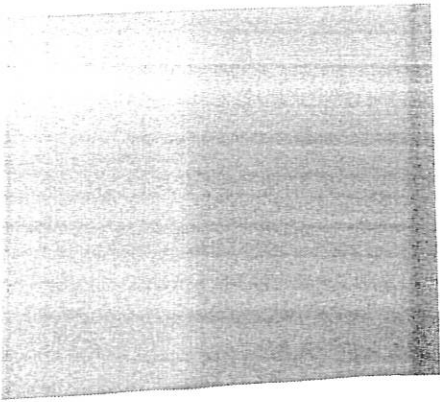
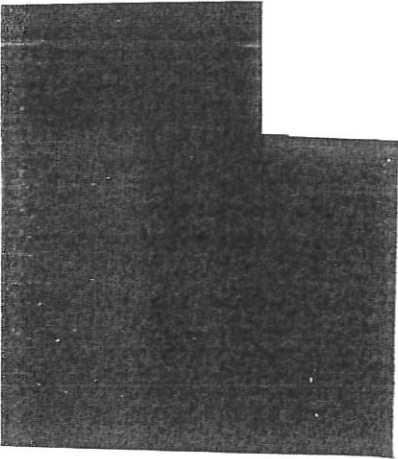


[Papyrus was made from the solid-stemmed marsh plants that grew along the Nile River. They were split open and beaten into flat sheets that could be joined end to end to form rolls of any length. At first, papyrus was also used in codices, and it continued to be utilized in Egypt "well into the tenth and eleventh centuries." But this lightweight material had its disadvantages as well as its virtues:

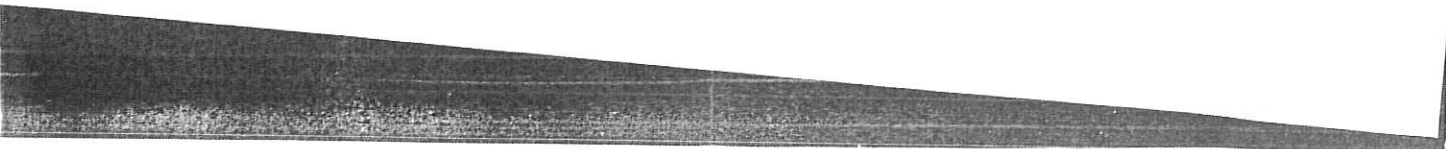
Papyrus was cheap and abundant in the Greek world, and it solved the problem admirably for several centuries. It suffered from two handicaps, however. Except in the dry climate of Egypt, it was very perishable. Damp ruined it, and in Rome, and still more in Gaul, texts had to be constantly re-copied to preserve them. The Emperor Tacitus, for example, wishing that the works of his imagined ancestor, the historian of the same name, should be in all the Roman libraries, felt it necessary to order ten copies



[The earliest codices, which took their form from the informal tablet book, apparently date from the early part of the Christian era (about the second century), and it has been speculated that the codex form might have been first adopted when the Christian Bible began to be copied on papyrus and circulated in book as opposed to roll form to distinguish it from the scrolled texts of Judaism and paganism. With its clear advantages over a scroll, "by the beginning of the fourth century, the codex became the predominant medium for both Christian and non-Christian literature, and the use of the roll sharply diminished."]



[Bookshops at the end of the second millennium come in many shapes and sizes, of course, and among the most talked about are the large superstores. These emporiums appear at first to be as far from the shops of the seventeenth century as the laser printer is from the printing press that produced the Gutenberg Bible. Although known as chain stores, these shops have books that are only metaphorically chained to the store through the magnetic tags that trigger alarms if carried through the shoplifter detectors at the store exit before being desensitized at the checkout counter.] But books may be freely carried around the store to be read in an easy chair or over a cup of coffee that



BOOKSHELF AN OXYMORON?

[The stories of the evolution of the book and the bookshelf truly are inseparable, and both are examples in the evolution of technology. More than literary factors, technological factors—those relating to materials, function, economy, and use—have shaped the book and the furniture upon which it rests. The evolution of the bookshelf is thus paradigmatic in the history of technology. But because technology does not exist independent of the social and cultural environments in which it is embedded and which it in turn significantly influences, the history of a technological artifact like the book or the bookshelf cannot be understood fully without also addressing its seemingly non-technological aspects.]

