Public Libraries and Public Benefaction in the Roman Empire

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Master of Arts Dissertation, Submitted May 31, 2023

A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Summary

This dissertation examines the use of Roman libraries as public benefactions during the principate. It argues that while euergetism typically involved an exchange of amenities from wealthy donors for approval from the non-elite citizens of a community, libraries were a form of munificence aimed entirely by elites at other elites. The non-elite citizens of the Roman Empire were almost entirely illiterate, and public libraries therefore offered them nothing of interest. Despite this, benefactors nonetheless saw value in donating libraries to their communities, because they offered the donors opportunities to display their apex status within elite society, and enabled forms of commemoration that no other type of euergetism could.

Word Count: 15,723

Introduction

Public libraries in the ancient Roman Empire pose an interpretive puzzle: they were one of the few readily-accessible sources of books, bestowed upon a population that was almost entirely unable to read them. They were doubtless welcomed by literate elites, but, unlike almost all other forms of public benefaction, they offered nothing to the illiterate masses. If few people could read, why were public libraries built at all? Not only built, but built repeatedly across the Roman Empire, lavishly and at great cost, for the smallest possible community of users. Numerous studies of both ancient libraries and euergetism have appeared in recent years, but few books or papers note this peculiarity of Roman libraries. This paper aims to explore this problem, arguing that libraries were a form of euergetism that not only benefited the Empire's literary class, but were an innovative means for their donors to display their status—not only to their communities in general, but to other elites in particular.

Julius Caesar's planned libraries, though never built, nonetheless established the fundamental traits that would define public libraries across the Roman Empire for the next two centuries. According to Suetonius, Caesar: *...destinabat...bibliothecas Graecas Latinasque quas maximas posset publicare data Marco Varroni cura comparandarum ac digerendarum...* ["determined ... to make public Greek and Latin libraries, as large as possible, giving to Marcus Varro the duty of preparing and arranging them..."].[1] Though intended to be public (*publicare*), they had a decidedly narrow appeal: the inclusion of both Latin and Greek collections, and the appointment of the polymath Terentius Varo, both suggest that, unlike temples, baths, theatres, or fountains, Caesar's libraries were not gifts for the populace at large; they were for the small and sufficiently well-educated portion of Roman society that could actually read the books within

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[1] Suet. Caes. 44.1-3. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

them.[2] Moreover, the libraries were planned within a context of elite competition. Before his death, Caesar had already undertaken projects to compete with Pompey's theatre complex, such as the Forum of Caesar, permanent structures for the Circus Maximus, and a new theatre adjacent to the temple of Apollo.[3] His libraries were clearly intended in this same competitive spirit, if Suetonius is anything to go by: he mentions them among other massive building and engineering projects Caesar had planned, suggesting they would have not only left his competitors behind, but, being *quas maximas posset* ["as large as possible"], would have outdone any library that even Hellenistic monarchs had built. After Caesar's death, emperors and wealthy citizens would continue to provide libraries as a form of munificent donation. In doing so, they continued this pattern of exclusiveness and competition that defined Caesars' never-realized designs.

Literature Review

The study of Roman libraries is a relatively new and fairly specialized area of research. It started in the early twentieth century with general surveys that laid the groundwork for the field, relying heavily on literary evidence, as library archeology was limited at that point.[4] Later surveys incorporated more evidence and broadened the field by incorporating archeological and epigraphical evidence more thoroughly, as well as introducing general questions of the socio-

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[2] Scholars generally agree that Roman public libraries appealed to a very limited portion of the public: Bruce, 1981, p. 566: "In truth the appellation 'public' is not particularly correct in the modern sense because a large reading segment of the population did not exist; reading was mostly the pastime of the educated upper and middle classes of society." Dix, 1994, p. 286: "Those authors who praise 'public access' to books most likely had in mind a 'public' made up of others like themselves. Given the high level of illiteracy in the ancient world, they had no reason to imagine great hordes of readers scurrying to the libraries." Cavallo, 2003, p. 70: "They [libraries] were, in substance, erudite libraries, originally conceived as places accessible to all, but in reality frequented by a limited public of the learned and professional literati." Platt, 2008, p. 6: "I argue that [library] buildings constituted highly visible islands of elite space in the cityscape. These spaces were simultaneously visible and inaccessible to members of the community who lacked the necessary educational background to participate in the high literary culture of the empire."

[3] Holleran, 2003, p. 54.

[4] Cagnat, 1906; Boyd, 1909.

political aspects of Roman libraries.[5] Some scholars began taking a focused look at aspects of library management, such as the role freedmen played,[6] and the acquisition and management of book collections.[7] Other studies focused on particular social aspects of the Roman library, both in the city of Rome and in the provinces.[8] Scholars also started providing correctives for assumptions arising from the uncritical use of literary sources, such as the fate of Ovid's books in Roman public libraries.[9] The distorting influence of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* has also been examined, as this unreliable work is the only literary evidence for the presence of libraries in bath complexes,[10] and for certain library collections such as the linen rolls in Trajan's libraries.[11] Library donors and users also developed into a more discrete field of research.[12] Archaeological studies added significantly to our knowledge of Roman libraries, despite the fact that only one library (in Trajan's forum) has been excavated in Rome, and that only partially;[13] while in the provinces, a handful of public libraries dating from the Principate have been identified with certainty through archeology, with a few more known through inscriptions.[14] Only occasionally do studies of Roman libraries give more than passing mention of euergetism, or studies of euergetism do the same for libraries.[15]

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[5] Casson, 2002; Neudecker, 2004; Nicholls, 2005; Dix & Houston, 2006.

[6] Houston, 2002.

[7] Marshall, 1976; Starr, 1987; Horsfall, 1993; Houston, 2008; Gamble, 2012; Houston, 2014.

[8] Dix, 1994; Coqueugniot, 2008; Johnson, 2009 and Johnson, 2010.

[9] Dix, 1988; Blum, 2017.

[10] Dix & Houston, 1995. This study also notes that archaeological evidence for libraries in bathing complexes is similarly lacking.

[11] Bruce, 1981.

[12] Dix, 1986; Morgan, 2000; Tucci, 2008; Jones, 2009; Nicholls, 2011.

[13] Packer, 2001.

[14] Pfeiffer, 1931; Strocka, 2003; Graham, 2013; Waelkens, 2015.

[15] Kalinowski, 1996; Platt, 2008; Zueiderhoek, 2009.

Euergetism: An Overview

Modern scholars tend to classify public libraries in the Roman Empire as a form of euergetism: much like temples, baths, and other structures, emperors and wealthy citizens bestowed libraries upon the community from their own resources. They improved the lives of citizens within the community, and in return, recipients bestowed honors and prestige upon the donor. However, libraries differ greatly in some respects from other forms of euergetism, because, unlike most of the buildings that wealthy citizens donated to their communities, libraries held no appeal for the vast majority of people. A library's primary purpose is to make books available to readers, but literacy, at least of the level needed to read the books stored in libraries, was confined only to a very small part of the population. Why, then, would benefactors expend their resources to build libraries and stock them with books (both hugely expensive undertakings), when the return on their investment—the honors and prestige they received from the community—was likely to be so limited? Arjan Zuiderhoek argues that euergetism helped ensure social stability by providing non-elites with the amenities of Greco-Roman social life, and in return elites received the honours they desired, and, ultimately, their legitimacy to rule. After examining Zuiderhoek's theory of euergetism (which finds consonance with other scholars' views), we can then examine how it applies to libraries.

Scholars generally agree that euergetism in the Roman Empire was fundamentally a form of exchange: a wealthy donor would give something to the community, and in exchange would reap rewards of prestige and enhanced social standing. The word "euergetism" itself is, according to Paul Veyne, a neologism coined by anthropologists and derived from inscriptions describing activities of εὐεργέται ("donors," "benefactors") when they gave εὐεργεσία ("good deeds," "benefits") to their communities, often summed up with the phrase εὐεργετεῖν τῆν πόλιν ("to benefit

the city").[16] Veyne's foundational work on euergetism in Greco-Roman antiquity defined it as "private liberality for public benefit" that arose from "a noble desire for glory and honours."[17] Other scholars have built upon and refined Veyne's work, but the basic interpretation of euergetism as an act of giving to the community that earns honours and prestige for the donor has not changed. As Zuiderhoek explains it:

> [E]uergetism was fundamentally a process of *exchange*. Generous elite members wanted something in return for their gifts. And the things they wanted – honours, prestige, and, with an eye to their role as members of the ruling elite, social stability and the legitimation of their elite position – could only be secured from the demos, the non-elite citizenry.[18]

Scholars vary somewhat in their interpretations of euergetism, but do not dispute the basic fact that donors received honors in exchange for their gifts to the community.[19] Stephan Joubert, for example, argues that Roman patronage and Greek euergetism are overlapping but distinct forms of benefaction, but he emphasises that both involved a give-and-take of gifts for honors: "Reciprocity was basic to all forms of social interaction in ancient Mediterranean society."[20] Scholars have disputed some points of the institution, particularly as it appears in Veyne's work.[21] However, none of the disputes are pertinent to this paper, as none challenge the basic fact that Greco-Roman elites offered public munificence to the non-elite citizenry with the expectation of honours and prestige in return.[22]

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[16] Veyne, 1990, p. 10.

[17] Veyne, 1990, p. 10.

[18] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 106. The emphasis is Zuiderhoek's. See also Gygax, 2016, pp. 2-3, who explains euergetism similarly.

[19] Euergetism should not be confused with the mandatory expenditures magistrates made as part of their duties of office. Scholars generally consider euergetism to be expenditures that go beyond the minimal requirements or are not required at all as part of a magistrate's expected duties: Veyne, 1990, p. 11; Hoyer, 2013, pp. 583-84.

[20] Joubert, 2001, p. 17.

[21] See Kalinowski, 1996, p. 17 and Gygax, 2016, p. 4, for examples.

[22] A point even Veyne, 1990, pp. 153-54 accepted, noting that euergetism often cost benefactors more than taxes, but taxes drew greater resentment because "unlike *euergesiae*, paying them conferred no social superiority."

These honors were not an end in themselves, but rather were a form of political capital that elites could use for their own benefit. By reminding the community of past benefactions, elites could, for example, call for political support, acquittal at trial, and obedience.[23] More fundamentally, these honours justified the elite as the natural leaders of their communities, as Zuiderhoek argues: "…[T]he morally excellent rich man was someone who used (part of) his wealth for the benefit of the whole community. Such men might justifiably claim, and were accorded, social and political influence."[24] Indeed, it was only through munificent donations to the community that the elite could hope to maintain their elite status. As disparities in wealth grew during the first two centuries AD, there was a pressing need for local elites to demonstrate their worthiness to hold their elevated positions in the community.[25] They did so by repeatedly sharing their wealth: "The more privileged the position of the governing elite became, the more individual members had to give evidence of their moral superiority, and they had to do so in hard cash."[26] Thus, there was an incentive for wealthy citizens to engage in euergetism. Their munificent benefactions, in the form of public buildings such as baths, gymnasia, temples, and so on, were tangible reminders of their generosity and concern for their fellow citizens, and thus their fitness to be leaders of their communities.

Euergetism was also a means for elites to display their status in comparison to other elites. The elite order in Roman society was dynamic and permeable: a few lucky families succeeded in amassing incredible fortunes and became elites-within-elites, but more often wealthy families

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[23] Gygax, 2016, p. 36-37. Zuiderhoek also noted the importance of euergetism in accruing political capital: "…[P]ublic gifts brought benefactors social prestige, an intangible but essential form of 'capital' for anyone who aspires to high standing the community…" Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 119.

[24] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 151.

[25] Zuiderhoek, 2009, pp. 53-54.

[26] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 131.

would fall on hard times or die out.[27] In order to fill magistracies and vacancies in the city council, elites had to bring into their ranks those non-elites who met the census qualification.[28] New elites would quickly adopt the established practices of their new order, which included providing gifts to their communities as a means of demonstrating their fitness to be leaders of the community.[29] This permeability of status, however, also created competition: if some could rise from obscurity to elite status, then naturally some elites would also fall down the social scale, or even disappear altogether. For this reason, the wealthiest gave even more extravagantly in order to assert their own superior status, not just to the community in general, but to other elites in particular.[30] Euergetism, therefore, not only served to win honours for the elites, but also served as a status marker for elite donors in relation to other elites.

The buildings and structures donors gave to their communities tend to emphasize relaxation and enjoyment of life. Starting in the late first century BC, for example, there was a shift in Italian building, from publicly funded structures such as temples and defensive walls, to privately funded structures for public entertainment.[31] In Roman Asia Minor during the first two centuries AD, religious structures were the most common sort of building donations, but baths and gymnasia were almost as common, while theatres, agoras and odeions were also frequently provided.[32] These

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[27] Frier, 2013, p. 99 notes that approximately three-quarters of senatorial families in the early imperial period disappear altogether after one generation.

[28] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 115: "Mortality was high and unpredictable for rich and poor alike. … The continuously appearing gaps in the composition of elite groups had to be filled by socially mobile individuals coming from social levels just below the elite." See also Zuiderhoek, 2009, pp. 135-37 for a detailed description of Greco-Roman mortality and the need to recruit new members to city councils.

[29] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 137.

[30] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 132: "These families alone among the urban upper classes possessed sufficient resources to make large benefactions frequently. …[T]heir position at the very top of the urban status hierarchy provided them with a strong incentive often to display their moral excellence in the most grandiose fashion possible, and to have it recorded, in an equally grandiose fashion, that they did so."

[31] Lomas, 2003, p. 34.

[32] Zuiderhoek, 2009, pp. 79-80.

privately funded benefactions were only sometimes utilitarian (e.g., sewers, roads, or aqueducts); more often than not, donated structures were amenities that allowed non-elites to enjoy the luxuries and pleasures of Greco-Roman life.[33] Clearly, euergetism was not aimed at ensuring the survival of the populace; rather, it supplied amenities that allowed people to enjoy certain pleasures of life that would not be otherwise available. The obvious problem with this situation is that the non-elites might notice this manifest inequality in wealth, and decide to give voice to their discontent by creating strife within the community.[34] Indeed, there were stirrings of such conflict and disagreement between elites and non-elites during the first two centuries AD:

> The refrain of *homonia* (concord) is repeated endlessly on coins and inscriptions from [Asia's] numerous towns and cities. Yet the continuous proclamation of peace only points to its absence … The information is scattered and sometimes difficult to interpret, but the pattern is evident: in many cities boule and demos frequently clashed during our period.[35]

Thus, euergetism could paradoxically bring citizens together in use of shared culture resources, but could potentially drive a wedge between rich and poor. Wealthy people therefore gave generously to their communities not just to win honors and prestige, but also to preserve social stability within the community.[36] The common people, by accepting these gifts, were simultaneously enjoying the fruits of their citizenship, and acquiescing in the social structures that subordinated them to the elites who gave these gifts in the first place. As Gygax explains the situation:

> … [G]ifts to those of lower rank produced contradictory effects that allowed gift-giving to appeal to opposed ideologies: gifts brought the two parties closer by expressing

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[33] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 77.

[34] "Euergetism is based on unequal distribution of the surplus and unequal power in deciding how the surplus is to be used." Veyne, 1990, p. 56.

[35] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 67.

[36] Gygax, 2016, p. 6 says euergetism helped "release tensions between rich and poor"; Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 106 calls euergetism a "strategy of conflict avoidance."

solidarity, but simultaneously separated them by demonstrating the differences between them.[37]

The possibility of social discord, then, was very much a part of Greco-Roman society during the principate, but euergetism, if done right, served to prevent it.

However, euergetism was not always successful at averting conflict between elites and the commons. We can discern hints of such discord in a few surviving sources from the first and second centuries AD. Dio Chrysostom, in Oration Thirty-four, for example, delivers a curative discourse for the strife that broke out in early second century Tarsus.[38] Importantly, Dio opens his speech by pointing out how unusual it is for citizens in any city to see a philosopher addressing the assembly rather than *τοὺς γνωρίμους καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους, ἔτι δὲ τοὺς καλῶς λελειτουργηκότας* ["those who are notable and wealthy, especially those who have nobly served the community at their own expense"].[39] Dio then admonishes the demos by saying that, since they accept the munificence of the rich, they should willingly give their benefactors a fair hearing in matters of city government: *οὐ γὰρ εὔλογον ἴσως τῆς μὲν οὐσίας τῆς τῶν πλουσίων μετέχειν ὑμᾶς τὸ μέρος, τῆς δὲ διανοίας μὴ ἀπολαύειν, ὁποία ποτ' ἂν ᾖ* ["For perhaps it is not reasonable for you to partake in a share of the wealth of rich men, but not enjoy the benefit of their intellect, whatever it may be"].[40] Dio does not specifically state that the strife in Tarsus arose from the resentment of the demos toward elite (perhaps he did not want to insult the audience members by stating a fact that would have been obvious to them), but by opening his speech with an explicit reference to the breakdown

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[37] Gygax, 2016, p. 17. See also Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 150 and Veyne, 1990, pp. 155-56 on this point.
[38] The exact nature of the dispute is not stated directly in the oration, but its effects are clear: "Assembly and council have been at loggerheads. One of the guilds, that of the weavers, is being treated like second-class citizens. The general tone of civic affairs is bad and must be improved…" Berry, 1983, p. 79.
[39] Dio Chrys. 34.1.
[40] Dio Chrys. 34.1.

of respect between the two orders, it is likely that this is exactly the sort of strife that Dio was trying to cure. Whatever the cause of the conflict, Dio's speech is clear that the common people accepted gifts from wealthy fellow-citizens, and were, in turn, expected to accept their status as leaders of the community. When this arrangement misfired, discord and unrest—exactly the sort of things euergetism was supposed to prevent—could result.

Another example of conflict related to public munificence comes from Ephesus around the year 145 AD. An inscription recovered from there suggests that the populace was resentful with Vedius Antoninus because his euergetism took the form of a public building project (the nature of which is unknown to us), rather than games or other forms of entertainment. The inscription preserves a letter of Antoninus Pius that addressed to the council, magistrates and people of Ephesus, admonishing all three groups for their lack of gratitude toward Vedius. The restored text reads in part:

> Βουλόμε/νος γάρ παρ'ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν βοηθείας [εἰς τό]ν κόσμον τῶν 9-10
> ἔργων ὧν ὑμεῖν ἐπηνγείλατο ἐδήλ[ωσεν ὅσα κ]αὶ ἡλίκα οἰ-
> κοδομήματα προστίθησιν τῇ πόλ[ει. Ἀλλ' ὑμ]εις οὐ[κ] ὀρ- 12
> θῶς ἀποδέχεσθε αὐτον. Κἀγὼ καὶ συ[νεχώρησα α]ὐτῷ [...]ς
> ἃς ἠτήσατ[ο] καί ἀπεδεξάμην ὅτι [οὐ] τὸν π[ολλῶν τῶ]ν πο- 14
> λειτευομένων τρόπον, οἳ τοῦ [παρ]αχρῆμ[α ? εὐδοκιμ]εῖν χά
> [ρ]ιν εἰς θέα[ς κ]αὶ διανομὰς καὶ τῶ[ν ἀγώνων θέματα ? δαπαν] ῶ[σιν ?] 16
> [τὴ]ν φι[λοτιμ]ίαν, ἀλλὰ δι' οὖ πρὸς τὸ [μέλλον ἐλπίζει ? σ]εμνο-
> [τέραν ποιή]σειν τήν πόλιν προῄρη[ται.

> Wishing to obtain assistance from me for the embellishment of public works that he had offered you, he informed me how many and how big [are the] buildings he is contributing to the city. But you do not appreciate him properly. Now I have granted him all that he asked, appreciating that he prefers to make the city more majestic—not in the customary manner of public figures who, for the sake of immediate popularity, expend their generosity

on spectacles and distributions and the prizes of games—but in a manner that looks to the future. [41]

The inscription is difficult to interpret because it does not provide specific details about the magistrates, council, and people's lack of appreciation, nor does it offer specific details about the sorts of buildings Vedius gave to the Ephesians.[42] However, it appears relatively certain from this letter that "spectacles and distributions and the prizes of games" were a well-established way for elites to court popularity. The explicit mention of such diversions in the emperor's letter suggests that Vedius's decision to forego them in favor of a building project was the disputed issue. Whatever the details, this inscription demonstrates that euergetism could misfire, creating discord in the community rather than fostering social cohesion. Thus, benefactors had a strong incentive to carefully consider the forms of munificence they bestowed upon the community—unlike Vedius, not every benefactor could rely on the emperor's support.

Literacy and Library Holdings

If libraries were a form of euergetism, and euergetism helped underwrite the solidarity between elites and non-elites during the principate, then it is important to understand the extent of their appeal—for without widespread appeal, libraries would presumably fail as euergetism, and undermine rather than reinforce social harmony. As repositories of books, libraries demanded a fairly high level of literacy from any potential user.[43] It is therefore important to have a clear understanding of just how many people in the Roman Empire were literate enough to read the

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[41] Quoted in Kalinowski 1996, p. 104. The translation is Kalinowski's.
[42] Kalinowski, 1996, pp. 110-111 believes the building project was a bathing complex and that opposition came mainly from other elites; Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 109 believes the opposition to the building project came mainly from non-elites, who preferred games and spectacles to whatever building project Vedius had undertaken.
[43] Further discussion on this point will be given below.

books contained in public libraries, and therefore appreciate libraries as a form of euergetism during the first two centuries AD.

The most extensive work on literacy in Greco-Roman antiquity is William V. Harris's book *Ancient Literacy*. Harris contends that literacy was widespread in elite society of the Principate, and that a small number of non-elites acquired some level of literacy, but most people in the Roman Empire during the first two centuries AD were illiterate. The reason, he argues, is that education on a large scale is a prerequisite for a literate society, but this never materialized during the principate.[44] While there were institutes of higher learning, the Roman Empire had no buildings specifically dedicated to the early education of children; schooling, when it occurred, was typically conducted outdoors.[45] Nor was the teaching of basic literacy an attractive career for most people. Instructors were paid from municipal funds or relied on endowments from the upper classes, who generally considered teaching a lowly occupation.[46] The wealthy classes had options for basic education that almost everyone else in Roman society lacked, and it would be very unusual for them to fail to educate their children.[47] Even newly-wealthy people, particularly freedmen, who were frequently illiterate or semi-literate, ensured their sons received at least some literary education.[48] Outside of the upper classes, people who wanted to give their children at least some basic education relied on poorly-paid school masters, with all the shortfalls that taking classes in the streets entailed.[49] Moreover, there would have been a cost for this education that might have

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[44] Harris 1989, pp. 233-34: "In short, we have no reason to suppose that Romans somehow transmitted literacy in great quantities without the help of great quantities of formal schooling."

[45] Harris, 1989, p. 236: "Roman schools were, as far as we can tell, physically makeshift. Those normally hideous but at the same time strangely inspiring educational edifices which appear in every modern centre of population have no counterparts in Roman archaeology or indeed in any written source concerning the Roman Empire."

[46] Harris, 1989, p. 237: "…that the well-to-do belittled those who, while more or less sharing the culture of the elite, sold their knowledge for pathetic sums of money, is scarcely surprising."

[47] Harris, 1989, p. 233.

[48] Harris, 1989, p. 251-52.

[49] Harris, 1989, p. 233.

been an impediment, at least to lower-earning artisans and businessmen.[50] There was undoubtedly some level of literacy among some artisans, businessmen and people practicing certain trades, but it is impossible to say how deeply it might have extended, because the evidence is scattered and anecdotal.[51]

Graffiti and epigraphy, though widespread, do not indicate that literacy was prevalent in the Roman empire. The graffiti in places such as Pompeii (our most abundant source) consists of writing that had accumulated on walls over decades, and includes many advertisements posted by professional painters that can be attributed to a relatively small number of literate artisans.[52] Such an accumulation over time gives the false impression of extensive literacy. Even in a wealthy city like Pompeii, where literacy was comparatively high, Harris estimates no more than 3,000 literate and semi-literate people (out of a population of about 11,000).[53] For the same reasons, widespread epigraphical evidence does not automatically entail widespread literacy. In short, Harris' book posits that in the western provinces outside of Italy, no more than 10 percent of the population was literate, while literacy in Italy during the principate was probably somewhat under 15 percent of the population.[54] Harris does not offer percentage-based estimates for the literacy in the eastern half of the Empire in the first two centuries AD, but concludes that whatever financial support Greek communities had provided for education largely disappeared under Roman rule.[55] Members of the gymnasium class (i.e., men who held substantial property) were likely to be literate, and a few sub-elites were likely to be literate or semi-literate, but most labourers, whether skilled or not,

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[50] Harris, 1989, p. 238.
[51] See Harris, 1989, p. 203 and p. 277 for examples of trade literacy; and Woolf, 2009 for a discussion of Roman "literacies".
[52] Harris, 1989, p. 260. Milnor, 2014, p. 19 suggests Pomeian graffiti could have accumulated over a full century before the eruption of Vesuvius.
[53] Literacy in Pompeii: Harris, 1989, p. 264-65. Population of Pompeii: Wilson, 2011, p. 172.
[54] Harris, 1989, p. 272 and p. 267 respectively.
[55] Harris 1989, p. 273.

were illiterate.[56] The same applies to Roman Egypt, where, he argues, the upper classes in the major cities tended to be literate, but lower classes and people in the villages were generally illiterate.[57] Thus, Harris' study paints a picture of extensive levels of literacy among wealthy elites, which disappears quickly the further down the social hierarchy one looks. Harris' study has come under a few attacks, but no scholar has successfully challenged his conclusion that literacy was concentrated at the top of Greco-Roman society.[58] Most scholars have agreed with Harris or come to similar conclusions through their own research. Greg Woolf, for example, acknowledged that "Harris … firmly established the limitations of literacy" in Greco-Roman antiquity.[59] Other studies of specific regions or institutions also supported Harris's conclusions.[60] Clearly, the available evidence indicates that only elites were sufficiently literate to read book-length works of high literature during the Principate.

The Problem with Libraries as Euergetism

It should be clear by now that public libraries as a form of euergetism create significant interpretive problems: if euergetism was an exchange of gifts for honours that helped ensure social stability and justify elite rule, then libraries, as repositories of books that few were able to read, could not have possibly satisfied the desires of the illiterate and non-elite majority of the population. If anything, such munificent donations should have sparked resentment, leading to the kind of strife and discord discussed by Dio Chrysostom and Antoninus Vedius. Yet scholars

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[56] Harris, 1989, pp. 276-77.

[57] Harris, 1989, p. 278. Even village officials in Egypt during the Antonine age were likely no better than semi-literate: Harris, 1989, p. 279.

[58] Curchin, 1995, p. 461 criticized Harris' methods for calculating literacy rates, but nonetheless came to not dissimilar results himself; nowhere does he suggest that full literacy extended much beyond elite circles.

[59] Woolf, 2011, p. 68.

[60] See for example: Fear, 1995 (case study of a second-century Spanish grammaticus); Bowman, 1996 (literacy in the Roman army); and Morgan, 1998 (Egyptian papyrological evidence).

generally do not differentiate libraries from other forms of euergetism.[61] Even in the few instances when they do recognize the fact that public libraries do not align with the usual expectations of euergetism, they offer no explanations for this discrepancy.[62]

It is tempting to think that a public library could have mitigated this resentment by doubling as a venue for recitations—indeed, some scholars make this assumption. However, they offer no relevant evidence to support their positions.[63] In fact, evidence for recitations in public libraries is non-existent.[64] The lack of evidence is, of course, not proof that recitations never occurred in public libraries, but these institutions tended to have strong associations with elite activities, arguing against their use as venues for amusing the illiterate masses. For example, Augustus, when he was an old man, often held senate meetings in the Palatine library near the Temple of Apollo (which was, it is worth noting, practically an extension of his home, and therefore unlikely to be a venue

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[61] E.G.: Coqueugniot, 2010, p. 41: Très souvent, ces bibliothèques ont été offertes à la communauté par un individu et sa famille et s'inscrivent donc dans la tradition de l'évergétisme gréco-romain. ["Very often, these libraries were offered to the community by an individual and his family, and therefore fall within the tradition of Greco-Roman Euergetism"]. Zadorojnyi, 2013, p. 20: "Libraries are … tied up with the dynamics of public euergetism. The list of known library sponsors is a good cross-section of the ruling class …".

[62] E.G., Kalinowski, 1996, pp. 55-56, discussing the importance of munificent building for keeping the lower classes happy, acknowledged that the library of Celsus "was not used by all classes of the population, and is therefore not to be classified as a project intended for the general good"; however, she does not explain this discrepancy except to note the library also served as a funerary monument. Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 85, recognized that "perhaps with the exception of libraries," the buildings provided through euergetism were expensive and essential to the proper life of a Greco-Roman citizen, but he does not offer any explanation for this exception.

[63] For example, Dalzall, 1955, p. 27, and Dix, 1994, p. 287 both cite the story in Vitruvius (Book 7, Praef. 4-7) in which Aristophanes of Alexandria catches poets plagiarising other authors' works during a second century BC recitation held in a public library, but neither scholar explains how that story demonstrates that recitations occurred in Roman libraries two centuries later. Dix & Houston, 2006, p. 683 cite Horace's description of a competition between a lyric and an elegiac poet in Epistle 2.2. as an example of a recitation in a public library, but also note that Horace states the event took place in an *aedes* (temple): they assume that Horace meant the library attached to the Temple of Palatine Apollo, but offer no evidence to support this assumption. Bowie, 2016, p. 242 notes that Asinius Pollio was a proponent of public recitations at Rome, and presumes he held them in his library, but offers no supporting evidence. Matthew Nicholls (2016, p. 276) asserts that libraries were a natural venue for recitations and debates because of their prominent placement and association with other public buildings, but cites no source in support of his position.

[64] Johnson, 2016, p. 363: "… public events like recitations, in contradistinction to Greek habits, seem to have taken place almost always in domestic circumstances (despite assertions the contrary, there is no solid evidence for recitations in public libraries)."

for entertaining Roman plebs).[65] Tiberius, too, used libraries for Senate meetings.[66] Libraries were also instrumental in the preservation of old books of high literature and government records,[67] and in scholarly research.[68] They also underwrote the philological debates, found throughout Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, which constituted one of the arenas in which elites vied for status.[69] These activities all suggest an exclusively elite function for libraries, with little appeal to any but the highly educated.[70] Though there is some evidence of public recitations in theatres, such as Quintillian's reference to public recitations by actors, or Aulus Gellius's reference to a recitation of Ennius, extant sources never mention them occurring in public libraries.[71] Apuleius's *Florida* hints at this possibility, but is ultimately ambiguous on this point.[72] There is, in the end, no

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[65] Suet. Aug. 29.3: Templum Apollinis in ea parte Palatinae domus excitavit quam fulmine ictam desiderari a deo haruspices pronuntiarant; addidit porticus cum bibliotheca Latina Graecaque, quo loco iam senior saepe etiam senatum habuit ["he erected the temple of Apollo in that part of his Palatine house which, having been struck by lightning, the seers declared was chosen by the god; he added a portico with a Latin and Greek library, in which location, as he was by then an old man, he quite often held Senate meetings."]; See also Neudecker, 2016, p. 231 for further discussion of political activities in the Palatine library.

[66] Meeting in the Palatine library: Tac. Ann. 2.37; meeting in the library of the Portico Octaviae: Dio Cass. 55.8.1.

[67] Preservation of high literature: Aul. Gel. 18.9.5: Offendi enim in bibliotheca Patrensi librum verae vetustatis Livii Andronici... ['For in the library of Patrae we hit upon a truly ancient book of Livius Andronicus..."]; old government records: Aul. Gel. 11.17.1: Edicta veterum praetorum sedentibus forte nobis in bibliotheca templi Traiani et aliud quid requirentibus cum in manus incidissent... ["The edicts of the praetors of old fell into my hands as we chanced to be sitting in the library of the temple of Trajan, inquiring about some other thing..."]

[68] EG, Galen's medical research (Gal. de Indolentia. 14, cited in Nicholls, 2011, p. 138); Aulus Gellius's study of logic (Aul. Gel. 16.8.1-3).

[69] EG, Aul. Gel. NA, 5.21.9-16; 9.14.3-4; 18.9.5. Johnson, 2009, p. 327 argues that such debates might seem bizarre today, but they carried cultural force: "…this sort of learned disputation is critical, because the battle over these details determines who will be the cultural gatekeepers for the society."

[70] Platt, 2008, p. 62.

[71] Quint. Inst. Orat. 11 3.4: Documento sunt vel scaenici actores, qui et optimis poetarum tantum adiciunt gratiae ut nos infinito magis eadem illa audita quam lecta delectent, et vilissimis etiam quibusdam impetrant aures, ut, quibus nullus est in bibliothecis locus, sit etiam frequens in theatris. ["Indeed, as proof are stage actors who add such charm to even the greatest poets that those same words delight us to an immeasurably greater degree when heard rather than read, and they even obtain a hearing for some of the worst writers, for whom there is no place in the libraries, so such a work is, in fact, often heard on the stage."]   Gell. NA 18.5.2: Atque ibi tunc Iuliano nuntiatur, ἀναγνώστην quendam, non indoctum hominem, voce admodum scita et canora Ennii Annales legere ad populum in theatro. ["And during our time there, it was announced to Julianus that a certain reader, a man not uneducated, with a highly trained and melodious voice, would read the Annales of Ennius in the theatre to the people."]

[72] Apul. Flor. 18.9.: Igitur proinde habetote, si curia digna protulero, ut si in ipsa curia me audiatis, si erudita fuerint, ut si in bibliotheca legantur. ["So then, if my words are worthy of the council house, imagine you hear me in that very house; if they are scholarly, that they are read in the library"].   The verb legantur ["they are read"] is

definitive written evidence refuting the idea of recitations within public libraries, but there is no clear supporting evidence either. Archaeology likewise leaves us in the dark. There are several studies of the acoustics of Roman theatres and at least one study of the acoustics of areas of the Roman forum where *contiones* are known to have occurred.[73] However, there are no studies of the acoustics of Roman libraries that might indicate whether or not they were suitable for recitations. In the end, it may simply be modern sensibilities about public libraries that makes them seem a natural venue for this sort of activity. But if they were not used for public recitations, then it is difficult to see what sort of honours or prestige donors could expect from the illiterate masses by building public libraries.

Nor did the contents of public libraries offer anything that would interest the semi-literate, let alone the illiterate. Recreational reading in the form of ancient novels certainly existed (E.G., the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, or Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*), but they were not written for people of unsophisticated reading skills; in fact, they required a fairly high level of literacy.[74] Moreover, the authors of these novels were themselves often highly literate.[75] Whatever the literary capabilities of their authors, however, novels were not a well-respected branch of literature during the Principate, and many were written for an audience seeking escapism rather than

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ambiguous in this context: it might mean Apuleius is inviting his audience members to imagine they are each individually sitting in a library and reading his words in a book; it might also mean he wants the audience to imagine they are in a library and listening as someone reads his words aloud to them. Nothing in his speech suggests a definitive interpretation one way or the other.

[73] For example, Sukaj et al., 2021; Gate & Angelakis, 2006 (theatres); and Kopij, K. & Pilch, A. 2019 (contiones).

[74] Hagg, 1983, p. 90, writing of the expansion of literacy in the Hellenistic age, states: "Of course we must not be led to believe that increased literacy at this time meant anything approaching a general ability to read and write, let alone the desire to read for pleasure and relaxation. We are still dealing with only a small proportion of the population…" There are no grounds to think this situation changed during the first and second centuries AD. See also Reardon, 1989, p. 11 who calls novels a form of relaxation for the literate.

[75] Reardon, 1989, p. 8 notes that novels showed "much sophistication" by the second century AD, and their authors were often trained in the intellectual milieux of the second sophistic.

enlightenment.[76] Moreover, novels often featured female protagonists, leading some scholars to believe that novels were written with female readers as the intended audience.[77] There is no indication that public libraries held such books; indeed, all indications are that public libraries held rather more antiquarian, high-brow, and scholarly works. Surviving literary sources mention Roman libraries holding, for example, the works of the now-obscure and fragmentary poets Euphorion, Rhianus, and Parthenius, whom Tiberius added to the public libraries;[78] copies of Virgil and Livy that Caligula threatened to ban;[79] Sallust, Cicero, and rare copies of Cato's speeches that Marcus Aurelius, in a letter to Fronto, said he secured from the Palatine library;[80] while Galen reports that the Palatine library had autograph copies of Artistarchus (a second-century BC Homeric scholar) and works of Plato once owned by Panaetus (a second-century BC philosopher and friend of Scipio Africanus), among other works.[81] Outside of the city of Rome, Apuleius, in a defence speech, mentions Aristotle's books in the public libraries in north Africa;[82]

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[76] Reardon, 1989, p. 12: "On the whole, the novel made little lasting impression on educated antiquity." Hagg, 1983, p. 93, says novels likely appealed to those who were "not necessarily literary highbrows," including scribes, who could be hired to read them to the illiterate; in addition, literate members of a household might also have read novels to illiterate family members and friends. He does not suggest such readings ever took place in public libraries; rather he says literate people in such social stations would likely have offered recitations in "private circles."

[77] Cavallo, 2003, p. 80.

[78] Suet. Tib. 70.2 says Tiberius added their images (probably busts or statutes) to the libraries, either implying that their works were already there, or that Tiberius added their books along with their images to the libraries. See Houston, 2008, p. 255 ff on this point.

[79] Suet. Calig. 34.2.

[80] Fronto Letters 4.5.

[81] Gal. De Indolentia 13, quoted in Jones, 2009, p. 391 and Nicholls, 2011, pp. 130-31.

[82] Apuleius, Apolog. 41.4. This passage is noteworthy because Apuleius unambiguously links scholars to public libraries: Hoc in me accusas, quod ego et Maximus in Aristotele miramur? Cuius nisi libros bibliothecis exegeris et studiosorum manibus extorseris, accusare me non potes. ["Do you make this accusation against me, for something I as well as Maximus admire in Aristotle? Unless you would confiscate his books from the libraries, and twist them from the hands of scholars, you cannot accuse me."] That he his referring to public libraries is clear from context: Apuleius' argument would be meaningless if he were suggesting his opponents would have to remove Aristotle's books from private libraries. Not even the emperors were able to censor private libraries: Ovid's books, after they were shunned by Rome's public libraries, clearly contemplate a home in a private collection, as stated in Ovid Trist. 3.1.79-80: interea, quoniam statio mihi publica clausa est, / privato liceat delituisse loco. ["Meanwhile, since a public abode is denied to me / let it be possible to hide away in a private place"]. Similarly, works banned under Augustus or Tiberius were preserved in private collections until they were given a reprieve under Caligula (Suet.

Aulus Gellius also mentions Aristotle among the holdings of the library in the temple of Hercules in Tibur, as well as Cato and Ennius in the library of Patrae in Achaia.[83] There are no surviving catalogues or booklists that we can say with certainty came from public libraries, but one Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragment, dated to the second century AD, gives an alphabetical list of writers of Old Comedy. The sheer extensiveness of the authors listed on the fragment suggests it came from a public library (or possibly a very large private collection).[84] The authors listed in this fragment were not light reading, but they would no doubt have appealed to the scholarly minds of the second sophistic. Clearly, all available indications are that public libraries held works more sophisticated than novels, and demanded an erudite audience capable of reading antiquarian and scholarly books. Consequently, nothing suggests that *euergetai* could hope to win honours and prestige from the illiterate majority, or even from semiliterate, sub-elite citizens, when they donated libraries to their communities. There is, in short, no reason to think that non-elites could have found much use for public libraries. Why, then, would anyone donate these buildings to their communities?

Negotiation of Status: Competitive Building

Libraries offered donors a unique way to demonstrate their status and wealth to the community at large, and to other elites in particular. Competitive building among elites was a well-established practice for negotiation of status long before the end of the Republic, and the building of public libraries during the Empire continued it. The best example comes from Rome's first two

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Calig. 16.1); and all copies of the history written by Cremutius Cordus during the rein of Tiberius were burned, but nonetheless resurfaced later (Tac. Ann. 4.35.1). Starr, 1987, p. 219: "Private circulation implies that suppression or official discouragement could never be entirely successful nor were they expected to be."
[83] Aul. Gel. Noc. Att. 19.5.2-4 and 18.9.5 respectively.
[84] Houston, 2014, p. 67. The papyrus fragment is P.Oxy. 33.2659.

public libraries, built by Gaius Asinius Pollio and Augustus respectively.[85] Pollio opened Rome's

first public library, in the Atrium Libertatis, sometime before 28 BC.[86] A supporter of Antony, he

had been politically active in previous decades, serving as consul in 40 BC, and celebrating a

triumph circa 38 BC for his victories over Illyrian tribes; he then settled into a literary retirement,

ostensibly devoid of political activity.[87] With the money gained from his military victories, he built

his library and brought to fruition the project Julius Caesar had planned. Though pardoned by

Augustus for supporting Antony in the civil wars, Pollio, most scholars assert, maintained an

unspoken opposition toward the Augustan regime.[88] The library doubtless increased his prestige

among Rome's literary elites, but it held a subtle political dimension too: he not only denied

Augustus the opportunity to fulfill one of his adoptive father's ambitions, but he also built it out

of the spoils of his Illyrian victory at a time when Augustus had all but taken over this practice for

himself.[89] In a further display of defiance, Pollio's library included a bust of Marcus Terentius

Varro, a former supporter of Pompey, and the first living person commemorated with a bust in a

library.[90] Such a break with tradition, coming as it did with a pointed reminder of opposition to the

sole rule of the Caesarian family, can be seen as further proof of Pollio's unwillingness to accept

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[85] Though the Emperor was not known as Augustus until 27 BC, it would be needlessly confusing to try to use his various names prior to that date (e.g., Octavian, Julius Caesar Octavianus, Imperator Caesar) with precision here. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to him as Augustus. See Mackay, 2004, p. 160, p. 165 and p. 183 for some discussion of Augustus's names during the years between 44 BC and 27 BC.

[86] Bowie, 2016, p. 239.

[87] Morgan, 2000, pp. 60-61.

[88] Pardoned: Sen. Clem. 1.10.1.; opposition to Augustus: Morgan, 2000, p. 61; Syme, 2002, p. 291; Canfora, 2007, pp. 73-74. Not all scholars see Pollio as opposed to the Augustan regime, however. See, for example, Bosworth, 1972, p. 441 ff.

[89] Bowie, 2016, p. 239.

[90] Supporter of Pompey: Caes. Bel. Civ. 1.38.1 & 2. 17.1 ff. First living person: Plin. Hist. Nat. 7.115. Of course, his library also contained images of past authors (Plin. NH 35.10) and other impressive works of art (Plin. NH 36.23 ff). Images of living people in libraries became more common in later times, e.g., the image of Dio Chrysostom in the library of Corinth, Dio. Chrys. Orat. 37.8 (though this attribution to Dio may be pseudonymous).

Augustus as the new master of Rome.[91] In fact, Pollio deftly maneuvered Augustus into a corner with this one bust: he could have easily followed convention by limiting himself to the celebrated authors of the distant past, but instead displayed a reminder of a more recent, and deeply violent, past—one still as alive in people's memories as Varro himself.[92] Augustus, having pardoned Pollio, could not order the removal of Varro's bust without, at the very least, appearing churlish, or at worst demonstrating to all that his claims of *clementia* were empty.[93] Any action against Pollio would, in effect, undermine his own status. By building a library that not only enhanced his own prestige among Rome's literary elites but also subtly challenged Augustus's standing, Pollio defiantly continued competitive building, so common during the Republic, into the early days of the Empire. His library, as an enduring and concrete expression of that defiance, was an overt challenge to Augustus's authority.

Augustus, of course, could not ignore Pollio, and opened the Palatine library as a rival institution in 28 BC.[94] But Augustus was at a disadvantage in this sort of competition: he entered politics after Caesar's murder as an outsider who maintained his power through violence. To avoid Caesar's fate, Augustus had to build his power while simultaneously winning acceptance across all classes.[95] His library, then, was not only a response to Pollio, but also a statement to Rome's nobility more generally. As part of the precinct of the temple of Palatine Apollo, which, in turn,

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[91] Fantham, 1996, p. 70 (she also calls Varro "an old republican and follower of Pompey in resistance to Caesar.") By honouring Varro in this way while ignoring Augustus, Pollio might have been deliberately snubbing the Princeps: Bowie, 2016, p. 239.

[92] His history of Rome's civil wars accomplished the same feat. Morgan, 2000, p. 65, said Pollio was "simultaneously asserting his apolitical neutrality and engaging in an activity – contemporary historiography – which bore the closest possible relationship to politics."

[93] Suet. Aug. 51 gives examples of Augustus' policy of clementia; see also Starr, 1955, pp. 38-40.

[94] Fantham, 1996, p. 70; Zanker, 2000, p.70; Bowie, 2016, p. 239.

[95] Mackay, 2004, p. 165: an important part of that process involved "trying to shed his reputation as a 'teenage butcher.'" See also DuQuesnay, 1984, p. 22.

was directly linked to his house, the library was practically an extension of his own home.[96] This immediately differentiated his library from Pollio's, which was in a public building. Elite Romans of the Republic saw sharing their personal libraries as the proper thing to do for one's *amici*, but it simultaneously broadcast one's cultural bona fides: "From the late Republic, individuals might win approval by advertising their sensitivity to literature and culture in general, and their commitment to making both more accessible."[97] By giving Rome's educated elites access to the Palatine library, Augustus was imitating the *amicita*, familiar since Republican times, that saw wealthy elites opening their private libraries to friends and scholars.[98] It is difficult to see how the same could be said of Pollio's library: as part of the Atrium Libertatis, it would be more analogous to a state archive than a personal library.[99] Thus, Augustus used his library to style himself a member of Rome's cultural elite, graciously opening his book collection in a spirit of friendship with other elites.[100] By accepting his library, Rome's educated class was accepting him as one of their own, and in effect gave their acquiescence to his new regime.[101] It was an effective response to Pollio's challenge. Augustus also one-upped Pollio in the decoration of the Palatine library, by erecting a statue of Apollo bearing his own (i.e., Augustus's) facial features, thus asserting his own divinely inspired authority over the library and its books—and by extension, its users.[102] Unlike

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[96] Suet. Aug. 29.3; Petrain, 2016, 344.

[97] Tutrone, 2013, p. 159.

[98] EG, Lucius Licinius Lucullus opened his library to Greek scholars in Italy (Plut. Luc. 42.1); Cicero and Marcus Cato appear to have had a free hand to read and borrow his books as well (Cic. de Fin. 3.7). Galen's texts suggest that elites continued to share their books well into the Antonine age: Johnson, 2016, p. 360. See also Houston, 2002, pp. 151-52 on this point.

[99] Neudecker, 2004, p. 295 notes that the Atrium Libertatis was, in fact, an administrative building.

[100] White, 1976, p. 82 notes that, however friendly this arrangement may have appeared, such amicitia did not imply the parties were equals.

[101] Bowie, 2013, p. 241: "The library is presented as a private resource that is generously being made available to the *populus Romanus* – in particular, of course, to … the educated elite which included the senators and *equites* whose support for the regime still had to be fought for."

[102] Neudecker, 2004, p. 297 calls it "ein als Augustus gedeuteter Apollon" ["an Apollo interpreted as Augustus"]; see also Petrain, 2016, pp. 344-45: "…Augustus would be claiming a stake in *all* the works stored in his library as the one responsible for bringing them together, giving visual form the resultant cannon and regulating the

Pollio's visual reminder of past conflicts, however, Augustus's statue of a living person (i.e., himself) was a literal embodiment of the new regime. The Palatine library, then, was one of the tactics Augustus used during the unsettled years of the late first century BC to compete with Pollio, and to negotiate his political status as the leading man of Rome.

Projection of Status: Conspicuous Expenditure

Libraries also projected the donor's status as a member of the wealthy elite, communicating it in often very blatant and public ways. Books themselves could be quite expensive in ancient Rome: Cicero, for example specifically noted that the books stolen by a slave from his personal library were worth *multorum nummorum* [a "great deal of money"].[103] The actual cost of books is rarely mentioned in our sources, but when they are, figures vary widely. On the lower end, a book of Martial's poems, smoothed with pumice and decorated in purple, cost five denarii from a bookseller near Caesar's forum.[104] Pliny the Younger said his famous uncle was offered 400,000 sesterces – an Equestrian's census qualification – just for the *excerpts* from the many books he read in the preparation of his Natural History.[105] Aulus Gellius's acquaintance Fidus Optatus reportedly spent 20 gold *aurii* for a copy of the second book of the Aeneid, supposedly owned by Virgil himself.[106] When these costs are compared against a wage of 3 sesterces per day for a Roman

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admittance of newcomers." The image of Augustus as Apollo is possibly that to which Marcus Hortalus pointedly gazes upon in Tac. Ann. 2.37.1

[103] Cic. Ad Fam. 13.77: Dionysius, servus meus, qui meam bibliothecen multorum nummorum tractavit, cum multos libros surripuisset nec se impune laturum putaret, aufugit. ["My slave Dionysius, who managed my library, which is worth a great deal of money, is on the run after he stole many of my books and realized he would not go unpunished."]

[104] Mart. Ep. 1.117.10-17: dabit ...rasum pumice purpuraque cultum / denaris tibi quinque Martialem ["For five denarii, he will give to you a (copy of) Martial, smoothed with pumice and adorned with purple"].

[105] Plin. Ep. 3.5.17: Referebat ipse potuisse se, cum procuraret in Hispania, vendere hos commentarios Larcio Licino quadringentis milibus nummum ["He himself said that, while he was procurator in Spain, he could have sold these notebooks to Larcius Licinius for four hundred thousand sesterces"].

[106] Gell. NA 2.3.5: venit nobis in memoriam Fidum Optatum ... ostendisse mihi librum Aeneidos secundum mirandae vetustatis, emptum in Sigillariis viginti aureis, quem ipsius Vergili fuisse credebatur. ["There comes to

labourer in Martial's day, books, even at the lower end, appear to be a pricey commodity.[107] The

existence of booksellers is well established, but there is no evidence of a publishing industry

comparable to the modern world, making it likely that commercial hand-copying of texts was

small-scale, and often driven by commissions from individual customers.[108] As a result, books

were essentially luxury items because they remained a relatively rare commodity, even in the high

Empire.[109] Thus, stocking public libraries amounted to an exercise in conspicuous expenditure.[110]

The library buildings themselves were even more expensive than the collections they

housed. Again, evidence for costs is rare, but when we do find specific figures, they indicate a

significant outlay of funds. An inscription from Thamugadi (modern Timgad, Algeria), for

example, states that the library of Rogatianus was completed at a cost of 400,000 sesterces.[111] The

library in Dyrrhachium cost 170,000 sesterces, though it is not clear if this was the full cost of the

library or just for the land.[112] Pliny the Younger dedicated 100,000 sesterces just for the

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mind Fidus Optatus ... showing me the second book of the Aeneid, of a remarkable age, purchased in the Sigilaria for 20 aurii, which was believed to have been owned by Virgil himself"].

[107] Phillips, 1985, pp. 37-38. Phillips argues that books could cost as little as a few sesterces, making them affordable to anyone earning more than this basic wage, but the evidence he cites (Mart. Epig. 1.66.1-4 and Stat. Sil. 4.9.7-9) appear to refer to blank papyrus rolls, not finished books. Starr, 1987, p. 221 argues that even if books cost little, it is a moot point, due to high rates of illiteracy and the absence of an ancient Roman middle class that would justify a market in cheap books.

[108] Starr, 1987, pp. 2019-20; Hill, 2012, p. 25.

[109] Gamble, 2012, p. 25; Johnson, 2016, p. 360.

[110] Though some early private libraries were brought to Rome through the conquest of Hellenistic monarchies (e.g., the library Aemilius Paulus took from Perseus of Macedonia: Plut. Aem. 28.11; the library Sulla captured during the sack of Athens in 86 BC: Plut. Sul. 26.1; the 200,000 books from the libraries of Pergamum Antony willed to Cleopatra: Plut. Ant. 58.5), and some of these collections might have ended up in Rome's public libraries, by the early Empire, there were no more Hellenistic monarchies left to plunder, so libraries were likely stocked largely through book purchases. Our sources occasionally mention the purchasing of books for private collections, but are silent on the stocking of public libraries.

[111] ILS 9362; Pfeiffer 1931, p. 159.

[112] CIL III 1.607 states it was oper(i) biblio[th(ecae) sestertium CLXX m(ilibus). Dix, 1996, p. 94 takes this statement to mean it was for the land alone; Platt, 2008, p. 248 believes it indicates the cost of the entire library. There is no indication from the inscription if that figure includes the 12 pairs of gladiators displayed at the library's dedication.

maintenance of the library he built in Comum.[113] The library dedicated to Tiberius Julius Celsus

Polemaeanus in Ephesus states that it was built and books were paid for by Celsus' son, Tiberius

Julius Aquila Polemaeanus, but it does not provide figures for the cost of construction or the

collection; however, it does state that Aquila left 25,000 denarii for upkeep and further book

purchases, with 2,000 denarii from this sum spent in the first year of operation, while the remaining

23,000 was set aside (and presumably invested) to cover staff salaries and other expenses.[114]

Expression of the donor's status, however, was conveyed even more effectively by the

buildings themselves than by the amounts recorded in their inscriptions. Few Roman public

libraries survive in the archaeological record, but their opulence and extravagance are nonetheless

clear from what little remains. Without a doubt, the most famous example is the Celsus library of

Ephesus, where archaeologists have restored its façade. Sitting on one of the most travelled streets

in one of Roman Asia's leading cities, the library rose in two levels to 17 m in height and 21 m in

width; its façade was adorned with protruding porches bearing inscriptions; its marble columns in

different colours were topped with Corinthian capitals supporting highly decorated entablatures.[115]

Moreover, the building's architects used subtle tricks of perspective to make the library appear

even larger than it actually was: horizontal joints on the façade, for example, rise slightly in the

middle, and the columns of the central porches are slightly taller than the outer columns, giving

the illusion that the library is wider than it actually is.[116] Similarly, the *armaria* niches inside the

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[113] CIL V.5262. The figure for the maintenance of the library comes from a 15th century copy of a now lost inscription recording Pliny's donations to Comum; regrettably, any details about the library's construction costs, if they were indeed part of the inscription, were lost before the 15th century. Dix, 1996, pp. 93-95 notes that Theodor Mommsen speculated the library might have cost up to one million sesterces, but Dix himself argues that such a figure is excessive.

[114] IvE 7[2] 5101; implications of the expenditure of the 2,000 denarii are discussed in Strocka, 2003, p. 40.

[115] For more detailed descriptions of the library than can be given here, see Strocka, 2003, p. 33 ff.; Burrell, 2009, p. 78 ff.; and Graham, 2013, pp. 398-402.

[116] Strocka, 2003, pp. 33-34.

building are cut to different widths: those along the back wall are the narrowest (at 1.07 m), while the central niches on the left and right sides of the library are the widest (at 1.20 m), so that the interior appeared larger than it actually was.[117] This library would have been a stunning sight when it opened in the early second century AD: "Whoever stood before it was amazed: not only by its actual size, but by the magnificence of the prospect of the two floors, by the profusion of its structuring, especially when the morning sun enhances the effect through plays of light and shadows."[118]

Other libraries that survive in the archeological record also suggest magnificence and expense far exceeding anything necessary for the storage and reading of books. The library built by Titus Flavius Severianus Neon in Sagalassos, Turkey, for example, was built circa 120 AD on one of the city's busiest thoroughfares; the façade, though now lost, likely imitated the Celsus library's alternating porches.[119] Inside, the back wall had a podium rising to 2.35 m, with niches for small statues along its base, and more niches for large statues cut into the wall above the podium, including a central niche able to accommodate a statue of at least 4 m.[120] The *armaria* niches are almost the same dimensions as those in the Celsus library, suggesting the architects used similar tricks of perspective to make the Neon library seem bigger than it actually was.[121] The central location, exterior resemblance to the Celsus library, and a decorated interior that would have been over 6 m high (and made to look larger through manipulation of perspective) all suggest

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[117] Strocka, 2003, pp. 36-37; Despite this sort of enhancement, Nicholls, 2016, pp. 269-70 argues that the interior would have been rather plain when compared to the exterior, which "goes all-out to catch the attention of people whose interest in it might well have been marginal and transitory…".

[118] Strocka, 2003, p. 33. See also Thomas, 2007, p. 10: "With its elaborate variation of basic formal elements such as the column, the pediment, and the arch, the façade of this building was a monumental statement of the family's rise to the highest circles in Rome, combining metropolitan and local idioms with verve and daring."

[119] Waelkens, 2015, p. 216 (construction date and thoroughfare) and p. 226 (façade).

[120] Waelkens, 1993, p. 172.

[121] Waelkens, 2015, p. 223.

an expensive building designed to impress the viewer. Even the veteran's colony of Thamugadi had a library, built during the unsettled years of the third century, possibly as late as 250 AD.[122] It occupied a prime location on the Cardo just north of the Decumanus; it had a paved courtyard and colonnade in front, while its main room was a semicircle with spiral-fluted marble columns flanking the central statue niche; and was roofed with a half-dome.[123] The colony of Thamugadi is largely full of "unoriginal," even "dry and uninteresting buildings."[124] Yet the library was so unique that, at the time of its 1901 excavation, archaeologists could not identify its function until they found the dedicatory inscription in 1905.[125] Even in a Roman colony of no particular note, someone not only chose to donate a library to the community, but spent the exceptional sum of 400,000 sesterces to put it in a high-traffic area, and give it a remarkable appearance that stood out from other buildings in the community. As with other libraries from across the Empire, the library donated by Rogatianus to the citizens of Thamugadi was as expensive as it was conspicuous.

The large expenditure that donors made on their libraries suggests that they were consciously trying to draw attention to themselves. Books were an expensive commodity in the Roman world, but libraries were built in highly conspicuous and public areas where theft must have been an obvious concern—and their extravagant façades, lofty interiors, beautiful statues, and expensive marble columns did little to protect their precious collections.[126] Clearly, Roman public libraries were built not simply to preserve book collections and make them available to readers, but rather to communicate the wealth of the library donor and his family through

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[122] Pfeiffer, 1937, p. 159.
[123] Pfeiffer, 1937, p. 160 (courtyard and colonnade), and p. 161 (semicircle, fluted columns, and half-dome).
[124] Pfeiffer, 1937, p. 158.
[125] Pfeiffer, 1937, p. 157-59. The semicircular main room and half-domed roof are still unique among excavated Roman libraries; see also Nicholls, 2016, pp. 271-72 for discussion of the library's appearance.
[126] Nicholls, 2016, p. 262-63.

extravagant expenditure.[127]   Roman public libraries showcased their donors as being especially wealthy, and willing to use this wealth to provide their communities with something unique and beautiful. Clearly, libraries were a means of asserting the donor's status as a member of the elite within his community.

Display of Status: Literary Culture

Any act of public munificence could unambiguously advertise the donor's wealth if it is extravagant enough. The donation of a public library, however, made a unique statement to the community about the donor's connection to Greco-Roman literary culture.[128] It would be hard to overstate the importance of literary sophistication to elite identity during the Principate. Roman society traditionally held mastery of language in high esteem. During the Republic, for example, those who displayed this skill through oratory, either in politics or in the courts, could become the leading men of the City. When the emperors came to hold a monopoly on power, mastery of language, expressed through writing and literary knowledge was the *sine qua non* of elite status in certain circles.[129] Thus, libraries were a benefaction that acknowledged the elite status of their users, but at the same time also emphasised the donor's immersion in Greco-Roman literary culture. Pliny the Younger, for example, not only donated a library to Comum, but also participated in literary culture by attending as many of his friends' recitations in Rome as possible, claiming that *neque enim est fere quisquam, qui studia, ut non simul et nos amet* ["for there is almost nobody

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[127] Nicholls, 2016, p. 276: "…it is not right to restrict the 'audience' or constituency for these acts of library euergetism solely to the literary communities of the recipient towns: the consistent choice of prominent, expensive locations and ebullient architecture suggests a wider appeal."

[128] Dix, 1994, p. 282: "Perhaps it was … inevitable that an aristocrat would make a conspicuous display of his interest in literary culture by founding a 'public library.'"

[129] Johnson, 2010, p. 203.

engaged in literary pursuits that does not also love me."][130] He was himself an active author, mentioning the books or poems he had written, and recitals of his works he had given, throughout his letters.[131] Though he does not say so, it would be logical to assume that he added the books he authored to the library he donated to Comum. In this way, he was not just an active participant in all aspects of literary culture, both in Rome and in Comum, but he also shared his own and others' literary works with the elites of his community. Pliny's library was an expression of its donor's love of literature and the image he wanted to project to his community.[132]

Augustus, too, took part in the literary culture of his day: he was fond of attending author readings, and was himself an author of works of history, autobiography, and some poetry, and he gave private recitations to friends.[133] Suetonius records a few of the titles and the number of volumes comprising some of Augustus's works, suggesting that he saw these books himself, possibly in his capacity as the manager of Rome's libraries.[134] If so, this raises the possibility that books authored by Augustus had been deposited in one of Rome's public libraries, most likely the Palatine library, as it was closely associated with his own home. Augustus, like Pliny, was both an author and a frequent guest at recitations, and he was certainly a library donor. These activities demonstrated his close affiliation with literary culture.

One final example comes from the library of Celsus in Ephesus, which featured bronze statues of its dedicatee, standing upon bases bearing two-word inscriptions: *σοφία Κέλσου* (wisdom

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[130] Plin. Epist. 1.13.6. He also mentions his attendance at recitations in letters 4.27, 5.17, 6.17, 6.21, 8.12, to name a few.
[131] E.G., letters 3.18, 5.3, 7.4, 7.12, 7.17, 7.12, 8.19, 8.21. Again, this is not a complete list.
[132] Dix, 1996, pp. 97-98 downplays any sort of literary culture at all in Comum: "…Pliny's library at Comum was a gift inspired more by the self-conception of its donor than by the needs of his community."
[133] Suet. Aug., attending readings: 89.3; writings and recitations 85.1-2 (He also attempted a tragedy based on the Ajax myth, but gave up, quipping that Aiacem suum in spongiam incubuisse ["Ajax has fallen upon his sponge"]).
[134] Townend, 1961, p. 103: Suetonius held the post of a bybliothecis, probably under Trajan.

of Celsus), *ἀρετὴ Κέλσου* (virtue of Celsus), and *ἐπιστήμη Κέλσου* (knowledge of Celsus).[135] These first two traits are not typically associated with successful military and political careers; rather, they are qualities ascribed to Homer in a second century relief by Archelaos of Pirene, hinting that Celsus had a direct connection to Greco-Roman literary culture.[136] This association, along with the obvious fact that an entire library was dedicated to him, strongly suggest that Celsus was actively engaged in the literary culture of his day. A public library, then, was not just a benefit to those who participated in a community's literary culture: it was a tangible and enduring manifestation of the individual donor's (or dedicatee's) literary sophistication, and thus a projection of his elite status within the community.

So important was literary sophistication to elite identity that some people even faked it: the wealthy freedman Calvisius Sabinus, for example, spent hundreds of thousands of sesterces to purchase slaves, each of whom specialized in a particular poet's works, so they could remind him of the details that Sabinus himself found impossible to remember. He claimed *ut putaret se scire, quod quisquam in domo sua sciret* ["...that he believed himself to know whatever anyone in his own house knows"].[137] Others seem to have collected books to emulate the trappings of elite status: "Indeed, the personal library came to be seen as a feature of social distinction, and aspirants to elite status acquired private libraries in pretense of an educated and literary cultivation that were often lacking."[138] Clearly, the personal libraries that were a mark of literary sophistication during

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[135] IvE 7[2] 5108, 5109, and 5111. A fourth statute base was repurposed in late antiquity to praise the ἔννοι Φιλίππου (foresight of Philippos), so its original description of Celsus is lost to us (IvE 7[2] 5110).

[136] Burrell, 2009, p. 81.

[137] Sen. Epist. 27.5-8. Even if Seneca's description of Sabinus is a caricature, it nonetheless underscores the centrality of literary sophistication to elite identity: he could not mock such behaviour unless it had at least some basis in reality.

[138] Gamble, 2012, p. 26, cites as examples of literary pretense the (presumably illiterate) barbarians who display busts of famous authors in their homes (Juv. Sat. 2.4-7); the ignorant book collector who pays too much for worn-out volumes because he thinks they're old and valuable (Lucian, Adv. Ind. 1); and the Greek and Latin libraries that

the Republic would have lost their significance as the Sabinuses and Trimalchios of the Roman world tried to imitate erudition without putting in the necessary hours of study.[139] If pretentious book collecting by wealthy freedmen and the nouveau riche was more than just a literary trope (and it is difficult to explain repeated appearances of it in the literature of the Principate if it had no basis in reality), then it would naturally have pushed the traditional aristocracy toward other ways of differentiating themselves from these poseurs. Some, presumably, chose to do so by building libraries, effectively taking the Republican practice of opening one's library to a small circle of friends and extending it to the entire community. In doing so, they concretely and publicly demonstrated not only their wealth, but also their dedication to the literary culture that was a traditional preserve of the highly educated and leisured elite. Thus, libraries, were a way of demonstrating the donor's wealth and status, much like traditional euergetism had done in previous centuries. However, this wealth underwrote a form of public munificence that displayed the donor's status in a way that baths, games, or temples never could. It showed that the donor had not just wealth, but also the rarified affiliation with high literary culture that set him apart from the rest of the community.

Preservation of Status: Commemoration

Finally, public libraries, in rare instances, helped immortalize their donors. Greco-Roman authors extolled the immortalizing effect of writing from early on: Herodotus says he wrote his history *ὡς … τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται* ["so that the deeds of men would

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do little to improve Trimalchio's literary acumen (Petron. Satyric. 48). Johnson, 2016, p. 358 cites these latter two passages to show "… where bibliomania is confused with cultural advancement and elite status."

[139] Johnson, 2010, p. 31: "From the pages of Quintilian one senses the critical importance of deep internalization of things literary. … The upshot of all this is that bookroll culture in the high empire was designedly reserved for elite [sic] of a certain stripe, able and willing to devote immense time and energy to its mastery." See also Starr, 1987, p. 8: "Since literature had been and remained a symbol of social status, its reduction to a marketable commodity may indicate a weakening of the hold of the traditional aristocracy on the control of access to social status."

not become lost through time…"],[140] while Thucydides claimed his work was *κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται*. ["not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time."][141] Roman writers continued that tradition: Pliny the Elder allegedly wrote his now lost history of the German wars because of a dream in which the ghost of Drusus Nero *commendabat memoriam suam orabatque ut se ab iniuria oblivionis assereret* ["entrusted his commemoration to Pliny, and begged him to protect it from unjust oblivion"].[142] But some authors saw writing as a way to secure not only the commemoration of other people and their deeds, but of their own names as well. Horace, for example, wrote of his poems that *exegi monumentum aere perennius*… ["I have completed a monument more lasting than bronze"] and that *non omnis moriar multaque pars mei / vitabit Libitinam* ["I shall not die entirely, and a great part of me will avoid the funeral pyre..."].[143] Ovid closed his Metamorphoses by predicting his own eternal renown: *perque omnia saecula fama, siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam*. ["...if the prophecies of poets have any measure of truth, I shall live through all ages in fame."][144] The people who built public libraries must have been aware of such claims, and hoped to share in them through their donations. Scholars have recognized that euergetism was not just a way to win popularity, but also afforded the donor a continued, albeit symbolic, presence in the community, even after death. It was a form of immortality "...as pagans conceived it: A man's name and fame in the eyes and on the tongues of his fellowmen."[145] Libraries in particular, being both expensive and exclusive, were a means to out-compete other major *euergetai* for an enduring place in the minds of their fellow citizens

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[140] Herod. 1.1.0.
[141] Thuc. 1.22.4, Trans. Dutton, 1910.
[142] Plin. Ep. 3.5.4.
[143] Hor. Od. 3.30.1 and 6-7.
[144] Ovid 15.878-9.
[145] Gleason, 2013, pp. 83-84.

generally, and among elites in particular.[146] By preserving the books that themselves perpetuated their authors' names, libraries helped ensure a similar vitality for the names of those who built them.

Lest the public find that connection too subtle, library buildings were often designed to make commemoration of their donors glaringly obvious. Anyone who stopped to look at the library of Celsus would have noticed its emphasis on the donor's family: the inscriptions on the protruding porches of the façade bring several names (literally) to the fore: Celsus, Aquila, and Ti. Claudius Ariston (who oversaw the library's completion after Aquila died) were conspicuous by their prominence, and easily read by people with at least a basic level of literacy.[147] Equestrian bronzes, resting on plinths inscribed with Greek and Latin summaries of Celsus's career, flanked the stairs leading up to the library's entrance.[148] There were at least three statues of Celsus and one of Aquila erected in niches on the façade of the library, while twelve fasces with hooded axes—reminders of Celsus's time as proconsul—are carved into the pilasters of the doors.[149] The dedicatory inscription states that the statues of Celsus were to be crowned three times per year, while the other statues, their identities now lost, would be decorated on Celsus's feast day (presumably his birthday).[150] All these statues and inscriptions, not to mention the crowning of the statues and a

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[146] Coqueugniot, 2010, p. 41: "Or les grands donateurs étaient souvent en concurrence les uns avec les autres, et se disputaient les honneurs civiques et une place dans la mémoire collective des cités grecques et latines." ["But the major donors were often competing with each other, and contending for civic honours and a place in the collective memory of Greek and Roman cities."]

[147] IvE 7[2] 5101, discussed in detail by Graham, 2013, pp. 398-400. Woolf, 2011, p. 56 notes that writing could be adapted to many media, including inscriptions, which people with only a limited ability to read could understand, thanks to inscriptional conventions and abbreviations.

[148] IvE 7[2] 5102 and 5103.

[149] Burrell, 2009, p. 81.

[150] IvE 7[2] 5101.

feast day for Celsus, are an unsubtle indication that preservation of Celsus's memory was at least as important a function for this library as the preservation of literature.

The library of Neon in Sagalassos was equally unambiguous: it featured seven statues of T. Flavius Severianus Neon and his family, honouring them as leading citizens and benefactors of the city.[151] Surviving inscriptions indicate that the statues occupied the whole interior wall opposite the library's main entrance, while broken fragments recovered from the site suggest that they were larger than life-sized bronzes.[152] Given their size and position, they must have dominated the room as they looked down on the library's users. Little survives of the library's exterior, but surviving interior elements suggest the library was modeled on the Celsus library, which in turn suggests that the façade would have followed suit.[153] If so, it almost certainly displayed more inscriptions and statues of Severianus Neon and his family, prominently proclaiming the family's virtues to anyone traveling the busy thoroughfare in front of the library. Again, the commemoration of the family was conspicuous.

The forum of Trajan, too, made the connection between donor and library explicit. Anyone entering Trajan's Forum would see a bronze statue of the emperor over-topping the roof of the Basilica Ulpia, an immediate and conspicuous reminder of who was responsible for the entire complex.[154] Crossing through the basilica, the viewer stepped out into a peristyle and courtyard with one library to the left and another to the right; the column supporting Trajan's statue comprised the literal centre of the library complex, while from within the libraries, the column

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[151] Waelkens, 2015, pp. 220-21.
[152] Waelkens, 2015, p. 223.
[153] Waelkens, 2015, p. 223.
[154] Davies, pp. 63-64. The bronze statute of Trajan likely stood atop a sphere, and reached 4 m in height, but was lost before the current statue of St. Peter was erected atop the column in 1588: Packer, 2001, pp. 75-76.

base and lower portions would have dominated the sightlines from the doors and windows.[155] Like the statue of Apollo that was made to resemble Augustus in the Palatine library, the statue of Trajan was physically located in direct connection to the libraries, standing atop the column between them and eternally asserting his authority as patron of the collections, which doubtless perpetuated his memory in the minds of all who used them. Trajan's libraries also recalled their Augustan predecessor by being integrated into a temple complex: the peristyle that connected the two libraries was extended into the precinct of the Temple of the Deified Trajan, just north of the libraries, once it was completed and dedicated early in Hadrian's reign.[156] In this way, Trajan's libraries were given direct, deliberate, and unambiguous association with their founder. Though few libraries survive in the archaeological record, wherever we do find them, we also have evidence of the donors' images featuring prominently, as well as other associations with the donors, such as inscriptions and, in Trajan's case, a memorial temple adjoining the library. Combined, these elements underscored the use of libraries to preserve not just works of Greco-Roman literature, but the donor's memory as well.

In a very few instances, libraries became literal memorials by holding their donors' earthly remains. The most famous example is Trajan's column, which entombed the ashes of both the emperor and his wife Plotina.[157] Though ancient sources give no information on this point, it appears likely that the column was intended from the start to include Trajan's burial chamber.[158] If it was intended as a funerary monument from the outset, then it is significant that Trajan would have chosen to build it between his libraries. Tombs were typically the site of Roman cultic

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[155] See Packer, 2001, pp. 72-77 for a more detailed description and illustrations of the peristyle and column environs.

[156] Packer, 2001, p. 72 (extension into the temple precinct), p. 80 (dedication by Hadrian).

[157] Packer, 2001, p. 75.

[158] Davies, 1997, pp. 46-48.

practices, often involving feasts, gatherings, and other rites, that perpetuated the deceased in the memories of the living.[159] Likewise, books perpetuated the names of authors and those they wrote about (often deceased centuries earlier) in the minds of the living. By preserving those books, libraries were, in a sense, sepulchres housing authors' intellectual remains, and had a subtle but undeniable role in preserving and evoking the dead in the minds of the living. There is a natural concordance, then, between tomb and library, as they shared complementary commemorative functions through rites and writing respectively.[160] Moreover, these libraries almost certainly held copies of Trajan's written account of his Dacian war, and opened directly to the column that bore an engraved visual representation of that same event.[161] Both library and column specifically and deliberately evoked Trajan and his accomplishments, through written history as well as engraved imagery in which he featured prominently.[162] Thus, the combination of a unique and magnificent tomb, built as part of a library complex, engaged its audience in commemorative functions on multiple levels (and was no doubt augmented by the opening of the Temple of the Divine Trajan during his successor's reign). Although the Forum of Trajan as a whole bore many reminders of its founder, the activities typical of a basilica were not specifically linked to preserving the names of the deceased in the minds of the living. Libraries, on the other hand, were fundamentally

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[159] Toynbee, 1996, pp. 61-62.

[160] It is possible that Dio Chrysostom took advantage of this same commemorative function by burying his wife and son near a library in Prusa, which housed a statue of Trajan. This act resulted in allegations of treason, which Pliny the Younger, as governor of Bythinia, investigated and reported to the Emperor: Ipse in re praesenti fui et vidi tuam quoque statuam in bibliotheca positam, id autem in quo dicuntur sepulti filius et uxor Dionis in area collocatum, quae porticibus includitur ["I myself have been to the very spot and have also seen your statue, placed in the library; but the place in which Dio's son and wife are said to be interred is located in an open area surrounded by a portico"] (Plin. Ep. 10.81.7). Pliny's letter does not make it clear exactly how close the tomb was to the library, and thus it is not clear if the burial was meant to evoke some commemorative aspect from the library. Trajan's response is equally unhelpful on this point: he told Pliny to disregard the matter, as he had no wish to rule through fear or threats of treason trials (Plin. Ep. 10.82.1-2).

[161] Davies, 1997, p. 43; Packer, 2001, p. 78.

[162] Packer, 2001, p. 75 reports that Trajan appears 60 times out of the 155 individual scenes depicted on the column. One can only speculate, but it seems likely that Trajan would feature just as prominently in the written history of the Dacian war as well.

inseparable from this role—one could not see authors' busts or read their books in a library without turning one's mind to names and deeds from years, even centuries, past. From this perspective, it made perfect sense for Trajan to have his remains entombed between two libraries, at the literal centre of a complex purpose-built to preserve the names and deeds of the dead in the minds of the living.

The library of Celsus shared this sepulchral role, and not surprisingly it too is similarly filled with images that emphasize commemoration of the departed. For example, it has a chamber beneath the central apse, in which archaeologists found the dedicatee's magnificent marble sarcophagus. Like Trajan's tomb, the library of Celsus was intended from the outset to house Celsus's remains, as the passage leading to the burial chamber is too small for the sarcophagus to pass through, and thus must have been deposited there during construction.[163] As already noted, Celsus's son Aquila spared no expense to preserve his father's memory, not just by ensuring the library was adorned with images and inscriptions, but going so far as to provide an endowment for the crowning of his father's statues three times per year, while other statues were adorned on his feast day. A commemorative feast at the tomb of the deceased on his or her birthday was one of the rites that perpetuated the dead in the minds of the living.[164] Adorning the statues on Celsus's birthday might have been part of just such a commemorative feast, which his surviving family would almost certainly have held at the library. In this way the library combined both imagery and funerary practices to commemorate the dead. Moreover, Celsus's name appears on the library's façade in the accusative case, a practice more typical of honorific statue bases than building dedications.[165] However, this use of the accusative is not infrequently found in Greek funerary

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[163] Strocka, 2003, p. 38.
[164] Toynbee, 1996, p. 62.
[165] Burrell, 2009, p. 78.

inscriptions, particularly inscriptions from Asia Minor that include the names of both the dedicator and dedicatee.[166] The façade inscription of the library of Celsus fits this pattern, suggesting the designers wanted to give particular emphasis to its funerary function. As with Trajan's column, the library structure, already a place that evoked the dead in the minds of the living, combined images, words, and funerary rituals, resulting in commemoration of the deceased on multiple levels that must have been more effective than any one of these elements alone.

Libraries as Euergetism: A Reconsideration

As a form of euergetism, libraries clearly did not operate in the same way as other munificent donations. As explained earlier, scholars generally agree that euergetism was a form of exchange: elites shared their wealth with the community in the form of public buildings and entertainments, and in return they received the honors and prestige that validated their superior social standing. This process of exchange helped ensure a peaceful coexistence between elites and non-elites within the community. Crucially, this legitimation and social harmony could only be conferred by the non-elite citizens.[167] Without it, communities ran the risk of the sort of discord that Dio Chrysostom and the Vedius Antoninus inscription discuss. Libraries, however, were emphatically elite institutions, offering the illiterate masses little besides beautification of the cityscape.

Nonetheless, emperors and wealthy Romans had good reason to open public libraries, because the people who actually used them were members of the cultured elite, people who, in Roman terms, very much *mattered*. They were sometimes people who moved in circles close to the emperor (e.g., Horace was an *amicus* of Maecenas and was known personally to Augustus,

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[166] Mednikarova, 2003, p. 133.
[167] Zuiderhoek, 2009, p. 106; Gygax, 2016, pp. 2-3, as noted on p. 4 of this paper.

Galen was Marcus Aurelius' personal physician, Fronto was tutor to Marcus Aurelius) or were *amici* of those who did (e.g., Aulus Gellius was part of Fronto's circle of friends). They were also the poets and scholars of the Principate, or part of the literary elite whose esoteric debates determined who would be the gatekeepers of elite Roman society. All these activities depended heavily on access to books, which were expensive and often difficult to obtain. Thus, in both Rome and in the provinces, provision of a public library benefited the elite reading community. At the same time, the donation of a library elevated the donor's status in relation to the elites who made use of them, because it made him into a sort of patron among the Empire's literary and educated class—effectively an elite within the elite. Such a relationship underscores the value of a library as a tool for earning prestige: other munificent donations such as baths might be used by more people than libraries, but the fact that libraries were uniquely associated with elite culture gave them a value no other gift could match.[168] Even Domitian, an emperor not known for his love of literature, took pains to rebuild and restock Roman public libraries that had been lost to fire.[169] He could have used that money to chase the approval of the crowd by spending it on more games, baths, or theatres. The fact that he spent it on libraries demonstrates how important they were to him – not for his personal use or his love of literature, but because they made him a sort of patron to Rome's literary class. As a form of elite competition, libraries were in a category all their own: a building of cultural significance that benefited and appealed to the most important people in Greco-Roman society.

Those who donated libraries also bestowed other benefactions on their communities as well, as they had to be sure they did not ignore the desires of non-elite citizens and risk sowing

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[168] Platt, 2008, pp. 255-56.
[169] Suet. Domit. 20.1. Domitian was better known for using his stylus to impale flies than for literary pursuits: Suet. Domit. 3.1.

discord in the community. Pliny, for example, donated public baths to his community (costs of which are lost to us), with an additional 300,000 sesterces for their decoration and a further investment fund of 200,000 sesterces for maintenance; he willed over 1,800,000 to Comum as capital for the maintenance of his freedmen, and for a municipal feast; he created an *alimenta* investment fund worth more than 500,000 sesterces to support Comum's poor freeborn children; and he offered to set up a fund to pay one-third of a teacher's salary so Comum's youths would not have to attend schools in other communities.[170] Clearly, Pliny did not have to choose between a library and some other form of euergetism; he could provide one without sacrificing another.[171] As a result, no one in Comum could feel that Pliny's library detracted from his generosity to the non-elites of the community. Likewise, the family of Celsus in Ephesus was well-known for its munificence to the city. And the same family that built the Neon library in Sagalasoss was also "the most prolific building benefactors" in the city.[172] In short, those who donated libraries were the wealthiest of elites, able to benefit others of their class without short-changing the non-elites of their communities. Domingo Gygax said euergetism "brought the two parties [i.e., elites and non-elites] closer by expressing solidarity, but simultaneously separated them by demonstrating the differences between them."[173] The same could be said of libraries as a form of intra-elite euergetism: they brought elites together through their shared literary sophistication, but simultaneously demonstrated that fabulous wealth separated the few from the many within an already narrow stratum of society. Though libraries were a gift for the elite, the very fact of their donation demonstrated that their donors were at the apex of their communities.

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[170] Baths, freedmen, and dinner: CIL V.5262; alimenta: letters 1.8.10 & 7.18.2-3, and CIL V.5262; teacher: letter 4.13.3-9. See also Nichols, 1980, p. 379 on Pliny's relationship to Comum.
[171] Platt, 2008, p. 253.
[172] Waelkens, 2015, p. 228.
[173] Gygax, 2016, p. 17.

Conclusion

Libraries occupied a unique place within the institution of Greco-Roman euergetism. They shared some obvious similarities with other munificent building donations: wealthy citizens offered them to the community in exchange for prestige; they were magnificent structures that enhanced the lives of their users; and they were as culturally central to elites as baths or temples were to the general population—but like any other form of euergetism, they simultaneously underscored the gulf in wealth and social standing that separated the donors from the users. In this respect, they continued the elements inherent in Julius Caesar's planned libraries that made them an entirely novel form of munificent donation: they were exclusive, benefiting only the literate elites who formed a tiny segment of Greco-Roman society, and they functioned as a form of competitive building that delineated elite from elite, as only emperors and the richest citizens could afford to build them. These traits made libraries an ideal projection of not only the donor's tremendous wealth, but also the depth of his commitment to literary culture. Some library donors took that projection of status even further, by appropriating to themselves the commemorative aspect inherent in books, in sometimes blatant displays of monumental statuary and inscriptions. In a very few instances, they were even used as tombs, combining the commemorative aspects of libraries with those of cultic funerary rites to perpetuate the deceased in the minds of the living— a combination of functions and practices that was otherwise unknown in antiquity. Ultimately, the very fact of their exclusiveness made libraries entirely different from any other form of elite building: libraries both acknowledged the status of their users, while simultaneously underscoring the even more rarified status of their donors. Though not aimed at the common people of the community, donors nonetheless could not ignore that constituency, which made libraries an option for only the wealthiest benefactors, who alone could afford to provide amenities for commons and

nobles alike, and thus further highlighted their elite-within-elite status. Though they were an expensive benefaction aimed at the narrowest audience, donors clearly believed public libraries were a worthy expenditure: not because they improved the lives of the community at large, but because of what they expressed to that community, particularly the elites within it, about the donors themselves.

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