

**'READERS ARE REQUESTED'**  
**Ancient Libraries and their Problems**

It's now forty years since I, as an awe-struck schoolboy, passed through that grand front-door in Bedford Square and set foot in what was then the Joint Library of the Hellenic and Roman Societies. A little later, in 1953, the new Institute of Classical Studies came to share the premises, and add its library: happy days, when the library sustained itself on a budget of £200 a year. In 1958 Institute and Societies moved to the splendid premises they now occupy. Outsiders have always been welcomed: and it's a special pleasure to me, as an outsider, to be invited to give this lecture – partly to thank the Institute, and partly to thank Ana Healey for her part in running the amiable yet efficient home-from-home which provides the two things a scholar really needs – the newest books in the Library, and the newest gossip in the Common Room.

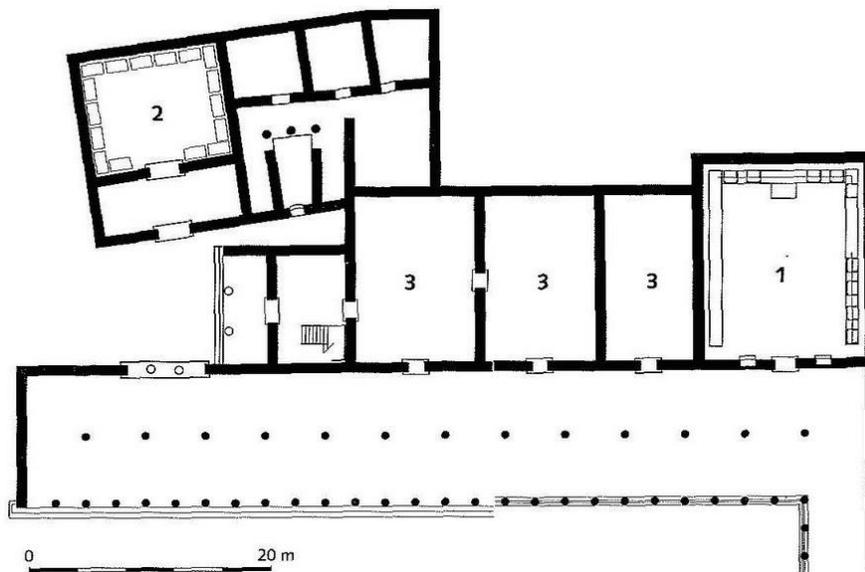
My subject is Ancient Libraries: and like most aspects of the Greek and Roman world, it's one we don't know much about. We have a scatter of archaeological remains and a small file of chance remarks in literature: and to that we can add what we know about ancient books, and ancient man, in general. Well, this is a festive occasion: so ignorance is not going to get in my way. I hope that most of what I'll be saying has some warrant: almost all of it will have more than some imagination; when both fail, you will forgive the occasional excursion into the Middle Ages.

Let's picture, then, a Librarian in the city of Rome in the auspicious first year of the Emperor Hadrian - a little blood has just been shed, but it's a happy time for the reading classes, with a government so enamoured of civilisation that it granted special tax relief to scholars and philosophers. It is an hour before dawn as our Librarian struggles out of bed in his decent apartment. This is not the attic under the tiles where the poor scholar Cordus lives with his box of books chewed up by uncultured mice (a scene recently described by the satirist Juvenal,<sup>1</sup> nor is it the mansion where that grandee the Procurator Bibliothecarum Graecarum et Latinarum is preparing for his levee – the present holder is a rising young man (about to be appointed Secretary to the Emperor), a young man with literary aspirations, by the name of Suetonius. Our Librarian is an intellectual, probably of Greek origin, happy to avoid squalor and grandeur alike.

In his dawn reverie, our librarian can look back to a long and distinguished ancestry. Libraries, of course started with the Greeks. Pisistratus the tyrant of Athens founded the first public library, so the story said,<sup>2</sup> adding that it was carried off as booty by the invading Persians, and only restored to Athens by Seleucus Nicator. Famous men collected, or at least eggheads like Euripides and Plato, and above all, Aristotle, described by Strabo, with some justice, as the first of the library organisers – his books, clearly,

served as a base for the research institute he headed. Their history gives a glimpse of the uncertainties which surrounded such collections: Aristotle bequeathed it to his successor Theophrastus, who bequeathed it to Neleus, who took it off to Scepsis, where Neleus' heirs 'kept the books locked up and not even carefully stored', so that they ended up much damaged by damp and worms. Eventually they were sold to a bibliophile called Apellicon: after Apellicon's death, Sulla captured Athens and carried off the books as spoil: in Rome the scholar Tyrannion got his hands on them by paying court to the librarian – and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Aristotle was the precursor. Early Hellenistic monarchs took culture seriously – it reinforced the credentials of Hellenism in exile. And so the greatest of them all, the Library of Alexandria: we know precious little about it, no single stone remains, but it stood for nearly a thousand years as the premiere library of the Greek east. Other capitals set up rivals; but only the one in Pergamum achieved a great reputation, and here at least the building has been identified. The plan was simple: apparently a grand room, and three store rooms, opening onto a colonnade. Architectural historians identify that as the Greek model - a space for reading, separate from the stacks in which all the books were kept. Smaller towns had their own libraries, sometimes attached to the gymnasia.



Library of Pergamum: plan (from *Brill's New Pauly*)

*Graecia capta*: whatever the Romans did to Greek armies, they duly bowed to Greek culture. In the period of conquest, libraries became booty: Aemilius Paulus removed the Macedonian royal library to Rome, Sulla took Apellicon's, Lucullus the library of Mithridates; Antony offered Cleopatra a present of the Pergamene library. As Roman authors conquered Greek literary territory, and Rome acquired the

marble glories of a Hellenistic capital, libraries were an indispensable amenity. Caesar planned, but died too soon; it was left to Asinius Pollio to create a public library in the Atrium Libertatis. That was soon eclipsed by imperial foundations: Augustus' libraries in the Temple of Palatine Apollo and the Porticus Octaviae; two libraries ascribed to Tiberius; a library in the Forum Pacis; the Bibliotheca Ulpia in the Forum of Trajan; a library attached to the Baths of Caracalla; Alexander Severus' library in the Pantheon – by the late empire, Rome itself had 28 libraries; and it was the libraries that Ammianus, in the 350s, used to index the degeneracy of the times – libraries now 'shut up for ever, like tombs'.<sup>4</sup>

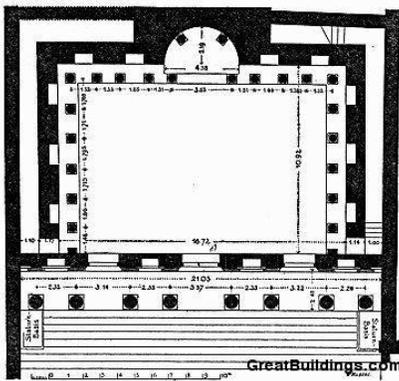
Libraries were for a time the rage. Seneca complains typically about the fashion for libraries in private houses<sup>5</sup> – thousands of books, and all the owner does with them is yawn: genius turned into wallpaper. So of course the successful and socially rising were endowing libraries in their own towns, as that literary fustian and dutiful self-publicist the younger Pliny set up a library in Como. Several indeed have survived archaeologically much better than those at the centre – the one at Ephesus, founded in 110 by Ti. Julius Aquila in memory of his father Ti. Julius Celsus; the one in Athens founded by T. Flavius Pantaenus under Trajan; the one in Timgad founded in the early third century by the sonorously named M. Iulius Quintianus Flavius Rogatianus.



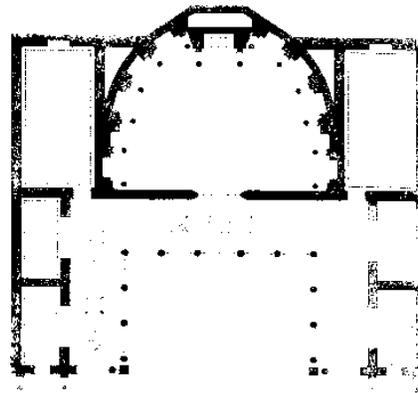
Library of Celsus at Ephesus, reconstructed facade

There were of course theoretical prescriptions for the building of libraries. Vitruvius recorded odd hints: they should face east, 'for their use demands the morning light'; that will help also to preserve the books; in rooms facing south and west the books will be exposed to worm and to damp, which makes them go mouldy.<sup>6</sup> Light of course is crucial: eye ailments were all too common. Experienced architects, we're told by the learned Bishop Isidore of Seville, in the seventh century, recommend paving libraries with green marble, which refreshes the eyes, and disrecommend gilding the ceiling, which tires them.<sup>7</sup>

This advice was not always followed, at least as regards orientation. What surviving ground plans do show is a simple common design: not stacks and stoa, as at Pergamum, but a design still dominant, say, in the Reading Room of the British Museum – a reading room (sometimes two, one for Greek, one for Latin) and the books housed in niches round the walls. The grandest formed part of larger complexes: such was the Bibliotheca Ulpia, two rooms facing one another on either side of Trajan's Column, or Hadrian's library in Athens, attached to a monumental courtyard with ornamental pool. Among self-standing buildings, the Celsus Memorial Library offered a rectangular reading room, insulated from damp by an external corridor; Rogatianus' architect provided a large semicircular space, and spent the rest of the money on an enormous portico.



Library of Celsus



Library of Rogatianus

For the exteriors we rely on those appealing fantasies, the artists' impressions: and largely indeed for the interiors, though we know from literature what to expect – the reading rooms dominated by a statue of Minerva or (in less tasteful libraries) the founder, handsomely adorned with statues and busts of great (that is, dead) authors, surrounded by niches in which wooden shelves or cupboards held, stacked up, their treasure of papyrus rolls. Here then is what artists have made of Hadrian's library. Here is the library of Timgad – notice the grand dome of the reading room, with windows duly facing east. And here the best preserved, the Library of Celsus, with its statues of Wisdom, Virtue, Intelligence and Knowledge, also facing east.



Artists' impressions: Athens, Library of Hadrian



Timgad, Library of Rogatianus



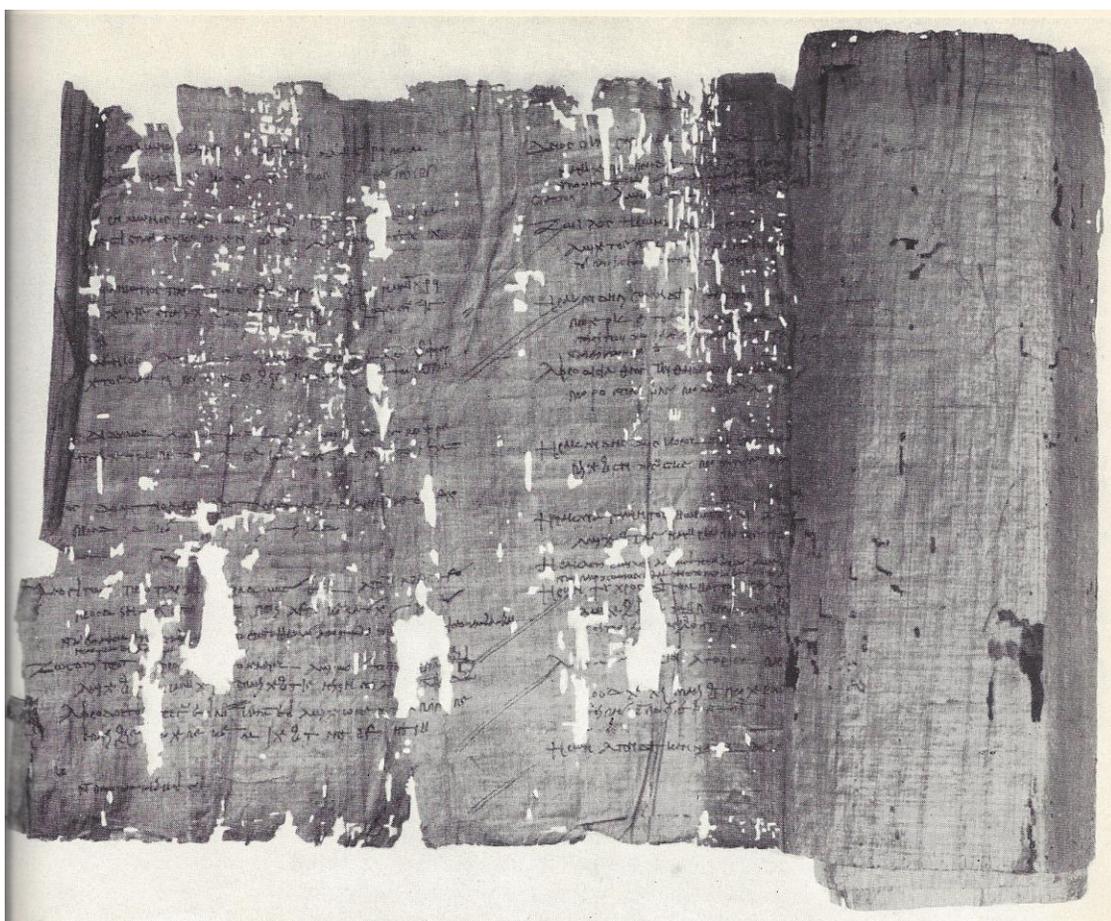
Ephesus, Library of Celsus

It isn't so easy to visualise the scale of ancient libraries. The Library of the Institute of Classical Studies occupies, stacks and reading room together, about 3200 square feet. Compare the Pergamene rooms, with nearly 4000 sq. ft; the municipal libraries of the Empire – that at Nimes about 1500 sq. ft., the Library of Celsus about 2000; even in the supreme grandeur of Trajan's Forum, the two libraries ran to no more than 10,000 sq. ft. And of course the floor area is no easy guide to the holdings: wall book cases clearly use the space less fully than the transverse cases which came in with medieval libraries. We have few simple figures, and those are no doubt legendary: 200,000 books for Pergamum, 500,000 for Alexandria – but these books are rolls, which (for the most part) hold a good deal less than a modern book – one or two books of Homer, say, rather than twelve. So, a certain scaling down is needed, perhaps indeed by a factor of five to ten: that would give say an equivalent figure of 75,000 books for Alexandria, 30,000 for Pergamum.

So our librarian enters his municipal classical facade and crosses his green marble floor: and there, the mainstay of his worries, are the books – and that means, for the period we're concerned with, the papyrus rolls. Spread out your roll, and it looks like the Hyperides below, the text set out in columns along the length. Roll it up laxly, and you have an immediate problem of storage.

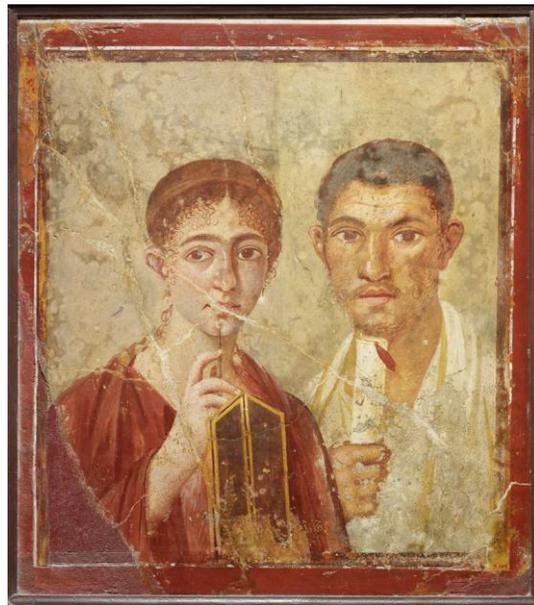


Literary text on papyrus roll (Hyperides, P.Lond.Lit. 132)



Laxly rolled roll

Of course, the best rolls, as Catullus for example tells us, got rolled up properly on a central rod, with ivory knobs above and below, a parchment wrapper and tie strings,<sup>8</sup> but it must be said that no roll actually recovered in Egypt has these refinements. The roll is not user friendly: not just because it has no word divisions and indeed precious little help for the dazed reader in the text, but because it may be quite hard to find out what it is – most often the title comes at the end. Again, the well-organised roll has a tag with the title; but they are vulnerable, and quite likely to come adrift (as indeed several such drifters have been found in Egypt).



The well-organised book-roll, with its purple tag (Pompeii)

Rolls have to be stored. A private user's handful of books can go, umbrella fashion, into a book box. But for larger numbers you need shelving, or cupboards. A famous relief from Neumagen (we have only the engraving, since the original was destroyed) shows a pigeon hole system; there are the rolls, some ticketed (or are they umbilici?), and you may get the idea how much the ancient library was like a wall-paper shop.



Pigeon holes for rolls, and a reading stand to the right (Neumagen)

Cupboards look neater: the pictures below are medieval, but the pattern probably hadn't altered – the splendid Codex Amiatinus depicts Ezra, in the Christian view the first to make a library, writing out the law in front of his collection; a mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna shows the four gospels nestled in their own special cupboard. As an extra efficiency, the cupboards might be numbered, as they still are in the Vatican Library: whatever fraud it was who wrote the Augustan History's life of the Emperor Tacitus justifies one statement by appealing to an ivory book in Cupboard no. 6 in the Ulpian Library.<sup>9</sup>



Ezra in his library (Codex Amiatinus)



Gospels in their cupboard (Mausoleum of Galla Placidia)

We don't of course know how much the ancient librarian had to spend; and he had one great advantage over the modern – there were no periodicals, and fewer books. And at his side he might have works now lost to us – Herennius Philo *On acquiring and choosing Books*, or the *Bibliophile* by Damophilus. Surviving catalogues are unremittingly serious-minded: no sign of unclassical works like that new invention, the novel. Acquisitions will have presented various problems. New publications can be bought, or donated, with a judicious censorship: politics occasionally gets in the way. Ovid, disgraced for moral lapses in verse and in life, intuits that his works aren't going to get into the Palatine Library;<sup>10</sup> if you asked for Julius Caesar's youthful tragedy *Oedipus*, you would find it denied on imperial orders.<sup>11</sup> One wonders what the Palatine librarian did with the works of Cornelius Gallus, when he became a non-person and a literary soldier dropped his epigrams into the legionary dump at Qasr Ibrim. Even the classic dead are not quite safe: Tiberius gave orders that copies, and statues, of his favourite Hellenistic poets, Euphorion, Rhianus and Parthenius, should be placed in libraries;<sup>12</sup> the contrary Caligula almost got round to ordering the removal of Livy and Virgil.<sup>13</sup> In any case, acquiring older books must have made great difficulties. Given the conditions of ancient production, any one book will have circulated in scattered handfuls of copies: ancient libraries are likely, each one, to have possessed a chance selection of unique items. To acquire more, you could go to dealers, or to sales, as Cicero did when Sulla's library was auctioned.<sup>14</sup> You would look for old copies, as more authentic (so Galen did, in studying Hippocrates); but you had to look out, since there were those dealers who'd antique modern copies (as they did for that learned collector King Juba of Mauretania) by smearing them with cedar oil and covering them fresh corn, to give that yellowing look.<sup>15</sup> And of course the market was full of phony works: people forged for fun, for gain as when the orator Timarchos sold one of his own works to a rich idiot for 30 gold pieces as the work of Teisias,<sup>16</sup> even for spite, as when one of Hadrian's secretaries did down a rival by forging a pornographic novel in his name.<sup>17</sup>

But of course, there were more reliable sources. In the absence of the xerox, there was only one way to make copies: to write them. Many libraries will have kept a staff of scribes: they will have been visited by the scribes of readers, to make a private copy. On the grandest scale, we have the action of Domitian: to replenish libraries destroyed by fire, he bought in copies wherever he could find them, and sent a staff to Alexandria, to make and check new copies of the missing items.<sup>18</sup>

Our librarian has his building, his cupboards and his books. Next comes the catalogue. Scientifically, he may look back to the exemplar of bibliography, the *Lists of Eminent Authors and What they wrote*, compiled by Callimachus in the third century BC<sup>19</sup> and taken by some to be effectively a catalogue of the Alexandrian library: that gave, for each book, the title, the author, the first words and the number of lines. (Not, of course, the date of publication!) But the catalogues which survive are not so scientific: they group authors by subject, and then with titles – that is, they are shelf-lists. Such is a rather

grand list on stone from a library on Rhodes.<sup>20</sup> Scruffier lists among the papyri from Egypt may be catalogues or lists of desiderata: the most famous gives a rich selection of philosophical works in no particular order; so too does another, clearly a working list of someone; another, recently published by Herwig Maehler, has major classics alongside scholarly literature.<sup>21</sup> Monumental or scribbled (and having your catalogue on stone must surely have discouraged new acquisitions), they have an essential in common: they are shelf-lists, but without shelf-marks. To find what was advertised, you would turn to the librarian, or rather to his slaves; and they fetched and carried for you.

And now, the readers. Literacy was not so widespread in the ancient world, so no doubt readers were not too numerous. Except in gymnasium libraries, one whole class was missing: students. They were to come later; and it was in medieval times that librarians' blood pressure began to rise. We have no ancient parallel to the hymn of hate in Richard de Bury's *Philobiblon*:

'You may see some froward youth slumped idly over his studies. When in winter the frost is sharp, his runny nose drips, pinched with cold, nor does he think fit to wipe it with his handkerchief until he had bedewed the book before him with this disgusting fluid... He has his nails thick with fetid filth, as black as jet, with which he marks the place when any passage pleases him ... He does not fear to eat fruit or cheese over the open book, and lifts his cup up and down regardless... Almost at once he leans forward, resting his elbows on the book, and solicits a prolonged sleep to make up for his brief period of study...'<sup>22</sup>

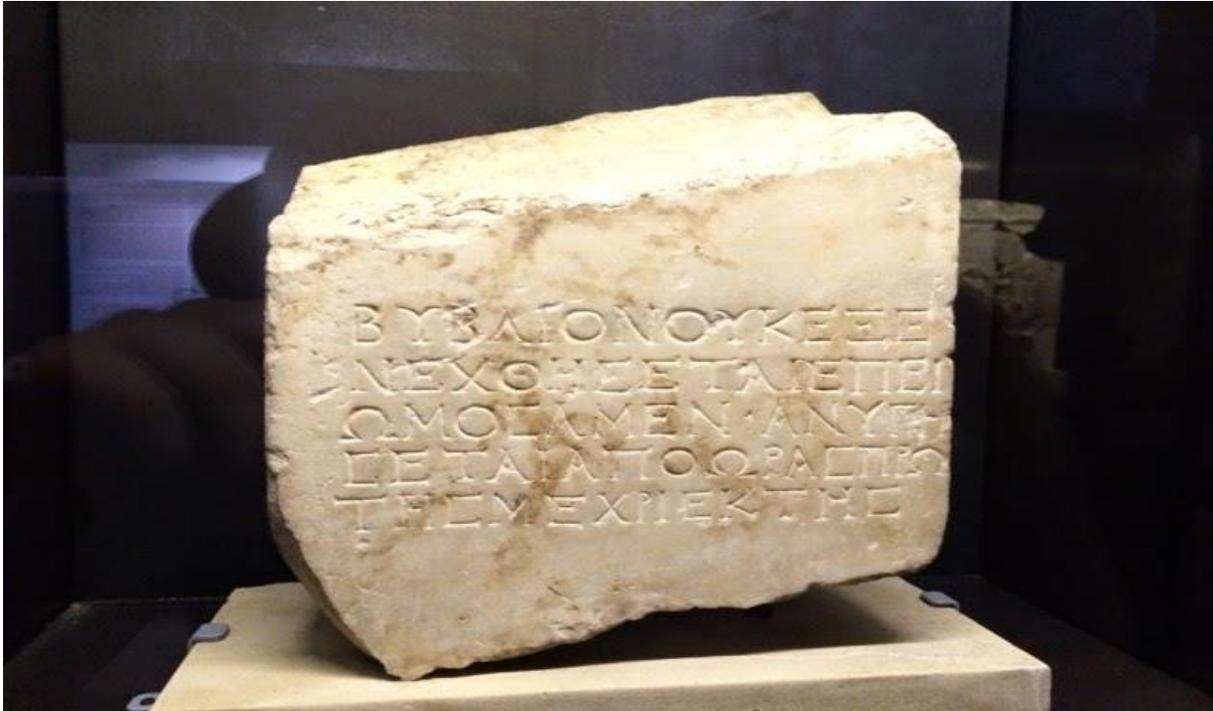
Even so, ancient readers will no doubt have fallen into typical modern categories: gentlemen, scholars and nuts. These categories are of course not mutually exclusive. As an example of the first two, we may take that amiable but rather owlsh lawyer and littérateur, Aulus Gellius; for what he says about libraries illustrates both the use of them, and their limitations. Here he is sitting in the Bibliotheca Ulpia and 'looking for something else' when some archaic praetorian edicts fall into his hands. Here he is sitting in the Library of the Palace of Tiberius with Sulpicius Apollinaris and various friends, when it happened that a book by Cato Nepos was brought out, and they fell to discussing who that was. Here he is searching for a work of the grammarian L. Aelius and finding and reading it in the Library of the Forum Pacis.<sup>23</sup> You'll note how much depends on chance; that you don't borrow, but read in the library; and that the visit might be a sociable one.

Another combination might be scholar and nut; and no doubt ancient libraries were even more exposed than modern ones, for the range of unique holdings, the serendipity of browsing there, made them ideal backings for creative fraud. Consider Julius Africanus, Christian philosopher, compiler of a world chronology from the Creation to AD 221: he quotes the Underworld section of the *Odyssey* with an addition, a prayer to the Egyptian god Thoth Omososo; considers blandly whether perhaps Homer actually wrote this stuff; and gives references – the additional lines he had found in copies of Homer in

the archives of his home town of Jerusalem and in Nysa in Caria and, partly, in the Pantheon library which he himself designed for the Emperor Alexander Severus.<sup>24</sup> Again, the fact that every library could contain unique treasures gave libraries a high validatory position in the world of those with an idea to prove or a revelation to substantiate. So you find one well known fraud, the eye witness memoirs of the Trojan war by Dictys of Crete, authenticating itself with the statement that the Emperor Nero had given Dictys' diary a place in his Greek library; the *History of Apollonius King of Tyre* similarly asserts that its hero had deposited his own account of his adventures in a library.<sup>25</sup> Narrators of miracles particularly justified the marvellous by citing authority from the repository of all truth, the library.<sup>26</sup> This desire for documented wisdom can't have been limited to the active frauds: librarians must have been used to authentic seekers after improbable truths.

Where there are readers, there must be rules. How they looked, and what they contained, we don't really know, except in one case, which must be the shortest and most decorative on record: this elegant inscription from the Library of Pantaenus in Athens. 'No book shall be taken out', it says, 'for we have sworn. It will be open from the first hour to the sixth.' The second sentence notes what is still indeed practice in some continental libraries: it opens at dawn and closes about midday. The first states what we have already guessed from practice (just as Cicero and Cato, when they needed a book in a great private library, went there to read it): with some exceptions, ancient libraries did not lend. It's not clear whether it was Pantaenus' librarian, or the readers, who took an oath to that effect; perhaps both, to judge from the medieval practice, which still continues (for example) in the Bodleian Library; you remember the famous (perhaps even true) story of how King Charles I sent to Bodley to borrow a book, and the librarian, John Rous, replied politely that the statutes to which he'd sworn forbade the lending of books – with no exceptions. The Palatine librarian did make exceptions: he allowed Marcus Aurelius to take out a text of Cato for his holiday reading.

Pantaenus apart, and leaving aside the surviving medieval rules, which will be conditioned partly by the necessities of the monastic life, we can only guess. The prudent librarian will have tried to stop readers adding to his worries on a number of points.



Library of Pantaenus at Athens: the Rules

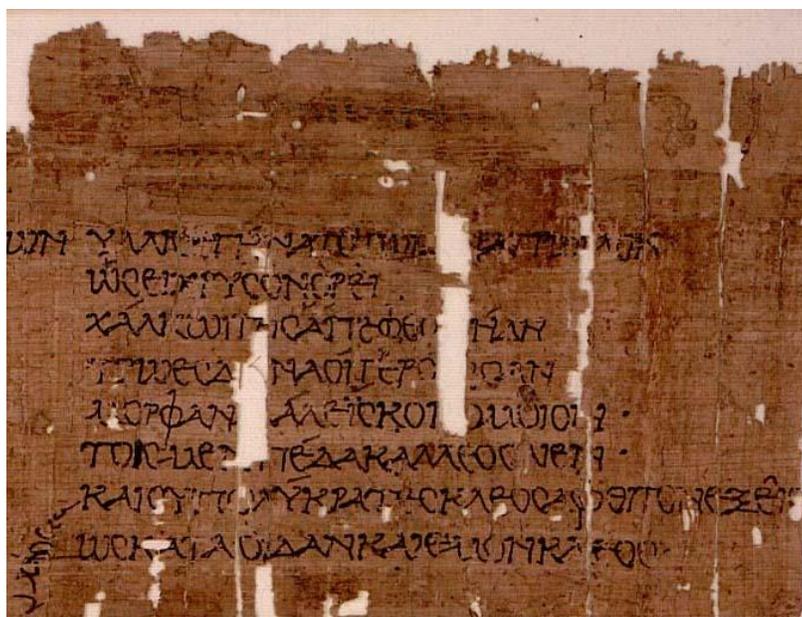
**READERS ARE REQUESTED NOT TO TALK IN THE LIBRARY.**

That will have been easier ruled than respected. Gellius' reports show an inclination to chat, however high-minded: Bishop Isidore, who decorated his library with verses on the authors it contained, added a final address to the gatecrasher – *non est hic quod agas, garrule, perge foras.*<sup>27</sup> But there was a further point. Scattered evidence suggests that in the ancient world silent reading was the exception rather than the rule. Of course, we can guess that levels differed from time to time, and place to place; equally, it seems plausible that reading, when you had to deal with a continuous stream of letters, without word divisions and with the most primitive punctuation, will have come closer to 'spelling it out' than it does with us. We have to reckon with the possibility that our librarian found his rooms full of murmurs, not (as nowadays) the regular breathing of beginning slumber, but the moving lips of assiduous syllabifiers.

**READERS ARE REQUESTED TO HANDLE THE BOOKS WITH CARE.**

A serious and central problem. We've already heard Vitruvius warning that, if your library faces the wrong way, you'll suffer from damp, and the books will get worm and mould. We have an even more down-to-earth view from a report delivered not long after 100 AD in Egypt: subject, the *bibliotheke* in the Fayum district. This was not a literary library, but a public record office; in Greek the name is the same. But it does illustrate the fragility of the papyrus roll. Some rolls, it says, have lost their beginnings; some are worm-eaten; some are partly ruined, and others eaten

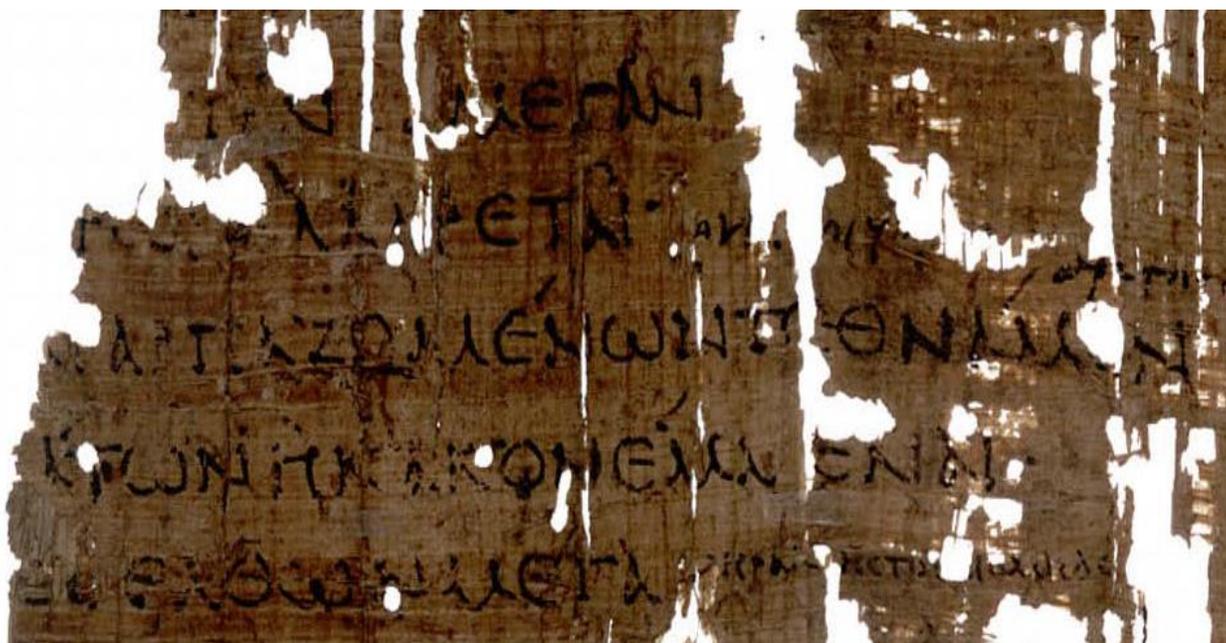
away at the top, because the place is so hot.<sup>28</sup> Heat indeed makes papyrus brittle and crumbly (we have the same problem with acidic papers). Worms flourish under all circumstances; no doubt the modern worms leave very similar tracks. The normal remedy was to treat the papyrus with cedrium, a kind of oil of turpentine; it was generally thought to work, but turned the papyrus yellow (an example below) and gave you a headache.<sup>29</sup> Even the best authors – those who didn't need to worry about their works being sent off to the fish market as wrapping paper – worry about mice and worms; indeed, in ancient library conditions Horace's boast that his *Odes* represent a literary monument more enduring than bronze may have a touch of straightforward practical anxiety. The mind, says Seneca,<sup>30</sup> is like a book roll: if you don't unroll it sometimes, it will stick together; 'shake out my medical books', writes an army doctor to his parents.<sup>31</sup> Shaking might also knock out the worm (Dr Cockle tells me that the Librarian of the Alexandrian Archaeological Society still does the same today). The worm was even immortalised in verse: curses on you, wrote the epigrammatist Euenus, 'devourer of columns, living off stolen fragments of wisdom, the black creature that lies in ambush and leaves your spiteful track over the sacred pages'.<sup>32</sup>



P.Oxy. 1790 (Ibycus): papyrus with yellow stains after being treated with cedar oil

But there are simpler hazards. You read a papyrus book by rolling it in with the left hand as you unroll it with the right: your thumbs are there on it, and you can't help tugging it sideways. The

beginnings are particularly liable to rubbing and stress; hence the rolls which have lost their beginnings. The upper edge gets exposed most to damp and heat, and may crumble; the lower edge frays where it catches on the clothes, and indeed Martial's verse of party presents includes a portable reading stand precisely to make your rolls last longer.<sup>33</sup> The sweaty fingers damage the ink; below you can see part of a magnificent Pindar – magnificent even in the wretched fragments which now survive – where some letters have been worn off and then re-inked in a rather primitive way. Repeated reading equally may wear through the papyrus; on the back of the same Pindar, we find a patch – a bit cut from some cursive document – stuck on to hold the thing together. No wonder that *glutinator*, the sticker, was a recognised post in libraries.<sup>34</sup> Of course the librarian would rather his readers put the books down flat. As usual, we don't know: but certainly there were available reading stands like the one shown, together with a book-box, in a famous image of Virgil. It may be hoped that there were also tables: how else was it possible to compare one passage with another, two feet further along the roll, or to compare passages in three different books without having them unwind themselves all over the floor?



Pindar, P.Oxy. 2450: several worn letters have been redrawn in thick ink



Virgil with lockable book box and reading stand (Vergilius Romanus)

**READERS ARE REQUESTED NOT TO REMOVE BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY.**

Libraries, lending or closed, have the same problem: theft. I can't find any direct complaints; but we know something of it from a curious literary genre which has recently been chronicled by Marc Drogin, that is, the Curse on the Book Thief.<sup>35</sup> The earliest known was entered in books in the library of Assurbanipal: 'Whoever shall carry off this tablet... may Ashur and Belit overthrow him in wrath and anger, and may they destroy his name and posterity in the land'. It re-emerges in the 7th century AD: a simple threat of excommunication, or a more literary one (*qui cupit hunc librum sibimet contendere privum, / hic Fletonteas patiatul sulphure flammis*); or a simple promise of violence - the thief will be beaten, hung, or simply kicked (*qui te furetur, / in culum percutietur*).

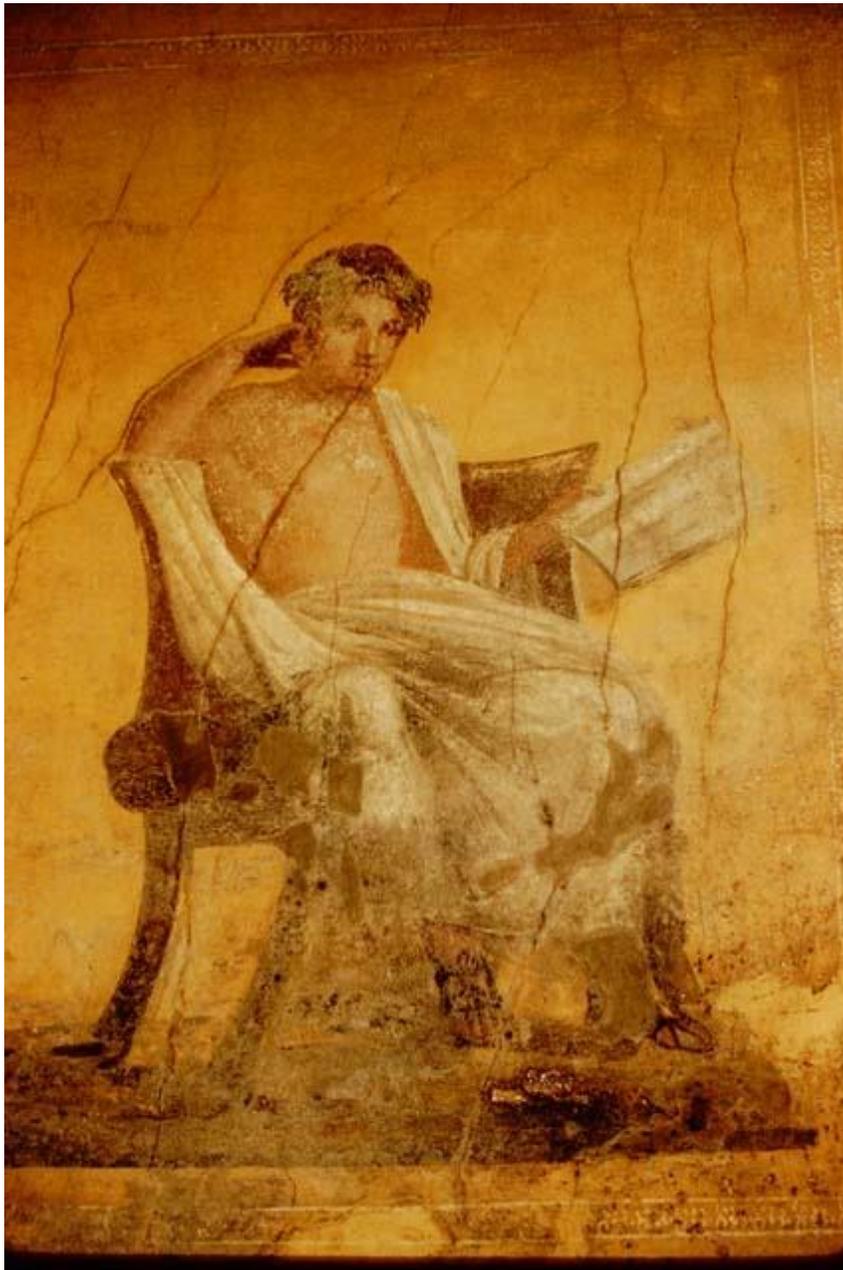
**READERS ARE REQUESTED TO BRING NEITHER FIRE NOR FLAME INTO THE LIBRARY.** That is, indeed, still part of the Bodleian reader's oath: the Institute, with its modern fire alarms, has no need of it. In the ancient library, it must have been crucial. Apart from war – with the possibility, as we've seen, that your library might be carried off as booty – fire was the greatest hazard. Of course, the two things might go together: the original Alexandrian library, or part of it, is said to have perished in Caesar's siege of the city. But even without war, or riot, the outlook was not good. Of Roman libraries, the Palatine was badly

damaged by fire in 191, and destroyed in 363; several libraries had to be replenished by Domitian (after the fires of 69?); another library or archive on the Capitol was burned after being struck by lightning in 189.<sup>36</sup> The Palatine fire illustrates several points. Galen the physician had, he tells us, written two books about the compounding of drugs, and left them for safety in a depository on the Sacred Way. The fire destroyed this building too, and his books and many other people's too: and since none of his friends admitted to having a copy, he had to write them all over again:<sup>37</sup> so tenuous is the circulation, and so uncertain the survival, of literary production. The imperial library in Constantinople had reached 120,000 books when it was destroyed by fire in 475: it reached 36,000 again, only to be destroyed again in 726. Some or all of these fires started outside the library; but librarians certainly won't have encouraged readers to burn the midnight oil.

Through these speculative paragraphs there has stalked a ghostly figure – anxious but provident, practical yet humane, the Librarian. It is the way of librarians to do good by stealth; and perhaps that is why we hear so little about them. Of their superiors, in Rome at least, we know some names: Suetonius, Valerius Eudaemon and Julius Vestinus went on to be imperial secretaries; Volusius Maecianus climbed to the exalted office of Viceroy of Egypt. Of their staffs we know a little. Tombstones reveal names of *vilici a bibliotheca Graeca* or *Latina*, who served the Palatine library; we can guess the duties - the edict regulating the Library of Constantinople provides for *antiquarii*, who repaired books, and custodians;<sup>38</sup> the *promus librorum* must have played a central part.<sup>39</sup> But of those who directed the 28 libraries of Rome we know almost nothing. At an early stage, the librarian's post had its glamour: the first librarians of the Alexandrian library were not only distinguished scholars and poets, but served as tutors to the heir to the throne. Under Augustus we know the names: Pompeius Macer, son of a famous Greek historian, friend of Ovid, administrator and poet; C. Julius Hyginus, scholarly polymath (and not the author of the miserable handbook of myth that has come down under his name). But the modern trend was set, perhaps, when all the libraries of Rome came under a *procurator bibliothecarum*: bureaucracy had arrived. The very word *bibliothecarius* makes its first appearance in prophetic context: the heir to the throne, Marcus Aurelius, writes to his mentor Fronto 'Read the speeches of Cato. No use trying to take them out of the Palatine Library, since I've got them myself. So you'll have to get round the librarian of Tiberius' Library... (*igitur Tiberianus bibliothecarius tibi subigitandus est*).<sup>40</sup>

Ana Healey, then, can look back over a long line of silent servants, the library organisers and library administrators to whom we owe the survival of our classical inheritance and the comfort of our classical studies. She can look back, we hope, with a feeling of some relief. Many and disagreeable her tasks must have been, but at least she has not had to cope with a gilded ceiling, or worms feasting on her books, or even with the prospect of the indefatigable Aulus Gellius stopping by for a chat. She has controlled more books than in the library of Pergamum, and more floor space than in the Library of

Celsus, and controlled it for all our benefits. Ancient readers, whether anxious intellectuals or frenzied composers or the young nodding off before they reach the end of the roll, and modern scholars in all the range of anxiety, inspiration and drowsiness we see here today, owe an equal debt to their libraries. Please join me in applauding the noble race of librarians, and especially Ana Healey, who has so nobly carried on that great tradition of efficiency, humanity and irony.



The drowsy reader (Pompeii)

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<sup>1</sup> Juv. 3.203

<sup>2</sup> Gell. 7.17

<sup>3</sup> Strabo 13.1.54

<sup>4</sup> Ammianus 14.6.18 *bibliothecis sepulcrorum ritu in perpetuum clausis*.

<sup>5</sup> Sen. *de tranquillitate* 9

<sup>6</sup> Vitr. 6.4.1

<sup>7</sup> Isid. *Orig.* 6.11.2

<sup>8</sup> Cat. 22

<sup>9</sup> HA *Tac.* 8.1

<sup>10</sup> Ov. *Tr.* 3.1.59

<sup>11</sup> Suet. *Caes.* 56

<sup>12</sup> Suet. *Tib.* 70

<sup>13</sup> Suet. *Gaius* 34

<sup>14</sup> Plu. *Cic.* 27

<sup>15</sup> Elias, *Com. Cat. Arist.*, CAG XVIII i 128 Ἰοβάτους γὰρ τοῦ Λιβύων βασιλέως συναγαγόντος τὰ Πυθαγόρου καὶ Πτολεμαίου τὰ Ἀριστοτέλους, τινὲς καπηλείας χάριν τὰ τυχόντα συγγράμματα λαμβάνοντες ἐκέδρουν καὶ ἔσηπον διὰ παραθέσεως νέων πυρῶν, ἵνα σχοῖεν δῆθεν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ χρόνου ἀξιοπιστίαν.

<sup>16</sup> Lucian *Pseudolog.* 30

<sup>17</sup> Philostr. *VS* 1.22.3

<sup>18</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 20

<sup>19</sup> Call. *fr.* 429-453 Pf.

<sup>20</sup> A. Maiuri, *Nuova Silloge epigrafica di Rodi e Cos* (1925) no. 11 = Martin Vazquez, *Inscripciones rodias* (1988) no. 1447

<sup>21</sup> WChr. 155, P.Vars. 5, P.Turner 9

<sup>22</sup> *Philobiblon* ch. 17 *Videbis fortassis juvenem cervicosum, studio segniter residentem, et dum hiberno tempore hiems alget, nasus irriguus frigore comprimente distillat, nec prius se dignatur emunctorio tergere, quam subjectum librum madefecerit turpi rore; cui utinam loco codicis corium subderetur sutoris Unguem habet fimo fetente refertum, gagati simillimum, quo placentis materiae signat locum. Paleas dispertitur innumeras, quas diversis in locis collocat evidenter, ut festuca reducat quod memoria non retentat. Hae paleae, quia nec venter libri digerit nec quisquam eas extrahit, primo quidem librum a solita junctura distendunt, et tandem negligenter oblivioni commissae putrescunt. Fructus et caseum super librum expansum non veretur comedere, atque scyphum hinc inde dissolute transferre; et quia non habet eleemosynarium praeparatum, in libris dimittit reliquias fragmentorum. Garrulitate continua sociis oblatrare non desinit, et dum multitudinem rationum adducit a sensu physico vacuarum, librum in gremio subexpansum humectat aspergine salivarum. Quid plura? statim duplicatis cubitis reclinator in codicem et per breve studium soporem invitat prolixum, ac reparandis rugis limbos replicat foliorum, ad libri non modicum detrimentum.*

<sup>23</sup> Gell. *NA* 11.17; 13.20; 16.8

<sup>24</sup> P.Oxy 412

<sup>25</sup> Dictys 3.11/3 Eisenhut. *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* Rec. B 51, p. 82 Schmeling

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. E. Peterson, *Heis Theos* (1926) 217-21

<sup>27</sup> Isid. *Carm.* xviii

<sup>28</sup> P.FamTebt 15.36, 49

<sup>29</sup> Plin. *NH* 24.11.17 (if *volumina* is the right reading)

<sup>30</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 72.1

<sup>31</sup> P.RossGeorg III 1.17

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<sup>32</sup> AP 9.251 = GP 2296 Ἐχθίστη Μούσαις σελιδηφάγε, λωβήτειρα / φωλάς, αἰ σοφίης κλέμματα φερβομένη, / τίπτε, κελαινόχρως, ἰεραῖς ψήφοισι λοχάζη, /σίλφη, τὴν φθονερὴν εἰ κόνα πλαττομένη;

<sup>33</sup> Mart. 14.84

<sup>34</sup> Cic. Att. IV 4c; ZPE 50 (1983) 25-8

<sup>35</sup> Marc Drogin, *Anathema! Medieval scribes and the history of book curses* (1983).

<sup>36</sup> Galen *de comp. med.* 1.1 (XIII 362 Kühn), Dio 72.24, Amm. 23.3.3; Suet. *Dom.* 20; Oros. 7.16.

<sup>37</sup> Galen *ibid.* See now Galen's fuller account in his *περὶ ἀλυπησίης* (ed. Boudon-Millot and Jouanna, Paris 2010).

<sup>38</sup> CTh 14.9.2

<sup>39</sup> Apul. *Ap.* 56

<sup>40</sup> Fronto *Ep.* 4.5

**NOTE.** This lecture is reproduced more or less as it was given, on the occasion of Ana Healey's retirement in 1989. For full, scholarly and uptodate treatments of the ancient library see (for example) Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (Yale, 2002); Jason König et al., *Ancient Libraries* (Oxford, 2013); George W. Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries: Book Collections and Their Management in Antiquity* (Chapel Hill, 2014).