FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Libraries Through the Ages
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Libraries as repositories of civilizations? records have existed for five thousand years, since the origination of Sumerian cuneiform writing. This abridgement of the author's The Story of Libraries: From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age (Continuum 1998) is a useful primer for high school students contemplating a library career, or a brief overview for the reader seeking descriptions of the cultural roles that libraries have been assigned and assumed throughout history.

The author uses a comparative approach to library development, relating, for example, that while the early monastic libraries of medieval Europe were created to serve God, contemporary Chinese libraries were primarily founded to promote subservience to the emperor. Education for citizenship remains a priority one thousand years later. Following the Russian Revolution, citizens were "encouraged" to read "[a]s the proletarian revolution wants you to be sober and clear-minded, you should not fail to obtain a book at your local library."

Islamic libraries of the tenth century appeared more hospitable than their western Europe counterparts. Visiting scholars were not only given access to the collection, but they were also supplied with paper and ink and fortified with food and beverages. Prior to the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century, Baghdad had thirty-six book centers, of which twenty were public libraries.

Public library services for American children, now a major priority for all public libraries, experienced a less auspicious beginning. Signs warning "children and dogs not admitted" were displayed prior to 1890 before child labor and education laws placed a new importance on youth. The library had become a healthy competitor to conveniently located taverns.

The history of libraries is the most prominent feature, but the author briefly discusses the rise of universities and their libraries, different types of modern libraries and the "library of the future," or more realistically, the future of libraries. The future "library" will still require the selection, cataloging, preservation and dissemination of information, but with the promise of the

World Wide Web and digitized resources, these functions may be performed by individuals with skills very different from those possessed by current librarians, in virtual libraries unencumbered by physical structures.

Karl Helicher