, as senior library assistant,

had primary responsibility for subject requests. The section's brief was in fact wider than that described in the Annual Report because in July they also assumed responsibility for the "internal" requests placed by on-campus library users and previously dealt with by Lending. Casual staff were called upon to assist with subject requests and staff from Information Services (previously Reference) also helped out, but there were doubts "as to whether we are able to support this service to all-comers in its present form."<sup>77</sup> All in all the picture that emerges is one of stress –

"The restructuring has brought a number of new staff to the Department, some of whom spend half their working day in other areas. There are distinct benefits to this, but the settling in period has been a difficult one with a considerable amount of retraining still to be done. Normally extramural workloads decline somewhat from August but this year they have remained stubbornly high to the end of the month."<sup>78</sup>

Restructuring, however, was not the only item on the agenda and Renwick was looking at more fundamental change in the way that extramural library service was funded and delivered. In a paper put to the February 1993 meeting of the Board of Extramural Studies<sup>79</sup> she explained that "Aware of the importance to Massey of extramural students, the Library is concerned to improve the service and to establish a standard of quality." She explained that fax and direct dial telephone had been introduced and regretted that "it is not possible to provide more access to the [online] catalogue but it is hoped that this situation will soon be improved." Impending semesterisation was another concern, as "the effect of running courses in one semester rather than over three terms will be to concentrate demand for library material in a shorter time."

The issue of reading lists in study guides was still a problem despite repeated requests for them to be made available – "if material is recorded in study guides it should be available from the Library ... After discussion with CUES, it is hoped that library staff will have the opportunity to check reading lists at an earlier stage." The paper recommended "that the Board encourages course controllers a) to ensure that all listed reading material is available in the Massey University Library, and b) to include previous examination papers in an early study guide."

On the subject of library skills she wrote that “the Library has identified a need for extramural students, especially those doing advanced courses, to learn general library research skills ... An internal student would normally be expected to develop their own information research skills. Extramural students who do not have a library of adequate depth cannot develop the same skills.” It was difficult to know what to do about this problem however and the recommendation was simply “that the Board note the implications of a lack of library research skills for extramural postgraduate students.”

With the deposit collections, on the other hand, she was able to be more forthright and they were gone – “In the current competitive environment, libraries are no longer able to provide access as generously as they did and, despite the contribution of deposit collections, extramural students are now being charged fees. With traditional library cooperation under threat, Massey must take full responsibility for the services its students require ... the Library has therefore decided to discontinue support for the deposit collections.” The collections were withdrawn, and the argument that the polytechnics’ charters somehow obliged them to provide service to Massey students was not to be used again.

The most radical proposal, though, related to charges for the extramural library service, including return postage of books. Renwick began by describing the current system –

“The Library pays for outward postage of books on loan to extramural students, while they are responsible for the return postage. Photocopying is charged at \$2.50 for up to twenty pages and at \$4.00 for more than that amount. Recording the transactions for photocopying requests, which numbered more than 10,700 last year, is a significant administrative overhead.”

She contrasted this with the situation at Deakin University which charged an annual levy of \$26, which was built into enrolment fees, to cover these costs. The advantages of such a system at Massey would be that “administrative overheads are reduced allowing staff to redirect their attention to the service, and the students get as much information as they want without direct costs and the inconvenience of finding a post shop.” The argument in favour of free return postage, originally proposed by Auger and Tremaine and endorsed

by Gallie, had prevailed, at least within the library. The paper closed with the following recommendation –

“That as from 1994 extramural library service be funded from a student levy of approximately \$20 per student and that no further charges for the provision of library materials be passed to the student.”

Although the proposal involved an additional charge on distance students, ExMSS were supportive and there was a good chance that it would be accepted. In fact a levy on students was not Renwick’s favoured option and she immediately entered into discussions with Bill Tither, the Registrar, to discuss “building these services in as part of the standard fee rather than requiring a special levy.”<sup>80</sup> This would have normalised the new level of service and acknowledged that Massey was at last accepting responsibility for the provision of a high level of library service, as well as protecting the library from a degree of odium that the levy was bound to attract. However, it was probably opposed by those who saw it as a raid by the library on extramural funding, because in November it was reported that “approval has been given for a separate library fee of \$25 to be levied as part of enrolment charges. For this students will receive return post-paid bags for their library books and a generous amount of free photocopying.”<sup>81</sup> The library was to get the money but it was to be identified as an additional annual charge on each student regardless of how many papers they had enrolled for.

Not unexpectedly, the effect on demand for the services was galvanic. In 1994, book title requests through the distance service rose by 52% and demands for photocopied articles by 63%; by 1996 they were respectively 88% and 206% higher than they had been in 1993. Even requests for subject searches had risen by 38% over the same period although they were not directly affected by the levy. An interesting, and possibly disturbing, phenomenon occurred in 1996 when the total lending of books to distance students actually fell while the number of requests coming into the postal service rose. Two factors may have been at play here – demand on the service may have led to a decline in fulfilment rates, but it is also possible that some students were switching from borrowing their books in person to using the postal service. The difficulty of distinguishing those who actually needed the service from those who simply



found it convenient was to be a preoccupation in years to come. The levy was a blunt instrument, being a flat charge regardless of how many papers the student was enrolled for, or whether or not they used the service, and it attracted a good deal of complaint, particularly in its first year of operation. On the other hand the additional money available allowed the employment of extra casual staff, which not only improved turnaround times on requests but freed up permanent staff for the checking of reading lists and the purchase of additional copies of heavily used books. Library staff continued to address meetings of extramural students around the country and only the subject request service appears to have had difficulty in coping with the sudden increase in business in early 1994, with fulfilment times suffering.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to the effect of the new “free” services, two other factors combined to push demand up during these years. The introduction of semesters in 1995 saw the length of distance courses halved while enrolments increased. For the library the result was that “large numbers of students request the same number of items in a shorter time frame.”<sup>83</sup> This was new, but in a sense it was more of the same – since 1961 the service had faced the problem of too many students chasing the same books at the same time and the solution was, as it had always been, to buy more multiple copies of the same books, trading off against the library’s ability to develop collection depth in order to satisfy immediate demand. The second issue was more complex however. As the 1995 Annual Report explained – “the nature of enrolment has changed with many more block mode students, mixed mode students, and internally enrolled students (predominantly postgraduate) studying at a distance and requiring Library support. These students tend to be studying at higher levels and have greater need for supplementary reading and research material than do those at 100 and 200 level. The sharp increase in demand for photocopied journal articles (up 63%) may be a reflection of this.” What was worse, these students were now “unfunded” users of the augmented distance service – “although these groups tend to be heavy users of Library services, their enrolment in categories other than “extramural” avoids the collection of the levy charged to that group.”<sup>84</sup> Block mode study had been introduced in the late 1980s as a means of providing professional groups with “short bursts of intensive, face-to-face study rather than the discipline of home-based self-study”<sup>85</sup> and, in order

to maintain Massey's academic credibility among a group of students who fell well outside accepted academic norms, it was necessary to provide them with a full library service, even though they were neither internal nor extramural students in the commonly accepted sense of the terms. A similar situation existed with internally enrolled postgraduate students living at a distance from a campus – officially they didn't exist but they were real people with real needs for library service; the library couldn't ignore them, but however much support they may have needed they didn't pay the \$25 levy.

It would be easy to characterise the years after the introduction of the levy as boom times and to an extent they were. Not only had barriers to access been removed and awareness of the service raised, but more resources were now available, more use was being made of the services and more staff were available to provide them. Less time was spent on unproductive activities like charging for photocopying and more on essential activities like liaison and collection building. This is to tell only half the story, however, and those staff who were present recall the years from 1993 as a time of some personal stress. The managers of the service were largely new to their jobs and found themselves having to give expression to ideas and structures that may have made sense on paper, but were inevitably more complex to implement on the ground. It must have seemed that no sooner had they worked out what everybody was supposed to be doing, and got to know one another, than they were hit by a tsunami of requests in 1994 and a larger one in 1995. While having money to employ new staff is a boon, these staff don't appoint and train themselves and the employment of casual staff, with shifting and demand-responsive hours of work, is always demanding of management time as well. For the front-line staff the challenges were as great – trying to keep up and improve response times while requests flooded in and help arrived a day or two too late was also a challenge, and yet the 1995 Annual Report records that 83% of requests for available books were despatched within two days and that “grateful students acknowledge their appreciation of the service and External Services probably receives more letters of thanks than any other.”<sup>86</sup> The years 1993 to 1996 were indeed interesting times.



Staff of the Distance Library Service in 1994

Annual reports often contain trend-spotting predictions about the future that can range from the obvious to the quaint or, from the perspective of future years, simply puzzling. However, the author of the 1996 extramural report achieved a remarkable feat of prescience and identified what was to become one of the most influential trends of the next decade and a half -

“The most significant development this year has been remote access to the catalogue and also to the bibliographic databases via MIRO. An increasing number of students are communicating via email and are interacting directly with the catalogue, placing their own requests online, and renewing their own books. As more students gain remote access the number of subject searches requested may decline, with a consequent change in the nature of the Section’s work, from completing searches for students to providing advice in the use of the databases. The introduction of the Library’s home page on the Web in 1997 will provide the opportunity to install online tutorials and helpsheets for distance students to use.”<sup>87</sup>

Massey had been the first university in New Zealand to introduce an online catalogue and circulation system in 1984, and it was similarly the fore with online databases in 1996. MIRO was a collection of databases covering many of the social science, business and education disciplines favoured by distance students and, for the first time, they had direct access to the abstracting and

indexing tools which had hitherto been available only by visiting a university library. What is more, one of the databases (ABI Inform) included the full text of articles from some of the journals it indexed – a student with Internet access could now dial into the library and not only find a scholarly article but print it out and read it without leaving home. At a time when academic journals can be accessed and read on a mobile phone by a student sitting on a bus, it is hard to understand just how revolutionary a step this was. In 1996 the World Wide Web itself had been in general use for only a couple of years, much of the everyday information we take for granted was not available, and search engines were crude and unreliable. Broad spectrum information sources like Google, Google Scholar and Wikipedia were still years into the future and university-level research of the full scholarly literature was literally impossible without regular in-person visits to libraries. Although abstracting and indexing tools had been available as electronic databases for some twenty years the costs had been prohibitive to all but a few well-funded researchers and in 1996 most journals were still published in print only.

The growth of postgraduate study within the Massey programme had been gaining pace over the previous decade and would continue to do so until the present, when over 40% of all extramural paper enrolments are at postgraduate level.<sup>88</sup> In 1996 it had been noted that “the type of material requested by students has changed in the last three years, with the result that journal articles are requested as often as books,” so the arrival of this new information channel was particularly timely. What is more, its effects were quickly reflected in the statistics – subject requests peaked at 2,890 in 1996 but by 2000 had declined by 25% to 2,165 and continued to do so until in 2007 the graph lines crossed and fewer subject requests were received than had been twenty years earlier in 1987. This trend was clearly understood at the time and the Annual Report for 2000 noted that “requests for subject searches decreased by 19.6% as more resources became available via the Library’s web site. Planned improvements to the web site and the distribution of printed guides to searching should enable students to become more self-sufficient in this respect.”<sup>89</sup>

This was still some time off in the future, however, and in 1996 the library was coping with a demand for subject searches that had probably never been envisaged when the service had been introduced twenty years before. With

an increasing proportion of the student roll studying at postgraduate level the range and complexity of questions continued to increase; a decision had been made in 1993 that they be carried out exclusively by professionally trained librarians so that staff from the Information Services section were called upon to assist the three professional staff of the distance library service. (This extended to the College Liaison librarians after that section was established in 1997.) At the same time access to the service by 100 and 200 level students was restricted to a search for books only, while more advanced students received books and a bibliography of journal articles. This was still not sufficient to cope with the demand however and from 1994 part-time professional staff were employed to carry out searches.<sup>90</sup> As will be seen, satisfaction with the service was running at high levels and the ability of the library to provide additional levy-funded staffing was a critical factor in its success, but there had always been concerns around the subject request service and these related to a dilemma at the heart of distance education – the development of autonomous research skills and the understanding of scholarly information norms and structures, often known as information literacy.

Put simply, an internal student going to the information desk of an academic library and asking for information on a topic will not be handed a list of books or articles; instead they will be guided through the process of finding them and will then be expected to finish the task for themselves. Librarians will, or should, tailor the amount of assistance they give to ensure that the student gets a reasonable outcome but they will avoid doing the whole job themselves – this would be regarded as “spoon-feeding”. By learning how to find information for themselves students are also able to shape and guide the information search process for themselves and follow lines of enquiry. There is an obvious difficulty in replicating this process in the context of a postal service where the student simply places the question and waits for the answer. They will have limited input into how this is done or opportunity to understand the processes involved, and they will generally not be able to test alternative approaches. In practice they may, and probably do, get a pretty good outcome much of the time, but what they miss out on is a valuable part of the research education experience. As the senior staff of the distance library service put it at the time –

“The more searching and selecting of material the library does, the less likely the students are to acquire the research skills which are an important part of their study programme. Also, however hard we try to provide material with a balanced perspective, our own biases may inevitably influence the results.”<sup>91</sup>

The difficulty was, of course, that there was no obvious alternative to the subject request service when geographically isolated students were expected to carry out individual research. Long study guides with lots of readings could be helpful, and at one stage this was a common practice at Massey,<sup>92</sup> but arguably this did even less than the subject request service to develop skills of information search and critical enquiry. This dilemma has never been satisfactorily resolved, and to a large extent the distance education library profession has been spared its worst implications by the arrival of networked information which has allowed most, but not all, distance students to undertake their own searches and develop their own skills.

An opportunity to assess the results of the redesigned service came in 1997 when two surveys of distance students were carried out, one of the service in general and one of the subject request service.<sup>93</sup> The reports carry a great deal of detail which is beyond the scope of this study, but they also contain broader assessments of where things stood at that point. Since 1984 the proportion of extramural students who did not use the service had dropped from over a half to just a third; non-users were concentrated in disciplines where “study guides and set texts are the prime source of information.” Only a quarter of Auckland extramural students were using the Albany Library which had begun operation in 1993 and, although those who did use it were enthusiastic, it had not been stocked to cater for the wide range of subjects taught by distance and had not been promoted to distance students. Interestingly, use of public libraries for study material had dropped from 55% in 1984 to 42% and use of local tertiary libraries was also down slightly, suggesting that Massey was indeed carrying more of the burden of supporting distance students. The report’s authors were disappointed that only a small minority of postgraduate students had used the MIRO databases that had been introduced the previous year and that they did not rate them very highly for either usefulness or usability – “There is clearly an urgent need for better publicity and education in their use.” Staff interpersonal skills were rated very highly and, although there was room for improvement

with turnaround times, they were regarded as satisfactory by most students. Despite the cost of toll calls, use of the telephone was a popular method of placing requests and the need for a second outside phone line for the service was noted. The only area where the distance service did not rate well was publicity and it was noted that there was a real difficulty in communicating changes in library policy to students when material for brochures and study guides needed to be prepared many months in advance.<sup>94</sup>

The survey on subject requests confirmed that this was a critically important service for many students and one which they valued highly. Students were generally satisfied with the quality and relevance of the materials sent to them, although some of them struggled with the task of describing their topics clearly and defining their information needs. Turnaround time was still a problem however and, as the report noted, “extramural students are normally busy people, with full-time jobs and family responsibilities, and not all are sufficiently organised in their study to allow enough time for subject searches to be done and then for the material to be obtained. A faster turnaround time would be highly desirable.” Availability of books was another problem and once again it appears that the needs of distance education had created an almost insatiable demand for multiple copies – “the Library needs to update its collection in a number of areas and to ensure that adequate multiple copies of recent works are held. Those doing subject searches often find that all copies of recent books are already out on issue and they are forced to fall back on older material. Those responsible for collection management are now being notified regularly of areas that need updating.” This is an interesting comment because it reveals the way in which the subject request service placed library staff themselves in the position of proxy users of the collection and gave them an insight into student needs that would otherwise not have been available to them. Collection needs are typically monitored through the number of holds placed on books, but these do not record the number of times students borrow an older or less relevant title or simply do without. In Massey’s case the subject search staff were able to report directly on their experience to those staff responsible for collection management which from 1997 was the staff of the College Liaison Section, with whom the subject searchers shared an office. On the subject of electronic resources the survey also revealed that “a considerable

number of students are now accessing both the Library's catalogue (KEA) and networked databases (MIRO) to do their own searching. Details are advertised in the Distance Library Service brochure and in study guides but it is clear that more publicity about this facility is needed. Remote access to the university network can prove complex and prone to interruptions; front-line Library staff need more training to be able to help students feel confident accessing our systems." The report concluded that, although there were high levels of satisfaction with the service, "there is much that can be done to improve it, most notably reducing turnaround times and updating the collection. It would be desirable to set up a system of continuous assessment of subject searches, so that direct feedback could be obtained on individual searches as they are done."<sup>95</sup>



Helen Renwick

Over time the extramural operation had separated from the disparate elements that made up the External Services Section, finally emerging in late 1996 as the Distance Library Service (DLS), a separate unit within the library for the first time. That year Celia Bockett moved to College Liaison and Joan Pitchforth to Information Services and in March 1998 Rae Gendall was appointed as a



Librarian within DLS to join Lucy Marsden who remained as Head of Section. Restructuring had in fact seen the transfer of one professional position to College Liaison, the intention being that the subject searches would be done outside DLS although the Head of Section would continue to monitor them. Demand for service continued to increase and by now the anomalies caused by the extramural levy were beginning to place a strain on the library budget. In just a few years overall use of the service had risen by 187% and in 1997, for the first time, the cost of providing return postage and photocopying exceeded the amount generated. In a paper put before Library Committee in July 1998<sup>96</sup> Helen Renwick argued that a good deal of the problem had been generated by the relatively new multi-modal student enrolment environment – students could now enroll for a variety of internal, block and extramural papers and only those who were taking exclusively extramural papers were classified as extramural students and therefore eligible for the levy. However eligibility for the service was extended to anyone enrolled for a single extramural paper and as a result there were 950 mixed mode students in Palmerston North alone who had access to the distance service but did not contribute towards it. (Although Renwick diplomatically refrained from mentioning it, there was a strong likelihood that some students were “gaming” the system by enrolling for a single extramural paper in order to gain eligibility.) Controlling demand for the service and extending the revenue were both critical and she set out to define how this might be done. On the question of demand she argued that access to the service should be confined to those students genuinely *needing* it and that “in the multi-modal, multi-campus environment of flexible learning, students need a distance library service when they are not within a reasonable distance of a Massey Library.” On the subject of income she presented a number of options, including a return to “user pays” but favoured a “charge ... embedded in the tuition fee for those who need a distance service.” Later in 1998 a full review of the Distance Library Service<sup>97</sup> was carried out and revealed few major concerns apart from the time taken to fulfill subject requests –

“Overall the Distance Library Service is an efficient and effective operation, with productive, friendly and highly focused staff. Small improvements to work flow have been recommended, and technology should be used where

possible to improve efficiency and/or enhance service.” It appears, however, that departments whose brief was broader than the servicing of extramural students could not be expected to give them the same exclusive priority they received within DLS – “The ‘outsourcing’ of subject requests to professional staff in other sections is appropriate, but a reduction in service level, particularly turnaround, seems to follow. This is an area of concern which needs to be addressed.”

It went on to look at the future in the context of wider university concerns about the shape of the extramural operation –

“As Massey expands in flexible teaching and learning the need for the Distance Library Service in the future is assured. The mechanism by which it will be provided is less obvious, particularly with the introduction of new merger partners. A centralised service based on the ‘one stop shop’ model is proposed, but depends partly on the future structure of CUES ...”

Other recommendations included placing a template for requests on the DLS web page, the purchase of a cordless telephone and headsets, the adoption of service standards for turnaround times based on those used by Deakin University, and the inclusion of information on electronic access with completed subject requests as they were sent out.



Lucy Marsden, seated front right, with a group of distance students in Kaikohe, 1999

The DLS Annual Report for 1999 reveals that electronic access was having a two-pronged effect on demand for service. On the one hand availability of full-text articles had led to a stabilising of demand for photocopied articles, but the ease of requesting directly from the online catalogue was encouraging students to request larger numbers of books. Work had been done with Registry staff in writing a programme to define eligible students on the basis of need but this proved more difficult than had been expected. On a more positive note Helen Renwick's efforts to do away with the levy (which she had never wanted) bore fruit – "In December, University Council agreed to abandon the concept of a separate Distance Library fee, and to fund the service from general University funds."<sup>98</sup> Course controllers were asked by CUES to supply the library with advance copies of their reading lists so that books could be ordered in good time and about 50% did so.

# Into the New Century

Lucy Marsden, who had led the distance service through a number of incarnations and a period of immense change and growth, moved from the position of Head of the Distance Library Service in January 2000 to become the University Archivist and was replaced by Daniela Rosenstreich. Over that time demands on the service had grown massively in all areas, client groups had increased in number and complexity and new modes of service had come into being, while the core staffing of the section had remained relatively unchanged. Year after year the reports record that staff were scrambling to keep up, but somehow they not only adapted to new levels of demand but continued to think about their services and bring about improvements. The surveys in 1997 and the review in 1998 revealed that the services provided were of very good quality and highly regarded by students and staff alike. This was a remarkable achievement by all involved.

Demand for books continued to grow and it was reported that fewer alternative titles were having to be supplied. Essentially this meant that requested titles were available more often than in the past, which in turn reflected favourably on the collection work that had been done in previous years and on the improved access to reading lists. The amount of material available electronically continued to increase and the new library web page proved popular, although students often reported difficulty with the cumbersome user authentication system then in use for databases and electronic journals. And finally, after years in which it had sometimes seemed to be an intractable problem, some progress was made with defining eligibility to the service. Enhancements to the patron download meant that fewer than 5% of students eligible to use the service were not automatically identified. This development, combined with the withdrawal of the levy, led to a huge reduction in queries and complaints coming into the section from students who felt they had been unfairly denied service. To promote both the postal service and electronic alternatives a new booklet was produced.<sup>99</sup>

In 2001 book requests continued to rise at an alarming rate, with 25% more being received than in the previous year – an analysis showed that this was due

to more students using the service rather than over-use by individuals. Despite earlier misgivings, responsibility for the subject search and reference enquiry services was moved to Information Services and College Liaison; distance service was increasingly accepted as an accountability of the whole library, rather than simply of one department within it, while budget savings within the library meant that staff and service levels within DLS could be improved.<sup>100</sup>

Despite a degree of optimism that might have been felt, the service was still under immense strain and, at least within the library, it was doubted whether the university as a whole understood the importance of the distance library service and of its uniqueness in national and even international terms. Because its very quality and efficiency attracted students to use it, the service was continually operating at the limits of its budget and a pattern of crisis management had become normalised. This was spelled out by Helen Renwick and Daniela Rosenstreich in a paper that made a case for an additional \$280,000 annual funding and also sought further clarification of eligibility for the service in light of the plans to extend the international programme. They pointed out that demand for the service had doubled in the period 1995–2000 while the extramural and block mode rolls had risen only 15% in the same period. Echoing Adrian Turner nearly forty years earlier, they pointed out that distance students were more expensive to service than internal students but that their need for service was at least as important. Massey provided the same core range of library services as other universities with distance programmes but use of them per student was significantly higher and as a result Massey had slower turnaround times. Both the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and Deakin University placed limits on the numbers and types of requests that could be submitted, for example, where Massey did not. If this policy of open access continued, growth in demand was likely to do the same. While fewer photocopied articles were requested as electronic access improved, new journal packages were added to the library's holdings, and more students had access to the Internet, no such relief was in sight for books. The choice facing the university was stark – either increase funding to the library or institute some form of rationing of services.<sup>101</sup>

This paper was possibly one of Helen Renwick's last acts as University Librarian. She left Massey in September 2001, having overseen a revolution in the way

in which distance library service was funded and delivered, and then having spent several years struggling with the implications of these changes. She had come into the position with no experience of distance service delivery but had mastered her brief remarkably quickly. The decision to fund return postage on books, as had been recommended by Auger and Tremaine, and to extend this to the provision of free photocopying, was taken within the first eighteen months of her tenure and this, more than anything else, removed a major barrier to use of the services. She had not been happy with the notion of a levy, arguing that library service was a core right of distance students that the university should simply provide in the same way they provided buildings and lecturers, but was prepared to go along with it pragmatically if that was needed in order to get the new services off the ground. She was then prepared, probably at some personal cost, to continue to oppose the levy on grounds of equity and practicality until it was finally withdrawn. She had consistently promoted the value of library service and argued for improved library funding right to the end, and in doing so she had given real effect to the views of her predecessors that the extramural library service was an inescapable responsibility of the university. Some of the restructuring of departments that took place during those years could be, and was, questioned but by the end of her tenure the essential structure of the Distance Library Service was in place and it has continued to serve with little change until the present.

The following year, 2002, saw a further round of personnel changes for the Distance Library Service. Rae Gendall, who had made a solid contribution to the 1998 review and to the deliberations and practical work on eligibility, had left the section in late 2001 and in January she was replaced by Caroline Stephens. Daniela Rosenstreich resigned in June to be replaced as Head of Section by Pauline Knuckey. Book requests continued to rise (by 8%) while photocopying and subject requests continued to decline. The growth of summer school enrolments saw book requests rise by 35% in December compared with the previous year.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast to the preceding decade, the years from 2003 on proved to be less fraught with change and those that did occur were largely beneficial. Under John Redmayne, who replaced Helen Renwick as University Librarian in mid 2002, the departmental structure of the library has remained comparatively

stable and his support of digital initiatives has been instrumental in reinforcing the online trends which were emerging in the previous decade. The pattern of increasing book requests and decreasing subject and photocopied article requests was now well-established, and as more electronic databases were purchased, including the Web of Science in 2000,<sup>103</sup> virtually any student with Internet access was able to find at least some articles on their subject. These years also saw an explosion in electronic journal availability with publishers like Blackwell, Wiley, Elsevier and Emerald making their entire journal collections affordable – suddenly distance students had access to a far greater collection of journals than had previously been available in all but the largest university libraries. It would be easy to characterise these changes as benefiting only those students with computers and Internet access, but in fact the Distance Library Service made these resources available to everyone. Not only did subject searches become easier (and faster) to carry out, but their results were probably more focused and comprehensive than they had been in the past. What is more, the big journal packages meant that a far higher percentage of the articles found were immediately available without recourse to interlibrary loan. The 2003 DLS Report recorded that the service acquired a second printer (second hand) to deal with the increased demand.<sup>104</sup>

This was followed at the beginning of 2004 by the addition of more PC computers into the section so that each staff member had email, library catalogue and Internet on their desk and it was possible to fine-tune procedures and normalise the use of email as a primary means of communication. Continuing the electronic access theme, Pauline Knuckey attended the Off-Campus Library Conference in Phoenix, Arizona and reported that “the Americans are well ahead of us in their use of electronic media and it was most useful to see what can be done with on-line tutorials, assessing the needs of distance students electronically, virtual reference facilities and a range of other topics specifically designed for the distance student. There are lots of exciting opportunities and challenges ahead of us.”<sup>105</sup> The following year, as demand for conventional services began to flatten out, this aspiration found some expression as Distance Library Service staff began to speak to staff of the Student Learning Centre “on the work they are doing for extramural students and how the Library can work with them.”<sup>106</sup> As a first step a library segment was included in the CD

Rom that SLC sent to first year extramural students. In similar vein, Pauline Knuckey was part of the organising committee for the 2005 Vice Chancellor's Symposium on Distance Education and E-Learning - as the university moved into the virtual learning era the library, with over twenty years experience in the on-line environment, was playing a central role. Communication with students continued to be a priority and the DLS had a regular contribution in *Off Campus*, the ExMSS magazine. In 2006 the Distance Library booklet was redesigned in a new fold-out format to give students an overview of the services the library offered.<sup>107</sup>

Pauline Knuckey resigned in May 2006, having led the service for four years – compared to her predecessors she was perhaps fortunate in that the runaway growth in journal article requests and subject searches of the late 1990s had reversed and she was able to focus her attention on achieving quality service and improved turnaround times in the core services. Having said that, she was someone well able to take advantage of the opportunities to promote the service and to foster its transition into the digital era, as well as continuing to develop a really strong team with an outstanding approach to customer service. Pauline Knuckey was not immediately replaced as Head of Section and Joanne Wood, who had replaced Caroline Stephens in mid 2003, took over day-to-day supervision of the service with support from the Deputy University Librarian, Linda Palmer. This interim arrangement continued until February 2007 when Joanne Wood was formally seconded as Acting Head of Section, a position she held for some five months before departing on parental leave. In July 2007 Heather Lamond was appointed to the position of Acting Head of Distance Services for a period of one year.<sup>108</sup>

The effects of the electronic revolution were by now thoroughly evident. In 2007 128,501 book title requests were received by the service, a 42% increase since 2000, while subject requests were down by 56% to 951 over the same period and photocopied articles by 73% to 14,055. By this time 89% of all book requests to the service were received through the library catalogue indicating that, at least among active library users, Internet penetration was pretty well advanced and request cards were becoming a thing of the past. During Semester Two auto-request processing was introduced meaning that there was less need for staff intervention in handling requests and a more transparent process for



students. As had been the case for many years, April, July and August were the busiest months with over 16,000 requests being received in July alone – more than the annual total for the whole of 1990! Communication with students was still very much to the fore and the Annual Report noted that “Much of the year was spent in investigating, and planning for, a centralised contact point for extramural students encompassing a freephone number and single email address. This is a service that extramural students have signalled as desirable and will simplify the contact points for the Library.”

An increasing amount of activity in support of distance students was now taking place outside the Distance Library Service itself. The growing number of postgraduate students on the distance roll meant that more and more complex questions were coming from off-campus students. Many of their students were undertaking advanced research including doctoral study. When the College Liaison Section had been established in 1997 a “research consultation” service was offered to postgraduates and from the beginning a number of distance students had taken advantage of this opportunity, either at the time of on-campus courses or during visits to supervisors. Typically a consultation lasts between thirty minutes and an hour and includes an overview of the appropriate resources for the student’s topic, advice on how to frame the research question and detailed advice on searching the databases. With the growth of electronic journals, guidance on accessing and storing PDF articles is often needed, and use of the EndNote bibliographic software is another common topic. Staff of Information Services carrying out subject searches actively encouraged postgraduate students towards a consultation as an alternative to having the search done for them and they reported that in 2006 searches done for postgraduates fell by 36%.<sup>109</sup> Sometimes consultations were held over the telephone and librarians became quite adept at talking students through complex problems involving databases and even EndNote without being able to see their screens, but this changed in 2007 when the use of Adobe Connect software made remote screensharing a reality and full research consultations readily available to distance students.<sup>110</sup>

Heather Lamond’s appointment as Head of the Distance Library Service was made permanent in August 2008 at the same time as Joanne Wood returned from parental leave to take up her former position as Librarian on a part-time

basis. This staffing structure is still in place at the beginning of 2011. Early 2008 saw the bedding down of the new freephone and centralised email services and an audit of postal delivery times which led to an extension of the period of short term loans and an abandonment of the practice of recalling books from distance undergraduate students when other library users requested them. As well as handling high numbers of requests DLS staff were taking a full part in many of the library's working groups, acting as advocates for distance students whose particular needs are easily overlooked in designing services. These included the OPAC group, the Web Development Group, the Circulation Group, the Collections Sub-Committee, the Public Services Committee and the Information Literacy Group. Heather Lamond had a particular concern with information literacy and the limited opportunities available to distance students to develop autonomous skills, and in 2008 she gave expression to these ideas with two conference presentations.<sup>111</sup>



Staff of the Distance Library Service, March 2011 - left to right, Heather Lamond, Jo Buckland, Sharon Vieregg, Janice Russell, Penny Gilmore, Rachel Dustin, David Collins and Joanne Wood [Absent – Jan Reid]

Towards the end of that year another major review was undertaken of the service.<sup>112</sup> It concluded that extramural students received an excellent service but sounded some familiar notes of caution – “Although the Distance Library delivery service is efficient and responsive, regular data should be kept in order to measure how well the collection actually meets needs, particularly in high

demand areas.” With so much material now directly available electronically the need for information skills had become a matter of practical necessity for service delivery as well as an important element of the students’ education. With a new virtual learning environment (Moodle, now known locally as Stream) on the horizon there was an opportunity to embed library content within the courses themselves so that students would have it readily to hand at the point of need, but this would require close cooperation with academic staff and new skills for librarians. There was a particular concern about the information skills of Māori students, many of whom were struggling with academic courses and without adequate support, possibly lacking both computer skills and Internet access in many cases. There was an urgent need to work with academic staff and within existing Māori support programmes. There were also concerns about approximately 1,000 students living offshore, some of whom did not receive books and others of whom had to pay return airmail postage.

The section on information skills lists a wide range of learning opportunities available to distance students, including library training at contact courses, library content inside existing course virtual learning environments, twice yearly regional workshops with Student Learning Development Services, email and telephone service, research consultation service in person, by phone or via Connect, help provided during in-person use of local Massey libraries, ‘how to find’ content on the website, the distance booklet and even the communication around subject searches. Despite this multi-faceted effort, however, there were still concerns as to whether the message was being heard – “there is plenty of evidence that extramural students struggle to find information, particularly journal articles. While there are a number of ways of accessing professional help and guidance, they almost all rely on the student making the approach to the Library.” One answer to this problem lay with the creation of a menu of “digital learning objects” on topics, such as finding journals in a particular discipline, catalogue searching or using EndNote, in a variety of forms including text, podcasts, Captivate tutorials and Adobe Presenter lectures. These would then be made available to academic staff who would be encouraged to place them at strategic points within the virtual learning environment for each paper. The Report commented that “trying to encourage academic staff to embed information literacy into their papers is a huge undertaking.”<sup>113</sup>

Despite the growth in use of the service there was also concern about non-users. Once again a variety of publicity channels was being used, including the Distance Library booklet written in 2006, study guide inserts, content in *Off Campus* magazine, a letter in the University's Welcome Pack to new extramural students, content in the Extramural Handbook and in some postgraduate handbooks. Information was also sent via academics and even through fliers placed in books sent out. As the Report pointed out "most of the above strategies are 'just in case' rather than at the point of need" and "feedback from students suggests most don't find or read the booklet." Once again, embedding the information within the courses was the favoured strategy – "Ideally all papers would have Library information at the point of the first assignment, as well as in administrative guides. This requires working individually with academic staff." The recommendations include surveying extramural students "to gather specific feedback from extramural students, and investigate the reasons for non-use," which had not been done since 1984 and, in a possibly unconscious echo of *Users and Non-Users*, production of a video.<sup>114</sup>

The review committee also looked at the subject search service and expressed concern that it was still being used by some students with Internet access who would be better off carrying out their own information searches. As they explained – "It is believed that the outcome for students is far better if they gain independent search skills. They are best placed to know if the information found meets their needs, and postgraduates in particular need comprehensive searches not just the 'start' provided by the Library." To this end it was suggested that "the preferred approach is to 're-shape' the service itself into 'assignment help', i.e. a way for students to contact the Library for assistance in finding information for their assignment. This might involve a phone or email conversation to discuss their needs, training on using search tools, and some material being sent directly to the student once it is identified." It was recognised, however, that this approach might leave some disadvantaged students high and dry – "The search and delivery service would still be available to students who do not have internet access, and to a limited extent for those experiencing extreme difficulty in finding information."<sup>115</sup> Questions of equity and the equivalence of educational experience between internal and distance students had been around for some time<sup>116</sup> and the

Report also contained a brief and eloquent statement on the subject – “In the development of Library policies, practices and services, the circumstances and needs of extramural students need to be considered. The Head of Distance has responsibility for representing the needs of extramural students, however all staff should be encouraged to consider equity of both access and service when making changes or introducing new initiatives.”<sup>117</sup> It was also reported that “approximately 3000 students of Māori descent are studying at Massey University, of whom approximately 2000 are studying extramurally. 21% of Māori enrolments are at the postgraduate level. There is a high attrition rate between 1st and 2nd years, and a high fail rate in 1st year, often caused by enrolling in too many papers or not withdrawing early. Good advice and support seem critical to success, however it seems many students don’t take up these services.” This was acknowledged to be a complex issue – “Finding ways to deliver information literacy offerings to Māori students that are reluctant to engage is an issue. This is an ongoing challenge, particularly when face to face teaching seems the most effective. Working with academic staff is critical, as noted elsewhere in this report.”<sup>118</sup>

All in all the review committee came up with twenty-seven recommendations for ways in which library service to distance students could be improved. The picture that emerges is one of an environment in which excellence is taken very seriously, with the student educational experience as its central mission. Many of the questions that had been raised in earlier years about spoon-feeding students were being addressed and the potential of digital networking was being fully explored. If recommendations for consultation or cooperation with academic staff are something of a mantra, that is more or less inevitable within the relatively decentralised Massey system. Close links with the Student Learning Centre and Extramural Students Society have allowed the library excellent access to student learning networks, and the Moodle/Stream strategy offered a road into the heart of the virtual learning environment. This last goal received expression in the latter part of 2009 with the secondment of Heather Lamond to a Fund for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching (FIET) project to create standards and procedures for library staff creating “learning objects” for inclusion in Stream. She worked on this from August to December with Joanne Wood once again being seconded to work as Acting Head of Section.

## People – Staff and Students

It would be wrong to conclude this account without saying something about the staff of the Distance Library Service over fifty years. From Margaret Hall's volunteers in 1961 to the staff of 2011 a tradition of service has been maintained without which the developments described here would not have been possible. From the start, student appreciation of the service has been effusive and each of the surveys that have been conducted has singled out distance library staff for massive amounts of praise. It is something of a joke in the library that distance staff are constantly receiving boxes of chocolates, and even bottles of wine, while other departments have to make do with occasional thank-yous. To some degree this is understandable. Distance students tend to be older and therefore more inclined to show appreciation; they are often more in need of help and the service they get can seem miraculous when a package of books or articles allows them to get an assignment in on time. Nonetheless it is hard to avoid the conclusion that what they are experiencing is outstanding personal service. It would be wrong though to paint a picture of an entirely and endlessly happy working experience. When things go wrong with distance service they go really wrong. Books arriving too late or not at all, requests not received, instructions not understood, databases that go down unexpectedly, gaps (real or perceived) in the library's collections, impossible essay questions, all of these can create huge stress and result in angry letters or unpleasant phone calls. Just getting messages to students can be difficult and, while email has certainly helped, modern communications technology can also create expectations of instant response.

Distance library service is spectacularly unrelenting. An internal student seeing a queue at the information desk is likely to drift away, ask their question some other time, ask a friend, sort it out for themselves or just forget about it. If the book they want is not on the shelves they might well find another. If there is not enough material for their assignment they may choose another question or take an alternative approach. The distance student gets none of these messages – they send their request and wait to get the books back and if thousands of other students do so at the same time that is not their concern. Bottlenecks

and backlogs can build up with alarming rapidity and until they are cleared everyone is stressed – students facing deadlines want to know where their material is, the phones begin to ring, time is lost in dealing with snarl-ups. It's not pretty. Even when things are going well, reliability, patience, attention to detail and accuracy are essential attributes of distance library staff and there is little opportunity to cruise.



Staff of the Distance Library Service becoming pirates for a day, 2004

Despite this, some staff have stayed with the Distance Library Service for long periods and find the work both interesting and rewarding. Many of the distance staff have been students themselves or are studying as well as working, others have family members who have studied through Massey, while some just enjoy serving people and meeting the daily challenge of doing so. Strong identification with customers is a key ingredient of good service and a sense of being proxies for thousands of students throughout the country, of

representing their views and going into battle for them, is a huge motivator for distance librarians. This sense of belonging to a team, of being comrades in arms in times of adversity, undoubtedly helps maintain morale when, as so often happens, the going gets tough. During the years 2002 to around 2006 the Distance Library Service became famous for their monthly Friday theme days when they came in dressed as pirates or fish, or all wearing the same colour, or representing a letter of the alphabet, and other library staff were profoundly disappointed when this colourful tradition inexplicably ceased. Training is another area of strength for Distance Library Service staff, strongly supported by their managers, and they have regularly chosen, both individually and as a section, to set time aside for improving their skills.

Students are the other key group in the distance library operation. They are, after all, its *raison d'être*, but it would be easy to characterise them as passive recipients of a service and take their significance for granted. Right from the beginning, however, they have shaped the service in a number of important ways, most particularly by using it. If the widely-held belief that textbooks and study guides were all that was needed for distance study had been correct then the postal service would never have got off the ground or at least would have formed only a small part of the library's services. As it happened, once the extramural programme began to expand in the early 1970s, student use of the postal service also took off and set the library on a chase to catch up that has never quite finished. Not only did they use the service, from the very beginning they appreciated it and expressed themselves in, as Adrian Turner put it, "a ceaseless stream of tributes from grateful users." These words are no less true today than when they were written forty-five years ago, and the willingness of distance students to affirm the value of the service they have received has been literally inspirational to those who provide and shape it.

Having said this, many students have passed through the Massey distance programme without making use of the Distance Library Service, a fact that has worried and perplexed librarians from the earliest days. In many cases they possibly didn't know about it – as was noted in 2008, not every student reads every piece of material in the enrolment pack– or had simply not got around to it. The longer a student studies at Massey the more likely they are to have discovered the service and to continue using it. It is also true that no matter



how often librarians reiterate the importance of wide reading not all students need to do this. Some disciplines can be studied from the text book and some students simply choose not to read from a range of sources. It is widely held that there is a positive correlation between library use and academic achievement<sup>119</sup> but this has not been investigated in the Massey context. Clearly, however, the extension of the distance programme into postgraduate research-based study made library use unavoidable for many students and, although Auger and Tremaine had advocated the targeting of those in their first year of study, it is highly likely that many of them came to make extensive use of the library when they reached this stage of their academic careers.

The belief that Massey distance students would make wide use of community library resources, following the Open University model, was certainly true and many of them became skilled in gathering study material from a wide range of institutions. How satisfactory this was must be seriously doubted, however, and the fact that use of the Massey service grew whenever barriers were dismantled suggests that a “one stop shop” would always have been their preference. The flood of electronic resources available from the mid-1990s delivered an almost unbelievable richness of content to distance students and it could be argued that they benefited more than any other group, having previously lacked the ability to search the library catalogue, browse journals and search databases for themselves; these developments have also placed heavy demands on their level of computer and Internet access and on their own IT skills and the point may have been reached where the library can no longer be used in any meaningful sense without these things. The sheer rate of change and the unreliability of systems have placed heavy demands on students, and many have wasted precious hours trying to search databases and download journal articles, time that should have been spent reading and writing.

# Looking Back – The Benefit of Hindsight

It is interesting to consider what the modern distance library service would look like to its pioneers, Margaret Hall and Adrian Turner. At first glance they might think that nothing much had changed, apart from there being a computer on every desk. They would still see library staff receiving requests, finding books on the shelves, putting them in packages and mailing them out. This was the core daily activity of the extramural service at Palmerston North University College Library in 1960 and it remains so today. They would hear discussion of the same problems – the need for sufficient copies of books to satisfy student demand, the problems of getting information about courses and reading lists from academic staff, even the slowness of the mail. They would be pleased, but not surprised, to see that the service was held in high regard and that it was being well used. They would probably not be surprised to hear that sorting out service problems and misunderstandings was a daily occurrence and that many students delayed asking for material until it was almost too late and then phoned in a panic wanting their books straight away. They would not be surprised, although they might be impressed, to see how hard people were working.

Undoubtedly the big difference that would strike them would be the sheer scale of the operation, with nearly 90,000 books being issued from Distance Library Service in 2009, but many of the biggest changes would not be immediately visible and have occurred through channels not even imaginable in 1960. The use of the library catalogue by distance students and their ability to request their own books, their access to online databases and electronic journals, the assumption that distance students would get the information they needed and not what the university decided they should get, all these would have excited them. If the scale of the distance programme had increased in size and scope since the 1960s, the library resources would appear to have more than kept pace.

The reports of 1925 and 1959, that had both disparaged the ability of distance education to deliver an experience comparable to that enjoyed by on-campus students, had based at least some of their argument on the availability and use of the university library. In 1925 the answer to the question “what is a library?” was simple – it was a building well stocked with books in which reading occurred. By 1959 the notion of what constituted a library had broadened somewhat to become a service, but what sort of service this might have been was still largely unexamined. The story of the Massey distance library service has been an attempt to answer this question, to continue to find new responses that continued to fall short or that were overtaken by events. What was clear even in 1959 though, and probably years earlier, was that a library was much more than a simple passive collection of books and journals, it was a place in which research happened and in which students could make the transition from learners to researchers, and it has been this challenge that has continued to press on distance library service, to extend this activity from a specific place into a variety of new geographically-unbound spaces. The struggle still goes on.

A number of themes emerge quite strongly from the story of the distance library service in its various guises. First and foremost among these, if only because of its persistence over the course of fifty years, is the library’s position as the (frequently unacknowledged) third leg of the distance education stool. As noted in the previous paragraph, tertiary education in any meaningful sense does not exist in the absence of a library, but managers and lecturers, from Stanley Culliford on, have repeatedly overlooked this fact and have instead treated the teaching and learning transaction as purely a two-way conversation between themselves and students. Often this results from simply not placing themselves in the students’ shoes, and the same problems arise with internal teaching as well, as for example when lecturers assume that the library will be able to support the needs of hundreds of students all set to do the same assignment. With the distance programme, however, one is often left to conclude that it also stems from over-optimism and wishful thinking, the belief that library resources simply must exist, or would somehow become available, for students enrolled in specialist subjects and living in remote areas, and that concerns about this should not be allowed to hold up the university’s

advance into new areas, both pedagogical and geographic. Out of this mindset grows the further belief in students as expert bibliographic foragers, able to beg, borrow or buy the resources they need from within a richly provisioned community. While many did indeed become so, one is forced to wonder how many others fell by the wayside or achieved less than their full potential – extramural completion rates have traditionally fallen short of those achieved by internal students. The deposit collections were an attempt by the library to enrich the community resources available to students, but to have had any effect they would have needed to be vastly bigger and better resourced and little appears to have been lost when they were closed down in 1993.

Allied to this tendency was the belief that the library was somehow able to read the minds of lecturers and those responsible for the development of new programmes. All too often new courses had begun before the books needed to support them were purchased, and the need for better liaison between the library and the academic community is a consistent theme from 1960 to 2011. It is true that progress has been made – representation of the library on the Board of Extramural Studies, and development of a liaison librarian scheme and the requirement for all new academic proposals to be subject to an evaluation of library resources are significant advances – but one cannot escape the conclusion that the alignment of the library's collections with the distance programme is an ongoing problem. At some times, substantial money has been poured into the purchase of multiple copies needed to satisfy the demands of distance students, while at others more emphasis has been placed on broadening the collection, and offering greater choice has been the preferred option. When this approach has been preferred, emphasis has then been placed on the importance of reading lists in study guides, to alert students to the richness of the resources available to them. Whatever the library has done, however, the cooperation of academic staff has been necessary. Massey's dual-mode system places a substantial load on university teachers, who are required to prepare and teach the same material to both internal and distance students, but it also places them at the very centre of things. Central facilities like CUES, later NSATS, have been largely administrative in nature, and have not tended to involve themselves to any great degree in the actual content of the courses they deliver, but the library is forced to deal quite intimately

with course content while at the same time existing at a greater distance from the academic departments. There is no easy solution to this problem, as fifty years of commenting about it attest, but at least in continuing to highlight the need for cooperation the library has been able to prevent matters from getting worse.

The question of library funding constitutes a strong underlying thread to the distance library story. Virtually every special report cited here was written with an eye to securing greater resources for the library, and even annual reports are written in order to make this case. The standard annual report could perhaps be summarised as – “due to the exceptional talent and diligence of our staff we are doing outstandingly well with pitifully few resources, but this situation cannot be expected to continue without an immediate injection of funds.” As was noted at the very beginning, a good distance library service needs to have lots of books to ensure both breadth of choice and some certainty of obtaining especially important titles. As early as the 1960s the assistance of ExMSS had been called upon to help meet the particular needs of distance students, but it is fair to say that this has never been recognised by the university as a whole and Massey Library continues to languish behind other New Zealand tertiary libraries in per capita funding per student and, despite their best efforts, it has probably not been entirely saved from the consequences of this by the exceptional talent and diligence of its staff. Bill Blackwood may have intended to leverage off *Users and Non-Users* in order to make the case for additional library funding but in the end timing was against him and the late 1980s was not a time to be asking for more money. Helen Renwick’s contribution was to realise that library use needed to be free of additional charges for distance students, and the removal of charges for return postage and photocopying created a boom in use of the service that has continued to the present. She was disappointed that the university’s initial response was to place the charge back on the students in the form of a levy, but when this was removed it could truly be said that Massey was fully taking responsibility for servicing its distance students.

On a more positive note, if the university did not always feature as a bringer of plenty, technology certainly did, and it is hard to imagine how distance library service could have been provided in the absence of cheap phone calls,

photocopiers, the Internet, electronic databases and online journal collections. In 1960, the operation was entirely manual, with books being identified and located through the card catalogue and issued through a card-based circulation system. A photocopying machine began operating in June 1967,<sup>120</sup> and one assumes that before this date journal articles would not have been available outside the library. Without the ability to supply copies of articles it is difficult to see how a meaningful postgraduate programme could have got off the ground. The introduction of the online catalogue in the 1980s marked the beginning of the era of direct user access to the library's collection, and began the trend towards student autonomy that continues to the present, strongly abetted by the massive developments in databases and electronic journal collections. Although these resources were initially purchased for an internal audience of postgraduate students and academic staff, their uptake by distance students was immediate and dramatic and much of the success of the service over the last fifteen years can be credited to the new digital technologies.

As these technologies began to enable a higher degree of student autonomy, they simultaneously drew attention to an issue that had been present from the very start, that of information literacy. A pedagogy based strongly on printed study guides and reading lists might be seen to inhibit the growth of independent information skills and the sort of research instinct needed by successful postgraduate students, and library staff seem to have been aware of this as early as the 1960s. The tension between wanting to be helpful on the one hand, but not wishing to create dependency on the other, has occasioned a great deal of thought over the years, and once again creative partnership with academic staff has generally been seen as the answer. As is always the case when this path is chosen, results have been mixed, but this is another area in which the growth of digital technology has allowed the creation of new learning spaces which librarians and academics can more comfortably cohabit. In the meantime, however, the prospects of those students forced to remain outside the digital domain appear ever more tenuous.

The position of the distance service within the organisational structure of the library as a whole has also been the subject of a good amount of discussion. Originating as a book lending service, it was domiciled within the Circulation Department for more than thirty years and, without the intervention of far-

sighted librarians like Mary Green, it might have remained an essentially functional undertaking. The appointment of professional staff dedicated to distance service in the mid 1970s was undoubtedly a key development, that led to its growing sense of identity over the next fifteen years. An initial outcome of the Renwick revolution was the loss of this identity within a larger structure, fashioned along functional lines, but a second round of changes saw the emergence of a fully-constituted Distance Library Service occupying its own organisational and, eventually, physical space. It would be wrong, however, to discount the changes of 1993 simply because they failed to become permanent. Normalising distance service as a whole-of-library responsibility was a worthwhile goal, and the effort to keep library staff seeing all students as equally important and deserving clients, and not defining distance students as the responsibility of only one section, is ongoing.

As noted in the introduction, this short history has not set out to place Massey Library's service to distance students within its international context, but it would be wrong to finish without suggesting that something of more than national significance has been achieved here. The growth of distance education at Massey has tended to be organic, growing out of a myriad of individual initiatives and *ad hoc* responses to problems, rather than guided by a over-arching strategy and clear national policy, and the library has often been forced into a reactive posture, chasing after each new development as it arises. Distance library service is not a cheap option, as other institutions have come to realise, but Massey's practice of creating an explicit equivalence between internal and distance students has at the very least created a credible benchmark of what a quality service would look like. If, as was noted in 1925, and again in 1959, a well-equipped library lies at the heart of a university education, then the service that has been created for Massey's distance students over fifty years deserves recognition for having more than met the challenge.

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Bruce White joined the staff of Massey University Library in 1982 and is currently a science librarian in Palmerston North. His interests include knowledge discovery systems and information management, scholarly publication practices and the history of science. He is the author of a number of book chapters, conference papers and journal articles.

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