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aged by the commercial and critical fortunes of *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (2010), its General Editors were nonetheless cheered by the fact that its continued prevalence prevented many from purchasing that two-volume work of 1.1 million words. Seeking a way to disseminate the years' worth of that compendium of book-historical and bibliographical scholarship, we have now edited *The Book: A Global History*, updating chapters from Part I of the *Companion* and adding new essays as well. It is our hope that the publication of this volume will make a valuable collection of bibliographical and book-historical scholarship—ambitious in its scope and innovative in its reach—accessible to a broad audience of general readers and advanced specialists alike. Throughout the planning and production of this volume, and to the world of the book across myriad times and cultures, it has been our constant ambition to bring to life book-historical studies for students and scholars, librarians and collectors, antiquarian book-sellers, and enthusiastic amateurs.

Building on *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, this volume seeks to delineate the history of the production, dissemination, and reception of texts from the earliest papyrus of the mid-4th millennium to recent developments in electronic books. Considering many aspects of the book—a convenient term for any recorded text—the *Global History* traverses the Inca and the Aztec empires, the European medical book and the early printing revolution, and the nationalization of the publishing industry and book trade after 1949 in Communist China. We have sought not only temporal comprehensiveness, but broad geographical range as well. In addition to book-historical studies of western Europe, in nations and the United States, readers will, for instance, find essays on the history of the book in Byzantium; in the Caribbean islands and Bermuda; in the Czech Republic and Slovakia; in the Baltic States and in the Balkans; in Africa, the antipodes, South America, and the islands of Southeast Asia.

We hope that the gathering of diverse perspectives from many nations in this history will lead readers to forge creative and serendipitous connections more powerful than the boundaries that have traditionally kept them separate. Proximity may generate productive associations; topographical contiguity might in some felicitous instances help to transcend debates in geography or even the demarcations of intellectual disciplines. Our hope, then, is not merely to supply information, but to promote new knowledge.

This volume also features topical essays on a wide array of subjects, including ownership, the book in the ancient world, manuscript printing, intellectual property, children's books, printed ephemera, Jewish books and manuscripts, the origin and development of writing systems, the book as symbolic object, and