Book burning is the practice of destroying by fire, often ceremoniously, one or more copies of a book or other written material. In modern times, other forms of media, such as phonograph records, video tapes, and CDs have also been ceremoniously burned, torched, or shredded. The practice, usually carried out in public, is generally motivated by moral, religious, or political objections to the material.

Some particular cases of book burning are long and traumatically remembered - because the books destroyed were irreplaceable and their loss constituted a severe damage to cultural heritage, and/or because this instance of book burning has become emblematic of a harsh and oppressive regime. Such were the destruction of the Library of Alexandria, the burning of books and burying of scholars under China's Qin Dynasty, the destruction of Mayan codices by Spanish Conquistadors and priests, and in more recent times, Nazi book burnings.
many early texts have been as thoroughly “lost” as if they had been publicly burnt. Elaine Pagels, "In AD 367, Athanasius, the zealous bishop of Alexandria, ... issued an Easter letter in which he demanded that Egyptian monks destroy all such unacceptable writings, except for those he specifically listed as “acceptable” even “canonical” — a list that constitutes the present 'New Testament’". Although Pagels cites Athanasius’s Paschal letter (letter 39) for 367 AD, there is no order for monks to destroy heretical works contained in that letter [1].

Thus, heretical texts do not turn up as palimpsests, washed clean and overwritten, as pagan ones do; many early Christian texts have been as thoroughly “lost” as if they had been publicly burnt.
In his 1821 play, Almansor, the German writer Heinrich Heine — referring to the burning of the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, during the Spanish Inquisition — famously wrote:

“Where they burn books, so too will they in the end burn human beings.” (“Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.”)

One century later, Heine’s books were among the thousands of volumes burned by the Nazis in Berlin’s Opernplatz in an outburst that did, in fact, foreshadow the blazing ovens of the Holocaust.

Anthony Comstock’s New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, founded in 1873, inscribed book burning on its seal, as a worthy goal to be achieved (see illustration at right). Comstock’s total accomplishment in a long and influential career is estimated to have been the destruction of some 15 tons of books, 284,000 pounds of plates for printing such ‘objectionable’ books, and nearly 4,000,000 pictures. All of this material was defined as “lewd” by Comstock’s very broad definition of the term — which he and his associates successfully lobbied the United States Congress to incorporate in the Comstock Law.

The Ray Bradbury novel Fahrenheit 451 is about a fictional future society that has institutionalized book burning. In Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, the euphemistically-called "memory hole" is used to burn any book or written text which is inconvenient to the regime, and there is mention of “the total destruction of all books published before 1960”.

The advent of the digital age has resulted in an immense collection of written work being catalogued exclusively or primarily in digital form. The intentional deletion or removal of these works has been often referred to as a new form of book burning. [citation needed]

This reference is more closely related to the relationship between book burning and censorship than the systematic and categorical elimination of a particular body of literary work. In general, book burning does not refer to individual censorship, but rather to an act of mass censorship, and the term is applied appropriately only when these types of digital cases are suspected to be epidemic or widespread and systemic. [citation needed]

Some supporters have celebrated book burning cases in art and other media. Such is the bas-relief by Giovanni Battista Maini of The Burning of Heretical Books over a side door on the façade of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, which depicts the burning of ‘heretical’ books as a triumph of righteousness.[1]

Chronology of notable book burning incidents

Headings indicate the books or libraries burned, with perpetrator and/or location in parentheses.

**Chinese Philosophy books (by Emperor Qin Shi Huang)**

Following the advice of minister Li Si, Emperor Qin Shi Huang ordered the burning of all philosophy books and history books from states other than Qin — beginning in 213 BC. This was followed by the live burial of a large number of intellectuals who did not comply with the state dogma.

The damage to Chinese culture was compounded during the revolts which ended the short rule of Qin Er Shi, Qin Shi Huang’s son. The imperial palace and state archives were burned, destroying many of the remaining written records that had been spared by the father.

**Jewish writings and ‘books of the law’ (by King Jehoiakim of Judah and the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV)**

According to the Torah in the fourth year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah the prophet Jeremiah dictated the words of the Lord to Baruch, who wrote them in ink upon a roll of a book. The following year three or four leaves were read in the presence of the king and princes, whereupon Jehoiakim cut the roll with a knife and ‘cast it into the fire that was on the hearth’ (Jeremiah 36:1–26).

Far more destructive was the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV, who in 168 BC ordered Jewish ‘books of the law’ found in Jerusalem to be ‘rent in pieces’ and burned (I Maccabees 1:56).

**Roman history book (by the aediles)**

The senator Aulus Cremutius Cordus’ History was burned by the aediles in 25 AD.

**Sorcery scrolls (by Early converts to Christianity at Ephesus)**

According to the New Testament book of Acts, early converts to Christianity in Ephesus who had previously practiced sorcery burned their scrolls: “A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.” (Acts 19:19, NIV) [2]
Epicurus' book (in Paphlagonia)
Established beliefs of Epicurus was burned in a Paphlagonian marketplace by order of the charlatan Alexander, supposed prophet of Asclepius ca 160 (Lucian, Alexander the false prophet).

Egyptian alchemy texts (by Diocletian)
The Egyptian alchemical books of Alexandria were burnt by the emperor Diocletian in 292.

Christian books (by Diocletian)
Christian books by a decree of emperor Diocletian in 303, calling for an increased persecution of Christians.

Books of Arianism (after Council of Nicaea)
The books of Arius and his followers, after the first Council of Nicaea (325), for heresy.

The Sibylline Books (by Flavius Stilicho)
The Sibylline Books were burnt by Flavius Stilicho (died 408).

Egyptian non-conforming Christian texts (by Athanasius)
According to Elaine Pagels, in 367, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria called in all non-conforming texts from the Christian monasteries of Egypt during his Paschal letter for that year. No such order is found in that work.

Writings of Priscillian
In 383, the theologian Priscillian of Ávila became the first Christian to be executed by fellow-Christians as a heretic. Some (though not all) of his writings were condemned as heretical and burned. For many centuries they were considered irreversibly lost - but surviving copies were discovered in the 19th century.

Repeated destruction of Alexandria libraries
Main article: Library of Alexandria#Destruction of the Library
The library of the Serapeum in Alexandria was trashed, burned and looted, 392, at the decree of Theophilus of Alexandria, who was ordered so by Theodosius I. Around the same time, Hypatia was murdered. One of the largest destruction of books occurred at the Library of Alexandria, traditionally held to be in 640, however the precise years are unknown as are whether the fires were intentional or accidental.

Etrusca Disciplina
Etrusca Disciplina, the Etruscan books of cult and divination, collected and burned in the 5th century.

Nestorius' books (by Theodosius II)
The books of Nestorius, after an edict of Theodosius II, for heresy (435).

Qur'anic texts (ordered by the 3rd Caliph, Uthman)
Main article: Origin and development of the Qur'an#First standardization of Qur'an
Uthman ibn Affan, the third Caliph of Islam after Muhammad, who is credited with overseeing the creation of the authoritative written version of the Qur'an, also ordered the destruction of competing versions, circa 650. Although the Qur'an had mainly been propagated through oral transmission, it also had already been recorded in at least three codices, most importantly the codex of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud in Kufa, and the codex of Ubayy ibn Ka'b in Syria. Sometime between 650 and 656, a committee appointed by Uthman is believed to have produced a singular version in seven copies, and Uthman is said to have "sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt." [5]

Competing prayer books (at Toledo)
After the conquest of Toledo, Spain (1085) by the king of Castile, it was being disputed on whether Iberian Christians should follow the foreign Roman rite or the traditional Mozarabic rite. After other ordeals, it was submitted to the trial by fire: One book for each rite was thrown into a fire. The Toledan book was little damaged after the Roman one was consumed. Henry Jenner comments in the Catholic Encyclopedia: "No one who has seen a Mozarabic manuscript with its extraordinarily solid vellum, will adopt any hypothesis of Divine Interposition here."

Abelard forced to burn his own book (at Soissons)
The provincial synod held at Soissons (in France) in 1121 condemned the teachings of the famous theologian Peter Abelard as heresy; he was forced to burn his own book before being shut up inside the convent of St. Medard at Soissons.

Samanid Dynasty Library
The Royal Library of the Samanid Dynasty was burned at the turn of the 11th century during the Turkic invasion from the east. Avicenna was said to have tried to save the precious manuscripts from the fire as the flames engulfed the collection.
Destruction of Cathar texts (Languedoc region of France)

During the 13th century, the Catholic Church waged a brutal campaign against the Cathars of Languedoc (smaller numbers also lived elsewhere in Europe), culminating in the Albigensian Crusade. Nearly every Cathar text that could be found was destroyed, in an effort to completely extirpate their heretical beliefs; only a few are known to have survived.

Maimonides' philosophy (at Montpellier)

In 1233 Maimonides’ "Guide for the Perplexed" was burnt at Montpellier, Southern France (see #Medieval burning of Jewish Literature).

The Talmud (at Paris)

In 1242, The French crown burned all Talmud copies in Paris, after the book was "charged" and "found guilty" in the Paris trial sometimes called "the Paris debate") (see #Medieval burning of Jewish Literature).

The House of Wisdom library (at Baghdad)

The House of Wisdom was destroyed during the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258, along with all other libraries in Baghdad. It was said that the waters of the Tigris ran black for six months with ink from the enormous quantities of books flung into the river.

Wycliffe's books (at Prague)

In 1410 John Wycliffe's books were burnt by the illiterate archbishop Zbynek Zajic z Házmburka in the court of his palace in Lesser Town of Prague to hinder the spread of Jan Hus' teaching.

Non-Catholic books (by Torquemada)

In the 1480s Tomas Torquemada promoted the burning of non-Catholic literature, especially Jewish Talmuds and, after the final defeat of the Moors at Granada in 1492, Arabic books also.

Decameron, Ovid and other "lewd" books (by Savonarola)

Main article: Bonfire of the Vanities

In 1497, followers of the Italian priest Girolamo Savonarola collected and publicly burned pornography, lewd pictures, pagan books, gaming tables, cosmetics, copies of Boccaccio's Decameron, and all the works of Ovid which could be found in Florence.

Arabic and Hebrew books (at Andalucia)

In 1490 a number of Hebrew Bibles and other Jewish books were burned at the behest of the Spanish Inquisition. In 1499 about 5000 Arabic manuscripts were consumed by flames in the public square at Granada on the orders of Ximénez de Cisneros, Archbishop of Toledo. Many of the poetic works were allegedly destroyed on account of their symbolized homoeroticism. The German Romantic poet Heinrich Heine wrote about this, stating "Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen" - "Where they burn books, they will also, in the end, burn humans" - a quote written on the monument for the Nazi Book Burnings today.

Tyndale’s New Testament (in England)

In October 1526 William Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament was burned in London by Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London.

Servetus’s writings (burned with their author at Geneva)

In 1553, Servetus was burned as an heretic at the order of the city council of Geneva on a remark in his translation of Ptolemy's Geography. "Around his waist were tied a large bundle of manuscript and a thick octavo printed book", his Christianismi Restitutio, three copies of which have survived.

Maya sacred books (at Yucatan)

1562 Fray Diego de Landa, acting bishop of the Yucatan, threw into the fires the sacred books of the Maya.

Medieval burning of Jewish Literature

The burnings of Hebrew books were initiated by Pope Gregory IX. He persuaded French King Louis IX to burn some 12,000 copies of the Talmud in Paris in 1243. He was followed by subsequent Popes. The Church and Christian states viewed the Talmud as a book hateful and insulting toward Christ and Gentiles. The most ferocious haters of Judaism and Jewish books among them were Innocent IV (1243–1254), Clement IV (1256–1268), John XXII (1316–1334), Paul IV (1555–1559), Pius V (1566–1572) and Clement VIII (1592–1605). They almost succeeded in stamping out Jewish books entirely. Yet Jews continued to pen their holy books without cease, and once the printing press
In 1933, Nazis burned works of Jewish authors, and other works considered "un-German", at the library of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in Berlin.

Luther’s Bible translation (in Germany)

Martin Luther’s German translation of the Bible was burned in Germany in 1624 by order of the Pope.

Books burned by civil, military and ecclesiastical authorities between 1640 and 1660 (England)

60 identified printed books, pamphlets and broadsheets, and 3 newsbooks were ordered to be burned during this period (see: A. Hessayon, «Incendiary texts: book burning in England, c.1640 – c.1660», Cromohs, 12 (2007): 1-25).

Hobbes books (at Oxford University)

In 1683 several books by Thomas Hobbes and other authors were burnt in Oxford University.

Anti-Wilhelm Tell tract (at Canton of Uri)

The 1760 tract by Simeon Uriel Freudenberger from Luzern, arguing that Wilhelm Tell was a myth and the acts attributed to him had not happened in reality, was publicly burnt in Altdorf, capital of the Swiss canton of Uri - where, according to the legend, William Tell shot the apple from his son's head.

Vernacular Catholic hymn books (at Mainz)

In 1787, an attempt by the Catholic authorities at Mainz to introduce vernacular hymn books encountered strong resistance from conservative Catholics, who refused to abandon the old Latin books and who seized and burned copies of the new German-language books.

Religious libraries (by Robespierre)

In 1793 Robespierre ordered the destruction by fire of religious libraries, as well as the burning of those books defending or glorifying royalism or the French Kings. The books were considered "inimical towards reformed France".

Early braille books (in Paris)

In 1842, officials at the school for the blind in Paris France, were ordered by its new director, Armand Dufau, to burn books written in the new braille code. After every braille book at the institute that could be found was burned, supporters of the code's inventor, Louis Braille, rebelled against Dufau by continuing to use the code, and braille was eventually restored at the school.

"Valley of the Squinting Windows" (at Delvin, Ireland)

In 1918 the Valley of the Squinting Windows in Delvin, Ireland. The book criticised the village's inhabitants for being overly concerned with their image towards neighbours.

Jewish, anti-Nazi and "degenerate" books (by the Nazis)

The works of Jewish authors and other so-called "degenerate" books were burnt by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. Richard Euringer, director of the libraries in Essen, identified 18,000 works deemed not to correspond with Nazi ideology, which were publicly burned.

On May 10, 1933 on the Opernplatz in Berlin, S.A. and Nazi youth groups burned around 20,000 books from the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft and the Humboldt University; including works by Heinrich Heine, Thomas Mann, Karl Marx, Erich Maria Remarque, and H.G. Wells. Student groups throughout Germany also carried out their own book burnings on that day and in the following weeks. Erich Kästner wrote an ironic account (published only after the fall of Nazism) of having witnessed the burning of his own books on that occasion.

Theodore Dreiser's works (at Warsaw, Indiana)

Trustees of Warsaw, Indiana ordered the burning of all the library's works by Theodore Dreiser.

Jorge Amado’s novels (by Brazilian dictatorship)

In 1937 the dictatorial regime of Getulio Vargas in Brazil ordered the public burning of the novels O País do Carnaval, Cacau and Mar Morto by the noted author Jorge Amado, at the time an active member of the Brazilian Communist Party.

Pompeu Fabra’s library (by Spanish fascist troupes)
In 1939, shortly after the surrendering of Barcelona, Franco's fascists troops burned the entire library of Pompeu Fabra, the main author of the normative reform of contemporary Catalan language, while shouting "¡Abajo la inteligencia!" (Down with the intelligence!). De la destrucción de la biblioteca de Pompeu Fabra. [citation needed]

**Comic books (at Binghamton, New York)**

In 1948, at Binghamton, New York children - overseen by priests, teachers, and parents - publicly burned several hundred comic books.[8]

**Judaica collection at Birobidzhan (by Stalin)**

As part of Joseph Stalin's efforts to stamp out Jewish culture in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Judaica collection in the library of Birobidzhan, capital of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast on the Chinese border, was burned.[citation needed]

**Communist and "fellow traveller" books (by Senator McCarthy)**

In 1953 United States Senator Joseph McCarthy recited before his subcommittee and the press a list of supposedly pro-communist authors whose works his aide Roy Cohn found in the State Department libraries in Europe. The Eisenhower State Department bowed to McCarthy and ordered its overseas librarians to remove from their shelves "material by any controversial persons, Communists, fellow travelers, etc." Some libraries burned the newly-forbidden books. President Eisenhower agreed that the State Department should dispose of books advocating communism: "I see no reason for the Federal government to be supporting something that advocated its own destruction. That seems to be the acme of silliness."[citation needed]

At Dartmouth College in June 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower urged Americans concerning libraries: "Don't join the book burners. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book . . . ."[citation needed]

**Wilhelm Reich's publications (by U.S. Food and Drug Administration)**

Main article: Wilhelm Reich

Noted psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich was prosecuted in 1954, following an investigation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in connection with his use of orgone accumulators. Reich refused to defend himself, and a Federal judge ordered all of his orgone energy equipment and publications to be seized and destroyed. In June 1956, Federal agents burned many of the books at Reich's estate near Rangeley, Maine. Later that year, and in March 1960, an additional 6 tons of Reich's books, journals and papers were burned in a public incinerator in New York. Reich died of heart failure while in Federal prison in November 1957.[citation needed]

**Library of writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer (by Suharto's "New Order")**

Following the late-1960's establishment of Suharto's New Order in Indonesia, the left-wing writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer was imprisoned. His entire library was burned, including extensive materials which he had collected in preparatory research for a new book. Toer nevertheless composed the book, This Earth of Mankind, from memory while imprisoned: deprived of so much as a pencil, he narrated his text orally to fellow prisoners. (By 2005 the book had been published and translated into 33 languages).[citation needed]

**Burning of Jaffna library**

Main article: Burning of Jaffna library

In May 1981 a mob composed of thugs and plainclothes police officers went on a rampage in minority Tamil-dominated northern Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and burned down the Jaffna Public Library. At least 95,000 volumes — the second largest library collection in South Asia — were destroyed, including a very rare collection of ancient palm leaf volumes.[9]

**Anti-Pinochet Dictatorship books (at Valparaiso)**

In February 1987 the Chilean Interior Ministry admitted that 15,000 copies of the Spanish edition of Clandestine in Chile: The Adventures of Miguel Littin were impounded and burned on November 28, 1986, in Valparaiso following direct orders from Augusto Pinochet[citation needed]

**The Satanic Verses (in the United Kingdom)**

The 1988 publication of the novel The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie, provoked angry demonstrations and riots around the world by followers of Political Islam, some of whom considered it blasphemous. In the United Kingdom, book burnings were staged in the cities of Bolton and Bradford. In addition, five U.K. bookstores selling the novel were the target of bombings, and two bookstores in Berkeley, California were firebombed[citation needed]

**Oriental Institute Library, Sarajevo (by Serb nationalists)**

In 1992, during the Bosnian Civil War, Serb nationalist forces attacked the Oriental Institute (Orientalinstitut) in Sarajevo with incendiary grenades. The entire collection of books and manuscripts was burned in the largest single act of book-burning in modern history. [8]

**Books "contrary to the teachings of God" (at Grande Cache, Alberta)**

In the 1990s congregants of the Full Gospel Assembly in Grande Cache, Alberta, Canada burned books with ideas in them that they did not agree with, or that they deemed to contain ideas contrary to the teachings of God.[citation needed]
Books of Falun Dafa Teachings

Falun Dafa books were burned in 1999 by the government of the People's Republic of China. The books were about the principles of the Falun Dafa practice. According to the practice, they are Zhen-Shan-Ren, or Truthfulness-Compassion-Forbearance.[12] As part of its anti-Falun Gong campaign, the government repeatedly claimed the practice to be an "evil cult" which brought "instability to the country".[13][14]

Abu Nuwas homoerotic poetry (by Egyptian Ministry of Culture)[citation needed]

In January 2001 the Egyptian Ministry of Culture burned 6,000 books of homoerotic poetry by Abu Nuwas, after pressure from Islamic fundamentalists[citation needed].

Harry Potter books (in various American cities)

There have been several incidents of Harry Potter books being burned, including those directed by churches at Alamogordo, New Mexico, Charleston, South Carolina, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.[15] See Controversy over Harry Potter.

Iraq's national library, Baghdad 2003

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Iraq's national library and the Islamic library in central Baghdad were burned and destroyed. The national library housed several rare volumes and documents from as far back as the 16th century, including entire royal court records and files from the period when Iraq was part of the Ottoman Empire. The destroyed Islamic library of Baghdad included one of the oldest surviving copies of the Qur'an.[16]

Anti-copyright anthology "Copy Me" (by Piratbyrån)

Piratbyrån, a group of Swedish anti-copyright activists, in 2005 published the anthology Copy Me with their own writings. At Walmuris Night the last of April 2007, as they declared that "the so-called file-sharing debate has served its time"[17] they burnt the remaining books on the mountain Värbergstopen in South Stockholm, while reading a declaration motivating the ritual.[18]

Inventory of Prospero's Books (by proprietors Tom Wayne and W.E. Leathem)

On May 27, 2007, Tom Wayne and W.E. Leathem, the proprietor of Prospero's Books, a used book store in Kansas City, Mo., publicly burned a portion of his inventory to protest society's increasing indifference to the printed word. The protest was interrupted by the Kansas City Fire Department on the grounds that Wayne & Leathem had failed to obtain the required permits.[9]

New Testaments in City of Or-Yehuda, Israel

In May 2008, a "fairly large" number of New Testaments were burned in Or-Yehuda, Israel. Conflicting accounts have the deputy mayor of Or-Yehuda, Uzi Aharon, claiming to have organized the burnings or to have stopped them. He admitted involvement in collecting New Testaments and "Messianic propaganda" that had been distributed in the city. The burning apparently violated Israeli laws about destroying religious items.[10]

For a different motive: Guru Granth Sahib

An example of ceremonial book burning with a completely different motive is that, in the Sikh religion, any copies of their sacred book Guru Granth Sahib which are too badly damaged to be used, and any printer's waste which has any of its text on, are cremated with a similar ceremony as cremating a deceased man. Such burning is called Agan Bhet.

- [11]: A copy damaged in a fire
- [12]: A copy damaged in a fire
- [13]: 4 copies damaged in New Orleans by the flood caused by Hurricane Katrina
- Guru Granth Sahib#Printing: Printer's waste
- [14]: on the Nicobar Islands after the 2004 tsunami (end of page).
- [15] MrSikhNet.com Blog query about an accumulation of download printouts of Sikh sacred text

In fiction

- The short story Earth's Holocaust from Nathaniel Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse is about a society that burns everything that it finds offensive, including its literature.
- The first part of Don Quixote has a scene in which the priest and the housekeeper of the eponymous knight go through the chivalry books that have turned him mad. In a kind of auto de fe, they burn most of them. The comments of the priest express the literary tastes of the author, though he offers some sharp criticisms of Cervantes' works as well. It is notable that he saves Tirant lo Blanch.
- In Part II of the play Tamburlaine, by Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine (the protagonist) burns a copy of the Quran after having conquered Asia Minor and Egypt. His book-burning and declaration of independence from any deity leads to his fatal illness, and subsequently the end of the play.
- In the introduction of the 1967 Simon and Schuster book club edition of Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury implies that the Nazi book burnings drove him to write the short story novella/"Fireman which was the precursor along with the foundation for his novel Fahrenheit 451 (451 °F being the temperature at which paper autoignites), stating "It follows then that when Hitler burned a book I felt it as keenly, please forgive me, as his killing a human, for in the long sum of history they are one in the same flesh."
- In one episode of The Simpsons, Lisa Simpson sees a Book-Mobile being driven by Reverend Lovejoy, however the letters behind a tree reveal that it actually reads Book-Burning-Mobile.
In "Anne of Green Gables", Anne watches in horror as her caretaker burns her book containing the poem "Lady of Shallot" as punishment for reading instead of doing her chores.

In the Myst series of computer games and books, the only way to destroy the link to an Age is to destroy its Descriptive Book, usually by burning it.

In the film Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: Indiana Jones' journeys to Berlin in order to retrieve his father's diary, which gives information about finding the Holy Grail. He retrieves it during a Nazi book burning rally (although it was not targeted for burning itself), where it is inadvertently signed by Hitler himself. At another point, his father makes a comment to a Nazi interrogator: "Goose-Stepping morons like yourself should try reading books instead of burning them."

In the film Pleasantville, the people who are still black-and-white burn all the books in the library to keep people from becoming colored.

In the future depicted in Brian Stableford's "The Halcyon Drift", one of the leading planets in the Galaxy is "New Alexandria", whose inhabitants are dedicated to the preservation and extension of knowledge, and are brought up to regard the destruction of books as the most heinous of deeds. Nevertheless, a protagonist agrees to help the Khor-Monsa, an alien species, in destroying books and records of their remote ancestors which were found in a drifting spaceship - since the books contained a shameful secret whose publication might have led to the present Khor-Monsa losing their social status and becoming discriminated.

In an episode of Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman, the townspeople burn some of the books from Dr. Quinn's library.

The Crusade episode The Needs of Earth depicts a world that has burned its entire cultural heritage - all art, music, and literature - and hunts the person who has the last remaining copies.

The 2002 film Equilibrium depicts a dystopian society which has eliminated human emotion, and burned all cultural influences that can cause emotion.

In the 2004 film The Day after Tomorrow, to avoid freezing to death, the main character suggests burning books to survive, much to the horror of two librarians, with the main characters choosing to keep people from becoming colored.

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See also

- Banned books
- Censorship
- Marc Drogin

Results from FactBites:

Book Burning (506 words)

In a symbolic act of ominous significance, on May 10 the students burned upwards of 25,000 volumes of un-German books, presaging an era of state censorship and control of culture.

At the meeting places, students threw the pillaged and unwanted books into the bonfires with great joyous ceremony, band-playing, songs, fire oaths, and incantations.

The works of leading German writers such as Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Alfred Kerr were consigned to flames in a book burning ceremony in Berlin.

AbeBooks: 75th Anniversary of the Nazi Book Burning (999 words)

In a symbolic act, words are not just being suppressed, they are being destroyed by fire.


His 1908 novel The Iron Heel depicts the rise of fascism in the USA with a socialist hero, and was one of three of his books to be burned.
Book burning is the ritual destruction by fire of books or other written materials, usually carried out in a public context. The burning of books represents an element of censorship and usually proceeds from a cultural, religious, or political opposition to the materials in question.[1]. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Contemporary book burning. Thousands of books smoulder in a huge bonfire as Germans give the Nazi salute during the wave of book-burnings that spread throughout Germany.