Summary Article: library
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a collection of books or other written or printed materials, as well as the facility in which they are housed and the institution that is responsible for their maintenance. Modern libraries may contain a wide range of materials, including manuscripts and pamphlets, posters, photographs, motion pictures, and videotapes, sound recordings, and computer databases in various forms.

The Modern Library

Modern libraries, in addition to providing patrons with access to books and other materials, often publish lists of accessions and may maintain a readers' advisory service. Interlibrary loan services, lecture series, public book reviews, and the maintenance of special juvenile collections are other important recent developments. Three systems of book classification are widely used to facilitate access to library collections: the Dewey decimal system of Melvil Dewey, the system of Charles Ammi Cutter, and the Library of Congress system (see catalog). Since the 1930s libraries have had several technological tools at their disposal, including microphotographic techniques for copying, computer data banks enabling the storage of far more information and the search of indexes and catalogs far more quickly than ever before, and computer networks that provide instant access to materials in libraries throughout the world and to the Internet and its increasingly rich resources. Books, newspapers, photographs, recordings, and other materials may also be digitized to make them available on computers and over the Internet. Digitization is especially useful in the case of older and rarer materials, which can be made more readily accessible to a wide range of scholars and the public through high quality copies.

Major university libraries in the United States must work to meet an enormous demand for research materials and spend nearly $5 million a year for books and related supplies such as binding materials. Preservation of pulp-based paper, which becomes brittle after a few decades, has become a major drain on library resources; many libraries will no longer acquire books that are not printed on acid-free paper. Such libraries typically have private endowments as well as receive federal and state support. Other libraries throughout the world operate on far smaller budgets, frequently with severe financial handicaps.

The architectural design of modern public libraries in the United States has placed the highest priority on functionalism. Outstanding examples of library construction include the central housing for collections in New York City (1911), Los Angeles (1926; major renovation 1993), Baltimore (1932), and San Francisco (1996) and university buildings at Columbia (1896; no longer a library) and Harvard (1915). Modern buildings tend toward modular construction and smaller, separate housing for special collections.

See also library school.

Evolution

The earliest known library was a collection of clay tablets in Babylonia in the 21st cent. B.C. Ancient Egyptian temple libraries are known through the Greek writers. Diodorus Siculus describes the library of Ramses III, c.1200 B.C. The extensively cataloged library of Assurbanipal (d. 626? B.C.) in Nineveh was the most noted before that at Alexandria. The temple at Jerusalem contained a sacred library. The first
public library in Greece was established in 330 B.C., in order to preserve accurate examples of the work of the great dramatists. The most famous libraries of antiquity were those of Alexandria, founded by Ptolemy I, which contained some 700,000 Greek scrolls. The library at Pergamum, founded or expanded by Eumenes II, rivaled those at Alexandria.

The first Roman libraries were brought from Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria as a result of conquests in the 1st and 2d cent. B.C. Caius Asinius Pollio established (c.40 B.C.) the first public library in Rome, but the great public libraries of the Roman Empire were the Octavian (destroyed A.D. 80) and the Palatine (destroyed c.A.D. 190) and the more important Ulpian library, founded during the reign of Trajan. In addition to these public collections, there were many fine private libraries by the time the Roman Republic was ended in 27 B.C. Of these there remain only fragments of one at Herculaneum.

The early Christian libraries were in monasteries; the Benedictines amassed a fine collection at Monte Cassino. The Romans had brought book collections to the British Isles, but important early monastic libraries were founded in York, Wearmouth, Canterbury, and elsewhere in England and Ireland by Anglo-Saxon monks. Some of the finest manuscript illumination was produced in these libraries. On the Continent, St. Columban and other missionaries founded monastic libraries in the 6th cent. Most of the ancient Greek and Latin texts that have survived until modern times were preserved in medieval European monastery libraries.

The Arabs in the 9th to 15th cent. collected and preserved many libraries, and the Jews and the Byzantines also developed fine libraries during the medieval period. In the 14th and 15th cent. Charles V of France, Lorenzo de’ Medici, and Frederick, duke of Urbino, all formed fine libraries; part of the Urbino library is now in the Vatican Library. In the 15th cent. the Vatican Library, the oldest public library in Europe, was formed. In 1475, Platina, as its first librarian, made a catalog that included 2,527 volumes. In 1257 the Sorbonne library at Paris was founded, and in 1525 the erection of the Laurentian Library in Florence, designed by Michelangelo, was begun. Many of the great university libraries (e.g., Bologna, Prague, Oxford, and Heidelberg) were opened in the 14th cent.

In the United States a circulating library, the Library Company of Philadelphia, was chartered in 1732 on the initiative of Benjamin Franklin. A public library had, however, been opened in Boston as early as 1653 (see Boston Public Library). Other early subscription libraries included the Boston Athenæum, the New York Society Library, and the Charleston (S.C.) Library Society. In 1833 the first tax-supported library in the country opened at Peterborough, N.H. The American Library Association was formed in 1876, and this organization spurred improvements in library methods and in the training of librarians.

Libraries in the United States and Great Britain benefited greatly from the philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie, who gave more than $65 million for public library buildings in the United States alone and strengthened local interest by making the grants contingent upon public support. Among the innovations of the late 19th cent. were free public access to books (involving elaborate classification schemes) and branch libraries or deposit stations for books in many parts of cities; in the early 20th cent. traveling libraries, or “bookmobiles,” began to take books to readers in rural or outlying areas. By the end of the 20th cent., the digital revolution had resulted in many resources being available to library patrons in electronic formats that could be accessed directly from home or work. In 2009, for example, the European Union (EU) launched a digital library containing tens of thousands of EU documents dating back nearly 60 years; materials in 23 languages were made available to the public free of charge.

Notable Libraries

https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/library
Among the chief modern public and university libraries are the Bibliothèque nationale and the Mazarine, Paris; the British Museum, London; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the Vatican Library, Rome; the Ambrosian Library, Milan; the Laurentian Library, Florence; the Russian State Library, Moscow; the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. (see under Huntington, Henry Edwards); the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; the New York Public Library; the libraries of Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and other major American universities; and the Newbery and John Crerar libraries in Chicago.

There are several sorts of libraries in the United States and elsewhere that exist apart from the public and university systems. Three major categories of these are private libraries, usually housing special collections, e.g., the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City of rare books in the humanities and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. (see under Folger, Henry Clay); presidential libraries, which contain the papers of past presidents not held in the Library of Congress, e.g., the Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, Ga., the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kans., the Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Mich., the Rutherford B. Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio, the Herbert Hoover Library, West Branch, Iowa, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library at the Univ. of Texas, Austin, the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y., and the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.; and industrial libraries formed by many corporations to house research works relevant to their business.

Bibliography

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Schottenloher, K., Books and the Western World (1989):
Battles, M., Library: An Unquiet History (2003):
see also World Guide to Libraries PLUS (annual on CD-ROM) and American Library Directory (annual and online).

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