



Fig. 1: One of the libraries in Trajan's baths at Rome. Image credit: Jon Coulston

### Library Building under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian

Celsus' (heavily reconstructed) library at Ephesos represents one of the most spectacular and best preserved sets of ancient library remains. But that is not the main reason why it appears on the home page of this site. It is there because its foundation highlights features of Nerva, Trajanic and Hadrianic literary culture that are significant for the wider study of literature and literary life in the period. It thus serves – along with other libraries of the same era – as a useful introduction to our research project, a way of starting to think about some of the themes and issues that will be central to our study.<sup>1</sup>

Tiberius Iulius Celsus Polemaeanus was Greek.<sup>2</sup> He came either from Sardis or Ephesos; but he was born into a wealthy, Romanised family, and embarked upon a military career which brought him into contact with the soon-to-be-emperor Vespasian. When Vespasian triumphed in AD 69, Celsus was one of the first provincials to be elected into the new emperor's reorganised Senate. He went on to enjoy a glittering career – and the favour of five successive emperors (no mean feat). Among other highlights, he was made consul (*suffectus*) by Domitian, served as *curator aedium sacrarum et operum locorumque publicorum populi Romani* (a position which saw him overseeing the organisation and finances of public building projects at Rome), and – to cap it all off – he was appointed proconsul of Asia by Trajan in 105/6. He was a Greek, in other words, who rose to the very top of Rome's imperial government. But he seems to have settled finally in Ephesos to live out his retirement.

Celsus may have conceived the idea of the library himself,<sup>3</sup> but – as its long foundation inscription (carved onto the library's façade) explains – the building was

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<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to Jon Coulston for sharing his great store of knowledge – and photographs – of ancient libraries with me.

<sup>2</sup> On his life and career, see J. Keil (1953), *Forschungen in Ephesos* V, 1: 62-5; and P.-W., *R.E.*, X, 1, *s.u.* Iulius 183, col. 544-550.

<sup>3</sup> It has even been suggested that it was Tacitus – proconsul of Asia in 112/3 – who suggested it to him: F. Hueber & V.M. Stroocka (1975), 'Die Bibliothek des Celsus.

begun by his son, one Tiberius Julius Aquila Polemaeanus, and completed by Aquila's heirs, sometime between 114 and 135 AD:

'To Tiberius Iulius Celsus Polemaeanus, consul and proconsul of Asia, Tiberius Iulius Aquila Polemaeanus, consul, his son, built the Celsian library out of his own funds, with all the building decorations, the statues and books. He also left 25000 dinarii for its equipment and for the acquisition of books, 2000 dinarii of which were spent in one year, so that from the annual interest of the remaining 23000 the library will be kept and its attendants will be paid [800] dinarii, which shall be paid to them on the birthday of Celsus for all times. And also according to the will of Aquila new books shall be bought every year. And also his [Celsus'] statues shall be hung with wreaths thrice a year. And also all other statues shall be decorated every year on the [birthday] feast of Celsus. After the same heirs had commissioned the equipment of the library with the 2000 dinarii taken [from the capital], the library was officially opened on the feast of Celsus [?], so that... on the seventeenth of the month... according to the wording of the will, no [demand nor] deduction nor expenditure shall be put up to them from the stated funds, for the heirs of Aquila have wholly completed the work. Executor of the will was Tiberius Claudius Aristion, three times asiarch.'<sup>4</sup>

Its construction represents a generous – and fashionable – act of civic patronage. Rome's earliest libraries had begun to appear in the 20s BC. Prior to that, wealthy individuals and families had amassed private book collections, and clearly shared them with each other (as indeed they continued to do, throughout the imperial period and beyond).<sup>5</sup> But it was Julius Caesar who first contemplated a more publicly accessible kind of library – as part of his wider programme of civic building projects designed to support his claims to power.<sup>6</sup> He was assassinated before his plans could be realised, and the honour of founding Rome's first 'public' library fell to Asinius Pollio – a literary patron and author, as well as a prominent statesman and successful military commander.<sup>7</sup> But Augustus was never one to be long outdone (especially by anyone who might seriously rival him), and he went on to found two more in quick succession: the first, in 28 BC, attached to his Temple of Apollo on the Palatine;<sup>8</sup> and

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Eine Prachtfassade in Ephesos und das Problem ihrer Wiederaufrichtung', *Antike Welt* 6, 4: 3-14, at 4.

<sup>4</sup> *IvE* 5113. Translation by V. M. Strocka (2003), 'The Celsus Library in Ephesus', in *Ancient Libraries in Anatolia: libraries of Hattusha, Pergamum, Ephesus, Nysa. The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 'Libraries and Education in the Networked Information Environment'*, Ankara: 33-43. On the library's several inscriptions, see esp. Keil [n. 2]: 61-80; and more generally on the library as a whole, Hueber & Strocka [n. 3].

<sup>5</sup> Casson, L. (2001), *Libraries in the Ancient World*, Yale: 65-79; W.A. Johnson (forthcoming), 'Libraries and reading culture in the high empire', in J. König, K. Oikonomopolou & G. Woolf (eds), *Ancient Libraries*, Cambridge: 704-24.

<sup>6</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 44.2. On the symbolism and politics of Rome's earliest 'public' libraries, see esp. G. Woolf 'Introduction: approaching ancient libraries', in J. König, K. Oikonomopolou & G. Woolf (eds), *Ancient Libraries*, Cambridge: 33-65, at 35-40; Y.L. Too (2010), *The Idea of the Library in the Ancient World*, Oxford: 44-6.

<sup>7</sup> Ovid, *Trist.* 3.1.71-2; Pliny, *NH* 7.115, 35.10; Isidore, *Etym.* 6.5.2; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. A-C, ed. EM. Steinby (1993): 196.

<sup>8</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 29; Dio Cass. 53.1.3; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. A-C, ed. EM. Steinby (1993): 55-6; E. Bowie (forthcoming), 'Libraries for the Caesars', in J. König, K. Oikonomopolou & G. Woolf (eds), *Ancient Libraries*, Cambridge: 500-504.

the second, sometime between 23 and 11 BC, as part of the Portico of Octavia.<sup>9</sup> Others followed (e.g., in the Temple of Augustus, built by Tiberius,<sup>10</sup> and in the Temple of Peace, built by Vespasian<sup>11</sup>); and by the late first/early second century AD, public libraries had begun to appear in other cities and towns across the empire.<sup>12</sup> Celsus' library, in other words, was part of a trend that was rapidly expanding across the empire. And its foundation did not simply provide the citizens of Ephesos with somewhere to consult recherché texts. It added to the consequence of the city, by enabling it to join the ranks of those (still relatively few) civic centres outside Rome which could boast a *bibliotheca*.<sup>13</sup>

The family's commitment to this euergetic gesture is clear from their decision to endow the library with funds that would pay for its future maintenance and the annual acquisition of new books. It was not supposed to be a flash in the pan, but a lasting (and even growing) benefaction. But public-spiritedness, of course, was not the only motivating factor, and its practical function was only part of the story. The library was also (and even more energetically) designed as a monument to Celsus and his family, and a focus for their on-going commemoration.<sup>14</sup>

The library itself comprised a single room (Fig. 2). Built in the Roman style (Greek libraries tended to consist of small storerooms packed with papyrus rolls, with adjoining colonnades where documents could be taken and read, while Roman libraries usually brought books and readers together in ornately decorated reading rooms), its walls were lined with niches housing book cabinets – probably thirty in total, spread out over three levels.<sup>15</sup> Columns supported the upper galleries, which must have been reached by mobile stairs or ladders, and statues of Celsus and other family members presumably adorned the interior. There was also an apse at the back, in which another statue stood (perhaps of Celsus, or perhaps Athena<sup>16</sup>).

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<sup>9</sup> Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.69-70; Suet. *Aug.* 29.4; Dio Cass. 49.43.8; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. P-S, ed. EM. Steinby (1999): 141; 196 E. Bowie [n. 8]: 502-5.

<sup>10</sup> Dio Cass. 57.10.1, 59.7.1; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. A-C, ed. EM. Steinby (1993): 197.

<sup>11</sup> Gell, 16.8.2, 5.21.9; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. P-S, ed. EM. Steinby (1999): 69.

<sup>12</sup> Casson [n. 5]: 110-114.

<sup>13</sup> The Greek world, of course, had been building libraries for a number of centuries (most famously, the great libraries of Alexandria, Antioch and Pergamon); but some of them had fallen out of use or into disrepair (Casson [n. 5]: 31-57; Too [n. 6]: 38-9).

<sup>14</sup> M. Nicholls (forthcoming), 'Roman libraries as public buildings in the cities of the empire', in J. König, K. Oikonomopolou & G. Woolf (eds), *Ancient Libraries*, Cambridge: 560-1.

<sup>15</sup> Strocka [n. 4]: 36-7.

<sup>16</sup> Keil [n. 2]: 82; Strocka [n. 4]: 38; G. Sauron (2010), 'La bibliothèque de Celsus à Ephèse: étude de sémantique architecturale et décorative', in Y. Perrin (ed.) *Neronia VIII: Bibliothèques, livres et culture écrite dans l'empire romain de César à Hadrien. Actes du VIIIe colloque international de la SIEN (Paris, 2-4 octobre 2008)*, Brussels: 378.



Fig. 2: *The interior of Celsus' library at Ephesos (image credit: Jon Coulston)*

So far, so normal, as Roman libraries go. But what makes this one stand out is what lies below the apse: for, in a highly unusual departure from the normal convention which kept burials firmly outside the city, Celsus was interred here in an ornate marble sarcophagus.<sup>17</sup> His library, in other words, was also his tomb.

This (partly) explains its extraordinary façade (Fig. 3), which – as various commentators have noted – prepared visitors for a building rather bigger than the one that actually lay behind it. Rising two storeys high – with three entrances, topped by windows and flanked by four richly decorated rectangular niches, and with a further three rectangular niches above, framing the upper windows – it has put many in mind of a *scaenae frons* (the back wall of a Roman theatre stage).<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 3: *The façade of Celsus' library at Ephesos (image credit: Jon Coulston)*

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<sup>17</sup> See esp. Sauron [n. 16] 374 on the honour of being granted burial within the city.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Sauron [n. 16]: 378-81; Nicholls [n. 14]: 559. Jon Coulston pointed out to me that it is also reminiscent of various *nymphaea* of the period.



A row of eight steps, running the width of the building, led up to the doorways, and they were originally flanked by two (probably bronze) equestrian statues of Celsus. Four more bronze statues stood in the four lower niches, personifying some of Celsus' attributes: 'Celsus' Wisdom' (Σοφία), 'Celsus' Virtue' (Αρέτη), 'Celsus' Understanding' (Έννοια), and 'Celsus' Knowledge' (Επιστήμη).<sup>19</sup> And a further four statues (three more of Celsus, and one of Aquila) were displayed on the upper level of the façade, with the career details of other family members (principally those who had donated them) inscribed on their bases.<sup>20</sup> These were to be garlanded at least once a year, according to the foundation inscription quoted above – a stipulation that aimed to ensure the family's continued prominence in the life of the city. And (should anyone be in doubt as to Celsus' deserving of such celebration), two further inscriptions – one in Latin, and one Greek, on the steps leading up to the library – proclaimed the details of his impressive career (Figs. 4-5).<sup>21</sup>



*Fig. 4: Latin career inscription on Celsus' library at Ephesos (image credit: Jon Coulston)*



*Fig. 5: Greek career inscriptions on Celsus' library at Ephesos (image credit: Jon Coulston)*

A letter from Hadrian congratulating Aquila on the library's construction also seems to have been inscribed on the façade.<sup>22</sup>

There was a lot to read, then, even before one stepped into the book room; and the façade's inscriptions and iconography would have been seen by a lot of people (far more than the number of readers the library itself ever attracted) because of its prominent position on one of Ephesos' busiest and most important roads.<sup>23</sup>

Celsus' library cannot tell us very much about ancient reading habits, literary canons, scholarly practice, or literary production. We have no idea quite how many papyrus rolls it had,<sup>24</sup> or what kinds of texts they contained.<sup>25</sup> And we know just as

<sup>19</sup> Keil [n. 2]: 71-2; Strocka [n. 4]: 41; Sauron [n. 16]: 376-7.

<sup>20</sup> Sauron [n. 16]: 377; Nicholls [n. 14]: 560.

<sup>21</sup> IvE 5102-5103; part of the Latin inscription is displayed in the top right corner of this site.

<sup>22</sup> Keil [n. 2]: 78-9; Sauron [n. 16]: 378.

<sup>23</sup> On its location, on a right-angle bend that allowed it to dominate the street leading from the upper agora into the heart of the city, see esp. Sauron [n. 16]: 374-5 and Nicholls [n. 14]: 557-9.

<sup>24</sup> Speculation ranges from 3000 to 12000, but as, e.g., Strocka [n. 4]: 37 reminds us, we will never know how many scrolls each book cabinet could store, not whether they were ever full.

<sup>25</sup> The library's proximity to an auditorium, in which law cases may have been heard, has led to speculation that it may have stocked legal texts, as well as more literary/philosophical works (Strocka [n. 4]: 43); and there has even been a suggestion that the library was connected to a local medical school (P. Scherrer (2001) 'The Historical Topography of Ephesos', in D. Parrish (ed.), *Urbanism in Western Asia*

little about its users. It may have catered for specialists in certain fields, or attracted a more general kind of reader.<sup>26</sup> But its profusion of statues and inscriptions (both inside and out) does remind us very vividly of one important thing: that Roman literary culture (like Roman libraries) did not just revolve around books.

From the 20s BC onwards, Roman libraries had been used to store archives and display works of art, to host political meetings, as well as public lectures and recitals, to exercise or display patronage, and to enhance the reputation of individual benefactors and authors – among other things.<sup>27</sup> Some literary activity took place in them too; but, in bringing together books and busts, scholarship, civic administration, social networking and public life, and in speaking (as Celsus' library did) to both users and non-users, they underline the extent to which literary activity in the Roman principate (perhaps even more so than in other periods) was inextricably bound up with the social, cultural, administrative and political life of the empire.<sup>28</sup>

And Celsus' library highlights something else too: the symbolic capital of literature and intellectual culture. Celsus and his family could have found other ways to commemorate themselves. That they chose to be remembered above all as literary benefactors (those statues that parade Celsus' 'wisdom', 'understanding' and 'knowledge' and his highly conspicuous burial amongst the books immortalise him as a man of letters, as well as a successful Roman statesman) testifies not just to their personal interests but also to the high value of literary activity as a currency in the quest for fame and influence.<sup>29</sup> For association with learning and literature – with the high culture that emanated from the city of Rome and other important cultural centres – did not just raise a man's profile locally; it marked him out as a member of the empire's educated elite, and that brought him kudos, connections and influence far beyond the confines of his province. This was not something specific to the Roman principate, of course; but the existence of an emperor (and the restrictions which that imposed on political activity and other forms of self-advancement) made a man's literary/cultural profile increasingly important.<sup>30</sup>

The way in which Celsus' library responds to and competes with other recent public building in Ephesos also testifies to the prominent role that literary culture played in provincial politics as Rome's empire continued to expand. As I noted above, the construction of a library at Ephesos enhanced the city's profile in a way that the building of, say, an aqueduct or a nymphaeum could not have done. It may have spurred an increase in scholarship and textual production in the process (a good library could attract writers and thinkers from far and wide, and even give birth to a

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*Minor. New Studies on Aphrodisias, Ephesos, Hierapolis, Pergamon, Perge and Xanthos, JRA suppl. 45: 76*). It may be reasonable to suppose that some of the books came from Celsus' private collection (Sauron [n. 16]: 385); but, as for many other ancient libraries, we have no secure information about the nature of its contents.

<sup>26</sup> On the difficulty of gauging precisely how any Roman libraries were used, see esp. W.A. Johnson [n. 5]: 704-35.

<sup>27</sup> On the variety of uses to which Roman libraries were put, see esp. Nicholls [n. 14].

<sup>28</sup> Greek libraries, for instance, sent out rather different signals; their design and use (as far as we can reconstruct them) seem more narrowly focused around scholarship, philosophy, teaching, and other literary/intellectual activity.

<sup>29</sup> Jon Coulston has pointed out to me that Celsus' library was built opposite the tombs of a number of eminent philosophers. The fact that Ephesos chose to honour those intellectuals with such prestigious burials underlines the value that the city placed on literary/intellectual activity; and Celsus and his family may have hoped to benefit from association with these philosophers' tombs.

<sup>30</sup> Woolf [n. 6]: 56-7; Too [n. 6]: 84.

flourishing literary community<sup>31</sup>); but even if it did not, it proclaimed the city's cultural credentials to the rest of the civilised world; and that helped Ephesos and its citizens (not just its governors and public patrons) to vie for position and recognition with their Greek and Roman counterparts. What was once a Greek import (the great library at Alexandria, of course, influenced Roman literary life profoundly) had become a Roman(ised) export, but no less potent for that. Libraries – and the intellectual culture that they embodied – were as effective a tool in personal and civic self-fashioning in the Roman empire as they had been in the Hellenistic world. And that reminds us that literary activity was not just an integral part of Roman society, but a powerful force within it.

Celsus and his heirs, of course, were only the latest in a long line of Greek and Roman statesmen to exploit the possibilities and prestige of libraries for personal and political ends. They might have been inspired by some of the earliest library foundations, but they must also have been influenced by more recent examples – for there seems to have been a flurry of library building towards the end of the Flavian era and during the principates of Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian.

It is not clear whether Domitian founded any new libraries himself (we do know that he restored at least two earlier foundations that had been damaged by fire<sup>32</sup>), but Pliny the Younger took pains to ensure that no one would overlook (or misunderstand) his gift of a library, in 96 or 97, to his native town of Comum. For, under cover of a request for advice on the editing and publication of the (private) speech he had given to the senate of Comum at the library's dedication (*Epistles* 1.8), Pliny advertises and explains his foundation (and also his setting up of a fund to support the education of the town's aristocratic youth) to a more public audience – as a useful benefaction, designed to serve the public interest, and not to seek glory for himself.<sup>33</sup>

As for so many other ancient libraries, we know nothing about this one's contents. But it is probably safe to assume that it contained copies of Pliny's own speeches, and perhaps also his uncle's magnum opus among other texts. It doubtless contained statues too, of Pliny and other family members, to watch over readers as they enjoyed Pliny's patronage and perhaps even read some of his works. This library, in other words, was not merely a 'symbol... of [his] intellectual disposition';<sup>34</sup> it offered concrete proof. And, despite his claims, its books and statues combined with Pliny's literary self-portraiture to promote his reputation (as a man of letters who might even rival his uncle's claims to fame) in Comum and beyond.

The existence of *Epistles* 1.8, however, also testifies to some of the political complexities surrounding even literary self-promotion (and the role played by literature in attempts to negotiate them). For, as Eleanor Leach argues, Pliny's expression of concern about the way in which others might view his library donation and the speech that accompanied it perhaps stems from an anxiety that it would be regarded as all too Flavian/Domitianic a gesture, not in keeping with the new, post-

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<sup>31</sup> Woolf [n. 6]: 63.

<sup>32</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 20.1; T.K. Dix (1996), 'Pliny's library at Comum', *Libraries and Culture* 31.1: 85-102, at 90-1 and n. 18; Bowie [n. 8]: 505.

<sup>33</sup> On *Epistles* 1.8 and Pliny's library foundation (apparently his first benefaction in Comum), see esp. Dix [n. 32]; E. Leach (1990), 'The politics of self-presentation: Pliny's letters and Roman portrait sculpture', *CA* 9: 14-39, at 28-31; M. Ludolph (1997), *Epistolographie und Selbstdarstellung: Untersuchungen zu den 'Paradebriefen' Plinius des Jüngereren*, Tübingen, esp.: 67-71.

<sup>34</sup> Leach [n. 33]: 29.

Domitianic world.<sup>35</sup> Hence a pseudo-literary discussion (about revisions to Pliny's speech), in an ostensibly un-literary genre (letters), to emphasise the noble (literary/educative) motives behind Pliny's civic benefactions and distract attention from his own (literary/imperial-style) self-promotion. Literary culture might have offered a fertile avenue for self-expression, but it was still fraught with pitfalls, not least because it had become so popular with emperors as a mean of projecting their power and identity.

It is through Pliny's letters (*Ep.* 10.81-2) that we know about another library, in the city of Prusa, which seems to have landed a different Trajanic-period author – Dio Chrysostom – in slightly hot political water. It is not clear if this was a new foundation, but it was certainly mixed up with a programme of civic improvements that Dio was attempting to push through in his native city (improvements that he acknowledges were partly inspired by the kind of ambitious/competitive building project embodied by Celsus' library: Dio was determined that Prusa should not lag behind other provincial cities, notably Smyrna, Tarsus, Antioch and Ephesos, that were already enhancing their public image – and also that he, a recently returned exile, should be seen to be playing a crucial role in improving his home town's appearance and fortunes).<sup>36</sup> The library came to Pliny's attention partly because questions were raised about some of Dio's accounting (*Ep.* 10.81.1); but it also transpired that Dio had set up a statue of Trajan inside the library, despite the fact that his wife and son were buried in a colonnaded square close by (*Ep.* 10.81.2, 7) – a move which might have been construed as offensive or even treasonous, but which Trajan (*Ep.* 10.82) appears to have been content to overlook.

Burial within the city walls in Prusa, as in Ephesos, was granted only to a very select few; so that family tomb would have added to Dio's consequence in a general way. But its proximity to a library presumably also highlighted his literary interests and achievements. The statue that Dio erected to his imperial patron, meanwhile, did not simply parade Dio's – and Prusa's – deference/allegiance to Trajan; it must also have reminded viewers of the imperial connections and favour that Dio claimed to enjoy (with both Nerva and Trajan) in several of his *Orations*.<sup>37</sup> Here is another prominent statesman and literary figure, in other words, whose identity and image

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<sup>35</sup> Leach [n. 33]: 30-1: 'His insistence upon private sincerity... is directly related to the lapse of time between Pliny's [foundation speech] and the publication of his letter, which did not occur until the year of his consulship under Trajan in A.D. 100, although the events recorded had taken place some years earlier, either in the last days of Domitian's reign or else during that of Nerva. In this change of rulers we can find our explanation for Pliny's anxieties concerning persona, since both the municipal gifts he had given were, so to speak, imperial in character and conception. The endowment of libraries was a gesture, modeled upon Augustan precedent, very much in the Flavian style... Pliny had good reasons to fear that the self-laudatory tone of his dedicatory speech might make a gift with Domitianic associations appear Domitianic in spirit. Possibly this is why he had undertaken revision of the speech at the beginning of Nerva's reign. His awkward dialogue between public and private selves reflects the stylistic crisis of a moment when the ambiguity of appearances was still keenly enough felt that men could not safely be judged by the face they presented to society...'

<sup>36</sup> On Dio's programme of civic improvements (and some of the difficulties he encountered), see esp. Dio *Or.* 40, 45 and 47; also C. P. Jones (1978), *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Cambridge, Mass.: 111-114; G. Salmeri (2002), 'Dio, Rome and the Civic Life of Asia Minor', in S. Swain (ed.) *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters and Philosophy*, Oxford: 67-8.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Dio *Or.* 44, 45, 49.



were to some extent bound up with and even articulated through a library building; and here is another library that was not just a literary but also (thanks to the presence of Trajan's statue and all that it evoked) a politicised and even a sacred space.<sup>38</sup>

A near contemporary library, founded in Athens by one Titus Flavius Pantainos and his son and daughter some time between 98-102 AD, likewise blended family memorial/self-promotion with expressions of local pride and a display of loyalty to Rome. A surviving inscription setting out the library's rules and other epigraphic evidence paint a more vivid picture than we often have of how it must have functioned as a library;<sup>39</sup> and the mention of Pantainos' father as the head of a philosophy school in its dedication inscription has led some to suggest that it may have operated in conjunction with that establishment.<sup>40</sup> But it also immortalised Pantainos as 'Priest of the Wisdom-Loving Muses', promoting him as an intellectual figure, not just a public benefactor;<sup>41</sup> and it was dedicated at once to Athena Polias, Trajan and the city of Athens.<sup>42</sup> Statues representing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* paid homage to the Greek literary tradition, while a statue of Trajan standing over a vanquished Dacian acknowledged the might of Rome and her emperor. And, as Matthew Nicholls points out, even the library's location – between the old part of the city and the new Roman agora – reflected its complex blend of Greek and Roman allegiance, its 'carefully expressed dual Graeco-Roman identity'.<sup>43</sup>

Roman libraries had long served emperors who were keen both to parade their immersion in a (Hellenised) literary culture<sup>44</sup> and to assert their control over Greek and Roman space.<sup>45</sup> Hadrian's literary foundations are another example. For, as well as incorporating a library into his own villa at Tivoli, for example, he built the Athenaeum at Rome (a 'school of liberal arts' which probably included at least one

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<sup>38</sup> On overlaps between libraries and sacred space, see esp. R. Neudecker (forthcoming), 'Archives, Books and Sacred Space in Rome', in J. König, K. Oikonomopoulou & G. Woolf (eds), *Ancient Libraries*, Cambridge: 644-64.

<sup>39</sup> H.A. Thompson & R.E. Wycherley (1957), *The Athenian Agora*, Vol 3, Princeton: 150 Agora I 2729; J. Platthy (1968), *Sources on the Earliest Greek Libraries with the Testimonia*, Amsterdam: 113 no. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Nicholls [n. 14] 565-6; and (more generally) J. Camp. (1990) *The Athenian Agora: A Guide to the Excavation and Museum* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), Athens: 140-2; J. Camp (1986), *The Athenian Agora: excavations in the heart of Classical Athens*, London: 187-91.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholls [n. 14]: 565.

<sup>42</sup> Thompson & Wycherley [n. 39]: 150 no. 464; Platthy [n. 39]: 112 n. 36.

<sup>43</sup> Nicholls [n. 14]: 566: 'adjacent to the Stoa of Attalos, the library opened on one side onto the ancient Panathenaic Way and the Greek agora, and on the other side to the new road (the 'Plataia') linking this area to the Roman agora...'

<sup>44</sup> Bowie [n. 8]: 530; see also Too [n. 6]: 40-4 on earlier Roman libraries and book collections as both symbols of and participants in the acquisition/assimilation of Greek culture by Roman politicians/intellectuals.

<sup>45</sup> From the start, there was a strong connection between Roman library building and political as well as cultural conquest. Asinius Pollio, for example, built his library with the spoils of his successful campaign in Illyria and also put on display art treasures funded from his booty (Isid. *Etym.* 6.5.2; Bowie [n. 8]: 499-501; Neudecker [n. 38]: 650-1). Augustus' Temple of Apollo on the Palatine (to which one of his libraries was attached) was built in response to one of his victories in the civil wars; and Vespasian's Temple of Peace (the site of his library) was a monument to his triumph in the first Jewish war (Josephus, *BJ* 7.5.7). See also, e.g., Too [n. 6]: 41 on Scipio Aemilianus' library, whose very books were acquired through plunder (Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus* 28.6).

library<sup>46</sup>) and constructed a public library at Athens (hence, perhaps, his interest in Celsus' foundation) which was part of a more extensive Roman building programme in the city that gave physical expression to Rome's conquest of that former Greek power.<sup>47</sup> Pantainos' *bibliotheca* imitated this imperial(istic) use of library building; but it also responded to it, balancing dutiful deference with an insistence on his own, his family's and his city's/nation's cultural achievements – just as many texts (and indeed other monuments) of the period were doing.

Celsus and his family would have been aware of Pliny, Dio and Pantainos' libraries – and perhaps also of foundations at Suessa Aurunca<sup>48</sup> and Pergamon,<sup>49</sup> *inter alia*. But the model that seems to have influenced them in particular was the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* built by Trajan inside his imperial forum.

Trajan's forum was not the first to incorporate a library (Vespasian's had), but the library here – or rather libraries, for there was a pair – occupied a more significant location, flanking Trajan's famous column at the heart of the complex.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, they bore an interesting relation to the column – which depicts scenes from Trajan's Dacian campaigns – for it is thought that the library contained the authoritative version of Trajan's (now lost) commentary on the Dacian wars.<sup>51</sup> The column itself was visible from inside the library – indeed, parts of it were more visible from the upper gallery (if readers, and not just librarians, were allowed to go up there) than from the ground. Thus visitors to his forum could 'read' about Trajan in more than one way; for (as was probably the case in Pliny's library at Comum), the iconography of the column and the statues of Trajan that decorated the libraries' interiors joined forces with his own writing and with the wider cultural connotations of the library foundation as a whole to project a multifaceted image of the emperor.

The column's portrait of a pious, merciful but also victorious commander was reinforced by the library's own display of imperial power – in its building (the interior was covered in marble sourced from all over the empire, for example) and in its books (while its Greek contents may have advertised Trajan's cultural conquests, another section seems to have included some government archives whose presence must have helped to reinforce a sense that Trajan exercised control over every aspect of Roman life – not just current political, legal and administrative activity but even his citizens' access to their constitutional past<sup>52</sup>). That was balanced, however, not just by Trajan's self-portrait in his *Dacian Commentaries* (however that was handled) but also by his

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<sup>46</sup> Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 14.1.3; Dio Cass. 73.17.4; Bowie [n. 8]: 507; Nicholls [n. 14]: 568.

<sup>47</sup> Aristides, *Panathenaicus* 13.188; Pausanias 1.18.9; V. Strocka (1981), 'Römische Bibliotheken', *Gymnasium* 88: 318-20; Casson [n. 5]: 113-5; Nicholls [n. 14]: 564; Too [n. 6]: 47 and (esp.) 196-7.

<sup>48</sup> An inscription (*CIL* 10.4760) mentions a *bibliotheca Matidiana*, which suggests (Casson [n. 5]: 111) that it may have been donated by Hadrian's mother-in-law, Matidia.

<sup>49</sup> On the foundation of a library, by Flavia Metiline, within the shrine of Asclepius at Pergamon, see esp. Strocka [n. 47]: 298-329, at 320-22; and A. Petsalis-Diomidis (2010), *Truly Beyond Wonders: Aelius Aristides and the cult of Asklepios*, Oxford: 205-20.

<sup>50</sup> On the *Bibliotheca Ulpia*, see esp. J. Packer (1995), 'Forum Traiani', *LTUR* 2: 348-56, at 353-4; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. D-G, ed. EM. Steinby (1995): 353-4.

<sup>51</sup> J. Packer (2001), *The Forum of Trajan in Rome; a study of the monuments in brief*, Berkeley: 78; Sauron [n. 16]: 383.

<sup>52</sup> A famous passage in the *Attic Nights* shows Aulus Gellius getting distracted in Trajan's library in the forum by a collection of edicts of former praetors (*NA* 11.17.1); on this, see esp. Bowie [n. 8]: 506; and Neudecker [n. 38]: 644-6.

library's association with wisdom, philosophy and Greco-Roman literary culture.<sup>53</sup> He understood as well as Julius Caesar and Augustus had done the propagandistic potential of literary activity (hence, perhaps, another library foundation in his Roman bath complex<sup>54</sup>). Indeed, Trajan's forum combined their examples; for while Caesar had presumably planned to place his *Gallic* and *Civil Wars* in the library he hoped to establish and Augustus had inscribed his *Res Gestae* on the walls of his mausoleum, Trajan's forum brought autobiography, library building and burial together: for his ashes, of course, were placed between his two libraries, in the base of his column.<sup>55</sup>

It might have been this juxtaposition of library and mausoleum that inspired Celsus and his heirs to turn their library into a tomb.<sup>56</sup> Imitation of the emperor was a natural consequence of the systems of patronage and government that fanned out from Rome across all of its provinces. But the connections that I have been trying to trace between library foundations in different parts of the empire were also prompted by – and help to remind us of – another important feature of literary and intellectual life in the period: namely the on-going interaction between Greek and Roman participants.

Roman imperial libraries had formed a habit of housing Greek and Latin texts separately (the tradition seems to go all the way back to Caesar's library plans), and this has (rightly) been seen as a physical manifestation of a wider cultural trend, which saw the Greek and Roman literary traditions being brought into comparison, competition, even confrontation with each other.<sup>57</sup> But, while acknowledging the way in which these libraries reflected and reinforced a sense of distinctiveness (as well as parading their founder's acquisition of Greek culture, and perhaps also papering over a certain Latin literary insecurity), it is important not to overlook the way in which they also brought the two traditions together. Roman libraries made Greek and Latin works available alongside each other, and that helped, on both a practical and a symbolic level, to bring texts, authors and readers into dialogue. Despite the territorial undercurrents manifest in their organisation of space, in other words, these libraries offer a timely reminder of the active engagement and exchange that was on-going between the two cultures. For (as many texts demonstrate) the relationship between Greek and Latin literary traditions was marked not (just) by difference and a series of one-way derivations or responses, but by layer upon layer of diverse, dynamic and mutually informative correspondence – rather more than is sometimes acknowledged.

Roman libraries were by no means the only – or even the most important – forum for literary culture. Indeed, far from being a hub of literary activity, they seem to have played a relatively tangential role (in contrast to some of their Greek predecessors) in Roman literary life. Ancient texts leave us with the impression that they may have been consulted periodically, perhaps by authors seeking very specialist works (as well as being used for a host of non-literary activities), but that the bulk of

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<sup>53</sup> Sauron [n. 16]: 384.

<sup>54</sup> Fig. 1; *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. T-Z, ed. EM. Steinby (1999): 67-9; Strocka [n. 47]: 311-13.

<sup>55</sup> As Jon Coulston recently reminded me, it is not known whether Trajan had envisaged a funerary role for his column from the outset or whether this was a late decision, or even an innovation of Hadrian's following Trajan's death.

<sup>56</sup> On other echoes between Trajan's library and forum and the library at Ephesos, see esp. Strocka [n. 4]: 39; Sauron [n. 16]: 383-4; Nicholls [n. 14]: 558.

<sup>57</sup> E.g., D. Petrain (forthcoming), 'Visual supplementation and metonymy in the Roman public library', in J. König, K. Oikonomopolou & G. Woolf (eds), *Ancient Libraries*, Cambridge: 678; on the relationship between Greek and Roman literary/intellectual cultures as embodied and articulated by libraries, see also Too [n. 6]: 40-9.

literary production and consumption still took place within the context of private villas and select literary gatherings.<sup>58</sup>

Even so, through their selection and organisation of texts and through their physical structure and décor, they did help to shape certain literary attitudes (Ovid's anxiety about being excluded from Augustus' libraries, for example, was not about whether but rather about how his poems might be read; while the presence of Varro's portrait in Asinius Pollio's library catapulted him, ahead of other contemporary authors, into an established literary canon<sup>59</sup>). Suetonius' position in charge of libraries under Trajan also points to some fascinating links between libraries and literary production and consumption (he was presumably appointed in part as a result of his own literary credentials; and it may be that his experience of and interest in libraries inspired some of his writing – in particular his *De Viris Illustribus*, a collection of biographies of various literary figures which offers a textual commentary on, or even a counterpoint to, the array of busts of authors often found in a Roman library).<sup>60</sup> And the rare glimpses that these libraries give us of actual literary activity both expand and nuance the pictures painted in, say, Pliny's *Letters* or Martial's *Epigrams* (emphasising, for example, its relatively communal nature).

Moreover, as this article has tried to show, their connection with various non-literary spheres of activity also offers important insights into Roman and Greek literary culture. As I have already suggested, the slippage between these libraries' literary, social, political, administrative and even sacred functions highlights the overlaps between literary culture and other aspects of Roman life; while the range of different discourses that libraries opened up (between users and authors, founders and authors, founders and users, founders and emperors, provinces and the imperial capital, Greece and Rome, and so on) underlines the considerable impact that literary activity could have across many different spheres.<sup>61</sup> The presence of archives and legal documents alongside more literary works, meanwhile, reminds us that distinctions between 'literary' and 'non-literary' texts were sometimes more fluid than we are inclined to assume.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> On these points, see esp. Johnson [n. 5]; also T.K. Dix (1994) 'Public Libraries' in Ancient Rome: ideology and reality', *Libraries and Culture* 29.3: 282-96, at 283-6.

<sup>59</sup> On Ovid's anxiety, see *Tristia* 3.1.59-72 (and, e.g., Too [n. 6]: 238-41); and on the inclusion of Varro's statue – the only one of a living author – in Pollio's library, see Pliny, *N.H.* 7.115. See also Neudecker [n. 38]: 649-50 and Too [n. 6]: 208-12 on Varro's role/presence in Rome's earliest libraries; and Petrain [n. 56]: 676-7 and 684-96 on the impact of library décor and arrangement on the reception of texts/authors.

<sup>60</sup> On Suetonius' various public appointments, see, e.g., H. Pflaum (1960-1961), *Les carriers procuratoriennes équestres sous le haut-empire romain*, Paris: 219-224; also (on Suetonius' involvement in libraries more specifically) R. Syme (1980) 'Biographers of the Caesars', *Mus. Helv.* 37: 104-28; A.F. Wallace-Hadrill (1983), *Suetonius: the scholar and his Caesars*, London: 7-8; F.G.B. Millar (1997) *The Emperor in the Roman World*, London: 90-1; Bowie [n. 8]: 517-8. Varro, of course, provides an interesting parallel: for Julius Caesar appears to have given him the task of overseeing his planned library (Isid. *Etym.* 6.5.2), and that may in turn have inspired Varro's composition of the now lost *De Bibliothecis* (*On Libraries*) (Pliny, *NH* 13.68-70; Gell. 7.17; Too [n. 6]: 44-5, 209). Neudecker [n. 38]: 650 notes that the publication of Varro's *Hebdomades vel de imaginibus libri quindecim*, a picture book of 700 portraits accompanied by epigrams, also coincided with the opening of Pollio's library in 39BC, which displayed busts of famous authors including Varro himself.

<sup>61</sup> On this point, see esp. Too [n. 6]: 215-43.

<sup>62</sup> Neudecker [n. 38]: 652-3.

The interplay that we have seen between texts, statues and monuments (especially in Pliny's library and Trajan's forum) also draws attention to the fact that literature, art and architecture often operated in dialogue with each other, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes glossing and sometimes adding an extra layer of complexity to their respective messages.<sup>63</sup> And, as well as prompting more discussion of, e.g., Pliny's engagement in the *Panegyricus* with imagery in Trajan's forum, or of the relationship between Dio's speeches and his building programme in Prusa, this helps to remind us that the 'audience' for some literary works extended beyond the select band of literati who actually read/listened to them.

The differences and similarities between Flavian and Nerva/Trajanic/Hadrianic library foundations, meanwhile, offer an interesting point of comparison with what many of the texts themselves tell us about change and continuity between the two periods. Domitian is more famous, of course, for burning books than for restocking burnt down libraries (Tacitus, *Agricola* 2), while Nerva and Trajan were hailed by various authors for ushering in an era of greater literary (and political) freedom (e.g., Tacitus, *Agricola* 3; *Histories* 1.1; Pliny, *Panegyricus* 2; Martial, *Epigrams* 10.72; 12.5). Pliny's anxiety about the interpretation of his library foundation and accompanying speech certainly reflects a change in rhetoric (if not in reality) post Domitian; and the extravagance of Celsus' and Pantainos' libraries may testify to a greater indulgence, under Trajan and Hadrian, of private self-promotion. And yet Celsus and Pantainos modelled their foundations on Trajanic and Hadrianic buildings; and the libraries of Trajan and Hadrian remind us that these emperors also used literary culture to display and reinforce their imperial authority, as well as to differentiate themselves from their imperial predecessors.

The libraries of the period reveal many other things too – far more than I am able to discuss here.<sup>64</sup> But above all, perhaps (for the purposes of this article, at least), they also prompt a host of interesting questions – about the categorisation of different literary genres, for example, and boundaries between literary and non-literary activity; about canons – and margins – and who gets to police them; about literary patronage – and censorship; about the relationship between reading and oral traditions/experiences; about the value and meaning of books as a physical commodity (in the wake not just of new library buildings but also of a contemporary flourishing of copyists and booksellers, and of the advent of the codex); about the centrality – or marginality – of literary/intellectual activity within society as a whole; about the role played by literary/intellectual culture in shaping – not just articulating – personal, civic and imperial identities; about change and continuity between Classical and Hellenistic Greece and imperial Rome, and between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties and the reigns of their successors; and about the impact of literary trends and developments under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian on later Greek and Roman writers and thinkers.

These are just some of the questions that this research project is setting out to examine. It might not come up with answers to them all – and it will pursue many other issues along the way. But in exploring connections and interactions between different authors of the period, and the complexities and dynamics of their wider literary context, it will shed some fascinating new light (as I hope this quick tour of libraries has started to do) on the period as a whole, not just on its literary and intellectual culture.

Alice König  
St Andrews, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2012

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<sup>63</sup> On this point, see esp. Too [n. 6]: 191-214.

<sup>64</sup> Yun Lee Too's recent book (Too [n. 6]) reveals how fascinating – and complex – the library as a phenomenon can be.