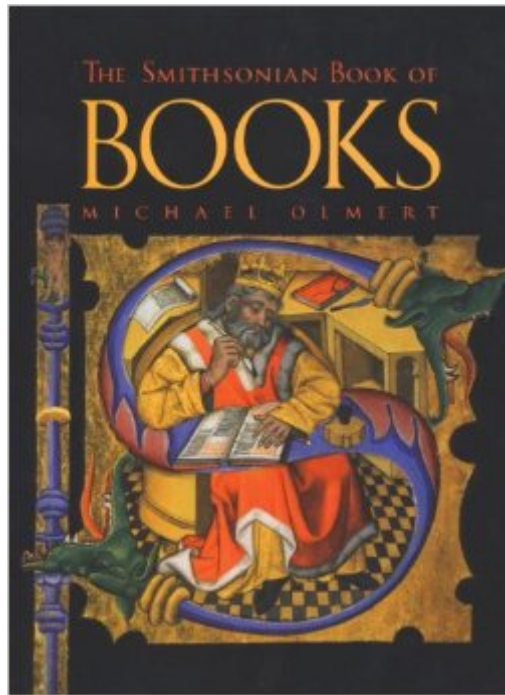


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The Smithsonian Book Of Books



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Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Smithsonian Books; Reissue edition (September 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 089599030X

ISBN-13: 978-0895990303

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 1 x 11.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.5 pounds

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Customer Reviews

Gorgeously illustrated with pictures from library collections all over the world, "The Smithsonian Book of Books" is a bibliophile's paradise. As Michael Olmert shows us, books became one of the world's most powerful means of disseminating information and entertainment. Can anybody imagine life without books? We learn how books developed from the papyrus and parchment rolls of the Egyptians and Greeks to the Roman codex, which transformed the book into the shape we know today, and how "people of the Book" -- Christians, Jews and Muslims, produced glorious volumes meant to teach the word of God. But these masterpieces were made by hand, every word and every stitch; they weren't for the the great unwashed masses. The Middle Ages, with their gloriously illuminated religious tomes sandwiched between jeweled covers that were worth a prince's ransom,

turned out books that were museum pieces; some more famous examples of illumination were the "Tres Riches Heures of Jean Duc of Berry", and the Irish "Book of Kells". The spread of handwritten books for keeping accounts made possible the development and spread of commerce during the Renaissance. But the Gutenberg revolution, the development of movable type, brought books down from the rarefied atmosphere of prized possessions for the rich alone, and made books and the dissemination of knowledge and information available to everyone. Olmert relates in detail how books were made, the development of different typefaces, and writes two fascinating chapters on the crafts of bookmaking and bookbinding. There are also chapters on the role of illustration in books by etching and engraving as well as drawing and painting, and how illustrations in texts were used to teach as well as embellish.

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