

Libraries of Cordoba

In the eighth century a new and independent Muslim kingdom was established by the Umayyads in Spain. Its capital city, Cordoba, became a center of learning and intellectual life and was widely known as a city of bibliophiles (people who love books). The most celebrated library in Cordoba was run by Caliph al-Hakam II al-Mustansir (A.D. 961-976). Al-Hakam, who was an accomplished scholar, sent bookbuyers all over the Muslim Empire to find books for his library. Library clerks, many of them women, carefully hand-copied the books while calligraphers and bookbinders created beautiful text and cover designs. Al-Hakam's library was said to have contained more than 400,000 books, whose titles filled a 44-volume catalog. The people of Cordoba also collected books for their homes. Those who owned large, personal libraries were regarded as important figures in Cordovan society.

