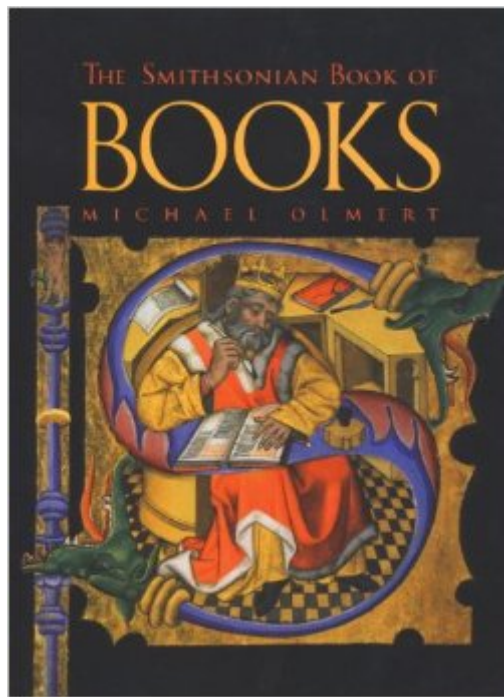


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Gorgeously illustrated with pictures from library collections all over the world, "The Smithsonian Book of Books" is a bibliophile's paradise. As Michael Olmert shows us, books became one of the world's most powerful means of disseminating information 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,

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