



Improbable Libraries: A Visual Journey to the World's Most Unusual Libraries

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How do you use your local library? Does it arrive at your door on the back of an elephant? Can it float down the river to you? Or does it occupy a phone booth by the side of the road?

Public libraries are a cornerstone of modern civilization, yet like the books in them, libraries face an uncertain future in an increasingly digital world. Undaunted, librarians around the globe are thinking up astonishing ways of reaching those in reading need, whether by bike in Chicago, boat in Laos, or donkey in Colombia. *Improbable Libraries* showcases a wide range of unforgettable, never-before-seen images and interviews with librarians who are overcoming geographic, economic, and political difficulties to bring the written word to an eager audience. Alex Johnson charts the changing face of library architecture, as temporary pop-ups rub shoulders with monumental brick-and-mortar structures, and many libraries expand their mission to function as true community centers. To take just one example: the open-air Garden Library in Tel Aviv, located in a park near the city's main bus station, supports asylum seekers and migrant workers with a stock of 3,500 volumes in sixteen different languages.

Beautifully illustrated with two hundred and fifty color photographs, *Improbable Libraries* offers a breathtaking tour of the places that bring us together and provide education, entertainment, culture, and so much more. From the rise of the egalitarian Little Free Library movement to the growth in luxury hotel libraries, the communal book revolution means you'll never be far from the perfect next read.

Improbable Libraries: A Visual Journey to the World's Most Unusual Libraries Details

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From Reader Review Improbable Libraries: A Visual Journey to the World's Most Unusual Libraries for online ebook

Jessica says

Beautiful and enlightening book on many different ways literacy is reaching the far parts of the world.

Paul Bryant says

if they make you go on a beach holiday, choose this one

Stewart Tame says

This was a fun book. As you'd surmise from the title, this is chock full of gorgeous photos of interesting and unusual libraries. If it were larger, it would qualify as a coffee table book. Some of these seem, to me at least, like vacation destinations in the making. I also found the chapter on travelling libraries fascinating: using various types of pack animals to travel to remote villages, or boats to bring books to remote lighthouses and inlets. This book helps one appreciate the universal power of reading and the love of books.

Gina says

Filled with beautiful photos, this book takes you on a journey to some of the world's most beautiful - and sometimes unusual - libraries.

At a time when libraries are grossly underfunded and at a time when electronic devices seem to be taking over, the libraries of the world continue to serve their communities, and serve them well. This is a book for all book lovers and reminds us that libraries are a vital asset to humanity and need to be preserved and treasured.

You will see everything from opulent interiors to a library traveling on the back of an elephant, all in the effort to educate and inform, to bring the pleasure of reading to the farthest corners of the big world.

Ann says

This is the type of book that book-lovers like myself will devour with shining eyes, while others will shrug it off. This is all about unusual libraries. There are some incredibly fancy modern design libraries showcased here, as well as hotels, bars and inns that have either their own library or function as an outpost of the local public library. But my favorites are the clever ways that book-minded idealists have found to bring the books

to the people in those areas or situations where the people can't come to the books. Book-bicycles in urban areas. A book-mule ("biblioburro") in a rural area in Columbia. A book-camel in Mongolia. A book-horse in Ethiopia. And a book-elephant in Laos! Apart from the cute factor, how I admire the people who believe in the power of books to the point where they push, pull, drag, carry or otherwise convey an even limited amount of books to underserved areas! Pictures of children queuing up to receive a book, even if they can only keep it overnight, tell the story : people love books. There are quite a few examples of floating libraries as well, both of the variety of a book-ferry that goes on its appointed rounds, as someone who parks her canoe in the middle of a lake and offers books to those who swim or paddle up to her boat.

My second favorite type of library is the "bring one, take one" type of library. The Little Free Library movement is the best example of this concept, but there are so many other forms. Upcycling telephone booths is a favorite approach, but clever designers have come up with so many original ideas such as book refrigerators or book cubes suspended from wires.

The one thing that struck me is that the most creative ideas didn't seem to come from either third world countries or Europe. That may reflect the interests of the (British) author, or it may indicate that there is less interest in a fresh look at the library concept in the USA. I hope it's the former!

Mary Ronan Drew says

The Improbable Libraries in this little book are those that display clever design (Kansas City with it's book-lined facade), are located in unusual places (the airport in Amsterdam), or move about (the library that travels by elephant in rural Asia and the burro libraries of South America." The pictures are lovely, but because of the small size of the book they are not at their best. The text is just basic explanation. Nonetheless, I enjoyed this tour through the world's most unusual and in some cases most useful libraries.

Oda Renate says

interesting books about special libraries.

Evelyne says

Great overview of what type of libraries exist, beautifully documented

Alison Smith says

A Thames & Hudson coffee table book - glossy paper, more pics than text - I loved it. Libraries situated in trees (yes, really!) in old unused British red phone boxes, pop-up libraries in parks; mobile libraries per camel, mule, bus ... An encouraging, fun book. Viva Libraries!

Jacques says

Bibliotheken van de 21ste eeuw. In een telefooncel, op een boot, in een bakfiets, in openlucht, op het strand, in het hotel en de supermarkt... Bibliotheken van de meest eenvoudige tot het architecturale meesterwerk. Allemaal hebben ze een ding gemeen : volwassenen, ouders, kinderen, daklozen, gevangenen, zieken, kort... iedereen aan te moedigen om te lezen. Fraai geïllustreerd boek om geïnteresseerd te lezen en (later) bij beetje van te genieten.

Wendy says

Geweldig boekje voor de bibliotheekliefhebber! Uiteraard maar een kleine selectie, maar wel eentje van heel bijzondere bibliotheken, met leuke foto's en een woordje uitleg. Het maakt nieuwsgierig en zet je aan om zelf op zoek te gaan naar nog meer van die bibliotheken. Inspirerend om te zien hoe overal ter wereld mensen hún manier vinden om een bibliotheek in te richten, hoe klein en vreemd het soms is. Absolute aanrader voor iedereen die van bibliotheken houdt!

Sarah Hayes says

A really wonderful and fascinating look at unconventional library spaces around the world. Would recommend to fellow library science students or librarians who are interested in critically examining what makes a library and how we make our collections accessible to different patron groups.

Kermit says

Chock full of photographs of every imaginable kind of library. Mobile libraries (not just bookmobiles---but also libraries on boats, bikes, motorcycles, carts) libraries carried about by animals (camels, donkeys, horses, elephants), tiny libraries. fancy fancy libraries in rich people's homes.....

Lots of libraries.

The tiny library concept is super cool to me. I like the ones in regular neighborhoods that are in people's front yards as well as the ones that are housed in obsolete phone booths in large cities.

Chris says

Very cool look at the many, many different ways that libraries reach people and people reach libraries around the world.

Rhys says

The photography is beautiful, and I loved reading about the unusual libraries from around the world. In some ways, I even finished the book feeling inspired by how important literature is, and by how far people will go to make it widely available to others. My only complaint was that the writing at times felt more like tangentially related lists that could have been organized in a way that let the ideas flow together. Still, the information was interesting and it is a wonderful collection of libraries.
