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## Fires of ignorance

This week marked 75 years since the Nazi book burnings of May 1933, covered in *Book Burnings* (Palgrave, July) by an Australian academic and rare book dealer, Matthew Fishburn (pictured). He is interviewed on [AbeBooks.com](#), where he explains the burnings as a Nazi propaganda stunt started by students and carried on by citizens.

"They have become a cultural benchmark, a popular analogy, a common insult (to burn a book is to be fascist), and even now, anyone caught burning books must expect comparisons with the regime," he says. "But are they the worst in history? I am not keen to make a league table of burnings. In terms of strict censorship, the efforts in the Soviet Union, beginning in the 1920s, would certainly make the most obvious comparison. In my experience, the most well-known book fires are: the burning/burnings of the Library at Alexandria; the burning of the Library of Congress by the British; the loss of Louvain Library in the German advance of 1914; the attacks on Salman Rushdie; and the recent artillery bombardment of the library in Sarajevo."

Posted by Susan Wyndham  
May 16, 2008 11:53 PM

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