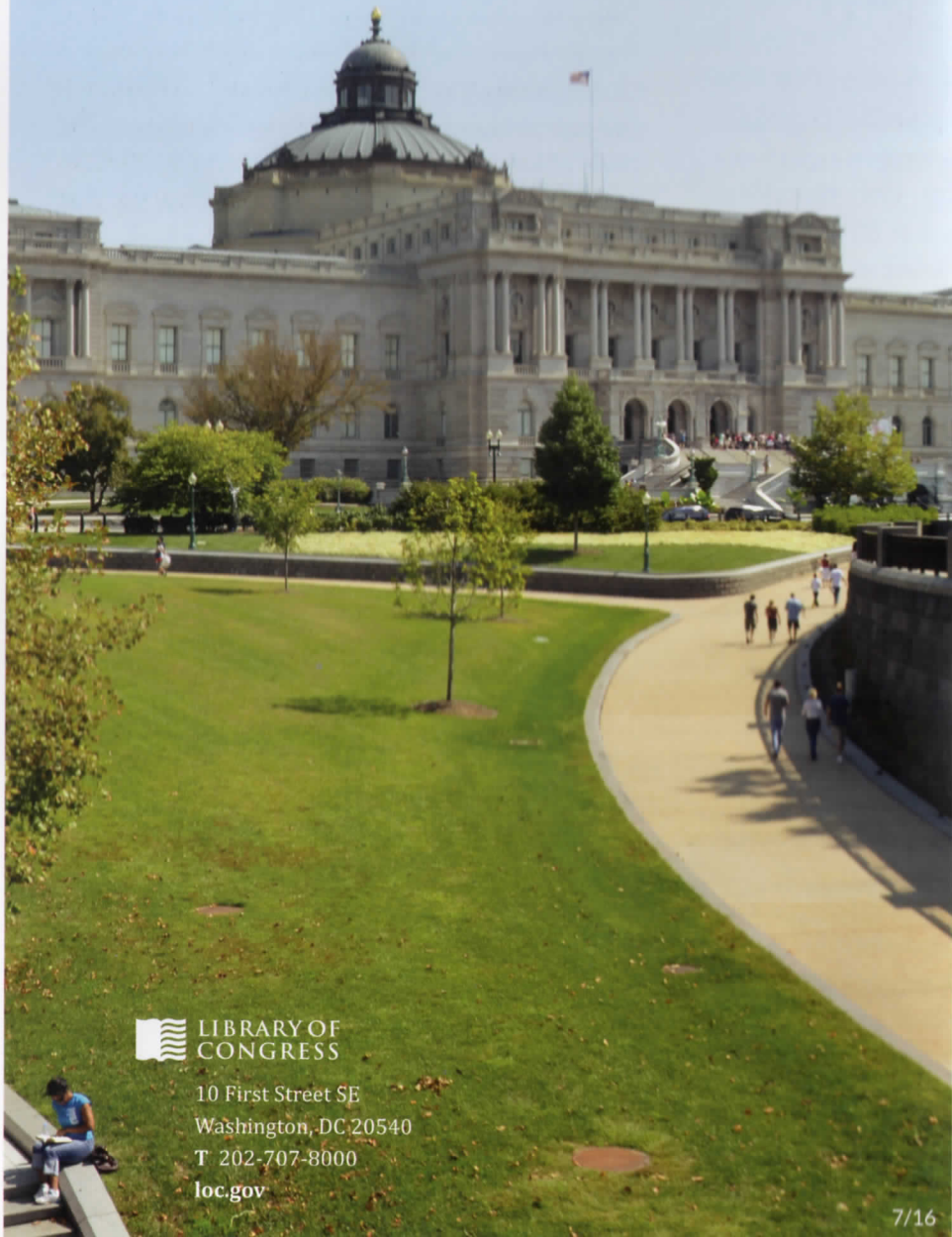


Thomas Jefferson Building and Exhibitions  
Monday through Saturday  
8:30 am to 4:30 pm  
Closed New Year's, Thanksgiving and Christmas



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ENGLISH

# THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING

Torch of Learning atop the Thomas Jefferson Building







## The Library of Congress Today

The Library of Congress is the world's largest repository of knowledge and creativity, with a growing collection of more than 162 million items, including books, print materials, sound recordings, photographs, maps, sheet music, motion pictures, and manuscripts in more than 470 languages.

Although books are the heart of the Library, from the volumes of American statesman Thomas Jefferson to the most current material that reflects contemporary culture, the Library offers much more. The Library supports research in the Main Reading Room and nineteen specialty reading rooms; archives millions of priceless objects, including the papers of key figures from around the world; gives a stage to performances and concerts; creates exhibitions that explore historic and cultural themes; produces publications and teaching materials; and is a global leader in the science of preservation and information management.

The Library is the home of the U.S. Copyright Office whose mission is to promote creativity by administering and sustaining an effective national copyright system; the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, 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 vast international legal collections. The Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation holds the most comprehensive collection of motion pictures, broadcasting and recorded sound collections. The Library's website provides access to collections as well as Library programs. [loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov)



## A Brief History

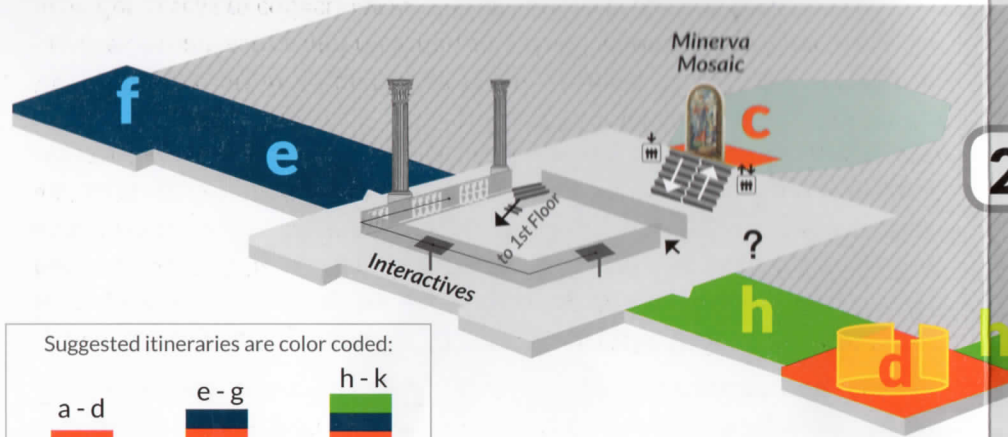
The Library of Congress was established in 1800, when President John Adams signed a bill transferring the seat of the U.S. government to Washington. The legislation described a library of "such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress." The initial collection of 740 books and 3 maps was housed in the new Capitol Building until August 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 January 1815, Congress appropriated \$23,950 to purchase Jefferson's collection of 6,487 books, and thereby laid the foundation for a great national library. The Jeffersonian belief that all subjects are important to the American legislature is the philosophy that inspires the comprehensive collecting policies of today's Library of Congress. The Thomas Jefferson Library exhibition is on view on the second floor (d).

Facing a shortage of space in the Capitol and concerned about the safety of the collection after two disastrous fires, Congress approved the construction of a separate building for its Library.

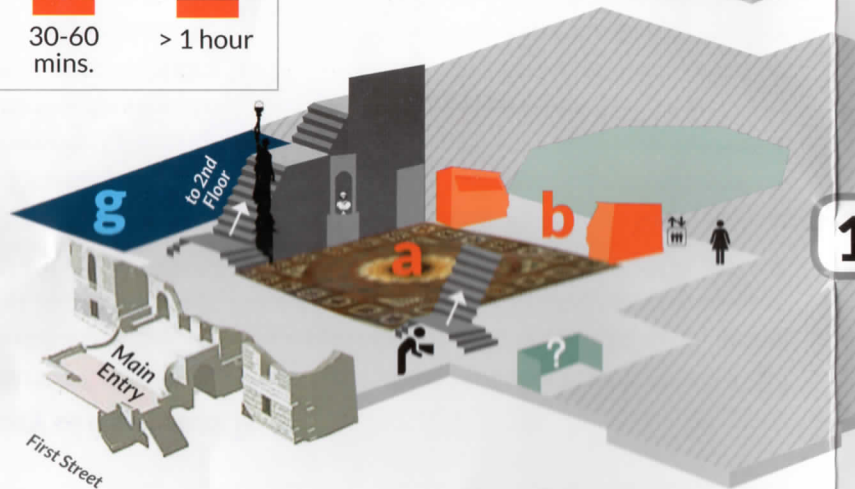
Opened on November 1, 1897, the new "Congressional Library" was hailed as a glorious national monument. In 1980, the building was named for Thomas Jefferson in honor of his role in the Library's history. Between 1984 and 1997, the building was restored to its original nineteenth-century splendor.





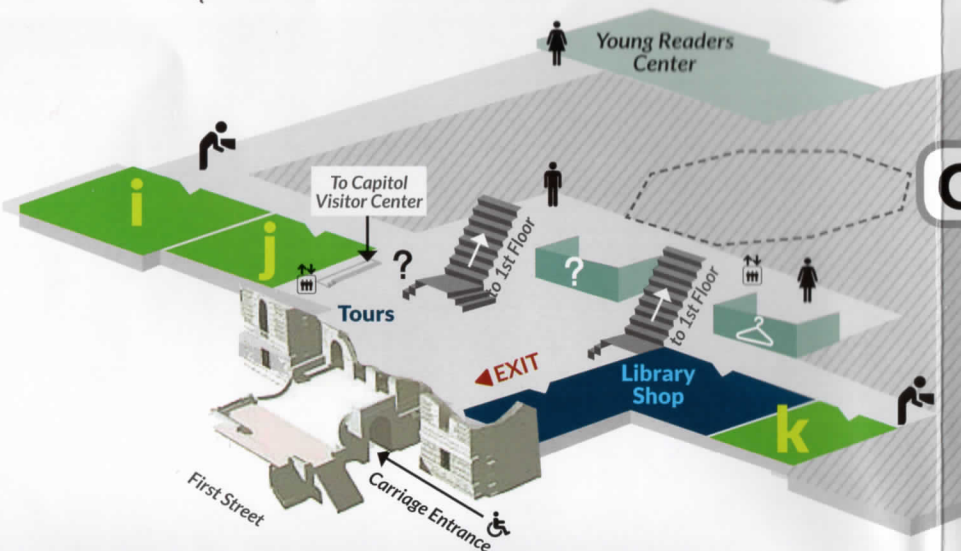
Suggested itineraries are color coded:

a - d	e - g	h - k
15 to 30 mins.	30-60 mins.	> 1 hour



- c** Main Reading Room Overlook
- d** Thomas Jefferson's Library
- e** Exploring the Early Americas Exhibition
- f** Waldseemüller Map Exhibition
- h** Temporary Exhibitions

- a** Great Hall
- b** Bible Gallery: Gutenberg Bible and Giant Bible of Mainz
- g** Mapping a New Nation Exhibition



- i** Bob Hope Gallery
- j** Gershwin Room
- k** Graphic Arts Galleries
- Library Shop
- EXIT

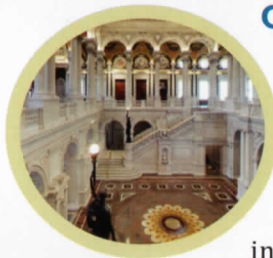


## Thomas Jefferson Building

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, became the lead architect and supervised the final construction and decoration of the building. Embellished with works by more than forty American painters and sculptors, the building connected the United States to classical themes and traditions. Yet in both 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 constructed with electricity installed.



## FIRST FLOOR 1



### Great Hall (a)

The Great Hall is the grand centerpiece of this Italian Renaissance-style building, which is theatrical and 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.

Two marble staircases flank the Great Hall. The sculptures of small children in the railings represent various occupations and hobbies and hold tools. For example, on the north side are a gardener; an entomologist; and an electrician. Halfway up the staircases are globes with figures representing Africa, America, Europe, and Asia.

To the east is a Commemorative Arch with two figures entitled *The Students*, a young man and an old one, who represent the importance of life-long learning.

### The Gutenberg and Mainz Bibles (b)

Pass through the Commemorative Arch to see two of the Library's greatest treasures: the handwritten (manuscript) Giant Bible of Mainz and the printed Gutenberg Bible. Both volumes were produced in Mainz, Germany, in the mid-1450s. The Gutenberg Bible is the first book printed with movable metal type in Western Europe. The wall paintings represent the *Evolution of the Book*.

Continue to the alcoves near the elevators to find five paintings by Elihu Vedder depicting

*Government*; the ideal form is over the door with the effects of good and bad government on each side. On the left, the paintings show *Corrupt Legislation* and *Anarchy*; on the right are *Good Administration*, and *Peace and Prosperity*.

## SECOND FLOOR 2

### Minerva Mosaic

On the east side of the second floor a staircase leads to a special gallery where visitors experience a view of the Main Reading Room. From the base of the stairs, take a moment to look at Elihu Vedder's glass, gold-leaf, and marble 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 new knowledge and understanding.



### Main Reading Room Overlook (c)

(May be available for walk through only.)

The Main Reading Room's domed ceiling soars 160 feet above the floor. In the circular mural at the apex of the dome, twelve figures, painted by Edwin Blashfield, represent the countries, cultures, and eras that contributed to the development of Western civilization as understood in 1897. The eight semi-circular stained-glass windows are decorated with the seals of forty-five states and three territories. (Alaska and Hawaii were not yet part of the nation in 1897.)

Giant marble columns support eight figures that represent characteristic features of civilized life and

thought. Sixteen bronze statues on the balustrades pay homage to men whose lives were devoted to the subject represented by the plaster 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 vast collections.



### Mezzanine

At the corners of the mezzanine, *The Virtues* are painted on Pompeiian red panels. Also, notice the fifty-six circular printers' marks that adorn the triangular ceiling vaults. In the ceiling of the north mezzanine, paintings represent *The Five Senses*, and the wall paintings show *Knowledge, Wisdom, Understanding, and Philosophy*.

Through the west mezzanine windows is a beautiful view of the U.S. Capitol. The eight paintings in the arches above show *The Sciences*. At either end of the ceiling is a tablet bearing the names of distinguished scientists. The three medallions in the center depict the arts: Sculpture, Architecture, and Painting.

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