

The Library of Congress

The first Library of Congress began in 1800 when the government set aside a small amount of money to buy reference books, which were housed in the Capitol Building. This was considered a necessity because whereas Congress had previously convened in New York and Philadelphia, where libraries were available to them, there were no libraries in Washington D.C. when it became the nation's capital. What books that were accumulated in the first twelve years of the library's existence were destroyed when the British almost completely burned down the Capitol Building in the war of 1812. To begin rebuilding the library Congress bought Thomas Jefferson's personal library, which consisted of 6,487 books.

Since then the Library of Congress has continued to grow. In 1897 the Library of Congress was moved into the newly completed Thomas Jefferson Building. The John Adams building, known for years only as "the Annex" became the second Library of Congress building in 1939. The James Madison Building became the third library building in 1980.

1. Why did Congress start the Library of Congress in D.C.?
2. What happened to the first collection of books?
3. How did Congress begin to rebuild the library?
4. How many buildings make up the Library of Congress today?