He was given the project in 1838.

He presented the design on December 19, 1839.

It took six to seven years to complete the construction.

The exterior of the library is simple in comparison to the interior's expression of detail in the ironwork and masonry, which came from his prior studies of Roman architecture.

Labrouste's limestone structure stands across the Panthéon.

When developing his design, he added the leafy garland band above the windows on the first level exterior nearly identical to the band on the Panthéon as a gesture of respect to its neighbor monument.

The lower floor is occupied by stacks to the left, rare-book storage and office space to the right, with a central vestibule and stairway leading to the reading room which fills the entire upper story.

The library contains around 2 million documents.