

A detailed illustration of a classic study or library. In the background, a brick fireplace with a warm fire is flanked by two tall, ornate brass lamps. To the right, a marble bust sits on a wooden cabinet, with a large vase and a bookshelf nearby. A wooden chair with a decorative back is also visible. In the foreground, an open book with a quill pen resting on it lies on a wooden table. To the left of the book is a small brass lamp with a single candle. To the right is a blue inkwell with a quill pen. The text "IS READING IMPORTANT?" is written in large, yellow, serif capital letters across the center of the image.

IS READING
IMPORTANT?

- “READING MAKES A FULL MAN”

F. Bacon

- “READING IS TO THE MIND WHAT EXERCISE IS TO THE BODY”

R. Steele

- “READING IS A VITAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION WITH ALL OF MANKIND AND WINDOW OF MANY AGES”

O. Suleymenov

books can tell us a lot about ...
lives of famous people
politics
ancient times
the arts and fashion
teenagers' problems
gardening
latest discoveries
plants and animals
interesting things
the rest of the world
cookery

books help ...
discover new things
explore new ideas
expand outlook
educate
learn more about ...
solve problems
escape from everyday
life problems

I think reading is important
because ...

books ...
teach how to ...
give information about
make feel good

it is the perfect way to ...
make fun
entertain oneself
to feel comfortable
spend free time
relax
not to be alone
not to feel bored

Reading is not important
because ...

it is easier to watch TV or video
it hurts eyes
it makes me think hard

it is boring/annoying
it gives a headache
it takes too much time

Read the text once very attentively and try to understand and remember as much as you can.

The Printed Word

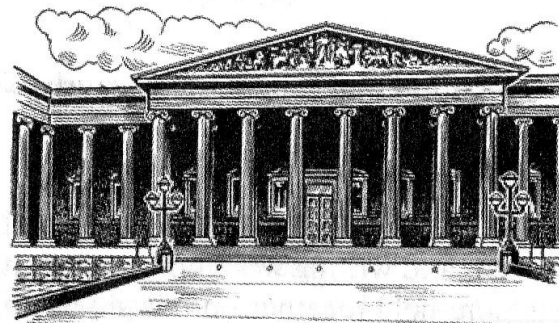
The earliest books were written on tablets of wood or pieces of bark. In Greece and Rome, the tablets of wood were covered with wax [wæks], and writing was impressed upon them with a small stick called “stylus”. These tablets were held together on one side with thin strips of leather or metal rings. In Assyria [əˈsɪrɪə] and Babylonia [ˌbæbɪˈlɒniə] clay tablets were used for writing and the words were drawn with a piece of wood. After baking, the tablets were kept on shelves, just like books are kept today. Although the clay tablets didn't look very beautiful, they were long-lasting and some of them survived until the present day.

The earliest books of the ancient world were written on papyrus [pəˈpaɪərəs] and skins of young animals. These books took the form of a long strip, rolled from one cylinder to another. These writings were known to the Romans as *volumen* from which comes the word *volume*. Though paper has been known in China since the first century, the secret of papermaking came to Europe much later.

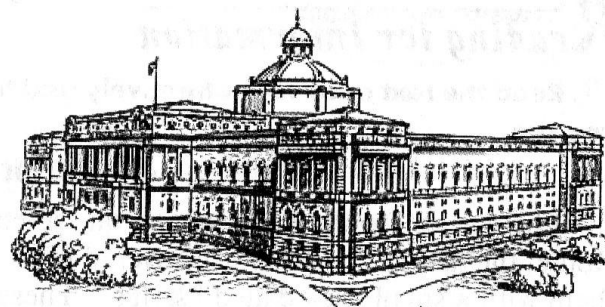
Books were quite common in ancient Rome: we know that there were many booksellers and the first public library was founded there about 39 B.C.¹ Only the rich could buy books or make their slaves copy books from important libraries. By the time of the Middle Ages all books were handwritten and often beautifully decorated. Libraries used to chain books to the shelves so that they could not be removed from the building. But very few people could read them. The invention of printing was a really great event in history. The first people to invent printing were the Chinese. In Europe there were several people who can be called inventors of printing. The best-known is Johann Gutenberg [dʒəʊˈænˈɡʊːtənɜːg] from Germany.

Printing went quickly over Europe and by the end of the 15th century there were more than 200 presses. The early printers were not only craftsmen, but also editors, publishers and booksellers. The first printing press in England was set up by William Caxton [ˈkækstən] at Westminster in 1476, and the first printing press in Russia — by Ivan Fedorov in Moscow in 1564. Printed books soon reached a very high standard and the craftsmen were rightfully proud of their work. Eventually there were more and more people in Europe who could read and they wanted more and more books. That led to opening more libraries.

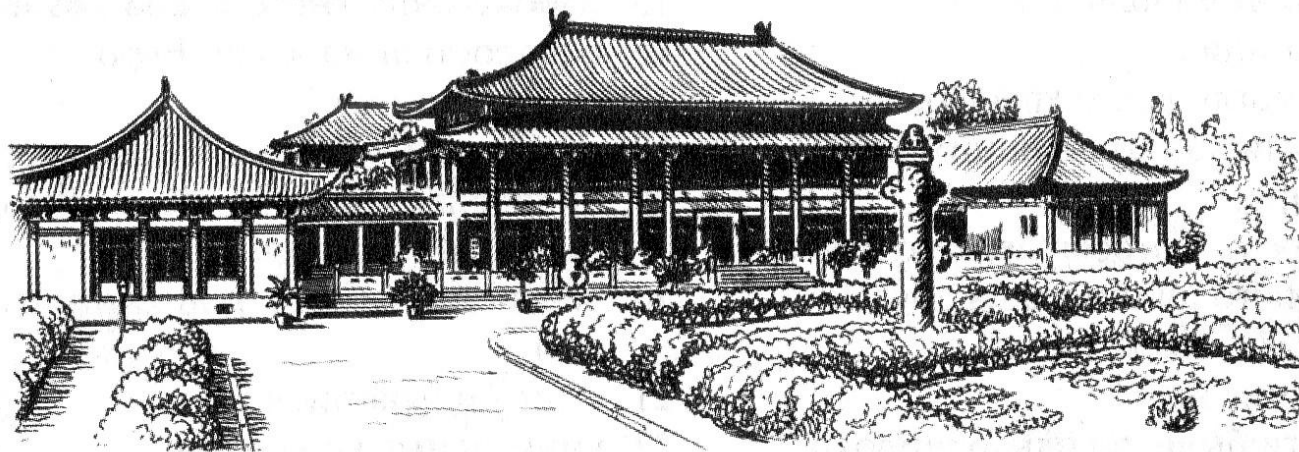
Early libraries were used only by scientists and were few. By and by they grew in number and began to be used by the public. The 19th century saw the appearance of a proper system of public libraries. Now most countries have their own national libraries. Many old university libraries have rich collections of books: Oxford and Cambridge in England, Harvard and Yale [jeɪl] in the United States. Among the great libraries of the world we can name the *British Museum Library* (the British Library) in London, the *Library of Congress* in the United States, *Bibliothèque* [bɪbliˈtek] *Nationale* [nasjəˈnal] in



The British Museum Library



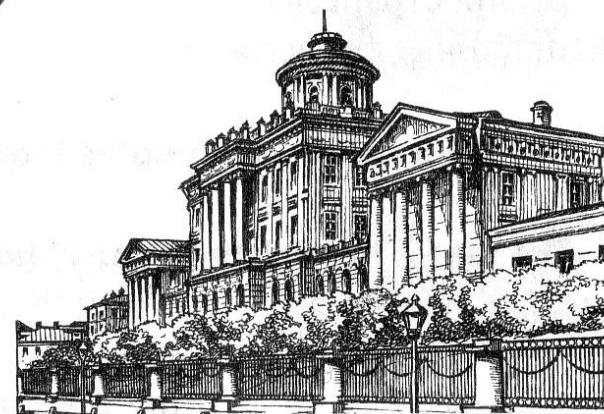
The Library of Congress



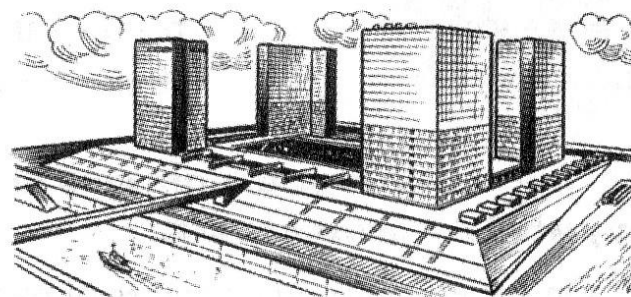
The Beijing Library

France, the Beijing¹ Library in China, the State Public Library in Moscow. The world's largest is the US Library of Congress. It holds about 90 million items — books and manuscripts ['mænjʊskripts]. The library was founded in 1800 in Washington, DC for the use of Congress and later became a public library. Bibliotheque Nationale dates back to the 17th century and the British Museum Library was set in the 18th century. The State Public Library in Moscow was founded in 1862 and has unique [ju:'ni:k] collections of books.

Modern libraries do their best to help people get information as quickly as possible. They use computers and electronic catalogues ['kætələgz]. Probably the most difficult problem for any library is to keep their books, journals ['dʒ:nlz] and films. How they do it is a new story.



The State Public Library



Bibliotheque Nationale

Now that you've read the text once, answer these questions

- What materials were used to make ancient books?
- In what places of the world did people have books in ancient times?
- Where and when was printing invented?
- By whom were early libraries used?
- When did many public libraries appear?
- What old universities have good libraries?
- What cities of the world have great libraries?

LES MAISONS DE LA PRESSE



"Whisper!"



Marie-Ode Murail

“READING MAKES A FULL MAN”

F. Bacon

