

For the Love of Libraries: Western Libraries Throughout History

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Ancient Libraries

- ❖ Mission of Ancient Libraries: serve centralized populations, economic growth, and political stability
- ❖ Served as temple repositories for religious texts and government documents



- ❖ Early written material was most often clay tablets, papyrus, or parchment/vellum
- ❖ Earliest Western libraries were Babylonian, around 3000 BCE, but evident in all ancient cultures
- ❖ Library of Alexandria - several hundred thousand scrolls - mysteriously destroyed
- ❖ Greeks and Romans had libraries for public access - nearly 30 in Rome by the fourth century



Medieval Libraries

- ❖ Mission of Medieval Libraries: A place of spiritual reflection, a place to house and achieve religious texts, and a place to reproduce both religious and secular texts
- ❖ The first university library was created during this time by the University of Paris in the mid-thirteenth century
- ❖ University libraries supported theological studies, law studies and instruction, medicine, and philosophy

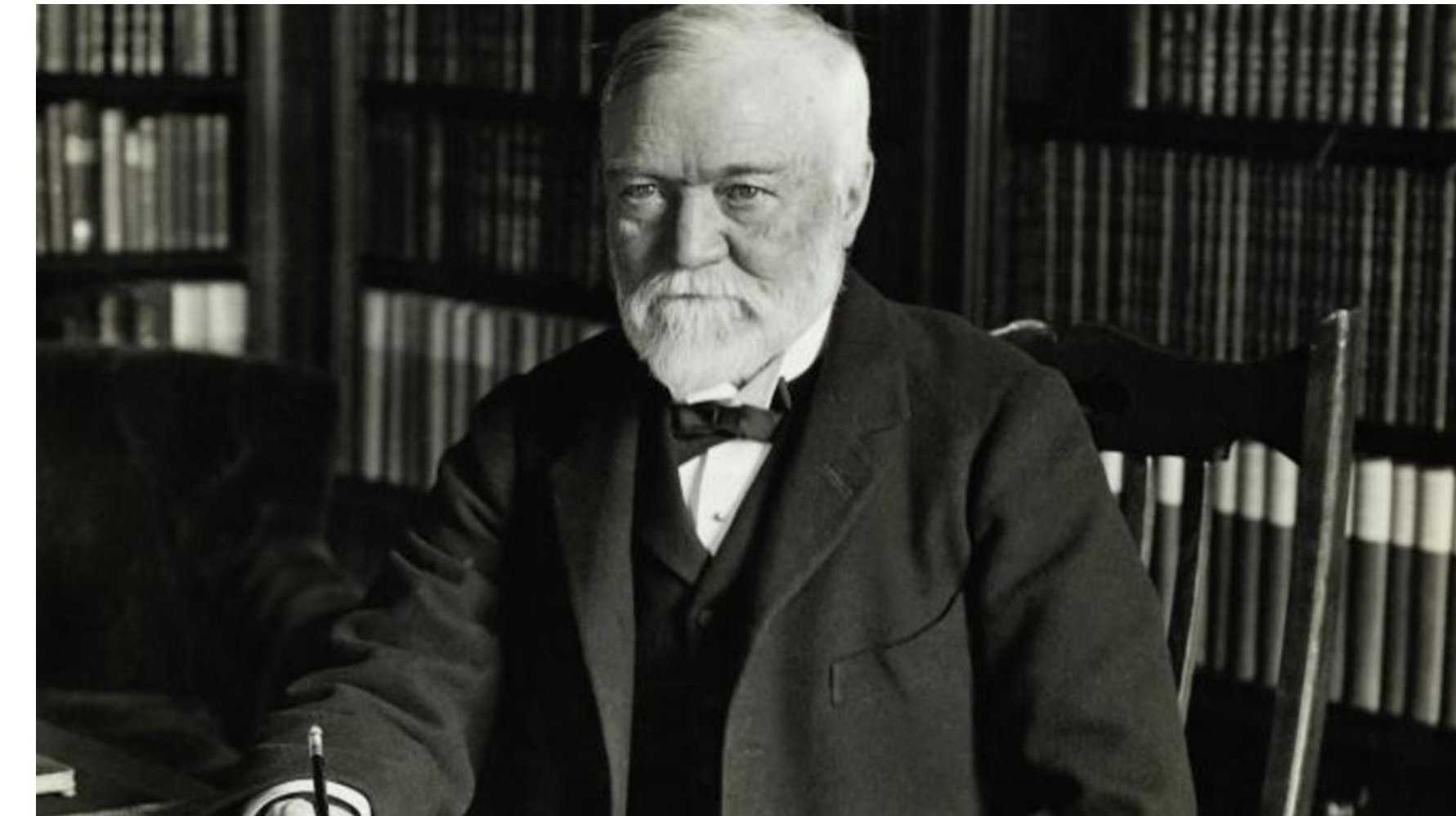


- ❖ Some libraries were privately owned by wealthy persons
- ❖ Books were tightly controlled by the Church and very labor intensive to create



Modern Libraries

- ❖ Mission of Modern Libraries: Varies depending on the type of library, but the mission can be summed up as a place where their community can go to find the information they need



- ❖ The modern libraries began with the creation of the printing press in 1454
- ❖ Literacy grows, knowledge spreads, society advances
- ❖ Andrew Carnegie gave millions to build thousands of public libraries after 1901
- ❖ True public places for learning, teaching, and growth



- ❖ Electronic documents and digitization made libraries accessible everywhere
- ❖ Modern public libraries have turned into Community Centers for their patrons

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