My choice of focus is Tiberius Julius Pappus, the Commissioner of Libraries for Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar Augustus. I opted to do a synopsis of his life as diary excerpts. I used information gleaned from George Houston’s (2008) titled “Tiberius and the Libraries.” According to Houston (2008), some of the things that we know, or might assume based on evidence, include:

- Tiberius created “a new library at the Temple of the Deified Augustus” which became one of the great imperial libraries in Rome (p. 247).
- Tiberius was “deeply interested in literature, intellectual activity, books, and…collections of books” (p. 248).
- Tiberius was an active writer, and wrote “Greek and Latin poetry, Greek epigrams and a poetic lament on the death of his stepson Lucius Caesar in AD 2: (p. 248).
- Books would have come to the emperor in large numbers and in various ways including authors giving copies of their new works to the emperor to win his favor, as a gift both privately and politically, through inheritance, through buying or commissioning works. (p. 249).
- The most likely location for the Temple of the Deified Augustus would have been “in the valley between the Capitoline and Palatine hills,” and that the library “stood outside of the portico and opened onto it” (p. 250).
- There likely was a very colossal (approximately 50 feet tall) bronze statue of Apollo “on low podia facing the main entrance” to the library” (p. 251).
- Tiberius assigned Pappus to be in charge of all libraries “some (and perhaps many) years before AD 27” where he was “expected to manage the personal collections of Tiberius and perhaps those of Claudius and other members of the imperial family” (p. 253).
- Pappus was likely a “friend who served as an intellectual companion and informal counselor of the emperor” (p. 254).
- Pappus was “…a scholar, comfortable with and among books…a good man to sort through newly acquired texts, to work on what we would call collection development, and to choose and organize the books for the new library at the Temple of Augustus” (P. 254).
- The library at the Temple of Augustus likely wasn’t completed until August of AD 37, five months after Tiberius’s death (p. 259).

In my research, I learned that many Roman structures were built from volcanic ash (Wayman, 2011), but it is mere speculation that the Temple of Augustus was built from this.

One additional noteworthy fact not found in Houston’s article: Tiberius was Caligula’s great uncle, and Caligula took over reign upon Tiberius’s death.

The information cited above is used in the “diary excerpts” below – I did not use citations in the diary, directly, as diaries do not usually include citations, and the citations interrupted the flow of the entries.
Dear Diary,
My dear friend and emperor, Tiberius, is now in his fifth year of reign and he speaks very earnestly of building a great temple to honor his late father, the great emperor, Augustus, the first emperor of our great empire. We have had much discussion about what the temple will include. His many years on the island of Rhodes have made him a very contemplative and learned man, and his love for books and writings in Greek and Latin will likely influence some part of this shrine.

ante diem iv Kalendas Octobres XXIV A.D. (September 29, 24 AD)

Dear Diary,
It has been unseasonably warm as twilight falls on the summer season, but Tiberius is determined to get the pozzolana (volcanic ash) shipped here and in storage before the rainy season begins next month. This ash will be mixed with seawater and used to form the walls and supporting structures of the new temple. This will be quite an undertaking, as Tiberius foresees this structure being as large and as magnificent, or perhaps even more so, than those built by Gaius Asinius Pollio, and even of those built or expanded by his father, Augustus, which include the Temple of Apollo and the Porticus Octavia.

a.d. iv Id. Mart. XXXIV A.D. (March 12, 34 AD)

Dear Diary,
The progress on the new Temple of the Deified Augustus is quite impressive – and as I surmised, there will be a library! The collections Tiberius has acquired are vast. Due to
his position, he has been gifted several copies of new works from writers hoping to win his favor. Some of them are very good – some will likely be used to stoke the hearth. From his peers, he has received many gifts of writings – I have to wonder how THOSE were acquired (theft, pillaging, forged copies?!?) And of course, he has inherited much of his father’s collection. In addition, he acquired a considerable collection of Greek texts during his seven years on the island of Rhodes. He has several great classic works, but he has also added newer well-known works by Parthenius, Euphorion, and Rhianus.

And I have wonderful news! I am honored that Tiberius has appointed myself as the Commissioner of Libraries! I am the very first to hold this esteemed title. I will be in charge of ALL the libraries of Rome, including the new Library at the Temple of Augustus!

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a.d. xvi Kal. Julias XXXVI A.D. (June 16, 36 AD)

Dear Diary,
I only wish you had eyes to behold the greatness of the Temple of the Deified Augustus! It is nearing completion and it is magnificent. Currently, the gleaming columns reflect the setting sun, and sunbeams fittingly converge upon the colossal bronze statue of Apollo, and bounce back into the heavens. This majestic statue adorns the low podia facing the main entrance to the library!! The hope is to complete the Temple within the next year. It has been a long, arduous, process, but the fruits of the labors are apparent and admirable. I am consumed with thoughts of how the new Library will be organized and what items will be included. I am overseeing much of the Library’s final touches, as Tiberius is ruling from afar on the island of Capri.

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a.d. xvii Kal. Apr. XXXVII A.D. (March 16, 37 AD)

Dear Diary,
It is with a leaden heart that I report the loss of my dear friend and Emperor, Tiberius. His death comes as a shock. I am heartbroken that I never had the chance to bid him
farewell or wish him well in his afterlife, as he was still on the island of Capri. It has been rumored that Tiberius’s great-nephew, Caligula, has been appointed heir to the emperorship. Oh Diary! My lamentation is fed by the knowledge that the Temple is so near to completion! Tiberius will not be here to oversee the grand dedication of his glorious accomplishment. In addition to the grief and suffering I am experiencing due to this sudden loss, my mind is troubled with what my future under a new Emperor might be. Will it change or I will be allowed to continue my position as Commissioner of Libraries?

*dates are approximate since the start date of construction is unknown other than it was after Augustus’s death. In addition, dates have been translated using the “Roman Date Calendar” website – link in references.
REFERENCES

