My dad was probably the coolest person in Ninevah (What you would call Kuyunjik, Iraq; what I called home), though don’t ever tell him I said that, and especially don’t tell King Ashurbanipal. Anyway, my dad is in charge of operating the Library of Ashurbanipal, which is considered by many to be the ‘first library.’

You see, when the king came to power in 668 BCE, he really needed a place to put all of his stuff. Over his forty-one year reign, he managed to collect around 30,000 cuneiform tablets, which I think are much better than the fragile books of today (You see how long our materials last when yours can hardly make it through 100 circulations?). But that’s just my opinion.

The king was an incredibly educated and smart individual (Who wouldn’t be with all of those materials?), but he didn’t really have time to maintain the library all hours of the day and night, especially because it was really popular with the clergy and members of the learned class. So, he hired my dad.

King Ashurbanipal created a system to keep the collection organized, and it was my dad’s job to make sure it stayed organized and the materials were taken care of. It’s not easy work.

The library had two different record rooms to keep track of. The king thought it was easiest to sort the materials by subject category, so everything was grouped together with other materials in its subject. So all of the law materials were together; all of the magic materials were together; and the same goes for the science materials, medical materials, astronomical materials, legends, and more. There was also a section for the boring government stuff that the king wanted to keep, but I don’t really care for those.

Anyway, back to my dad. Besides making sure everything stayed organized, he was in charge of creating lists for students and any of the royalty or priests who wanted to use them. He also had to make sure no one stole anything or damaged anything (Obviously so you archaeologists could still read them).

Sometimes, Dad was called out to help bring in new additions to the collection, and that made keeping them safe tough. See, the king loved to go on expeditions and collect items he came across, and even sometimes he would bring back items taken during war.

There was one time where Dad had been called in to help organize and add about 2,000 items to the collection, and Dad had to be gone for a week. While Dad was gone, he put me in charge (Well, actually, I pestered him to let me stay in the library when he went out to help. I was told to “go get an adult” if anyone was up to anything they shouldn’t have been, but I didn’t really need one). Basically, I spent that week living in the library.

I would do everything Dad always did:

- Start the day by cleaning the room
- Then, do a scan of all of the items and make sure nothing was left out of place
- Answer any questions that members of the learned class or priests brought forth (though they didn’t take much of my advice)
Warn those who wanted to check out about damaging or losing items
  I had to tell them nothing could be checked out until Dad got back, and they weren’t really happy about it.
Repeat

There was one person, one of Ashurbanipal’s secretaries, who really wasn’t happy with the “no checkout” rule. In fact, they were so unhappy that they tried to steal from the library late at night. Luckily I’m a light sleeper.

When I caught him trying to get one of the boring government documents off of the shelf, I said, “You really don’t want to mess with my dad. You’ll regret it”

I scared the guy so much that he almost dropped the tablet, which would have gotten us both into some serious trouble with the king. He was so possessive of his items, he would write things like, "Clay tablet of Ashurbanipal, King of the World, King of Assyria, who trusts in Ashur and Ninlil. Your lordship is without equal, Ashur, King of the Gods! Whoever removes [the tablet], writes his name in place of my name, may Ashur and Ninlil, angered and grim, cast him down, erase his name, his seed, in the land" (Casson, 2001, 12).

Yeah, he was serious.

Thankfully, the secretary was so scared that I had caught him that he practically flew out of the library. As far as I know, he never tried to steal from the library again. He spent the next couple of days inside of the library with me reading through the tablets rather than taking them home to read.

I decided to spare him by not telling Dad about the incident.

Plus, Dad was busy enough trying to find places for 2,000 tablets that I didn’t want to bother him with having to report the near-theft to the king.

Unfortunately, a massive fire raged through our city in 612 BCE, and it destroyed a lot of the non-tablet materials the king had collected (See? I told you that tablets were durable).

At least a lot of my dad’s (and the king’s) hard work survived to this day, so you all can learn about how my dad was seriously the coolest dad in Ninevah.
Works Cited
