

GOOD READING

Book industry is thriving

New Zealanders may be surprised to know that, per capita, this is the largest book market in the English-speaking world, and is among the two or three largest on earth in terms of all languages.

People no longer speak of the book trade, but of the book industry, in New Zealand. Its origins, evolution and present structure are in the traditions pioneer settlers brought from Britain, with the emphasis on education, libraries, bookshops and publishers.

Book publishing in New Zealand has grown rapidly since its beginnings in the 19th century. Trade and educational books predominate in the industry and the output of "juveniles" is increasing. Less fiction is now being published and there is little in the categories of science and technology. Poetry trails last.

People are continuing to write and seek publishers. There is strong competition between publishers and good authors abound. Few areas of New Zealand history, sociology, sport, the Maori people and travel have been neglected, and local books provide 15-20 percent of the bookshops' retail turnover.

In the 1960s the appearance of Barry Crump, Mona Anderson and the scenic books by Ken and Jean Bigwood split the publishing scene wide open. The book sales ran into hundreds of thousands — something that had never happened in New Zealand before — and sales were mainly in this

country.

Within five years the price of books has almost doubled. This is due to an international inflation rate, and the dramatic rise in the price of paper following a shortage.

New Zealand-published books are good value compared with overseas publications, considering the shipping, and time distances from international publishers and manufacturers which can produce delays and a high risk factor.

Most books scheduled for overseas manufacture are typeset, designed and made camera-ready in New Zealand. A lot of publishing

is done in Hong Kong and Singapore by firms with Japanese, Chinese, Malaysian and Singapore involvement.

Bookselling, too, has developed into an important sector of commercial life. The Booksellers' Association, formed more than 50 years ago, now has 300 members and 130 associates.

Judging by these statistics, it seems that parents and sociologists need not worry too much about the threat of television screens preoccupying the nation.