

"The Rise and Fall of Alexandria", Howard Reid and Justin Pollard

Post by "Joshua" of November 20, 2020 at 11:40 AM

Quote

At first I was thinking that taking the original seemed a little overboard, but I suppose in that day they were actually doing the owner a favor by giving them a newer version that might last longer?

Ha! No.

The Ptolemy's were very unscrupulous and underhanded about how they "acquired" books. In one instance they gave the city of Athens a large sum of silver as collateral to 'borrow' the original copies of several great Athenian playwrights. Upon receipt of the scrolls, they sent a message back—you keep the silver. We're keeping the books. Copying in the ancient world was often done by educated slaves, and was always prone to minor errors. Alexandria wanted to make sure it had the best and most accurate version of every text. I saw an article yesterday that referred to the practice as "reverse-copyright". The state 'owned' all writings from the moment of composition.