

The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library

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Greek and Roman Libraries in the Hellenistic Age

Monica Berti

This paper aims at exploring the birth and growth of libraries in ancient Greece and Rome during the last two centuries BCE and the 1st century CE. The main focus will be the library of Alexandria, which was not only the greatest expression of models developed in Classical Greece, but played also a fundamental role in stimulating the creation of analogous collections across the Mediterranean world during the Hellenistic age. The paper will therefore also examine the characteristics and reputation of the Seleucid and Attalid libraries at Antioch on the Orontes and Pergamum, ending with a brief analysis of sources about the development of librarian collections in Rome down to the first century of the Empire.

The Library of Alexandria

The library of Alexandria is one of the greatest archetypes of our civilization, and since antiquity many scholars and artists have fantasized about a blessed place where all the books of the world and therefore all human knowledge was collected.¹ They have praised the learned men of the Museum for their conquests in every field of culture, meditating on the tragic fate of that experience and the fragility of human achievements. Actually, the *floruit* of the Alexandrian library was short and already in the Severian age a writer like Aulus Gellius could enthuse over its unimaginable dimensions.²

Given the ubiquity of these traditions, it seems quite contradictory to remember that the historical sources on the Alexandrian library are surprisingly scanty. As a matter of fact, we have very little information on many aspects of the library, such as the place of storage of the papyrus scrolls, the dimensions of the collections, the role of the library of the Serapeum, the book additions after the death of Ptolemy III Euergetes, and even about the end of the library, all during a space of six centuries from the age of Caesar to that of the prophet Muhammad. The goal of this paper is not to add new hypotheses to the huge bibliography on the subject, but to recall a few points pertaining

1 On the antiquity of the Alexandrian library's fame see, for example, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 5.203e.

2 Aulus Gellius, *Noctes atticae* 7.17.3.

to the importance that the foundation of the Alexandrian library had for the history of scholarship and philology and to contextualize its life in the Hellenistic period.³

After Alexander the Great's death in 323 BCE, his empire was divided into three parts. The Antigonids controlled Greece, the Seleucids ruled most of Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia, and the Ptolemies dominated Egypt.⁴ After seizing power over the country, Ptolemy I needed a basis for his rule and so he attempted to legitimize his position by providing himself with a tradition that placed great emphasis on his own links with Alexander. He stole Alexander's body and brought it to Egypt in order to bury it in Alexandria, the city that Alexander had founded in 331 and named after himself.⁵ Further stress on his relationship with the glorious son of Philip II was given by the publication of

3 For a recent survey of sources on the Alexandrian library, see Monica Berti and Virgilio Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria. Storia di un paradiso perduto* (Tivoli [Roma]: Edizioni Tored, 2010).

See also Luciano Canfora, "La Biblioteca e il Museo," in *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica* (ed. G. Cambiano et al.; Vol. 1.2; Roma: Salerno Editrice, 1993), 11–29. For a discussion of various themes connected to the foundation and the tradition of the Alexandrian library, see now Luce Giard and Christian Jacob, *Des Alexandries. 1. Du livre au texte* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2001); Christian Jacob, *De Alexandries. 2. Les métamorphoses du lecteur* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2001). On the Alexandrian library in the context of destructions of art and culture in times of conflict, see Monica Berti, "The Library of Alexandria," in *Ravaged. Art and Culture in Times of Conflict* (ed. J. Tollebeek and E. van Assche; Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2014), 60–65.

4 Michail R. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (Vol. 1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), esp. 255–422; Andrew Erskine, *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), Parts 1 and 2; Édouard Will, "The Succession to Alexander," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*² (ed. F.W. Walbank et al.; Vol. 7.1; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23–61; Édouard Will, "The Formation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*² (ed. F.W. Walbank et al.; Vol. 7.1; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 101–117; Patrick Wheatley, "The Diadochi, or Successors to Alexander," in *Alexander the Great. A New History* (ed. W. Heckel and L.A. Tritle; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 53–68.

5 According to the geographer Strabo (*Geographica* 17.1.8), Ptolemy I buried the body in Alexandria, while other sources affirm that he first brought it to Memphis: *Marmor Parium*, *FGrHist* 239 B11; Pausanias, *Graeciae descriptio* 1.6.3; Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 10.10.20; *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 3.34.4–6 Kroll. Pausanias (*Graeciae descriptio* 1.7.1) writes that Ptolemy II was responsible for the transfer of the corpse to Alexandria. On the history of the rape of Alexander's body see Nicholas J. Saunders, *Alexander's Tomb. The Two Thousand Year Obsession to Find the Lost Conqueror* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 33–48, and on its significance Andrew Erskine, "Life after Death: Alexandria and the Body of Alexander," *Greece & Rome* 49(2) (2002), 163–179. Cf. also now Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 3–10.

Ptolemy's history about Alexander's campaigns, now unfortunately lost and preserved only through later quotations.⁶ Ptolemy was not only a valorous soldier and an astute ruler but also an intellectual, and he succeeded in promoting scholarly activity and patronizing creative artists to a degree never seen before. In this way, he provided himself with a political and dynastic link to Alexander and gave the Greek inhabitants of Egypt a cultural connection with their own Greek past.⁷

To this context belongs the foundation of the Alexandrian Museum, which was a cultural community gathering scholars from all over the world. Our sources say that Ptolemy provided them with a library containing a huge collection of papyrus scrolls, and entrusted them with the mission of exploring every field of human knowledge. It is uncertain whether the Library was founded by Ptolemy I (Soter) or Ptolemy II (Philadelphos), though it is likely that it was set up under Ptolemy the First and developed under his son.⁸ In any case, the Museum and its library had a fundamental role in enhancing the prestige and influence of the royal house. From a certain point of view, the flowering of arts and science in Alexandria was intended to justify the rule of the Macedonian-Greek dynasty over Egypt and we can say that it was the expression of a cultural policy in the true sense of the word.⁹

The Museum was a typical product of Hellenistic culture, as it was also symptomatic of the competition which arose among the successors of Alexander. Its birth has to be understood in the cultural climate of that period, remembering the importance of the model of the library of Aristotle, who

6 Ptolemaeus Lagus, *FGrHist* 138 F1–35. On the historical work of Ptolemy and his contribution to the historiography of Alexander the Great, see Lionel Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (New York: American Philological Association, 1960), 188–211; Paul Pédech, *Historiens compagnons d'Alexandre. Callisthène – Onésicrite – Néarque – Ptolémée – Aristobule* (Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1984), 215–329.

7 On the military and cultural achievements of Ptolemy of Lagos, from his childhood in Macedonia to the conquest of Egypt, see Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*, 188–211; Walter M. Ellis, *Ptolemy of Egypt* (London: Routledge, 1994), 17–22; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 73–77.

8 Plutarchus, *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* 1095d; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 5.203e; see also Vitruvius, *De architectura* pr. 4. On the debated question about the name of the founder of the Alexandrian library, see Edward Alexander Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library. Glory of the Hellenistic World. Its Rise, Antiquities, and Destructions* (London: American Elsevier Publishing Company, 1952), 88 n. 2, 103–105; Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Vols. 1–3; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 2, 469 n. 69.

9 Erskine, "Life After Death."

had been tutor of the young Alexander.¹⁰ Strabo writes that Aristotle taught the kings of Egypt to organize their library and Athenaeus says that Ptolemy Philadelphos acquired the library of Aristotle from Neleus, who was a student of the philosopher.¹¹ These testimonies cannot be proven because the fate of Aristotle's library is a mystery and because by the time Ptolemy gained control of Egypt Aristotle was dead. Nevertheless, both sources are important, because they mean that the organization of the material in the Alexandrian library was modelled on Aristotle's own private library, which can be considered the first research library systematically organized.¹²

A more important Peripatetic connection with the Ptolemies is attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum, who was not only a pupil of Aristotle and Theophrastus but also ruled Athens for the Macedonian king Cassander from 317 to 307 BCE. After the death of his patron, Demetrius fled to Egypt, where he joined the Alexandrian court and assisted the Ptolemies in collecting books and transforming the city into the most important cultural center of the Hellenistic age.¹³

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- 10 Plutarchus, *Alexander* 7–8. On the role of Aristotle in Alexander's education see Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 57–59; Thomas R. Martin and Monica Berti, "Cani, lepri, barbari e Alessandro il Macedone. Nobiltà d'animo e d'azione nell'opera di Arriano," in *Tradizione e Trasmissione degli Storici Greci Frammentari 11. Atti del Terzo Workshop Internazionale, Roma, 24–26 febbraio 2011* (ed. V. Costa; Tivoli [Roma]: Edizioni Tored, 2012), 389–410 (402). On later traditions about the relationship between Aristotle and Alexander, which arose from Hellenistic sources and in particular from the original texts that formed the so-called *Alexander Romance*, see Monica Berti, "Alexander the Great and Aristotle in the *Libro de Alexandre*," in *Aliento. Énoncés sapientiels et littérature exemplaire: une intertextualité complexe* (ed. M.-C. Bornes-Varol and M.-S. Ortola; Nancy: Éditions Universitaires de Lorraine, 2013), 327–350.
- 11 Strabo, *Geographica* 13.1.54; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.3a. As far as we know, Aristotle's school in Athens (the Lyceum) had a shrine of the Muses and promoted a universal concept of studies, giving particular importance to community life (John P. Lynch, *Aristotle's School. A Study of a Greek Educational Institution* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972], 16–31, 68–96). Moreover, there are strong connections between the early Ptolemies and Aristotle's successors in what became known as the Peripatos and in fact the Peripatetic Straton of Lampsacus was tutor of Ptolemy Philadelphos (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 5.37; 58).
- 12 On the unknown fate of Aristotle's library, see Rudolph Blum, *Kallimachos. The Alexandrian Library and the Origins of Bibliography* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 52–64; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 49–59.
- 13 On the activities and the literary production of Demetrius in the Aristotelian school, see Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 5.80–81. As far as concerns the complex events that led to the end of Demetrius' rule in Athens and to his exile in Egypt, see R. Malcolm Errington, *A History of the Hellenistic World: 323–30 BC*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing,

Demetrius' activity confirms the strong influence of the Aristotelian tradition on Ptolemaic cultural programs, which is evident if we remember the amazing variety of studies promoted by the Peripatetic school in Athens, where Aristotle and his pupils devoted their efforts not only to philosophy and science, but also to literary history and philology, anticipating and contributing to what would have been developed in the Alexandrian Museum.¹⁴

As far as concerns the Museum, we have only a brief note by Strabo, who stayed in Egypt from 24 to 19 BCE as a follower of the prefect Aelius Gallus and could see Alexandria with his own eyes. Strabo writes that the Museum was part of the royal palaces, had a public walk, an exedra with seats, and a large house, in which was the common mess-hall of the men of learning who shared the Museum. This group of men not only held property in common, but also had a priest in charge of the Museum, who was formerly appointed by the kings and later by Caesar.¹⁵ Beside that, we have only the testimony of the rhetor Synesius, according to whom in the Museum there were statues of Diogenes, Socrates and other philosophers.¹⁶

What was the relationship between the Museum and the Library? It is quite widely assumed that the great Library was reserved for the scholars of the Museum, just as many modern research libraries are closed to people not affiliated to a scientific or academic institution. This is only a hypothesis, based on the fact that according to Epiphanius from Cyprus, in addition to the great Library located in the Bruchion district, there was a smaller library called *sister* that still existed at the time of Caesar and was situated *down* in the city, inside

2008), 25, 47. According to Plutarch (*Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* 189d) and Aelianus (*Varia historia* 3.17), Demetrius gave Ptolemy advice on books pertaining to monarchy and hegemony, and also lessons on lawmaking: Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1, 114 and 315; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 63. On the assistance of Demetrius in helping Ptolemy II to collect books, see Joannes Tzetzes, *Prolegomena de comoedia Aristophanis* 1. On this evidence see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 106–121; Blum, *Kallimachos*, 104–113. On the initiative of Demetrius, who according to the *Letter of Aristeeas* made the suggestion to translate the Pentateuch into Greek, see *Aristeeas epistula* 9–11; 28–32; 301–302; 308–309; 312–317. On the chronological problems pertaining to Demetrius' activity, which is connected to both Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II, see Nina L. Collins, *The Library in Alexandria and the Bible in Greek* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2000), 4; Paul McKechnie and Philippe Guillaume, *Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his World* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), 228–232; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 59–73.

14 Blum, *Kallimachos*, 14–94.

15 Strabo, *Geographica* 17.1.8.

16 Synesius, *Cabvitiu encomium* 6.

the temple of Serapis.¹⁷ The Byzantine scholar Tzetzes asserts that the sister library also had been founded by Ptolemy Philadelphos and that it contained 42,800 rolls, probably copies of the writings shelved in the bigger library. In the Serapeion, as indirectly stated by Callimachus, “the old man who invented the ancient Panchaeon Zeus”—i.e., Evemerus of Messene—would have written his impious books.”¹⁸ This is sound evidence that the great Library, that of the Bruchion, was barred also to famous authors—like Evemerus—who had not been co-opted onto the synod of the Museum.

One of the biggest problems about the Alexandrian library is constituted by the disposition of the collections and their entity, because ancient sources vary in a disconcerting manner. Seneca speaks of 40,000 books, referring to those burnt during the fire of the time of Caesar; Epiphanius writes that Demetrius of Phalerum acquired 54,800 books; Tzetzes goes as far as 490,000 books; the *Letter of Aristeeas* speaks of 500,000 books; finally, Aulus Gellius and Marcellinus reach the figure of 700,000 books.¹⁹ It sounds curious, but these numbers, including the higher ones, have been accepted by many modern scholars, in spite of the fact that “lacking modern inventory systems, ancient librarians, even if they cared to, scarcely had the time or means to count their collections.”²⁰ Probably some ancient tales about Ptolemaic book avidity, regarding in particular Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 BCE), have contributed to the acceptance of these figures. Galenus, for example, narrates that Ptolemy II would give orders for his agents to rummage through every ship landing at Alexandria, to copy the books discovered in this way, and to give the copies back to the owners while keeping the originals for the library at Alexandria.²¹ Galenus also reports that, when a heavy famine affected Athens, Philadelphos helped the city only on condition that the Athenians lend him their official texts of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The Athenians tried to insure themselves by asking him for 15 talents as a guarantee of the texts’ safe return, but the originals were never given back.²²

17 Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus* 324–329.

18 Callimachus, *Iambi* 1, fr. 191 ll. 9–11 Pfeiffer.

19 Seneca, *De tranquillitate animi* 9.5; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes atticae* 7.17.3; *Aristeeae epistula* 10; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Historiae* 22.16.3; Epiphanius, *De mensuris et ponderibus* 269–270; Tzetzes, *Prolegomena de comoedia Aristophanis*, pr. 2.

20 Diana Delia, “From Romance to Rhetoric: The Alexandrian Library in Classical and Islamic Traditions,” *AHR* 97 (1992): 1449–1467 (1459).

21 Galenus, *In Hippocratis librum iii epidemiarum commentarii* 3.17a.605–606.

22 Galenus, 607–608. On the problem of the size of the collection of the Alexandrian library, see Roger Bagnall, “Alexandria: Library of Dreams,” *PAPhS* 146 (2002): 348–362.

The first Ptolemies acquired and stored in the Museum many papyrus scrolls. In order to manage this huge and increasing collection of texts, scholars devised a way to classify and order them according to various criteria, the most important evidence for which is represented by the work of Callimachus of Cyrene, who was a leading figure not only in the history of the library of Alexandria, but also in the tradition of Greek scholarship.²³ Callimachus was a native of Cyrene in Lybia, but he spent the greatest part of his life at the Ptolemaic court in Alexandria. His lifetime coincided more or less with that of his patron, Ptolemy II, and extended into the era of Ptolemy III.²⁴ He worked in the Museum, but we do not know if he became general director (προστάτης) of the library.²⁵ According to the *Suda*, Callimachus was a grammarian (γραμματικός) and wrote more than 800 books in verse and prose. Ancient authors regard Callimachus as one of the greatest Hellenistic poets, and it is in this sense that we have to read the term γραμματικός. Like other learned poets of his age, he was interested in every field of literature and science, and these interests were of fundamental importance for his approach to the vast patrimony of the Alexandrian library and for his contribution as a scholar and a librarian.

As we can see from the *Suda* list, Callimachus, who was a typical representative of the antiquarian researcher of Hellenism, wrote reams of works on a great variety of subjects. His fame as a scholar, however, rests primarily on the *Pinakes* (Tables), whose full title was *Tables of those who distinguished themselves in all branches of learning and their writings* (Πίνακες τῶν ἐν πάσῃ παιδείᾳ διαλαμψάντων). This impressive work, 120 books long, was a detailed bio-bibliographical survey of the most important Greek writings, but unfortunately only a few fragments survive and we don't know what the word *Pinakes* actually refers to in the title, and if this work can be understood as a catalogue of the Alexandrian Library.²⁶

23 *Suda* [x 227], s.v. Καλλίμαχος.

24 On the chronology of Callimachus, which has been debated by modern scholars, see Blum, *Kallimachos*, 124–125; Luigi Lehnus, “Riflessioni cronologiche sull'ultimo Callimaco,” *ZPE* 105 (1995): 6–12.

25 See Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 141–145; Blum, *Kallimachos*, 124–125.

26 First of all, why *Pinakes*? The Greek word πίναξ (pl. πίνακες) means, in general, “board” or “plank”: A board or plank made of various materials, like wood or metal. The term is also used for plates with anything drawn or engraved on them (drawing- or writing-tablets). The term soon acquired the meaning of “picture,” “map,” or “register,” “list,” and “catalogue” (we can recall the πίναξ ἐκκλησιαστικός, the register of the Athenian citizens who participated in the assembly). Probably πίναξ was also the name of the tablets placed above the library cases or shelves registering classes of authors and works on the rolls stored there

In the sense of “list” or “register” the term is often used as a synonym of ἀναγραφὴ, and can refer to lists of historical and literary material, which form a well attested *pinakographic* genre deriving from archival documents such as lists of priests, victors, dramatists, and so on. For the 5th century BCE, we can quote two similar works by Hellanicus of Lesbos, the *Priestesses of Hera in Argos* (Ἱερεῖαι τῆς Ἥρας αἰ ἐν Ἄργει) and the *List of the winners in the Carnean contests at Sparta* (Καρνεονίκαι).²⁷ His younger contemporary Hippias of Elis composed a *List of the winners at the games at Olympia* (Ὀλυμπιονικῶν ἀναγραφὴ).²⁸ Aristotle too wrote various works in the form of lists (*pinakes*) that have not come down to us, but they are more or less known from quotations by later scholars: *Winners at the Olympic games* (Ὀλυμπιονίκαι), *Winners at the Delphic games* (Πυθιονίκαι), *Victories in the dramatic contests of the Dionysia at Athens* (Νίκαι Διονυσιακάι), and *Dramatic plays* (Διδασκαλίαι), which were very important for the history of Attic drama, because they listed all tragedies, satyr plays, and comedies performed in Athens during the 5th and 4th centuries at the most important Dionysian festivals.²⁹

The *Pinakes* of Callimachus therefore form part of a well-established tradition, to which a great stimulus was given by the Aristotelian school. But unfortunately, out of the 825 extant fragments of Callimachus' works, only 25 fragments of the *Pinakes* survive (collected by Pfeiffer in his Callimachean edition), most of which are merely oblique references and not actual quotations by ancient authors. We do not even know if the *Pinakes* were edited for a publication, and perhaps they were never finished.³⁰

Even if the fragments are very few, we can reconstruct some general principles that guided Callimachus in his work: 1) he divided Greek authors into classes and—if necessary—into sub-classes; 2) within the classes and sub-classes, he arranged them alphabetically; 3) whenever possible, he added brief biographical data to the names; 4) under an author's name he listed the titles of his works, arranging them in categories; 5) he cited the first words of each work and its extent, i.e., its number of lines. According to the preserved fragments, the following categories were represented in the *Pinakes*: oratory, history, laws, philosophy, miscellaneous literature (comprising also cooking and dining),

(see Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 39 ill. 3.1). On the word see *LSJ*⁹, s.v. πῖναξ.

27 *FGrHist* 4 F74–84; *FGrHist* 4 F85–86.

28 *FGrHist* 6 F2.

29 Blum, *Kallimachos*, 20–43.

30 Rudolph Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* (Vol. 1; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), fr. 429–453.

medicine, lyric poetry, and tragedy.³¹ The *Suda* lists two other titles beginning with the word *pinax*: A *pinax* of the tragedians in chronological order (Πίναξ καὶ ἀναγραφή τῶν κατὰ χρόνους καὶ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενομένων διδασκάλων), and a *pinax* of Democritus' glosses and compositions (Πίναξ τῶν Δημοκράτους γλωσσῶν καὶ συνταγμάτων).³²

The *Pinakes* cannot be merely considered a catalogue of the Alexandrian library, if only from the title, which indicates a selection and refers, specifically, not to *all* Greek writers, but only to those who distinguished themselves in the field of culture. Moreover the fragments show that Callimachus not only registered names and titles, but also discussed biographical data and the works' paternity and authenticity, revealing a profound knowledge of literature and science and an admirable effort in literary criticism. We do not know how many categories—and therefore πίνακες or ἀναγραφαί—were originally conceived by Callimachus, but we can presume that for the very first time he tried to categorize every field of human knowledge.

Callimachus did not begin the work of arrangement of the Alexandrian library; this task had already been accomplished by Zenodotos, who was the first to arrange authors, and partially also works, in alphabetical order.³³ Rather, Callimachus tried to provide complete and reliable access to the library holdings, and that work consisted essentially of literary criticism.

Lists of writings of one kind or another had been drawn up before, but Callimachus' tables were the very first to be comprehensive. Thanks to his immense work and his pupils' assistance, he provided a systematic presentation of all writings in Greek language—literary, scientific, even practical, such as cookbooks—conceiving a sort of scholarly catalogue. He was able to fulfil this task because he could consult almost all of these works in the Alexandria's library. In turn, he furnished a key to the vast collection. He created a vital reference tool, thanks to which users could determine the existence of any particular work and its location.

This repertory of the works of Greek literature was used by later scholars, as can be deduced from the fact that Aristophanes of Byzantium, perhaps the greatest Alexandrine grammarian, published corrections and supplements to

31 Francis J. Witty, "The Pinakes of Callimachus," *Library Quarterly* 28 (1958): 132–136; Francis J. Witty, "The Other Pinakes and Reference Works of Callimachus," *Library Quarterly* 43 (1973): 237–244; Blum, *Kallimachos*, 153.

32 Blum, *Kallimachos*, 137–142.

33 Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 138; Rudolph Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 105–122.

the *Pinakes*.³⁴ The catalogue of the library of the Museum was of course continued, because the collection grew steadily, new books had to be catalogued, and the inventory of old books had to be improved. Not only librarians, but also other scholars, especially biographers, made good use of the *Pinakes* of Callimachus, and we can find traces of this work in later *lexica*, like that of Hesychius and the *Suda*.

The ancient world did not attribute to the Alexandrian library any chronological primacy. Athenaeus of Naukratis, for instance, listing the predecessors of the Alexandrian institution, quotes the libraries of Polycrates at Samos, Pisistratus and Euclides at Athens, Nikokrates at Cyprus, Euripides again at Athens, and eventually the book collections of Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Neleus. In this context, he adds that Neleus, having inherited the books of Aristotle and Theophrastus, would have sold them to Ptolemy II, and that these volumes would have formed the first nucleus of the library of Alexandria with others acquired at Athens and Rhodes by the Ptolemies.³⁵ If the 'libraries' of Pisistratus or Euripides probably are a figment of Athenaeus' imagination, the part of this story concerning Neleus is also very suspicious, since Strabo narrates that, having been frustrated in his hope to succeed Theophrastus, he abandoned the Lyceum and retired to his hometown, Skepsis in the Troades, with all the books of the school. There the volumes would have remained for two centuries, forgotten in a damp hole and in disrepair, until the grammarian Apellicon of Teus, in the age of Sulla, rescued them.³⁶

On the composition of the collection saved by Apellicon modern scholars disagree, but this is for us of little account, because the *fil rouge* between the Lyceum and the library of Alexandria is confirmed both by the tradition (actually rather late) according to which the first nucleus of the Alexandrian collections would have been created by a pupil of Aristotle, Demetrius of Phalerum, and by the fact that the Ptolemies' ambition to gather at Alexandria all the books of the world seems in direct continuity with the universalism and cultural eclecticism that are so typical of the first Peripatos. In addition, the *Letter of Aristeas*—a source that probably reflects beliefs and aspirations circulating in the Jewish community of Alexandria around the 1st century BCE—reports that Demetrius, having been informed that the “laws of the Jews” deserved to be included in the Alexandrian library, asked king Ptolemy Soter permission to translate them into Greek. This tremendous undertaking, according

34 William J. Slater, “Aristophanes of Byzantium on the Pinakes of Callimachus,” *Phoenix* 30 (1976): 234–241.

35 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.3a–b.

36 Strabo, *Geographica* 13.1.54.

to *Aristeas*, was performed by seventy-two Jewish scholars, under the leadership of Eleazar, high priest of Jerusalem. That version of the Hebrew Bible, still known as the Septuagint, remained the common Greek translation of the Christian Old Testament until two centuries ago.³⁷ Whatever we may think of this tradition, its very existence shows that a perceived hallmark of the Alexandrian library was its universality. This universality is already intrinsic in the foundation project, which overcomes the limits of the old Hellenocentrism and is expanded as far as trying to embrace the best of other foreign cultures.

According to the *Letter of Aristeas*, the Ptolemies founded the Alexandrian library aiming to collect not many or very many books, but “all the books in the world:” “Demetrius of Phalerum, the director of the king’s library, received vast sums of money, for the purpose of collecting together, as far as he possibly could, all the books in the world.”³⁸ The historical genuineness of this passage has no relevance here. What really matters is that it influenced the ancient imagination so deeply that we find the same statement in various Christian writers.³⁹ Moreover, as it appears clearly from the decision to translate the Hebrew law into Greek, the cultural horizons of the Lagids, the “world” which Demetrius and Ptolemy talk over, encompassed not merely Hellenism, but indeed covered the whole *οικουμένη*. And this is not at all strange for a dynasty that was linked with Alexander and that ruled over a population which was for the most part not Greek.

By gathering in Alexandria writings from all over the world, the Ptolemies made the most ambitious attempt ever known to recapture the unity of knowledge. And the fact that this knowledge, after being reunified, was lost again, contributed in its turn to increasing the legend of a place where, if only for a few centuries, the heritage of human wisdom was stored and made accessible. Still, this great cultural program had its detractors. One was Seneca the Younger, who blamed Livy for writing that the Alexandrian library was a “wonderful testimony of the Ptolemies’ opulence” (*pulcherrimum regiae opulentiae monumentum*) and an “admirable work of those kings’ elegance and interests” (*elegantiae regum curaeque egregium opus*). Seneca, on the contrary, says that Livy should not have spoken of elegance, but of the waste of money, and not

37 Cf. Gilles Dorival, “La fixation du canon de la Bible. Entre Jérusalem et Alexandrie,” in *Des Alexandries. 1. Du livre au texte* (ed. L. Giard and C. Jacob; Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2001), 115–134. On the *Letter of Aristeas* see Sylvie Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria. A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

38 *Aristeae epistula* 9.

39 Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 65, 78.

even an erudite one, since the Ptolemies would have acquired the books not to study them but only to show them off, *quoniam non in studium sed in spectaculum comparauerant*.⁴⁰

Whatever the tutor of Nero thought, the Alexandrian library was not merely a giant book warehouse. The Ptolemies founded the Museum at a very delicate juncture in Greek culture, during the passage from an old way of transmitting knowledge (orality) to a new one (the book).⁴¹ The scholars gathered in the Museum by the Ptolemies performed this miracle. The names of a few of them are known to us. Zenodotos, the first director of the library, laid the foundations of Homeric philology, and probably worked with more acuteness than is generally admitted nowadays. Eratosthenes from Cyrene, director of the library under Ptolemy III Euergetes, ranged from literary criticism to mythography, from philosophy to poetry, from chronology to geography and mathematics. Aristarchus of Samothrace, the greatest grammarian of the ancient world, invented conventional signs nowadays used in critical editions. Didymos of Alexandria, called βιβλιολάθας (book-forgetting) or Χαλκέντερος (brazen bowels), composed more than 4,000 commentaries on classical authors.⁴²

The position of these scholars, entirely devoted to study and free from daily care, was denigrated but at the same time envied by their contemporaries. For example, Timon of Phlius, disciple of the sceptic philosopher Pyrrho, compared them to “birds in the cage of the Muses,” always taken up with scribbling papyri and quarrelling with one another.⁴³ The first great poet and grammarian of the Museum, Philitas of Cos (330–328 BCE) was maliciously depicted as fragile and sickly since youth.⁴⁴ Pfeiffer observes that in every age, grammarians have never been disturbed at being compared to “birds in cages” or “mummies.”⁴⁵ Sometimes they have reacted with equal brashness, writing—like Ulrich von Wilamowitz does in his *History of Classical Scholarship*—that scholars of the ancient world take particular pleasure in being aware that their science is accessible to very few people.⁴⁶ The members of the Museum were

40 Seneca, *De tranquillitate animi* 9.5.

41 Cf. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 102.

42 For a survey of sources about these scholars with commentary, see Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 101–164.

43 Timon Flisius *apud* Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.41 (= Timon, fr. 12 Diels = 60 Wachsmuth).

44 Plutarchus, *An seni gerenda sit res publica* 791e. See Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 41–42.

45 *Ibidem*, 98.

46 Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *History of Classical Scholarship* (trans. A. Harris; Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

certainly devoted to abstruse activities, but thanks to their seemingly esoteric efforts today we can still read Homer and the tragedians.

What's especially important for the future of classical scholarship, in early Ptolemaic Alexandria scientists, poets, historians, grammarians etc. worked every day side by side. Some of them, like Eratosthenes, were at the same time scientists, poets, historians, and grammarians, following once more the supreme model of the great Aristotle.⁴⁷ The secret of Alexandrine culture, of its extraordinary contribution to ancient science, technology, and literature, lies just in the daily interaction between these apparently distant domains. The fate of ancient science after the closure of the Museum clearly shows that a collaborative environment is not only desirable, but constitutes an essential condition to maintain a high level of studies. Only a few years ago the path breaking essay *The Forgotten Revolution* by Lucio Russo, an Italian historian of science, has showed that when around the 1st century BCE the forms of cultural production changed, the outstanding conquests of Hellenistic science in mathematics, engineering, astronomy etc. were gradually lost for the simple reason that the new generation of scholars, who had started again to work individually, were no longer able to understand the writings of the ancient masters.⁴⁸

As far as concerns the end of the Alexandrian library, our sources are once again ambiguous and unreliable. Roman and Byzantine authors tend to impute the dissolution of the library to chance events (fire or sieges that Alexandria had to withstand during its late history), while Arab sources narrate the story mentioned above on Caliph 'Umar.⁴⁹ Along the path of human

47 On Eratosthenes see *Suda* [ε 2898], s.v. Ἐρατοσθένης and Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 134–146.

48 Lucio Russo, *La rivoluzione dimenticata* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1996).

49 The story was divulged in Western culture through the *Compendious History of the Dynasties* of Barhebraeus (Abu al-Faraj in Arabic), a Syrian-Christian author who lived from 1226 and 1289. Before him, it is quoted only—as far as we know—by two Arab sources from the beginning of the 13th century. On the fictitious character of this tradition see Bernard Lewis, “The Vanished Library,” *The New York Review of Books* 37(14) (1990), <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/3517>, and especially Diana Delia, “From Romance to Rhetoric: The Alexandrian Library in Classical and Islamic Traditions,” *AHR* 97 (1992): 1449–1467, and Bernard Lewis, “The Arab Destruction of the Library of Alexandria: Anatomy of a Myth,” in *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?* (ed. M. El-Abbadi and O. Mounir Fathallah; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), 213–217, with further bibliography. Cf. also Qassem Abdou Qassem, “The Arab Story of the Destruction of the Ancient Library of Alexandria,” in *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?* (ed. M. El-Abbadi and O. Mounir Fathallah; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), 207–211,

history, hundreds—if not thousands—of libraries have been devastated by fire.⁵⁰ In the case of Alexandria, the unreliability of our sources forces us to consider an alternative hypothesis. Every book—also those achieving universal popularity—has a limited life, as is well known by those who have had the opportunity to go around the rooms not accessible to the public in an old library. Even in today's libraries, where temperature and humidity are strictly controlled, it is easy to discover precious books, from two or three centuries ago, in very bad condition and even repellent to the touch. Many of them still have expensive bindings and at the time of their publication were no doubt greatly desired, but probably the last person to open them died decades ago.

In all probability, at Alexandria the loss of so inestimable a cultural heritage had causes more trivial than fire, negligence, or dullness—and at the same time more disturbing. To come to the point, every library—and in particular the ancient ones, that did not have modern systems of conservation or reproduction of books—are like living organisms, in which new acquisitions first complement, then substitute for old volumes, especially those that no one reads any more. Libraries, we have already noted, are living places in which knowledge is continuously recast, correlated, and reinvented. The not so obvious consequence of this, however, is that they often die not by unpremeditated or premeditated homicide, but simply by consumption. The library of Alexandria began to disappear when the community of scholars for which

and Ismail Serageldin, "Preface," in *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?* (ed. M. El-Abadi and O. Mounir Fathallah; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), vii–ix. For a survey and discussion of sources pertaining to various events that damaged the Alexandrian library, starting with the famous fire of the time of Julius Caesar, see Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 161–196.

- 50 To remember only a few cases from modern history, the French revolution led to the destruction of dozens of religious or private libraries throughout France. On July 12, 1880 the German scholar Theodor Mommsen, badly handling a candle, destroyed his private library and went on nearly to die himself. In 1914, the splendid library of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, was destroyed by the German army. Rebuilt after the First World War with the reparations imposed on Germany, it was burnt again by the Nazi armies at the beginning of the Second World War (May 16–17, 1940). On the destruction of libraries and books in history, see Matthew Battles, *Libraries. An Unquiet History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 156–191; Lucien X. Polastron, *Books on Fire. The Destruction of Libraries throughout History* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2004); James Raven, *Lost Libraries. The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Rebecca Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries. Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006). On Mommsen's library see Oliviero Diliberto, *La biblioteca stregata. Nuove tessere di un mosaico infinto* (Roma: Robin Edizioni, 1995).

it had been created was broken up. Or when, as Bagnall says, the generative impetus of the first centuries ended.⁵¹

The Seleucid and Attalid Libraries at Antioch on the Orontes and Pergamum

The great challenges posed by the cultural patronage of the Ptolemies were also at the origin of a fierce rivalry and keen competition in the Hellenistic world, leading to the development of other collections as those of Antioch on the Orontes and Pergamum. In these cases we don't have even as much information as for Alexandria, but the Attalid library especially acquired a great reputation in antiquity for putting together an imposing collection of books and arranging a center of literature and learning.⁵²

As far as concerns the library of the Seleucids, we have only one explicit reference in the entry of the *Suda* devoted to the epic poet Euphorion of Chalcis, who was appointed director of the *public* library of Antioch by Antiochos III the Great (222–187 BCE).⁵³ This piece of information is too short to infer anything about the characteristics of the collection at Antioch, its public function, or the role of Euphorion within it.⁵⁴ In spite of that, this evidence is interesting because it sheds light on other indirect references to cultural life promoted by the Seleucids and to other scholars who were active at Antioch.⁵⁵ Among them we can recall Aratus of Soli, who lived at the court of Antiochos I and possibly edited the Homeric poems, and the poet and grammarian Hegesianax of Troas,

51 Bagnall, "Alexandria: Library of Dreams."

52 See Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.3a, who includes the book collection of the kings of Pergamum among the most famous libraries of antiquity. Cf. Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 8–18.

53 *Suda* [ε 3801], s.v. Εὐφορίων... ἦλθε (sc. Εὐφορίων) πρὸς Ἀντίοχον τὸν μέγαν ἐν Συρίᾳ βασιλεύοντα καὶ προέστη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τῆς ἐκεῖσε δημοσίας βιβλιοθήκης. See Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 122 and 150.

54 The verb προΐστημι of the *Suda's* entry (see n. 53) is used also for the librarians at Alexandria (cf. above n. 25 for the case of Callimachus). On their role, which is debated by modern scholars, see Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 111–116, 139–144. Cf. also Horst Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico* (rev. and ed. Rosa Otranto; Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 2008), 198.

55 Cf. Cicero, *Pro Archia Poeta* 4. For a description of Antioch on the Orontes and a reconstruction of the Seleucid contribution to literature and arts, see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 32–50.

who lived under Antiochos II and became the “king’s friend.”⁵⁶ We have no other information on the library at Antioch, except for a reference by Joannes Malalas, who talks about the foundation of a Museum with a library during the reign of Antiochos IX or Antiochos X.⁵⁷

Archaeological investigations on the acropolis of Pergamum have revealed the presence of buildings and rooms inside the stoa of the sanctuary of Athena Polias, which were probably used for preserving rolls and holding various cultural activities for scholars and readers.⁵⁸ Literary sources preserve very little information about the library of Pergamum, even though it was one of the most famous collections of antiquity, especially thanks to the great impulse given by Eumenes II (197–159 BCE).⁵⁹ Beyond the testimony of Athenaeus, who lists Pergamum among the marvelous collections of Greece, we know about the cultural rivalry of the capital of the Attalid reign with Alexandria and its great efforts to acquire books for enriching the holdings of the library.⁶⁰ Strabo informs us that the heirs of Neleus hid the books of Aristotle when they

56 *Vita Arati* 1, 8 Martin; *Vita Arati* 3, 16 Martin. On this evidence see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 47, and Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 121. On Hegesianax see *Supplementum Hellenisticum* 464 and Edgar Pack, “Antiochia. Schema di uno spazio letterario semi-vuoto,” in *Lo Spazio Letterario della Grecia Antica* (ed. G. Cambiano et al.; Vol. 1.2; Roma: Salerno Editrice, 1993), 717–767 (733–736).

57 Joannes Malalas, *Chronographia* p. 235 Dindorf. On this evidence see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 50, and Canfora, “La Biblioteca e il Museo,” 11–29, 552.

58 For recent interpretations and reconstructions of the library of Pergamum, see Volker M. Strocka, “Römische Bibliotheken,” *Gymnasium* 88 (1981): 298–329 (302–304); Harald Mielsch, “Die Bibliothek und die Kunstsammlung der Könige von Pergamon,” *AA* (1995): 765–779; Herald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck, “Zur Ausstattung und Funktion des Hauptsaaales der Bibliothek von Pergamon,” *Boreas* 18 (1995): 45–56; Wolfgang Radt, *Pergamon. Geschichte und Bauten einer antiken Metropole* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1999), 165–168; Volker M. Strocka, “Noch einmal zur Bibliothek von Pergamon,” *AA* (2000): 155–165; Wolfram Hoepfner, “Die Bibliothek Eumenes’ II. in Pergamon,” in *Antike Bibliotheken* (ed. W. Hoepfner; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2002), 41–52; Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 252–256. For the first identifications and reconstructions of the library of Pergamum, see Alexander Conze, “Die pergamenische Bibliothek,” *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 53 (1884): 1259–1270; Richard Bohn, *Das Heiligtum der Athena Polias Nikephoros* (Berlin: Verlag von W. Spemann, 1885), 56–60; Karl Dziatzko, “Die Bibliotheksanlage von Pergamon,” *Sammlung bibliothekswissenschaftlicher Arbeiten* 10 (1896): 38–47.

59 Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 19–31.

60 See n. 52.

heard about the great zeal of the kings of Pergamum in searching out books for building their collection.⁶¹ The great physician Galen affirms that the cultural contest between the kings of Alexandria and Pergamon was at the origin of the first production of forged books.⁶² And certainly well known is the anecdote about the embargo imposed by Ptolemy V on the export of papyrus, which led Eumenes II of Pergamum to invent the famous *membrana* (parchment) in order to go on with the production of books.⁶³

In spite of this evidence about the importance of the library of Pergamum, we don't have enough information about its structure, organization, and amount of holdings, except for a brief note by Strabo, who talks of the "libraries" (βιβλιοθήκας in the plural) of Pergamum, and Plutarch, who remembers that Antony donated to Cleopatra 200,000 volumes from the "libraries" of Pergamum.⁶⁴ Athenaeus compares the catalogues of Pergamum with those of Alexandria and various sources remember scholars active at the court of the Attalids.⁶⁵ The most famous ones are certainly the Stoic philosopher Crates of Mallos, who founded a famous school of grammars and tried to interpret in an allegoric way the text of the Homeric poems, and the physician Galen.⁶⁶

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- 61 Strabo, *Geographica* 13.1.54 (τὴν σπουδὴν τῶν Ἀτταλικῶν βασιλέων ὑφ' οἷς ἦν ἡ πόλις, ζητούντων βιβλία εἰς τὴν κατασκευὴν τῆς ἐν Περγᾶμῳ βιβλιοθήκης).
- 62 Galenus, *In Hippocratis librum de natura hominis* 15.105 Kühn. On the evidence of Galen and the production of forged books in antiquity, see Luciano Canfora, "Le biblioteche ellenistiche," in *Le biblioteche nel mondo antico e medievale* (ed. G. Cavallo; Roma: Editori Laterza, 1988), 18–19; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 56–57. On the rivalry between Alexandria and Pergamum, see Luciano Canfora, *La biblioteca scomparsa* (Palermo: Sellerio Editore, 1986), 53–58; Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 48–53; Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 200–203.
- 63 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 13.70. On this anecdote see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 25–27 and Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 236.
- 64 Strabo, *Geographica* 13.4.2; Plutarchus, *Antonius* 58.9. On the story about Antony and Cleopatra see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 30–31 and Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 236–237.
- 65 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 8.336d (τὰς ἐν Περγᾶμῳ ἀναγραφάς). On the *Pinakes* of Pergamum see Friedrich Schmidt, *Die Pinakes des Kallimachos* (Berlin: Ebering, 1922), 28, 104–105, and Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 133.
- 66 Suetonius, *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* 2; *Suda* [x 2342], s.v. Κράτης. On the much-debated contribution of Crates to Homeric exegesis, see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 23–24; Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 237–246. On the disagreements between the Alexandrian Aristarchos and Crates, see *Suda* [x 3892], s.v. Ἀρίσταρχος. Cf. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1, 465–466; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 151. On the importance of the contribution of Galen see Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1, 339 and David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science. The European Scientific Tradition*

Other scholars who gravitated to the orbit of the Attalids may have been Antigonus of Carystus, Polemo of Ilium, and Demetrius of Scepsis.⁶⁷ Other names include the poets Nicander of Colophon and Musaeus of Ephesus, the historians Apollodorus of Athens and Neanthes of Cyzicus, and the scientists Biton and Apollonius of Perge.⁶⁸ The libraries of Pergamum and its antiquarian research never reached the importance of Alexandria, but nevertheless the attraction of the court of the Attalids would have been quite strong, as is demonstrated by an anecdote concerning Aristophanes of Byzantium, who was imprisoned for a certain period of time because he had planned to leave Alexandria and flee to Eumenes II.⁶⁹

The models of the great Hellenistic libraries of Alexandria, Antioch, and Pergamum were not isolated, because ancient sources attest the existence of many other smaller libraries around the Mediterranean world. They could be part of other institutions, as, for example, the so-called Ptolemaion of Athens, which was a gymnasium dedicated by one of the Ptolemies.⁷⁰ Among the most famous collections of antiquity Athenaeus mentions also Rhodes, which has preserved two inscriptions, one concerning a list of historical and rhetorical works and another about donations for a library.⁷¹ Finally an inscription from

in *Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to AD 1450*² (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 124–131.

67 Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 246–251.

68 Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 24.

69 *Suda* [α 3936], s.v. Ἀριστῶνυμος. On this piece of information (διασκευασθεῖς δὲ ὡς βουλευόμενος πρὸς Εὐμενῆ φυγεῖν, ἐφυλάχθη ἐν εἰρκτῇ χρόνον τινά), which is preserved under the entry concerning the comic poet Aristonymos, but which has probably to be attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium, see Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 172; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 1, 461; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 149. On other scholars who were invited to join the court of Pergamum, but declined the invitation, see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 23 and Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 234.

70 Cicero, *De finibus* 5.1.1; Pausanias, 1.17.2. Various inscriptions mention the Ptolemaion with its library: Jenö Platthy, *Sources on the Earliest Greek Libraries* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1968), nos. 28–35. On the Ptolemaion see Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 58–59 and Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 203–204.

71 Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.3b. The inscriptions from Rhodes are in Mario Segre, “Epigraphica I. Catalogo di libri da Rodi,” *RFIC* 13 (1935): 214–222; Platthy, *Sources on the Earliest Greek Libraries*, nos. 117, 119. See also Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 17; Blum, *Kallimachos*, 185–187; Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 59–60; Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 204.

Cos dated to the 2nd century BCE attests donations to the local library by a certain Diocles, his son Apollodorus, and other people.⁷²

Thus it is possible to infer from these brief examples that in the Hellenistic period the Mediterranean world was replete with libraries and benefactors who donated money and holdings to enrich them.⁷³ Unfortunately their characteristics are almost unknown to us, but they could be shaped in different ways, attached to different institutions and accessible to various scholars and erudites for their work, as is attested by Polybius in the 2nd century BCE, who suggests choosing a city with good commentaries and a good library for doing historical research.⁷⁴

The First Library Collections in Rome

Between the 3rd and the 2nd century BCE the importance of Greek culture and the passionate admiration of its literature led Romans to collect Greek works and create many different types of private libraries, which served both the needs of upper class families and those of intellectuals interested in translating and readapting Hellenistic themes, as for example Livius Andronicus, Nevius, and Plautus.⁷⁵

In the 2nd century Scipio Aemilianus was a leading figure in patronizing culture and acquiring Greek writings. After the victory over Perseus at the battle of Pidna in 168 BCE, his father Lucius Aemilius Paulus donated to him and his brother—who were lovers of books (φιλογράμματοι)—the books of the Macedonian king, allowing them to bring to Rome the first big library collection of those times.⁷⁶ Polybius himself testifies that his friendship with Scipio arose from the use of some books and discussion about them.⁷⁷ After the conquest of Carthage in 146 BCE, Scipio donated the libraries of the city to the rulers (*reguli*) of Africa who were allied with Rome, while the work of Mago was brought to Rome and translated into Latin.⁷⁸

72 Louis Robert, “ΕΠΙΔΟΣΕΙΣ pour des bibliothèques,” *BCH* 59 (1935): 421–425. See also Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 57–58 and Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 204–205.

73 For other examples of libraries in Sicily and the eastern part of the Mediterranean (e.g., Ephesus, Smyrna, Soli and Mylasa), see Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library*, 8–18 and Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 205–207.

74 Polybius 12.27.4–5. On this passage see Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 207.

75 Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 61–65.

76 Plutarchus, *Aemilius Paulus* 28.6; Isidorus, *Etymologiae* 18.22.

77 Polybius 31.23.4. See Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 65–68.

78 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 18.22; Columella 1.1.13.

In the 1st century BCE many works were imported to Rome as part of booties of military campaigns, such as those of Lucullus and Sulla, who was able to gain possession of the library of Aristotle thanks to the help of the grammarian Tyrannio of Amisus.⁷⁹ Plutarch remembers the generosity of Lucullus, who collected many books from his campaigns against Mithridates and opened his libraries to everyone including the Greeks, building a sort of residence of the Muses.⁸⁰

During the same century and until the 1st century CE, many other important collections were built in Rome thanks to men devoted to literature and learning. The most famous ones were certainly those of Cicero and his friend Atticus, whose letters are still a precious evidence for reconstructing characteristics and organizations of their collections and their methods of gathering and studying books.⁸¹ Beside them, we can remember Varro, who built a rich private library; the owner of the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum, whose extraordinary remains have preserved papyri with the works of Epicurus and Philodemus of Gadara (ca. 1,800 fragments of carbonized papyri); and finally Pliny the Elder.⁸²

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- 79 Strabo, *Geographica* 13.1.54; Plutarchus, *Sulla* 26.1–3. On Tyrannion, whose real name was Theophrastus and who worked in Rome and had relationships with Caesar, Cicero, and Atticus, see *Suda* [τ 1184–1185], s.v. Τυραννίων. Cf. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 68–69; Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 209; Berti and Costa, *La Biblioteca di Alessandria*, 51 n. 3 with further bibliography.
- 80 Plutarchus, *Lucullus* 42.1. Cf. Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 209–210. On the first big library collections formed thanks to the military conquests of Rome, see Paolo Fedeli, “Biblioteche private e pubbliche a Roma e nel mondo romano,” in *Le biblioteche nel mondo antico e medievale* (ed. G. Cavallo; Roma: Editori Laterza, 1988), 31–64 (31–33).
- 81 On these collections and sources about them, see Fedeli, 34–38; Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 69–74; Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 210–213. See also Theodor Pütz, *De M. Tulli Ciceronis Bibliotheca* (diss. Münster. Monasterii Westfalorum, 1925).
- 82 For Varro see Cicero, *Epistulae ad familiares* 9.4; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes atticae* 3.10.17. On the Villa of the Papyri, see Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 214–217 and Tiziano Dorandi, “Pratiques «philologiques» à la bibliothèque de la Villa dei Papiri à Herculaneum,” in *Des Alexandries. 1. Du livre au texte* (ed. L. Giard and C. Jacob; Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2001), 237–248. On the method of Pliny the Elder, see Monica Berti, “Istro alla scuola di Callimaco. Produzione e diffusione della ricerca nella biblioteca di Alessandria,” in *Le età della trasmissione: Alessandria, Roma, Bisanzio. Atti delle giornate di studio sulla storiografia greca frammentaria*, Genova, 29–30 maggio 2012 (ed. F. Gazzano and G. Ottone; Tivoli [Roma]: Edizioni Tored, 2013), 193–210 (203–206). For other artists and intellectuals who formed private libraries in Rome for their passion and needs, see Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 213.

Only after the death of Julius Caesar was the first project to build a public library accomplished by Asinius Pollio, who was able to build the collection thanks to the booty gathered in his victorious campaign in Macedonia.⁸³ The second public library in Rome was built by Augustus on the Palatine with two sections for Greek and Latin books.⁸⁴ Similar projects, which were carried out by Roman emperors and increased the number of imperial public libraries during the first century CE, began a tradition that contributed to reshaping in a different way arrangements and layouts of libraries, making them more similar to modern collections than to Greek ones.⁸⁵

Conclusions

This overview of the Greek and Roman libraries in the Hellenistic age has shown peculiarities and common characteristics of many different collections around the Mediterranean world during the last two centuries BCE and the 1st century CE. Even if ancient sources give us precious information to infer data for knowing something about the origin of these libraries and their features, modern scholars still lack knowledge about the size of these collections, the place of storage of the holdings, and the people who could access them. Especially the question concerning the dimensions of these collections doesn't permit us to deepen aspects related to the growth of the libraries and their arrangement.

In spite of that, the Hellenistic age is witness of the birth and growth of very important library phenomena that were destined to change libraries from then onwards. The Alexandrian library is the first result of the world born after the death of Alexander the Great, when centralized powers began to use culture in a very massive way to legitimize their governments, to spread the Greek heritage all around the known world and to implicitly promote the growth of universal knowledge that began in Athens with the schools of Plato and Aristotle.

83 Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 7.115; Isidorus, *Etymologiae* 6.5.2. Julius Caesar devised the project to realize the first public library in Rome with two sections for Greek and Latin volumes and appointed Varro to collect and organize the books, but the project was never accomplished due to the assassination of Caesar (Suetonius, *Iulius* 44.2). See Fedeli "Biblioteche private e pubbliche a Roma e nel mondo romano," 48–49 and Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 218–219.

84 Suetonius, *Augustus* 29.3. See Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 219–221, with sources also on the third public library built by Augustus in the Portico of Octavia.

85 On the libraries of the Roman empire built in Rome and outside it, see Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World*, 80–123, and Blanck, *Il libro nel mondo antico*, 223–243.

The Seleucid and Attalid libraries at Antioch on the Orontes and Pergamum reproduced the same model of the Alexandrian library because they were the result of the same climate of rivalries of the Hellenistic age and of the common need to legitimize and promote foreign powers in foreign countries. In this case unfortunately we have even less information than for the library at Alexandria about the size of their collections and therefore about their scale in comparison to other collections of the ancient world. Notwithstanding, also in these cases we know that the collections were part of the royal palaces as for Alexandria. So, as in the Ptolemaic experience, these libraries were the direct expression of the power that wanted them and used them for various needs. These libraries have to be understood not simply as buildings isolated from the rest, but first of all as living collections of books that were scattered and arranged in the research centers built by the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and the Attalids. They were enriched both by the competition and avidity of the kings, protagonists of this rivalry, and by the work of the scholars who were gathered by the rulers in their respective royal buildings.

With the first library collections in Rome between the third and the first century CE, we witness the growth and expansion of similar phenomena based on the Greek model but developed in a new historical and cultural world where we see the expansion of private collections. In the Classical and Hellenistic Greek world we know about private libraries, but in the Roman time we begin to have more information about them and about the methods of gathering, studying, and publishing books.