

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO  
LAW LIBRARY  
Information Series

10 Reading  
Room Murals



Missouri artist (LeRoy) Daniel MacMorris painted the seven murals located on the south wall of the Law Library Reading Room. The murals, titled *Evolution of the Printed Book*, were his earliest public mural project.

### FIRST PANEL

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Beginning at the left, the first panel illustrates an old man showing a boy some carvings he has etched on a tusk. This represents humans' early efforts to depict nature and the world about them.

### SECOND PANEL

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The second panel shows the development of writing in ancient Egypt and Assyria, the ancient middle-eastern empire. A male figure depicting a Babylonian king holds a clay tablet bearing cuneiform writing. These tablets are among the earliest historic documents. The Epic of "Gilgamesh" and the Babylonian "Legend of the Deluge," the world's oldest surviving written works, were found on similar tablets. The Egyptian priestess to his left writes on a papyrus scroll. The quotations below the painting reflect the two cultures. In the center is an Egyptian verse:



*I would cause thee to love books better than thy mother.  
I would cause their beauty to enter into the waters of  
thy spirit and the working of thy mind. It (the love of  
knowledge) is better than the holding of any office.*

At the left and right are lines from the *Legend of the Deluge*. *I will reveal to thee, O Gilgamesh, the hidden word* and *The decision of the gods to thee I will declare.*

### THIRD PANEL

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The third panel presents Chinese, Greek and Jewish influences in literature. The two male figures make use of vellum, or parchment, as a writing medium. The quote on the lower left is attributed to Confucius and reads:

*If your fields are left untilled your granaries will be empty; if your books are left unread your children will be ignorant; the words of the mouth fly away on the wind, the written word abides.*

The center quotation is attributed to Aristotle:

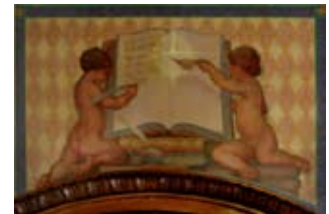
*Now, reason, as all would admit, exists for the acquisition of knowledge and seeks ends; the means to which are contained in philosophy; why then should philosophy not be pursued without hesitation?*

The quotation on the right is from the Jewish prophet Habakkuk: *Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*

### FOURTH PANEL

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In the fourth panel, located above the door, two cherubs hold and write in a book. Their writing says: *Let us reveal the wisdom of the ages by the light of truth.*



### FIFTH PANEL

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The fifth panel contains figures representing the Byzantine, Medieval and Renaissance eras. The Byzantine queen on the right holds a vellum scroll. To her left, a woman from the Middle Ages sits holding a book, which represents the invention of the first recognizable books: linen pages held between two wood boards. Behind them, a Renaissance craftsman operates an early 16<sup>th</sup> century printing press.



At the left are two lines from Italian poet Petrarch: *Only the poet's pure immortal plan outwits the swift mortality of man.*

The center quote is from *The Shepherd of Hermes*:

*First of all, speak evil of no man,  
neither willingly hear him who  
speaks evil. For, if in truth, you lend  
ear to it, you become the accomplice  
to him who speaks evil.*

Roman poet Virgil wrote the couplet on the right:  
*Come in the last of the ages, in song Cumean foretold; now is  
the world's grand cycle begun once more from of old.*

### SIXTH PANEL

The sixth panel depicts a contemporary scene from the 1930s and the culmination of the Industrial Age. Advances in printing technology over the centuries provided greater access to books and knowledge. The woman in the foreground is highlighted, emphasizing the introduction of greater educational opportunities for women. The writing on the left is from French poet Jean de la Fontaine: *Let the ignorant talk, knowledge and words have greater value.*



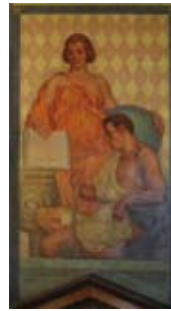
The writing on the left is from French poet Jean de la Fontaine: *Let the ignorant talk, knowledge and words have greater value.*

The text in the center is from Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle:

*In books lies the soul of the whole past time:  
The articulate audible voice of the past –  
When the body and material substance of it  
Has altogether vanished like a dream.*

The inscription on the right is from German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel: *The world's history is the world's court.*

### SEVENTH PANEL



In the seventh panel, the woman with her hand on the open book represents knowledge, while the man resting his arm on the anvil represents industry. MacMorris' point was that the scientific and technical development of the modern world depended upon the knowledge made available in printed books.

### ARTIST PROFILE

(Leroy) Daniel MacMorris (1893-1981) completed the seven-mural series, *Evolution of the Printed Book*, in 1932.

Aside from being a renowned muralist, MacMorris was also a decorator, designer, craftsman, portrait painter, etcher, sculptor, restorationist and teacher.

Although he had art studios in Paris and Carnegie Hall, his most famous works reside in Kansas City, Mo. They include the *Scenes of Kansas City History* mural at the city's public library, ceiling work at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and murals at the Liberty Memorial, the national monument to World War I.

Housed inside the Liberty Memorial is what MacMorris considered one of his greatest achievements, the restoration of the *Pantheon de la Guerre*, a 402-foot long painting created by 123 French artists during World War I.

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