“Scrolls, scrolls everywhere, but not a time to read!” I thought to myself as I walked through the main study area. It was early morning, but I could tell from the warmth of the oil lamp that Strabo and his scholars had just left. I tell them time and time again not study so late into the night. I don’t want another fire starting because of their carelessness with the oil! They could at least take their study to the breezeway, away from the indoor stacks. If they weren’t on the government payroll, I’d kick them out myself! I understand the need for the academic freedom we afford them, but they must clean up after themselves! That is no job for a librarian!

I have so much to do besides cleaning up their mess, but I must be done. I carried scroll after scroll to its proper pile, based on its author and title of work. As I wiped the sweat off my balding head, I noticed all of the Socrates text had been put back in some random order! “What a cruel joke!” I exclaimed. Some of my colleagues want to catalogue the scrolls by subject, not author. At this point I could care less how we do it, as long as we stay consistent.

Socrates text, like many other authors we are lucky to have at all. For example, it is rumored that Aristotle’s own library was transported to Alexandria, but on the contrary! They were hidden underground and when they were dug up, they were so damaged they had to be recopied. Unfortunately, the greedy book collector produced many inaccuracies. Hard telling if any scrolls with Aristotle penned as their author are actually his work!

Just one more armful of scrolls and I will rest with some wine. I reached down with each hand to put the last two scrolls in my basket, but came up with only half of each. They had ripped in two! “Great,” I thought. I hope we have some copies in the reserve stacks. If we don’t have copies, I’m sure someone does. Most of our patrons do not visit for reading, but for copying down a piece to read later.
I deal with damaged scrolls on a constant basis because, papyrus is so fragile. Thank the Gods they were so easy to make compared to the clay tablets of yesteryear. The scroll makers simply split open the individual plant stems, lay them flat overlapping each other and pound them into sheets of any given length.

I choked down some wine and made my way into the reserve stacks. The place is overflowing with works, especially those in medicine, engineering and theology. As I’ve been telling Pharaoh, it is high time for an addition to our main library. We are the knowledge capital of the world, and simply don’t have enough room for all the scrolls we acquire.

In fact, we just “borrowed” some books from recent visitors to our city port. Our underlings are hard at work copying each word for word. And they better be accurate! We don’t want people thousands of years from now reading something that was miscopied. Anyway, the fire will probably get the work before future generations do. Most likely, we will give the copies back to their owner and keep the originals for ourselves. What are they going to do? The Ptolemy dynasty is quick to quell anyone meddling with our pursuit for knowledge. The trait I like most about Ptolemy II is his understanding of knowledge as a resource that must be hoarded by our regime.

I think I need to start taking longer breaks. All I seem to do is carry these heavy scrolls to and fro. As I’m sure you heard, we banned the export of papyrus in order to supplement our dominance as the leader in knowledge. The plan backfired, as the Pergamenes invented a new paper that they call “parchment.” I wonder if it lessens the overall load of books?

“Callimachus!?!?” “Have you been talking to yourself this whole time?”

“Pharaoh!” the sweaty librarian said with an exasperated gasp. “I, I, I…”
“Oh, enough Callimachus! You keep stuttering and you’ll stutter the rest of those few hairs off your crown. And you wonder why stereotypes of librarians exist in the first place!”

\[1\] For historical context I used Battles book.