

THE CODEx

The **codex** is considered the first modern book form. It first appears on the historical record around 1st century AD. A codex was made by taking a bundle of pieces of paper/parchment, binding them together, then inserting them between two pieces of material thicker than the pages (usually wood or thick parchment skin pieces) and binding the two to create a book. Codices were sturdier than scrolls and could be transported more easily. The use of codices spread with the expanding trade routes of various civilizations.



Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century AD [replica]

All codices were written by hand and many were illustrated as well. These works of art became known as **illuminated manuscripts**. At first, illuminated manuscripts were primarily done in silver and gold borders around text, giving the manuscript a glow. This eventually expanded to include ornately drawn initials, colorful borders, and beautiful illustrations in the margins. One of the most famous European examples is *The Book of Kells*.



BOOK OF KELLS

8th Century, Ireland

Written on vellum (prepared calfskin).

Survived multiple Viking raids and later attacks from southern neighbors.

The entire book has been digitized and is available to see online at Trinity College Dublin's website:

http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=MS58_003v

WHERE TO STORE THE BOOKS?

The early centuries AD saw the rise of three different types of libraries:

Imperial -- belonged to the ruling class and were very susceptible to war and new ruler preferences, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of thousands of documents.

Monastic/Religious -- overseen by the various religions in different regions. Due to the power of the religious orders, the beautiful books created by these religious figures were often preserved more carefully.

Private -- often owned by the aristocracy of different regions, church members in high standing, and teachers. Survival rates of these depended largely on the region and time in which the library existed.



PROTECT THE BOOKS!

In monastic libraries, books were chained to the wall because they were so rare and valuable.



Malatestiana Library

Commissioned in Cesena, Italy between 1457-1452. All books belonged to the Commune of Cesena, not an individual, so it is considered the first modern public library in Europe (still in operation). It is designed like a church with pews, where books are tucked inside the small lecterns in front.

DE MATERIA MEDICA

Originally believed to have been written around 30-50 AD by Dioscorides, an army surgeon for the Romans who traveled the Middle East studying plants. This book became a standard text for pharmacists all over Europe and Arab worlds during the first century.

The oldest known copy is an illuminated Byzantine manuscript produced about 512 AD for Anicia Juliana, the daughter of Roman emperor Flavius Anicius Olybrius. The parchment codex comprises 491 folios (almost a thousand pages) and four hundred color illustrations.



“Mandrake”

De Materia Medica of Dioscorides

Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, 7th century



DRESDEN CODEX

1200 AD Mexico

One of four remaining Maya codices, the Dresden Codex has played a key role in helping scholars to translate ancient Mesoamerican artifacts and culture. The codex depicts hieroglyphs, divination calendars, astronomical calculations, rituals, and mythological instructions.



Maya codices were usually written on *huun*, a type of bark cloth made from the inner bark of a wild fig tree. They began to use this paper for codices circa 5th century AD, around the same time the codex was replacing the scroll.

CODEX BORBONICUS

The oldest surviving copy of the *Codex Borbonicus*, perhaps the most famous of all Aztec manuscripts, contains the 260-day tonalpohualli with pages devoted to a thirteen-day week and showing the constellation of gods belonging to that particular period. The manuscript is an enormous screenfold with square pages measuring 38.5cm (15in).

Learn more about Aztec codices here:

<http://dct-wsuv.org/avacca/history>



PRE-GOOGLE WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE

Before Google, there was the **encyclopedia**. For centuries, Middle Eastern, Asian, and European empires had attempted to record the “world of knowledge” by collecting as many manuscripts and books as they could. In the 18th century the concept of combining all of this knowledge into one book began to emerge, and in 1768 the first edition of the ***Encyclopedia Britannica*** appeared. Britannica is the most recognized encyclopedia around the world, and for many it was their first introduction to the world outside their hometown.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Latin word for "book" is *liber* with the root meaning connected to the bark of the tree.