The Bibliothèque Sainte Genevieve is located along the north side of the place du Panthéon. It was founded in 1642 as the monastic library of the Genovefains. The library was built as an addition and extension of the former but was built as a separate entity to claim its identity as a library.

Henri Labrouste's interests in this building came through in both his intent and manner of use of new technology and historical references.
The library was designed with a basic separation of program in a large two storied structure. On the first floor to the left are the book stacks and to the right are the rare books and offices. The entrance cuts through the center and ascends a stairway leading to the main reading room; a large and vastly open space that exhibits Labrouste's integration of modern materials and traditional structures. During this period there was a regeneration of social values and education to the masses. Along with being built as a separate entity, Labrouste wanted to proclaim the library's service to the people. He did this by using walls much like the pages of a book, inscribing them with the names of authors of books that would be put into the library.
At the turn of the century the use and development of structural technology was at a boom. However, their exposure was only used in buildings such as train stations. One of Labrouste's successes in the Bibliothèque Sainte Genevieve was his incorporation of modern technology throughout the building. Although sufficient technology existed to span the distance of the nave-like structure, Labrouste decided to use exposed cast iron trusses to span the distance. Through the center are the thin and elegant iron columns that hold roof and are grounded to masonry block bases. A clarity of intention and pursuit gives the project its strength.
The lighting of the library plays a dramatic role in the unfolding sequence from the street and finally into the reading space. The entrance is dark with oil lamps and the light falling down the stairwell being the source of light. The stairwell is well lit with natural lighting from high windows on opposite sides. Then the grand finale within the reading room where it is lined with high windows and light pouring in. Labrouste had originally wanted a garden space in front of the library to serve as a transitional space from the outer urban setting. Since the site would not allow for it he created a garden-like setting with painting and inscriptions on the walls of flowers and foliage above the book stacks. He made the analogy the book stack being like “walls from the fertile soil of the imagination.”
ROCK
The grounding and rooting element with its masonry structure.

PAPER
The wrapping element that conceals and protects the inside.

SCISSORS
The slicing element that circulates through and around the building.
Program

- reading room
- stacks
- rare books and offices

Repetition and Division

- horizontal division
- transverse repetition
- facade repetition

Inscription

Education to the Masses