

LIBRARY



ARY

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS





LIBRARY TODAY

The Library of Congress is the world's largest library. With more than 173 million items, the collections, in some 470 languages, include more than 51 million books and other print materials, 4.2 million recordings, 17.5 million photographs, 5.6 million maps, 8.2 million pieces of sheet music and 75 million manuscripts.

These vast collections allow the Library to support research in the Main Reading Room and other specialty reading rooms; archive millions of priceless objects; give a stage to performances and concerts; create exhibitions that explore historic and cultural themes; produce publications and teaching materials; and be a global leader in preservation and information management.

The Library is also home of the U.S. Copyright Office whose mission is to promote and protect creativity; the National Library Service for the Blind

and Print Disabled which circulates braille and audio materials nationwide; the Congressional Research Service, which does original research for members of Congress; and the Law Library of Congress, with its international legal collections. The Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation holds a comprehensive collection of motion pictures, broadcasting and recorded sound.

For more information and to explore the Library's incredible collections, visit our website: [loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov)

LIBRARY IN BRIEF

The Library of Congress was established in 1800, when President John Adams signed a bill transferring the seat of the U.S. government to Washington. The legislation described a library of “such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress.” The initial collection of 740 books and 3 maps was housed in the new Capitol Building until 1814, when invading British troops burned the building, destroying the library.

President Thomas Jefferson, then retired and living at Monticello, offered his personal library as a replacement. In 1815, Congress appropriated \$23,950 to

purchase Jefferson’s collection of 6,487 books, thereby laying the foundation for a great national library. The Jeffersonian belief that all subjects are important to the American legislature inspires the comprehensive collecting policies of today’s Library of Congress.

Facing a shortage of space and concerned about protecting the collection after two disastrous fires, Congress approved the construction of a separate Library building.

Opened on November 1, 1897, the new “Congressional Library” was hailed as a glorious national monument. Learn more about Thomas Jefferson’s Library on the 2nd Floor, or by visiting the exhibition page:



THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING

When it opened to the public in 1897, the Thomas Jefferson Building was an unparalleled national achievement.

The U.S. Congress selected the architectural team of John L. Smithmeyer and Paul J. Pelz to realize their Italian Renaissance design. The elaborately decorated façade and classical interior represented the young nation's growing cultural nationalism and its optimism for the future. In 1888, Congress charged Brigadier General Thomas Lincoln Casey and Superintendent Bernard R. Green with the construction of the building. In 1892, General Casey's son,

Edward Pearce Casey, supervised the final decoration of the building. Embellished with works by more than forty American painters and sculptors, the building connected the United States to classical themes. Yet in design and structure, it demonstrated contemporary American culture and technological ingenuity. Constructed at a time of scientific discovery, it was the first public building in Washington, D.C., to be built with electricity installed.

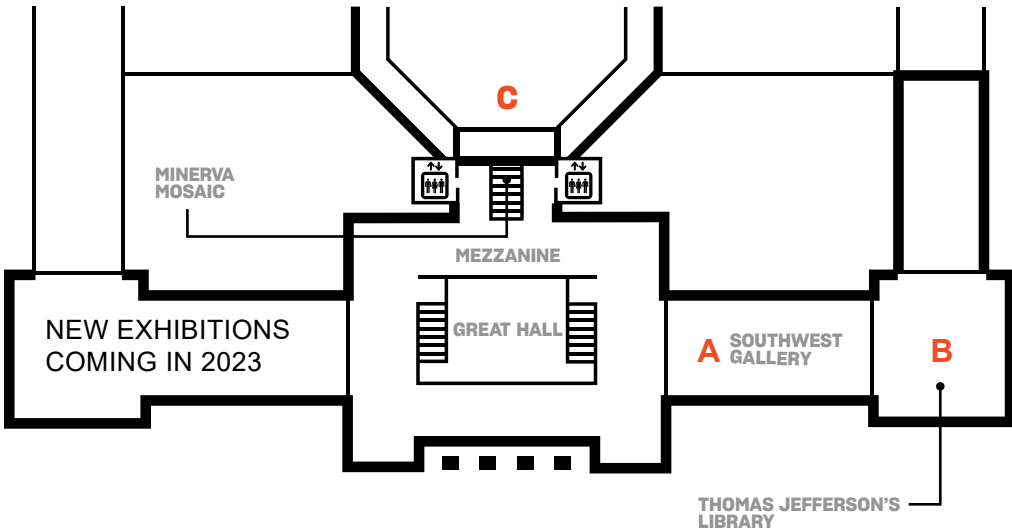
LIMITED TIME?

Make sure to visit the highlights of our collections:

- B** THOMAS JEFFERSON'S LIBRARY
- C** MAIN READING ROOM OVERLOOK
- D** GREAT HALL
- E** THE GUTENBERG BIBLE

2

- A** NOT AN OSTRICH: & OTHER IMAGES FROM AMERICA'S LIBRARY
- B** THOMAS JEFFERSON'S LIBRARY
- C** MAIN READING ROOM OVERLOOK



SECOND FLOOR (2)

MEZZANINE

At the corners of the mezzanine, The Virtues are painted on Pompeiian red panels. Fifty-six circular printers' marks adorn the triangular ceiling vaults. The ceiling paintings of the north mezzanine represent The Five Senses; the wall paintings depict Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding, and Philosophy.

Through the windows is a beautiful view of the U.S. Capitol. The eight paintings in the arches above show The Sciences. The center medallions depict the arts: Sculpture, Architecture, and Painting.

The south mezzanine ceiling paintings show The Three Graces. At either end is a rectangular panel portraying baseball and football. The circular wall paintings illustrate The Four Seasons.



Reading Room. From the base of the stairs, study Elihu Vedder's glass and gold-leaf mosaic of Minerva as she stands ready to defend a civilized society. A statue of Victory is to her left; at her right knee is an owl—the symbol of wisdom. Minerva holds a scroll that lists various fields of study. The scroll remains partially unfurled to represent the ongoing quest for knowledge and understanding.

MINERVA MOSAIC

On the east side of the second floor, a staircase leads to a special gallery where visitors may view the Main



MAIN READING ROOM (C)

Floating 125 feet above the reading room floor is a mural by Edwin Blashfield. Twelve painted figures represent countries, cultures, and eras that contributed to the development of Western civilization as understood in 1897. The semi-circular stained-glass windows show the seals of forty-five states and three territories. (Alaska and Hawaii were not yet part of the nation.)

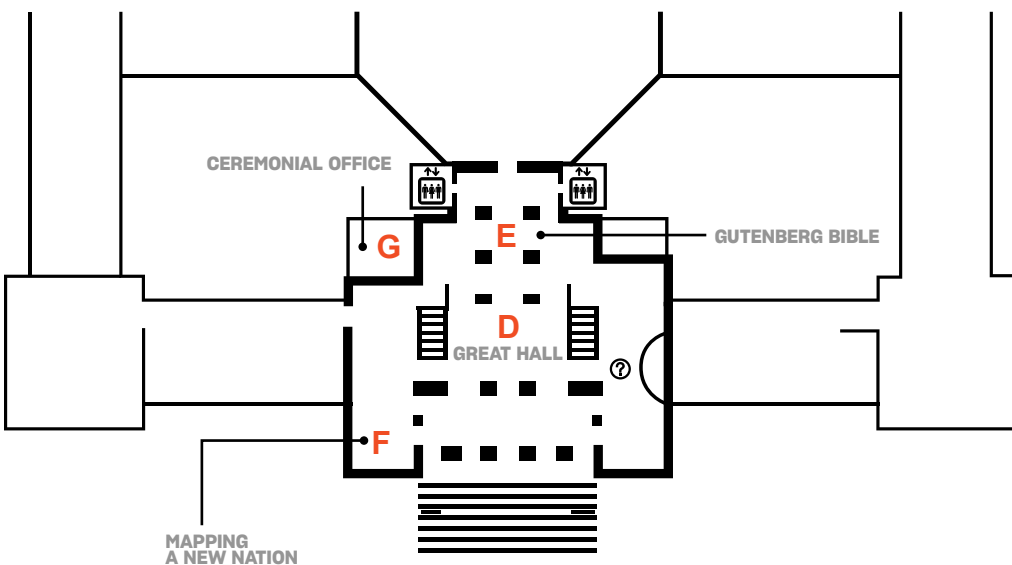
Giant marble columns support eight figures that represent characteristics of civilized societies. Bronze statues on the balustrades portray men who

devoted their lives to the subject represented by the statue above them.

Beginning on the right are Moses and St. Paul (Religion); Robert Fulton and Columbus (Commerce); Edward Gibbon and Herodotus (History); Beethoven and Michelangelo (Art); Francis Bacon and Plato (Philosophy); Homer and Shakespeare (Poetry); James Kent and Solon (Law); and Joseph Henry and Isaac Newton (Science). The circle of knowledge is continued below by the 236 desks where researchers use the Library's collections.

1

- D** GREAT HALL
- E** THE GUTENBERG BIBLE
- F** MAPPING A NEW NATION
- G** THE LIBRARIAN'S CEREMONIAL OFFICE



FIRST FLOOR (1)

GREAT HALL

The Great Hall is the grand centerpiece of this Italian Renaissance-style building, which is heavily ornamented in a Beaux Arts tradition. The ceiling, seventy-five feet above the marble floor, is decorated with stained-glass skylights surrounded by aluminum-leaf decorations. The triangular vaults contain names of the world's leading writers and thinkers. A large brass inlay of a compass rose is in the marble floor, surrounded by the twelve zodiac signs.

Marble staircases flank the Great Hall. The sculptures of small children in the railings represent various occupations, illustrated by their tools. Look on the north side for a gardener; an entomologist; and an electrician. Halfway up the staircases, figures touching globes represent Africa, America, Europe, and Asia.

To the east is a Commemorative Arch with two figures. *The Students*, a

young man and an old one, represent the importance of life-long learning.

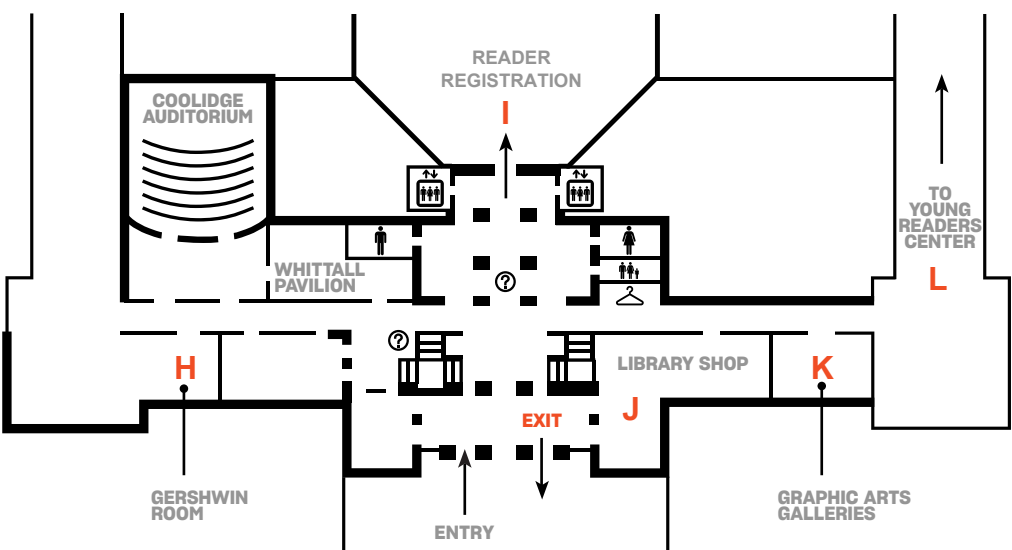
THE GUTENBERG BIBLE

Pass through the Commemorative Arch to see one of the Library's greatest treasures. Produced in Mainz, Germany, in the mid-1450s, the Gutenberg Bible is the first book printed using movable metal type in Western Europe. The half-moon wall paintings represent the *Evolution of the Book*. At the North end is the entrance to the Librarian's Ceremonial Office.

Continue to the alcoves near the elevators to find five paintings by Elihu Vedder depicting *Government*; the ideal form is central with the effects of good and bad government on either side. On the left is *Corrupt Legislation* and *Anarchy*; on the right, *Good Administration*, and *Peace and Prosperity*.

G

- H** GERSHWIN ROOM
- I** READER REGISTRATION
- J** LIBRARY SHOP
- K** GRAPHIC ARTS GALLERIES
- L** YOUNG READERS CENTER & PROGRAMS LAB





THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING AND EXHIBITIONS

Open every Tuesday through Saturday
10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Last entry at 4:30 PM
Closed Sundays and Mondays
loc.gov/visit

Stay
Connected:

