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TOWARDS AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF LIBRARIES[1]

This chapter discusses the history of libraries from the perspective of the material culture of knowledge. It is concerned with the buildings, including the shape of interior spaces, with the practical problems of heating, lighting and accommodating both staff and readers, and not least, with the arrangement of books on the shelves.

Key words: classification, material culture, organization of knowledge

I have long dreamed of a historical anthropology of libraries as part of a wider anthropology of knowledge. After all, like other organizations, libraries develop their own rules and traditions, initiation ceremonies etc.[2] They are the sites of a distinctive culture or at any rate a distinctive sub-culture, or more exactly two cultures, that of librarians and that of readers, coexisting in more or less harmony according to circumstances.

In this chapter, however, I shall be arguing not so much for an anthropology as for an archaeology of libraries. The use of the term "archaeology" is not – at least in the first instance – a reference to the metaphorical intellectual archaeology of Michel Foucault. The libraries to be discussed here are not the "libraries without walls" described so eloquently by Roger Chartier. The emphasis on what follows will be on the material culture of knowledge, studied not for its own sake but as evidence of past practices.[3]

If we attempt to read material culture in this way, we have much to learn from archaeologists.[4] I am not thinking exclusively of archaeologists of antiquity, though they certainly have a contribution to make. It may not be possible to uncover the lost library of Alexandria, but in 2005 an American millionaire offered to fund the excavation of a library at Herculaneum, the so-called Villa of the Papyri.[5]

This approach need not be limited to the ancient world. The definition of archaeology that I shall be following is a wide one. In this wide sense archaeology includes all material culture, whether ancient, medieval, early industrial or contemporary, "the archaeology of us". This chapter is inspired by the example of two American archaeologists who introduced new students to the subject some twenty five years ago by asking them to walk around their own campus at the University of Arizona at Tucson and to read it for evidence of use.

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[2]   Henri-Jean Martin, *Les métamorphoses du livre*, Paris 2004, 151-152.

[3]   Françoise Waquet, *L'ordre materiel du savoir*, Paris 2015.

[4]   For example, Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past*, Cambridge 1986.

[5]   *Sunday Times* (London), 13/2/2005.

In the museum, for instance, their attention was called to the indentations in the linoleum floor left by previous exhibitions. They were also asked to note the "discoloured patch on the men's room door", produced by the pressure of many hands pushing it open.[6] The "clues" or "traces" studied in this way are reminiscent of crime scene investigations, but there are two major differences. Archaeologists, unlike detectives, are interested in collective rather than individual agency and recurrent actions rather than single ones. Not the individual footsteps across the grass but the regular usage leading to the creation of an unofficial path.

Whether or not a real archaeologist would recognize what follows as archaeology, this is what has inspired the approach. I shall focus in turn on spaces, furnishings and books, privileging examples from libraries in which I have worked myself, mainly in Britain but also in France, Italy, The Netherlands, the USA, Brazil and elsewhere. The word "towards" in the title is intended to remind readers that studies of this kind are still few in number. One point of this attempt at synthesis, however provisional or even premature, is to provoke thought and encourage research in this area. It offers not only a survey but also a manifesto for what has so far been a relatively neglected approach to library history.

1. Spaces

This section is concerned with what the American sociologist Erving Goffman used to call the "front region", or what seventeenth-century scholars would have called a "theatre of knowledge", in which libraries take their place alongside anatomy theatres, lecture rooms and laboratories. The outer shell of the library, especially the façade, is often splendid, reminding viewers of a temple or a palace – in the case of the Newberry Library in Chicago, a palace of the Florentine Renaissance.

Within the library the reading room is often impressive. In the Renaissance and later these rooms often took the form of a hall, as in the case of the Escorial (1584), the Vatican (1589), the Ambrosiana (1609), Arts End, Oxford (1610), the Wren Library at Trinity College Cambridge (1695), the so-called "Prunksaal" of the Imperial Library in Vienna (designed by Fischer von Erlach and completed by his son, 1735), the library of Trinity College Dublin (1732) by Thomas Burgh, the Codrington Library, by Nicholas Hawksmoor, at All Souls College Oxford (1751), paid for by a legacy of £ 6,000 derived from the profits of sugar and slavery; or the Playfair Library at Edinburgh (1820s).[7]

A few impressive reading-rooms are of course circular, as in the case of the Radcliffe Camera at Oxford, designed by James Gibbs (originally a medical library), or the old Reading Room of the British Museum, designed by Sydney Smirke (Robert's brother) on the model of the Pantheon in Rome (following an idea of the librarian Antonio Panizzi). Variants on this design include the Rotunda at Wolfenbüttel (1704) the "hemicycle" of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (1865 – 1868, by Henri Labrouste), and the oval reading room of the original Warburg Institute in Hamburg, opened in 1926 and recently restored to its original use.

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[6]   Richard Wilk – Michael B. Schiffer, "The Modern Material-Culture Field School: Teaching Archaeology on the University Campus", in: Richard A. Gould – Michael B. Schiffer (eds.), *Modern Material Culture: the Archaeology of Us*, New York 1981, 15-30.

[7]   Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types*, London 1976, 91-110; Edmund Craster, *History of All Souls College Library*, London 1971, 66-81.

The layout of libraries needs to be viewed in the context of other building forms of the time. Just as the display of objects in museums was influenced by trends in the design of shop windows, so contemporary libraries sometimes follow the model of offices, as in the open plan of the new KB in The Hague. On the other hand, changes in layout are also responses to the particular problems of libraries. An analysis of the changing use of their spaces reveals a strong trend towards separation and specialization, with occasional movements in the opposite direction, such as the abolition of separate seats for ladies in the British Museum in 1907.[8]

The functional specialization of library space appears to be an inexorable trend. The separation of reading-rooms and book-stacks (*depot*, *magasin*, etc.) becomes more and more visible from the mid-19th-century onwards. The stacks often moved underground (underneath Radcliffe Square in Oxford from 1912 onwards) and might even be out-housed (in Woolwich during the last years of the British Museum Reading Room), leading to problems of delivery by pneumatic tubes, by van and so on.[9]

Separate rooms for manuscripts, newspapers, periodicals, maps, music, photographs, rare books, and so on have proliferated, together with separate spaces for certain kinds of reader – seminar rooms for students, carrels for postgraduates or faculty and so on. Lifts, lavatories and cafés have tended to eat up more and more library space. The library staff too required more and more space, divided into separate offices and workshops for binding, cataloguing, conservation, photography and so on. This trend is older than one might think: a plan for a "Photoatelier" in Hofbibliothek in Vienna dates from 1860.[10]

The crucial thing to say about library space is that it is generally under threat from the growing numbers both of books and readers. In the 17th century the Ambrosiana, which was already one of Europe's great libraries, had seats for only 42 readers. In 1868, however, the Bibliothèque Nationale had room for 400 readers. In the year 1900, nearly 200,000 readers are recorded to have entered the Reading Room of the British Museum (in other words 660 a day for 300 days, thus excluding Sundays and holidays).[11]

To review changes in more detail let us take the case of Oxford. In 1880, the number of readers in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (that is, what is now known as Lower Bodley) averaged as low as sixteen at any one time (before crying "scandal" it is worth remembering that students had access to college libraries as well as that of the University).[12]

By this time, however, after the great university reforms of the 1870s, pressure on space was increasing. Around the year 1900, the Radcliffe Camera was overflowing, so the 56 places there were increased to 86 by bringing the gallery into use. Upper Bodley, formerly a picture gallery, accommodated readers from 1907 onwards. By 1920, there were 500 – 600 readers in the Bodleian every weekday in term-time, thus catching up with the British Museum.[13]

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8 Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, London 1973, 280.

9 Edmund Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library, 1845-1945*, Oxford 1952, 236-237.

10 Josef Stummvoll (ed.), *Geschichte der österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, 1, Vienna 1968, 437.

11 Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, 257.

12 Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library*, 240; Michael G. Brock – Mark C. Curthoys (eds.), *History of the University of Oxford*, 7, Oxford 2000, 750.

13 Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library*, 337.

All these spaces need air but have not always been sufficiently ventilated. In the British Museum the "Museum headache" was well known, and Swinburne once fainted in the Reading Room. There was a similar problem in the Bodleian.[14]

Library spaces also need to be heated and lighted. In the long period before gas and electricity, both heating and lighting were dangerous. The problem could be avoided, and often was avoided, by the simple expedient of opening the library for only a few hours in the middle of the day. The Bodleian was not unusual in forbidding the introduction of "fire or flame" into the library from its foundation, though unusual in retaining the phrase in the oath still sworn by readers on their admission. When the French orientalist Abraham Anquetil-Duperron visited Oxford in 1762, he found the library unheated in cold weather. Heating pipes were installed in the Bodleian only in 1845, and the curators asked the superintendent of the London Fire Brigade to advise them on the risk involved (he recommended insulation). Despite the pipes, a nineteenth-century librarian remembered the Bodleian as "either close or cold, and for a great part of the year, both".[15]

In 1836 a House of Commons Committee investigated the British Museum. One of the concerns of this "Select Committee on the Condition, Management and Affairs of the British Museum" was the lighting: "Artificial light, then", they asked, in what even the official record suggests were tones of surprise, "is never admitted?" "Never admitted" came the reply.[16] The committee pursued the question in a comparative manner with questions to Sir Robert Smirke, the architect of the King's Library (the RR not being built yet). "Are you aware of any means adopted in the Bibliothèque du Roy (the predecessor of the Bibliothèque Nationale) to maintain warmth? There are none". Smirke went on to say that he was told that readers in the Bibliothèque du Roy "must keep themselves warm as well as they can".[17]

The Committee went on to send a questionnaire on the subject to a number of European libraries. At the University of Buda, "no lights ever admitted". In Florence (where four libraries were investigated) "Lights never used". At the University of Göttingen, "No lights or fire ever admitted into the library". In Berlin: "Fire and candles strictly forbidden in the library, but not so strictly in the reading room".[18]

A few library regimes were more relaxed or reader-friendly. There was for example a brazier in the Ambrosiana in the 17th century. In the eighteenth century the Bibliothèque Mazarin in Paris was lighted by chandeliers.[19] Returning to the questionnaire of the Select Committee, the answer of the Dutch libraries was "Neither fire nor lights forbidden".

It is tempting to conclude that from the point of view of an archaeologist, there are two great epochs of library history, before and after electric light (preceded by experiments

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[14] Ibid., 240; Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, 279.

[15] Arthur Waley, *Secret History of the Mongols*, London 1963, 19; Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library*, 134-137; G. V. Cox, quoted in: Ian G. Philip, "The Bodleian Library", in: Brock – Curthoys (eds.), *History of the University of Oxford*, 6, Oxford 1997, 585-597, at 585.

[16] *Report from the Select Committee on the Condition, Management and Affairs of the British Museum* (1836, facsimile rpr. Shannon, 1968), 412, question 5005. The laconic answers, here and below, suggest that statements have been summarized in the report.

[17] Ibid., 443, question 5409.

[18] Ibid., 561.

[19] Kurt Jarmuth, *Lichter Leuchten im Abendland*, Braunschweig 1967, illus. 207.

with gas). In 1893, for instance, electric light was installed at every seat in the Reading Room of the British Museum, which no longer closed on a foggy day at a time when such days were still common in London.[20] The Radcliffe Camera, by that time a reading-room, was lit by electricity in 1905, a quarter-century after the possibility of such lighting was first discussed at Oxford.[21] Problems remained. There was a fire in the university library in Turin in 1904 caused by faulty wiring. No wonder then that there was some hesitation over the adoption of the new invention. At the Hofbibliothek in Vienna, for instance, portable lamps were preferred to electric lighting, even in the stacks.[22]

2. Furnishings

Rather unkindly, the Swiss scholar Jean Leclerc described the Ambrosiana as "more set off with statues, pictures and other ornaments … than by any great number of its books".[23] Furnishings, including paintings, busts, statues, and giant terrestrial and celestial globes, made impressive contributions to the theatre of knowledge.[24]

The iconography of libraries has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years – the imagery of *translatio studii* in the Hofbibliothek in Vienna, for example.[25] Again, the idea of the library as a world (microcosm), or the world as a library goes back a long way before Borges. It was built into or more exactly painted onto libraries, illustrating Leibniz's remark in a letter of 1679 that "Il faut qu'une Bibliothèque soit une Encyclopédie".

The world of learning has long been symbolized by portraits of its leading citizens. Hugo Blotius, a Netherlander who became imperial librarian in Vienna, advised his employer to decorate the library with portraits of illustrious men.[26] In the Bodleian and the Ambrosiana the same principle was followed in the early seventeenth century, thus presenting a collective portrait of the Republic of Letters, the imagined community of scholars, extended in time as well as space.[27]

Some private libraries followed the same practice: Richelieu's library is recorded to have been decorated with 58 portraits of scholars and others, including Petrarch and Boccaccio, Alciati and Budé, Erasmus and Montaigne, Lipsius and Scaliger.[28] The tradition lasted into the modern period. The long rows of busts in TCD. The 36 medallion portraits

[20] Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, 270, 279.

[21] Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library*, 238.

[22] Stummvoll (ed.), *Geschichte*, 509.

[23] Quoted in: Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment*, Oxford 2001, 134; cf. Peter Burke, "L'Ambrosiana e l'Europa del tempo", in: Massimo Lanza (ed.), *Storia dell'Ambrosiana: il Seicento*, Milan 1992, 391-413.

[24] Eva-Maria Hanebutt-Benz, *Die Kunst des Lesens: Lesemöbel und Leseverhalten vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Frankfurt 1985; Norman D. Stevens, „Library Equipment", in: Wayne A. Wiegand – Donald G. Davis (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Library History*, New York 1994, 358-364.

[25] André Masson, *The Pictorial Catalogue*, 1972 (English transl.; Oxford 1981); Carsten-Peter Warncke (ed.), *Ikonographie der Bibliotheken*, Wiesbaden 1992.

[26] Howard Louthan, "Reformation of the Imperial Library", in: Idem, *Quest for Compromise*, Cambridge 1997, 67-84, at 77.

[27] Ian G. Philip, *The Bodleian Library in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Oxford 1983; Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana*, Cambridge 1993.

[28] Jörg Wollenberg, *Richelieu*, Bielefeld 1977, 133.

in the 19th-century Bibliothèque Nationale included Montaigne, Racine and Molière, and among foreigners Machiavelli, Shakespeare and Cervantes.

Turning now from the impressive to the practical, we find that the simple system of shelves or cupboards for books and tables or desks for readers has become progressively more complicated. Library furniture has long included chains, lecterns, book-stands, chains, book wheels and of course ladders. Gabriel Naudé complained that books were shelved too high in Milan, a practice revealing that space was already in short supply. In the Bodleian in the early eighteenth century, the weight of books in the new gallery threatened the safety of the building. In the British Museum, swinging presses were introduced in 1887 to solve the problem of diminishing shelf space, creating in turn problems of overload.[29]

Turning to seating, an archaeologist may read the shift from pews (still to be found in the Lower Bodleian and in college libraries such as St John's Oxford) to straight-backed wooden chairs and then to armchairs as a sign of changing attitudes to study and the use of books. In 1756, Windsor chairs, "admirably calculated for Ornament and Repose" were supplied for use in the Bodleian.[30] In the nineteenth century, we find leather armchairs in use in the libraries of London clubs and in the London Library, which has the atmosphere of a club. The metal book-stands sometimes attached to them suggest that the chairs were intended for reading books or at least newspapers as well as for sleeping. Today, even academic institutions such as the Firestone in Princeton offer armchairs in some parts of the library. The new Jerwood Library at Trinity Hall (opened in 1998) even offers places for readers to recline.

Other types of library equipment have gradually multiplied. In the seventeenth century the Ambrosiana was unusual – as scholarly travellers sometimes noted – in providing inkpots and pens for readers.[31] The practice spread and the British Museum Reading Room carried on the tradition of steel pens and open inkwells until quite late in the 20th century, despite the risk of spilt ink. More and more items have arrived: in the front region of the library, including stands for drinking water (especially in the USA), Xerox machines and of course computers to search the catalogue.

However, research on libraries also needs to consider the "back regions", the world behind the scenes, just as military history considers the logistics of supply as well as what happens in the front line. Here too we find the rise of new forms of equipment such as book trucks, book-lifts, conveyor belts, internal telephones (installed in the Bodleian in 1913) and security systems, as well as small items such as accession stamps.[32]

Perhaps the most important of all these items of equipment is the catalogue. The catalogue of the library of Leiden University was already in print by 1595, allowing readers who lived elsewhere to know whether or not to pay a visit. The example was followed in Oxford, Paris and elsewhere. A later innovation was the introduction of printed forms or slips for readers to fill in when they applied for books. In the case of the British Museum, these slips were used from 1837 onwards.[33] By the 1950s, the back of the forms was printed

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[29] Philip, "Libraries and the University Press", in: Lucy S. Sutherland – Leslie G. Mitchell (eds.), *History of the University of Oxford*, 5, Oxford 1986, 725-756, at 727; Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, 274, 325.

[30] Thomas Warton, quoted in: Philip, "Libraries and the University Press", 739.

[31] Burke, "L'Ambrosiana".

[32] Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library*, 336; Matthew Battles, *Library: an Unquiet History*, New York 2003, 142.

[33] Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*, 155.

with a list of the reasons why a particular book was unavailable, reasons ranging from "in use" to "destroyed by bombing in the war". The move illustrates the bureaucratization of libraries in the Weberian sense of standardization and a shift from oral to written communication. It may illustrate bureaucracy in the pejorative sense as well.[34]

3. Books

Let me turn at last to books, viewed here as material objects of different sizes occupying space. The number of books in libraries has multiplied at a dizzying rate. A good medieval monastic library might have 500 or at the end of the Middle Ages 1000 mss. The Vatican Library had 2,500 volumes in 1475. In 1600 the imperial library in Vienna had 10,000 volumes but by 1738 the number had increased to 200,000. Soon after the French Revolution, when it swallowed some ecclesiastical libraries, the B. N. had more than 300,000 volumes. The British Museum had 540,000 volumes in 1856. The Bodleian had a million printed books by 1914. Today, the Widener Library at Harvard has nearly five million and the Library of Congress the mind-boggling number of some 100 million items.[35]

The incorporation of smaller libraries in larger ones produces strata in which it may be revealing to dig. The Escorial acquired the libraries of Antonio Agustín, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza and Benito Arias Montano. The Vatican Library acquired the Palatina collection (looted from Heidelberg by Maximilian of Bavaria), the Urbino collection and that of Queen Kristina of Sweden. The Hofbibliothek of Vienna acquired the books that had once belonged to Busbecq, Tycho Brahe, Prince Eugen. The French Bibliothèque Royale acquired Casaubon's and later Colbert's library. In Britain, the British Museum swallowed Harley's and Grenville's collections, the Bodleian swallowed Selden's and the CUL that of Lord Acton.

Another kind of stratigraphy may be still more illuminating. Books acquired at a certain time testify to the interests of contemporaries. Conversely, what is thrown away, weeded out or as recent jargon has it, "de-accessioned", tells us about the decline of particular interests, like the information that is regularly dropped from encyclopaedias when they are brought "up to date". In other words, like the archaeologist of middens, the book historian needs to study rubbish, or more exactly what was considered to be rubbish, or at least a source of embarrassment, in different periods or in different types of library.

Alternatively, the books may be kept but their titles removed from the catalogue. In East Berlin in 1960s, for instance, politically subversive books were not in the catalogue of the university library (one might compare the removal of entries on Trotsky and others from successive editions of the *Soviet Encyclopaedia*). Many novels have been removed from the general catalogue of Cambridge University Library so that students will not be led into temptation. Pornography often has a special status, in "enfer" in the Bbibliothèque Nationale and more mysteriously, in the old British Museum, "Cup"[36].

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[34] I once ordered a book published in the 1960s and the form came back with a tick in the "bombing" section.

[35] Battles, *Library*, 4, 8, 86.

[36] I used to think that the abbreviation stood for "Cupid". More prosaically, it turned out to mean "cupboard".

The arrangement of books offers clues to the "arrangement of knowledge".[37] The beginning and the end of the story of book classification are better known than the middle. The traditional system involved classification by faculties, such as theology, law, medicine and so on, and it became unworkable when the growing number of books required more and more subdivisions. The modern system, whether alphabetical or numerical, allows for subdivisions. The adoption of the Dewey and Library of Congress systems in libraries in many parts of the world offers a spectacular example of standardization and globalization.

In between the two systems comes what we might call the age of experiment, a variety of solutions adopted in different places or in the same place at different times. Thus in Cambridge, John Taylor invented the A – Z classes (O for history, for instance) together with refinements such as Aa*, Bb*.

Again, the library of the Warburg Institute in London was originally the private library of Aby Warburg, and it was he who decided that thought (religion, magic, humanism) should be on the lower floors, leading to action (history) at the top. When Warburg's assistant Fritz Saxl first entered the library in 1911, he found the arrangement "baffling", all the more so because Warburg "never tired" of re-arranging the books. Even today, the Warburg Institute still practices what Warburg himself called "the law of the good neighbour", according to which a reader will find the book he or she really wants on the shelf next to the book they already know about, a system that requires an extremely fine-mesh subject classification only viable if the librarians read the books themselves.[38]

In many libraries, however, what might be called "non-intellectual factors" have long influenced arrangements. For example, John Selden's executors required the c8000 books he left to the Bodleian to be "kept together in one distinct pile and body", hence Selden End.[39] In 1583 Cambridge University Library arranged books according to their previous owners such as Matthew Parker, Nicholas Bacon, and Robert Horne, bishop of Winchester.[40] Emmanuel College Library swallowed the private collection of its former Master William Sancroft, but keeps it apart from the rest, like a village that has been engulfed by a city but retains its own identity.

Classification systems take a concrete form that allow archaeological investigation. They may be painted on the walls or shelves, as in the case of Trinity College Dublin (each bay lettered in majuscule, A etc., each shelf in miniscule, beginning at the bottom with aa, then bb, cc etc.), or the Playfair Library at Edinburgh, bearing inscriptions such as H*23. Classifications are also inscribed on the books themselves. In the fairly typical case of Cambridge University Library, for instance, "titles and numbers were written on the edges of the leaves" from 1574 onwards, showing that books used to be shelved with their backs to the wall.[41] From the year 1700 or thereabouts, on the other hand, the books coming into the library were "lettered on the spine and shelved in the modern manner".[42] An inspection of the covers and flyleaves of particular volumes sometimes

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[37] Daniel Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, Cambridge 2000, 173-177.

[38] Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg*, London 1971, 325-338 (a previously unpublished account by Saxl).

[39] Philip, *The Bodleian Library*, 48.

[40] John C. T. Oates, *Cambridge University Library*, 1, Cambridge 1986.

[41] Ibid., 113.

[42] Ibid., 472, 479.

reveals as many as six successive systems of classification: in Cambridge, the *Mémoires de l' Académie des Inscriptions*, once XV.5.1-, became Mm-4-1-, then 28.2.1-, then 28.8.1-, then P500.b.50.1-, and is now T.500.b.50.1-.

The material evidence for what might be called the official history of books (book-plates, gift labels, classification marks) needs to be supplemented by the material evidence for their unofficial history (dog-earing, underlining, marginalia). This evidence presents a problem for the archivist concerned with conservation.

Take the case of the books of the Brazilian sociologist-historian Gilberto Freyre, which remain on the shelves more or less where he left them in his house in Apipucos, a suburb of Recife, although the house is now a foundation, the Fundação Gilberto Freyre. Freyre was an active reader, indeed a "hands on" reader who dog-eared pages, wrote in margins, and underlined passages with pen, pencil, or when other instruments were lacking, his fingernail. When my wife and I were at the Fundação, studying Freyre, we found that the archivist-librarian was de-dog-earing the pages, doubtless following the instructions for conservation that she had received at a school for librarians; we had to explain that the damage he had done to his books was precious evidence for Freyre's intellectual development, and ought to be preserved.

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This chapter has suggested that the archaeology of western libraries makes or can make a contribution to a cultural anthropology or cultural history of western knowledge, which has long been viewed as essentially cumulative, and divided into disciplines. The ideas of the accumulation of knowledge and intellectual progress have taken a material form in the accumulation of books and the throwing away of works considered to be "out of date". Shelving gives the system of disciplines a material form and so makes it appear to be natural, reinforcing it.[43] Finally, the layout and the furnishings of libraries encourage or discourage certain practices or styles of reading: skimming, comparing, individual or group reading aloud or in silence.

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[43]   Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, Cambridge 2000, chapter 5.