亚历山大图书馆How far back did the burning of the Library of Alexandria really set处于。。情况 us?

1. Probably not very much at all. This question is based基于 on a number of false premises前提. You see, there are, unfortunately, a tremendous巨大的 number of widespread普遍的 misconceptions错误概念 about what the Library of Alexandria was and what happened to it. First of all, what everyone should know is that the Library of Alexandria was not the only library in the ancient world. In fact事实上, virtually几乎 every city or town in the Hellenistic希腊风格 world had a public library of some kind. The Library of Alexandria was certainly the most prestigious有声望的 of all the ancient libraries, but the Library of Pergamum probably had nearly as many scrolls. The vast大 majority大多数 of the texts文本 that were kept in the Library of Alexandria were probably held hold容纳 in several dozen other libraries across the eastern Mediterranean地中海 as well. 带文字的卷轴 帕加马 地中海

2. The Library of Alexandria was undoubtedly毫无疑问 one of the largest and most prominent著名的 libraries in the ancient world, but, again, it was not the only one. Think how much

information would be lost if the Library of Congress与将来事实相反的虚拟语气：if +were to do were to burn down today and everything in it were to be completely完全 destroyed破坏. Sure, we would lose thousands of rare稀少 and priceless无价的 manuscripts and the cost of the damage would be beyond words, but how much actual information would be lost? Probably very little.

3. The reason why so few manuscripts have survived继续存在 from classical antiquity古代 is not because one library was destroyed, but rather而是 because, in ancient times, they wrote on papyrus纸莎草纸, which is extremely极其 brittle易碎 and fragile破碎 and can only survive for about fifty years under normal conditions before it breaks分解 down into dust尘埃. The only way a manuscript手稿 could possibly be preserved保存 was by copying the whole thing out by hand, which was an unbelievably tedious无聊, time-consuming, and expensive task. In order for a text to be lost forever, you did not need to burn it; you just needed to decide not to copy it and, within在之内 a few decades十年, it would be gone. 帕特农神庙 纸莎草纸

4. This meant that, in order for a text to be preserved from antiquity, roughly every fifty years or so, some rich person had to read it and say, “Huh, you know, I’d really like a copy of this text” and pay someone an exorbitant昂贵的 amount of money to copy it. Copying a single manuscript could take months or even years, depending on the length. This was how manuscripts were copied for over 2,000 years until the invention of the printing press印刷机 in the 1400s. That means that, in order to survive, a manuscript of a text originally最初的 written in the fifth century BC had to be copied at least roughly forty times. We are truly unbelievably fortunate that anything has survived from the classical world at all.

5. The second thing everyone needs to understand about the Library of Alexandria is that, even though people always seem似乎 to talk about how it “burned” or “was destroyed,” it actually suffered遭遇 a very long, gradual逐渐 decline衰落 over the course of在某个时期 many centuries. This decline began in around 145 BC, when Ptolemy VIII Physkon (ruled c. 145–c. 116 BC) ordered命令 the **expulsion**驱逐 of all “foreign” (i.e. Greek) scholars **from** the city of Alexandria. The head librarian图书馆员 at the time, Aristarchos of Samothrake, a world-renowned世界文明 literary scholar学者, fled逃跑 to the island of Rhodes and Ptolemy VIII replaced替代 him with one of his bodyguards, who did not know the first things about running a library. 托勒密

6. From 145 BC onwards从。。往后, the history of the Library of Alexandria is one of inadequate不够 funding and patronage, persistent mismanagement, and general decline. What really killed the Library was probably primarily主要 lack缺乏 of patronage赞助 and funding. The early Ptolemies had taken great pride in以。。自豪 the reputation of Alexandrian scholarship and had done everything they could to incentivize物质刺激 reputable有名望的 scholars to come study in Alexandria. They had been willing to go不遗余力的做 to extraordinary lengths to procure设法获得 the earliest possible manuscripts of texts (because earlier texts had undergone经历了 less copying and were therefore less likely to不太可能 contain包括 errors).

7. The later Ptolemies, and eventually最终的 the Romans, however, did very little to promote促进 the Library and even used the position of head librarian as a political plum李子，（工作）吸引人的—the ideal meaningless没意义 but prestigious有名的 position for political supporters. As a result of this, while scholars continued to teach, conduct=do research, and write important treatises专著, they no longer felt the pressure to do so in Alexandria. Instead, they more often taught and conducted research elsewhere throughout the eastern Mediterranean. 李子，（工作）吸引人的 political plum由于政治背景获得的高薪职务 专著 treatise

8. It is true that, in 48 BC, during the Siege围攻 of Alexandria, Julius Caesar's men did accidentally事故的 burn at least a portion of the Library's collection (probably housed收藏 in a warehouse仓库 near the docks码头, not in the actual Library itself), but the significance of this burning is often overstated夸张 and the Library itself definitely continued to function起作用 afterwards之后.

9. The geographer地理学家 Strabo mentions提及 having visited the Mouseion博学园, the larger research institute which housed容纳 the Library, in around 20 BC, not long at all after Caesar's fire. Also, around the same time, the scholar Didymos Chalkenteros (lived c. 63 BC–c. 10 AD) was making prodigious巨大的 scholarly学术的 output产量 in Alexandria, on a scale规模 that most scholars believe would have been impossible unless除非 he had access to at least some of the Library’s resources.

10. The decline of the Library of Alexandria seems to have been closely linked with the more general decline in prominence声望 of the city of Alexandria itself. Under Roman rule, Alexandria was not nearly几乎 as important nor as culturally prominent突出重要的 as it had been under Ptolemaic rule. By the second century AD, Alexandria, though still a thriving蓬勃发展 city, was only a shadow of the cultural capital it had once been.