



*Guide to  
the Use of Libraries and  
Information Sources*

FIFTH EDITION

*Jean Key Gates*



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University of South Florida

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## GUIDE TO THE USE OF LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SOURCES

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# Preface

The purpose of *Guide to the Use of Libraries and Information Sources* is to provide a brief but comprehensive treatment of libraries, with emphasis upon the many kinds of library materials, their organization and arrangement, and their usefulness for specific purposes—and on the various services which libraries offer to their patrons. Particular attention is paid to academic libraries and to ways of using them most effectively.

The chapters are arranged in logical sequence, and the reader who follows straight through the text should gain a full-length picture of the academic library and a reasonably clear picture of any library. ~~There is some~~ repetition of ideas and information. This repetition is by design: each chapter, while it is a necessary part of the whole, has been planned to stand alone so that the instructor who has only a limited time in which to teach the use of the library can select the chapter or parts of chapters best suited to the requirements and purposes of a given situation.

Emphasis is placed upon *how to use information sources*. The selection of titles to illustrate the several kinds of library materials was based on a critical study of the basic reference materials reviewed in a number of selective and evaluative bibliographies, including:

"The Book Review," *Library Journal*. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1876– . (Semimonthly September through June; monthly in July and August.)

*The Booklist*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1905– . (Semimonthly; monthly in August.)

*Choice*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1964— . (Monthly except August.)

"Current Reference Books." *Wilson Library Bulletin*. New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1972— . (Monthly, except July and August.) Charles A. Bunge, editor, 1972–1981; James Rettig, editor, 1981–

*RQ*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1961— . (Quarterly.)

"Reference Books of . . .," annual feature of *Library Journal* (usually in the April 15 issue).

Sheehy, Eugene P. "Selected Reference Books of . . .," *College and Research Libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association. (January and July of each year.)

———. *Guide to Reference Books*. 9th ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 1976. *First Supplement*, 1980.

Also included are materials which I have used and evaluated in my own college teaching and reference work. The titles listed are only a selected sample of those now available, and each person will undoubtedly wish to add titles and to replace, with new editions and new titles, some of those which have been included. Listings of titles have been brought up to date by substituting new editions, adding titles omitted in the fourth edition, or adding titles published since 1979.

This book is not a manual for the study of a particular library. It is designed to serve as a textbook for college freshmen and other students who want or need instruction in the use of libraries and library materials. It will provide supplementary material for introductory courses in library science and can be used to advantage not only by reference librarians but by any person who is interested in learning what a library is and how to use it.

In general, each chapter includes (1) a definition of terms, (2) a brief statement of historical development, (3) discussion, and (4) appropriate examples.

Information sources are discussed as general or subject (specialized), according to kinds: dictionaries, indexes, handbooks, audiovisual materials, microforms, and others. Emphasis is placed on what they are, the purposes they serve, and the kinds of questions they are designed to answer.

Since students learn by doing, rather than by being told, all phases of their instruction should be accompanied by learning experiences, with each experience built upon the preceding ones but introducing new materials.

Technical library terminology is used only when it seems to be essential. The language is, with few exceptions, that of the student and nonspecialist.

I am indebted to many authors, publishers, and holders of copyrights for permission to use their material. I should like to express my appreciation to

my family and to my friends for their support; to my professional colleagues who answered questions or volunteered suggestions regarding this revision; to numerous users of the first, second, third, and fourth editions, both teachers and students, who have made helpful comments; and to cooperative librarians in many libraries who helped locate needed materials.

*Jean Key Gates*

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PART

1

*The Library*



## CHAPTER

# 1

## *A Brief History of Books and Libraries*

The earliest system for storing information and transmitting it from one person to another was language. By the use of words, history, rituals, stories, prayers, and medical and other knowledge were passed on from one generation to another. When people realized that spoken words could be represented by visual symbols, they invented their second means for the preservation and transmission of knowledge: writing—the chief medium used for this purpose for more than 5000 years.

The first writings were crude pictures carved on rocks, stone, bark, metal, and clay, or whatever materials were at hand. They were of three kinds: (1) pictographic, representing an object; (2) ideographic, representing the idea suggested by the object; and (3) phonographic, representing the sound of the object or idea. Some of these ancient inscriptions can be interpreted. Crude picture writing was done on other materials which were at hand: vegetable fiber, cloth, wood, bark, animal skin, clay, and metal. However, only the writings on clay, metal, and stone have survived.

Most historians agree that all our systems of writing came from these crude carvings and picture writings.

The story of books and libraries from earliest times to the present is closely interwoven with the story of writing and other methods of preserving and transmitting information and knowledge, with the materials and the physical forms which have been used for these purposes, and with the methods of preserving them and of making them accessible for use. For with the first "book" came the necessity for a place to keep it, to make it accessible for use, and to pass it on to succeeding generations.

# Writing, Books, and Libraries

## ANTIQUITY

### *The Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians*

From about 3600 to 2357 B.C. the Sumerian civilization flourished in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, and as early as 3100 B.C. Sumerian historians began to record their current history and to reconstruct the story of their past.

The system of writing of the Sumerians—perhaps their greatest contribution to human culture—is the oldest system known. The word “cuneiform,” which describes their style of writing, is from *cuneus*, the Latin word for “wedge.” The materials used were soft clay and a wedge-shaped stylus of metal, ivory, or wood. When the scribe had finished writing, the clay was baked until it was hard as stone. These pieces of baked clay, small enough to be held in the hand of the scribe, are called “tablets” and were the first books.

To the Sumerians, writing was first of all a tool of trade and commerce. In addition, it was an instrument for recording religious works: prayers, ritual procedure, sacred legends, and magic formulas. On these clay tablets are also preserved the records of the first schools, the first social reforms, the first tax levies, and the first political, social, and philosophical thinking. It was several hundred years before the Sumerians produced literature, but among the tons of tablets and cylinders removed from the ruins of Sumer’s ancient cities are some containing literary works almost 1000 years older than the *Iliad*. They constitute the oldest known literature.

By 2700 B.C., the Sumerians had established private and religious, as well as government, libraries. Among these libraries was one at Telloh which had a collection of over 30,000 tablets.

Sumer’s culture passed to Babylonia in Lower Mesopotamia, a civilization which lasted until 689 B.C. and which produced Hammurabi and his notable code of laws. In both Sumerian and Babylonian writing, the characters represented syllables rather than letters.

The Babylonians used writing in business transactions and in recording noteworthy events; thus their books were devoted to government, law, history, and religion. It is believed that there were many libraries in the temples and palaces of Babylonia. While none of these survives, the tablets of one of the most important ones, the library of Borsippa, were copied in their entirety by the scribes of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria (d. ca. 626 B.C.), who preserved them in his library at Nineveh. These duplicates of the tablets from Borsippa are the chief sources of our knowledge of Babylonian life.

The kingdom of Assyria, which existed at the same time as Babylonia, also inherited Sumeria’s language and method of writing, but modified the

written characters until they resembled those of the Babylonians. The most important library in Assyria was established at Nineveh by Assurbanipal. Tens of thousands of clay tablets were brought to this great royal library by the king's scribes, who traveled throughout Babylonia and Assyria to copy and translate the writings they found. The catalog of the Nineveh library was a listing of the contents of each cubicle or alcove, painted or carved on the entrance, where the clay tablets were arranged according to subject or type. Each tablet had an identification tag.

Among the most famous surviving specimens of cuneiform writing are the Code of Hammurabi,<sup>1</sup> now in the Louvre Museum in Paris, and the Gilgamesh Epic, part of which is the Babylonian story of the great flood. The key to this system of writing is the Behistun Inscription, which is located on the side of a mountain in Iran (Persia). Written in three languages (Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite), it was deciphered by Sir Henry Rawlinson when he was consul at Baghdad in 1844.

### *The Egyptians*

The civilization of ancient Egypt flourished simultaneously with the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilizations. The earliest known writings of the Egyptians date from ca. 3000 B.C. The writing material was the papyrus sheet,<sup>2</sup> and the instrument for writing was a brushlike pen made by fraying the edges of a reed.

Papyrus was far from satisfactory as a writing material, for there was constant danger of punching through it in the process of writing. Also, it was susceptible to damage from water and dampness, and when it was dry, it was very fragile and brittle. In spite of these limitations, however, papyrus was the accepted writing material throughout the ancient Mediterranean world and is known to have been used as late as A.D. 1022.

The form of the book in ancient Egypt was the roll, usually a little more than 12 inches high and about 20 feet long, made from papyrus sheets pasted end to end. The style of writing was hieroglyphic, a word derived from the Greek *bieros*, meaning "sacred," and *glyphein*, meaning "to carve." Hieroglyphic writing, as old as the earliest Egyptian dynasty, was used as late as A.D. 394.

<sup>1</sup>The Code of Hammurabi was not written on clay but was carved on a diorite cylinder. Diorite is a granular, crystalline, igneous rock.

<sup>2</sup>To make a papyrus sheet, the marrow of papyrus stalks was cut into thin strips and laid flat, side by side, one layer crossways over the other. The two layers were treated with a gum solution, pressed, pounded, and smoothed until the surface was suitable for writing, and then sized to resist the ink.

The Egyptians developed an alphabet of twenty-four consonants, but they did not adopt a completely alphabetic style of writing. They mixed pictographs, ideographs, and syllabic signs with their letters and developed a sketchy kind of writing for manuscripts, but the sacred carvings on their monuments were hieroglyphic.

Egyptian scribes were trained in the temple schools to learn to draw at least 700 different characters (hieroglyphs).

Writing was done in columns without spaces between words, without punctuation marks, and usually without titles; the text began at the extreme right and continued right to left. Egyptian rolls included religious, moral, and political subjects. The *Prisse Papyrus* in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris—the oldest Egyptian book known—is believed to have been written before the end of the third millennium (2880) B.C.; it contains the proverbial sayings of Ptahhotep. The longest Egyptian manuscript in existence, more than 130 feet long, is the *Harris Papyrus*, a chronicle of the reign of Rameses II.

The key to hieroglyphic writing is the Rosetta Stone, which was discovered near the mouth of the Nile in 1799 by a young officer of Napoleon's expeditionary force in Egypt. In 1821 this flat slab of slate, bearing an inscription in three styles of writing—hieroglyphic, demotic (popular), and Greek—gave to Jean François Champollion, the French Egyptologist, the clue needed to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphics. It is now preserved in the British Museum in London.

Little is known about Egyptian libraries. There may have been private and temple libraries as well as government archives. Records indicate that a library existed at Gizeh in the 2500s B.C., and it is known that Rameses II founded one at Thebes about 1250 B.C. Rolls were kept in clay jars or in metal cylinders with an identifying key word on the outside or on the end, or they were stacked on shelves.

### *Other Semitic Peoples*

In addition to the Babylonians and the Assyrians, other Semitic peoples inhabited that part of the near east known as the "fertile crescent." Among them were the Phoenicians. Phoenicia was the name given in ancient times to a narrow strip of land about 100 miles long and 10 miles wide between Syria and the sea.

<sup>1</sup>The region bounded by the Taurus and the mountains of Armenia and Iran, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, Egypt and the Mediterranean (*Cambridge Ancient History*, I 1924, 182).

The Phoenicians were traders, and an important item in their wares was papyrus, which they imported from Egypt and exported to all the countries along the Mediterranean. It is believed that wherever the Phoenicians took papyrus, they also took the Egyptian alphabet. History gives them major credit for spreading the knowledge and use of the alphabetic characters which had been developed in Egypt, Crete, and Syria and which form the basis of Greek and of all European writing. The Phoenicians were not a literary people; writing and books were to them merely means of keeping their numerous commercial accounts, and in time they developed a cursive, flowing style of writing and replaced the cumbersome clay tablets with papyrus sheets.

### *The Chinese*

The art of writing was known in China as early as the third millennium B.C. Materials on which the Chinese wrote included bone, tortoiseshell, bamboo stalks, wooden tablets, silk, and linen, and their writing instruments were the stylus, the quill, and the brush pen, depending upon the particular writing material used. The style of writing involved the use of characters, mainly ideographic, and book forms were the tablet and the roll. Little is known about their libraries.

### *The Greeks*

In the early part of the second millennium B.C., Crete became the center of a highly developed civilization which spread to the mainland of Greece and, before the end of the fifteenth century B.C., throughout the entire Aegean area. The Cretans developed the art of writing from a pictographic system to a cursive form, now called "Linear A," and by the fifteenth century B.C. to a system now called "Linear B." Many scholars believe that the language of Linear B tablets is an early form of Greek which was spoken by the Mycenaeans who occupied Knossos about 1460 B.C. and eventually overthrew the Minoan kingdom. After 1200 B.C. the Mycenaean world ceased to exist and the script disappeared. A period of illiteracy is believed to have existed from this time until the Greeks adopted the consonantal twenty-two-letter alphabet of the Phoenicians in the eighth century B.C.

Of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., only fragments of literature remain, but these fragments show the beginnings of new forms of poetry, notably the elegy and the choral lyric, and the birth of philosophy and scientific research. The fables of Aesop date from this period.

The fifth century was the golden age of Greek civilization, a period characterized by the highest form of literary creativity: the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides; the lyric poetry of Pindar; the

histories of Thucydides and Herodotus; the comedies of Aristophanes; and the philosophy of Socrates. This period, also referred to as the "Classical Age," extended through the fourth and into the third centuries B.C., finding expression in the works of Plato and Aristotle, as well as in drama, poetry, oration, and music.

During the Hellenistic period, which dated from the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. to the Roman conquest, the literary activities of the preceding century continued and there was a new emphasis on scientific knowledge (in the works of Euclid and Archimedes), on art, and on rhetoric.

In ancient Greece the materials used to receive writing were leaves or bark of trees, stone or bronze for inscriptions, and wax-coated wooden tablets for messages or notes. From the sixth century B.C., papyrus, which the Phoenicians brought from Egypt, was the usual writing material. In Hellenistic Greece, parchment and vellum came into use.\*

The use of parchment and vellum made necessary the development of a new kind of writing instrument, the broad-pointed pen made from a reed or a quill. Parchment proved to be a better medium for writing than papyrus because it was smooth on both sides and was less likely to tear. Papyrus competed with it for three centuries, however, and only in the fourth century after Christ did parchment become dominant.

The forms of Greek books were the roll, the wax tablet, and the codex, in which the papyrus or parchment leaves of the manuscript were fastened together as in a modern book. The subject matter of Greek books included literature, history, science, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and politics.

Early Greek writing resembled that of the Phoenicians, who had brought them the alphabet, but gradually the Greeks changed the forms of the letters, added vowels, changed some consonants to vowels, developed lowercase letters, and began writing from left to right. The first books did not have spaces between words or punctuation marks of any kind. Change from one topic to another was indicated by a horizontal dividing stroke called the *paragraphos*, and if the roll had a title, it was located at the end. Before the conquest of Greece by the Romans, Greek grammarians had introduced some forms of punctuation.

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) is said to have been the first person to collect,

\*Parchment was the skin of animals, principally that of the sheep or the calf, prepared for writing. Vellum, which is made from the skin of calves, is heavier than parchment and more expensive. It is probably the most beautiful and the most lasting material ever used for books.



preserve, and use the culture of the past. The story of his library is told by Strabo. In Hellenistic Greece there were private, governmental, and royal libraries.

The greatest libraries were in Alexandria in Egypt. The Museion, founded by Ptolemy I (323–285 B.C.) as an essential part of the academy of scholars under his patronage, is reported to have reached a total of 200,000 rolls within five years. It is said that foreigners were required, upon entering the Alexandria harbor, to surrender any books in their possession, later receiving copies in exchange for the originals. By the time of the Roman conquest, it contained 700,000 rolls, including manuscripts from all parts of the known world, written in Egyptian, Hebrew, Latin, and other languages. The second library, the Serapeum, founded by Ptolemy III (r. 246–221 B.C.) and located in the Temple of Serapis, grew to more than 100,000 volumes. Although there is not complete agreement regarding the fate of the Alexandrian libraries, many historians date the destruction of the Museion from Julius Caesar's campaign in Alexandria in 47 B.C. and that of the Serapeum from the reign of Theodosius the Great (A.D. 379–395), whose edicts against paganism resulted in the destruction of many pagan temples.

Second in importance to the libraries at Alexandria was the one at Pergamum, founded by Eumenes II (197–159 B.C.). Pergamum became outstanding for patronage of arts and letters, and book production was so intense that an embargo was placed by the Egyptians on the exportation of papyrus, with the hope of discouraging the copying of books. This act led to the increased production of parchment for use as a writing material.

According to Plutarch, Calvisius, a friend of Caesar, charged that Antony gave to Cleopatra the entire library at Pergamum, which contained 200,000 distinct volumes.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Romans*

The Romans continued the Greek tradition in books. Through commerce with Greece, Rome had early adopted the Greek alphabet, and Greek culture became important in Rome following the first Punic war (264–241 B.C.). By the time of the Roman conquest of Greece, the Romans were under the influence of the Greeks to the extent that they read and studied their literature, philosophy, and science, sent their sons to Athens to be edu-

<sup>1</sup>*Plutarch's Lives of Illustrious Men*, corrected from the Greek and revised by A. H. Clough (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1930), p. 674.