Book Metaphors in the High Holidays and Throughout Jewish history by DBL

Jews are known in the Koran as “people of the book” but in reality Jews are people of the oral law and (plural) book(S).

(1) The liturgy of the High Holidays, notes that one’s fate for the year “is `written’ on Rosh Hashanah, sealed on Yom Kippur, and this book of “din and heshbon” (accounts) is delivered to Hashem’s “archive” on Hoshana Rabbah, by angels (see angels at: http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=131604  ) At: http://libguides.tourolib.org/parsha The TC. Please enjoy a library guide on parashat ha-shavua and Hagim, at: http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=114143&p=742989 where one will find power point on the binding of Isaac, (the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah), and Sefer Yonah (Chanted in Minchah on Yom Kippur. There one will also find a link to a book review of time in the Jewish calendar as a process at: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10382

(2) On Purim children sometimes dress up as a sefer Torah, suggesting that all of us contain multitudes, need to internalize torah, yearn to be interpreted as “texts”, and that each of us writes the “book of our lives” turning chapters from one pager of life to the next. In the power point on Ezra and Nehemiah at: ( http://libguides.tourolib.org/ezranehemia we note how Ezra the scribe had the Torah read publicly inaugurating in the Jewish calendar the Torah was read on Mondays, Thursdays, the Sabbath, and Hagim.

(3) A power point on the history of Jewish education at: http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=114186&p=743007 illustrates how during times of crisis, when oral traditions risk being forgotten, oral traditions are written down so they not be forgotten as Rabbi Yehudah HaNasis did in 210 CE with the Mishnah, Rashi and the Tosofists did during the Crusades, and Rambam (1134-1205) did in the Moreh Nevukhim (see: http://libguides.tourolib.org/rambam ). Thus many Jewish books of oral law were written down lest those teachings be forgotten although the act of writing down oral law is forbidden. Thus the rabbis during crises decided to break the law in order to save the law.

(4) Rabbi Yehudah HaLevy ( 1075 – 1141), writes, “let your pen be your harp and your library books a garden and orchard of stored up cherished wisdom.” See: http://libguides.tourolib.org/halevi

(5) Rabbi Yehudah ibn Tibbon (Provence, Fr. 1120-1190) writes, "Make thy books thy companions; let thy cases and shelves by thy pleasure-grounds and gardens. If thy soul be satiate and weary, change from garden to garden... Then will thy desire renew itself, and thy soul be filled with delight." Rabbi Yehudah ibn Tibbon was a translator of Rambam’s Moreh Nevukhim in which Rambam comments that “this book, the Guide,” is like a “key” that will allow one to unlock and enter the chambers of heavenly palaces (Hechalot) where the soul will be refreshed by fountains of wisdom from angelic discourses. In Hilchot Teshuvah of the Mishnah Torah the Rambam clarifies, there one will find delight in basking in the ziv Shekhinah, where the crowns on the heads of the righteous will be directly proportional to the wisdom-understanding- and knowledge gained in this life (from books) which can like the Guide, bring one closer to Hashem.

(6) While Koheleth in Ecclesiastes notes, “to the making of many books there is no end”, Rabbi Shimon Zemach Duran known as the Tashbaz (1361-1444) who wrote a work called Zohar ha Rakiah,
which is a part of the TARYAG tradition (see: http://libguides.tourolib.org/10comm) writes, in allusion to Daniel 12:3 that some will shine like the “brightness of the firmament” (Zohar harakiah), “when a wise man lies down with his fathers, he leaves behind him a treasured and organized blessing: books that enlighten like the brilliance of the firmament and that extend peace like a river (Isa. 66:12).

Jews have been cherishing this wisdom found in books in archives and libraries from antiquity until today, an overview of the history of such archives and libraries can be found at: https://sites.google.com/site/mtevansco/elazar-classification