

America's Library

By Mary Lynn Bushong

When the Library of Congress started, it was not big. Books were not common. Many people could not read. The library started with law books. It was for members of Congress to research things.



Thomas Jefferson said Congress needed to learn more than just laws. They needed to learn about history, people from other lands, and the world. When the library was burned during the War of 1812, most of the books were lost. Jefferson offered to sell his own much larger library to America.

Over the years, many other books were bought for the library. Many were also given as gifts. Eventually, the Library of Congress grew so big that it needed three buildings to hold the books!

The Library of Congress has changed over the more than 200 years it has been in existence. It started with 740 books and maps. Now the library has about 142 million items. For a long time, the library merely housed its own collection. Now it shares books and other things with other libraries so people around the country can see them. It is no longer just for Congress; it's become America's library.

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Questions

_____ 1. At first, the Library of Congress was for _____.

- A. the president
- B. members of Congress
- C. lawyers
- D. the public

2. Who said Congress needed to know more than just laws?

_____ 3. How old is the Library of Congress?

- A. 200 years
- B. over 200 years
- C. under 100 years
- D. 150 years

_____ 4. How many items are in the Library of Congress now?

- A. about 1 million
- B. about 142 million
- C. about 10 million
- D. about 5 billion

Name _____



Date _____

What makes the Library of Congress important?

Why should we have a library for America?
