



Library of Congress Washington, D.C.

Introduction and Instructions

Did you know that the Library of Congress is the largest library in the world and the oldest federal cultural institution in the United States? What other fascinating facts can you uncover about our national library? In addition to any prior knowledge you may have, use your research skills and the resources provided here to answer the questions below.



The Library of Congress has an interesting history. Learn more about it by reading this article!
READ: <https://www.loc.gov/about/history-of-the-library/>

1. How did the Library of Congress begin?

Answer: John Adams approved an act of Congress that provided \$5,000 for books for the use of Congress.

2. What happened in 1814, and how did Thomas Jefferson save the day?

Answer: In 1814, during the War of 1812, the British burned Washington, destroying the Capitol and the small library. Jefferson offered to sell his comprehensive personal collection to reestablish the library.

3. The Library of Congress was not what it is today. Ainsworth Rand Spofford (Librarian of Congress, 1864-1897) persuaded Congress to view its library as a national institution, and thus, the national library was born. What were two things Spofford advocated for to accomplish his vision?

Answer : He wanted it to house a single, comprehensive collection of American publications for use by both Congress and the American people and to have the U.S. copyright registration and deposit at the Library of Congress.

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Watch this video that showcases the impressive architecture of the Library of Congress.
WATCH: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GPMh1QhLDU

4. Summarize the architectural features of the Library of Congress.

Answers will vary. Possible answers include:

Italian Renaissance style. Materials such as marble, granite, bronze, gold, and mahogany. It faces the Capitol building. It has a fountain featuring a statue of Neptune, bronze doors, Corinthian columns, a portico statue, copper dome, mosaics, and many quotes carved in stone.



Two additional buildings have been added to the Library of Congress – the James Madison Memorial Building and the John Adams Building. Use this link to access the maps and floor plans of these buildings.

EXPLORE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GPMh1QhLDU

5. Click on the floors and summarize what is housed in these two buildings.

Answers will vary. Possible answers include:

James Madison Memorial Building – Surplus books, maps, manuscripts, newspapers/periodicals, recordings, performing arts, Veteran History Project, LaFollette Reading Room, Law Library Reading Room, prints, photography and Motion Picture Reading Rooms, copyright offices.

John Adams Building – Duplication Services, training Room, Computer Catalog Center, Science and Business Reference Centers, Federal Research Division.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? *This is your chance to share your opinions, make connections, and apply what you've learned!*

1. Why do you think the Library of Congress is important for our nation? Give at least two arguments based on factual information about the Library of Congress.

Answers will vary.

2. We are living in a digital world where many of the items in the Library of Congress now exist digitally. Do you think that it is necessary for the hard copies of books and media to still exist? Explain your reasoning.

Answers will vary.



There are many inscriptions, carvings, and statues inside the Thomas Jefferson Building. Click on this link to read about the works of art and sculptures that exist in those areas of the Thomas Jefferson Building.

EXPLORE: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/walls/jeff1.html>

3. Describe two of the murals or sculptures in the Thomas Jefferson Building and interpret their importance and possible reason for being placed in the Library of Congress.

Answers will vary.