

THE LAW LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AT 175: A TIMELINE



In 1941, the main Law Library moved to the north end of the east curtain on the second floor.

1800

The U.S. Congress passes a bill to establish a library for its use.

1801

The Library of Congress opens in the U.S. Capitol Building (May 1801).

1812

President James Madison grants the U.S. Supreme Court the use of the Library of Congress.

1814

The Library's 174 law titles are destroyed in the British attack on the U.S. Capitol.

1815

Former President Thomas Jefferson sells his personal library to Congress, including 475 law titles.

1816

Senator Robert Goodloe Harper calls for a separate law library.

1832

An Act of Congress on July 14 (U.S. 4 Stat. 579) creates the Law Library, located in the U.S. Capitol.

1833

Charles Henry Wharton Meehan is appointed the first Law Librarian.

1839

The first separate catalog for law books is printed.

1848

After the war with Mexico, the U.S. Congress instructs the Law Library to obtain all available Mexican constitutions.

1851

A second fire in the Capitol occurs and many Library books are destroyed, but the law collections go unscathed, including Jefferson's law books.

1860

Law Library moves to the Old Supreme Court Chamber in the U.S. Capitol.

1897

The Thomas Jefferson Building opens to house the Congressional Library. The Law Library remains in the Capitol Building.

1907

On the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the Law Library mounts an exhibition with the American Association of Law Libraries.

1917

The Law Library assumes responsibility for foreign and comparative legal research, while American law and public policy research become the purview of the Legislative Reference Service, later known as the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Main site of the law collection is established in the Thomas Jefferson Building's Northeast Pavilion, while Law Library remains in the Capitol.

1924

John T. Vance, scholar and diplomat, becomes 13th Law Librarian. Vance helps to establish the Law Library's reputation as a foreign law research center.

1932

On the occasion of the Law Library's centennial, the American Bar Association establishes a Committee on the Facilities of the Law Library of Congress to increase support from Congress and the bar.

1932

George Wickersham founds the Friends of the Law Library.

1935

The Law Library's administrative ties with the Supreme Court end.

1940s

The first Foreign Law Division is established.

1950s

Hispanic Index begins in response to congressional research interests spurred by the Cold War.

The Law Library moves from the Old Supreme Court Chamber to another location in the Capitol.

1973

Law Librarian Carleton W. Kenyon establishes a publication series to make research originally done for Congress available to the public.

1981

The Law Library moves into the James Madison Building.

1989

The World Law Bulletin is launched to provide Congress with a monthly overview of developments in foreign and international law.

1990

The Law Library participates in the congressionally mandated Parliamentary Development Project ("Frost Taskforce") to assist developing nations in Eastern and Central Europe establish their own legislative information service.

1991

The Global Legal Information Network (GLIN) is established.

1993

The Law Library begins providing foreign legal research to the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice.



The 21st and current Law Librarian of Congress, Dr. Rubens Medina.

1994

Rubens Medina is appointed the 21st Law Librarian of Congress.

1995

The Global Legal Information Network (GLIN) database, designed to share the laws of member nations in the vernacular, goes online.



GLIN directors, representing twenty member countries, met at the Library in 2006 for their annual meeting

1996

GLIN debuts on the Library of Congress's Web site. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Law Library of Congress and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) provides satellite technology assistance to GLIN partner countries.

1998

The Law Library's pioneer digitization effort, "A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1873" is released to the public.

2000

As part of the Library of Congress's bicentennial, the Law Library coordinates a symposium titled "Democracy and the Rule of Law in a Changing World Order."

2001

The September 11 terrorist attacks necessitate the preparation of a multinational study of the foreign legal response to terrorism.



The first Holmes debate.

2003

The Law Library hosts the first in a series of Holmes Debates. Hosted by former Secretary of Defense William Cohen, the subject is "The Bounds of Post 9/11 Freedoms."

2005

The Law Library continues to expand its online resources by acquiring the entire online file of the laws of Kenya.

2006

The Global Legal Monitor, an online monthly publication, debuts with foreign and international law articles.

2007

The Law Library of Congress marks its 175th anniversary with a yearlong series of events. A significant milestone is reached when the collection grows to 2.6 million items.