

Recently, I had a book report to do. It was to be on any book considered a literary classic. So I went to our local library to and checked out *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas. The book seemed quite short, considering Dumas once wrote a novel so long that publishers divided it into four separate books. After I got home and started reading, I realized it was the abridged version. When I checked the library for the unabridged version, there wasn't a single copy.

\$100,000 can buy a lot of books. If I were given that much cash to invest in something, I would buy books for our library. It has a lot of volumes, but many others need to be requested from one of the sixteen other libraries in the county. It can take anywhere from four to seven days to get a book transferred. When students have deadlines and can't wait that long to get a book, they often end up going to a different library or buying a copy.

Mass-market paperback books cost an average of \$8.30 in 2007. Trade paperbacks (books published by a commercial publisher for general readership) cost more: a 2007 median of \$15.64 for fiction and \$20.40 for non-fiction. \$100,000 divided by \$14.78 (the average price of these three types of books) equals approximately six thousand seven hundred and sixty-six. That's a good number of books to add to a library.

Even before the invention of the printing press, people have kept libraries. The Mesopotamians kept collections of clay tablets in their temples. The Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh was found to have more than 30,000 of these tablets. One of the most famous, and most likely the largest, of ancient libraries was the Royal Library of Alexandria in Egypt. It is now hard to tell how many scrolls the library contained, as the building was burned and ancient writers may have exaggerated the number. Later, after the creation of books, many famous

people had huge personal libraries. Thomas Jefferson had a personal library of nine to ten *thousand* books. He offered to donate them to the Library of Congress after its three thousand volumes were destroyed when the British burned the Capitol. In the end, he gave them six thousand four hundred and eighty-seven books. That's not much less than what \$100,000 would buy today.