être intéressant d’offrir des points de vue contrastés sur la question de la nouvelle bibliothèque, un projet qui, il faut l’avouer, a connu sa part de détracteurs. En dépit de ces réserves, on ne peut que se réjouir de ce tour d’horizon de la BNQ nouvelle mouture. Ce numéro de *Documentation et bibliothèques* constitue une excellente introduction pour quiconque souhaite en savoir plus sur le passé, le présent et l’avenir de cette institution québécoise.

FRANÇOIS-XAVIER PARI

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Commissions to restore two historic libraries first led architect and interior designer Konstantinos Staikos to devote himself to the history of libraries, as well as the printing and publishing of books in Greek. In a series of books, as author and editor, he has described the diaspora of Greek printers and editors that followed the fall of Byzantium in 1453, and the significant role of Greek printing in both the western Renaissance and the later Neohellenic Renaissance. In this volume Staikos charts the history of libraries from the Minoan and Mycenaean to the Hellenistic eras. Five further volumes (the last a cumulated bibliography and index) will carry the story down to the retrieval of classical literature by Renaissance humanists and its embodiment and preservation in the great libraries of western Europe.

The evolution of Greek and proto-Greek scripts and writing media is the subject of Staikos’s first chapter, for which a dearth of both archaeological and textual evidence renders speculative any conclusions about the architecture of ancient libraries. Because Staikos is as concerned with the cultural significance of libraries as with their physical layout and appointments, he devotes considerable space to the intellectual history of classical Greece, and the production, transmission, and collecting of Greek texts. The classical schools of
Athens – Plato’s academy, Aristotle’s Lyceum, and their Epicurean and Stoic counterparts – were centres of book production and housed libraries, though few non-literary traces remain. Staikos finds firmer ground in his lengthy descriptions of the Hellenistic libraries at Alexandria and Pergamum, and briefer excurses on the palace of Ai Khanoum in Bactria (modern-day Afghanistan) and the collegiate libraries of classical gymnasia. The oft-told stories of the rise and later destruction of the libraries of Alexandria and Pergamum, as well as the peregrinations of Aristotle’s personal library, provide warning of the fragility of the record of human achievement, no less salutary in our own digital world. A tantalizingly brief concluding chapter is devoted to “the typology and equipment of archival and academic libraries.”

The English translation is admirably fluid, the book is amply documented with primary as well as secondary sources, and it contains an extensive, cosmopolitan, and useful bibliography. Its main claim to readers’ attention, however, are the more than 200 black-and-white and colour illustrations contained in a lavishly produced format, in which the end notes and bibliography are set in type as large as the text, with extra leading and ample margins. Staikos’s earlier book, The Great Libraries: From Antiquity to the Renaissance (3000 B.C. to A.D. 1600), appeared in 2000 in a larger but equally sumptuous volume from Oak Knoll (reviewed in the Papers/Cahiers 39 [Fall 2001]: 115-18). A comparison of the two elicits a feeling of déjà vu that extends beyond the format to nearly all of the illustrations, as well as large chunks of text, which, though slightly rearranged and with minimal rephrasing, are virtually the same in both works. The publishers obviously believe that the market for this genre of coffee-table book has yet to be saturated, and on the evidence of this first volume (100 copies of which are also offered in full-leather bindings for US $275), budget-minded purchasers would perhaps be better advised to invest in Staikos’ earlier and much larger work, The Great Libraries, which also contains, as a bonus, preliminary chapters on Mesopotamia and Egypt, as well as 14 individual chapters devoted to some of the world’s great libraries. Much the story contained in Staikos’s text, albeit bereft of the beautiful illustrations, may be found in Lionel Casson’s admirably compact Libraries in the Ancient World (2001), supplemented by J.W. Clark’s still-serviceable The Care of Books: An Essay on the Development of Libraries and Their Fittings, From the Earliest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century (1901).

Those who prefer gorgeous colour illustrations with a minimum of
text should also seek out Guillaume de Laubier and Jacques Bosser’s *The Most Beautiful Libraries in the World* (2003).

MERRILL DISTAD  
University of Alberta


This set is, in a sense, an appendix to Rummonds’s 1998 manual, *Printing on the Iron Handpress*. He had originally intended to include an extensive bibliography of historical sources in that book, but the list was deemed too much for an already exhaustive work of 470 pages, and dropped. In what probably was a typical response from a man whose life work is characterized by devotion to precision and detail, Rummonds developed the bibliography into not one, but two volumes that compare, contrast, and comment on every detail of printing with a handpress. Through comparing nineteenth-century practices to those of previous centuries, Rummonds creates a lively survey of the business of printing that is significant for both its breadth and depth.

Richard-Gabriel Rummonds was born in 1931 and raised in the United States. The story of how his interest in printing and books took him to Italy in the late 1960s probably is an interesting one, and may be told in the autobiography he is writing. (A renowned chef, the book will include, among other things, some of his favourite recipes.) He established an international reputation for the limited editions he printed on a handpress and published under the imprint Plain Wrapper Press during the 1970s and 1980s, and during a few years in the mid 1980s, while he was teaching at the University of Alabama, as Ex Ophidia. Although Rummonds’s reputation grew primarily from his virtuosity as a handpress printer, he was very much a contemporary publisher in both content and design. His dedication to the handpress was not the stillborn affectation of days gone, but to a tool with unique abilities for letterpress printing. He was not, however, blind or indifferent to the handpress’s history, and his quest