



Jefferson:

The Man, the Ideas, and the Legacy, reflected in the Library of Congress.

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“Jefferson, the Man and His Ideas,” is a Library of Congress specialty tour focusing on Jefferson’s love of learning and belief in education. His argument for public education:

“The tax which will be paid for the purpose of education is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance”

At one time researchers entered the Main Reading Room directly from the Great Hall. Today, guests can peek through the floor-level doors. They may notice the “Good Government” in the lunette, the half-circle above the door. Seated in the center, she holds a book reading, “Government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

Docent Jan Mc Kelvey pointed out the lunettes on the right represent the harmonious, prosperous society produced by justice. Good Administration, for example, holds a balanced scale. On her right, an educated youth carrying a book drops a paper ballot into the voting urn. (In latinated languages, the “ballot box” is called an urn even today.) On the right, a maiden pours the fruits of agriculture into an urn.

Students seeing the paintings on the left may be reminded of the bleak, famine-struck world of *The Lion King* after evil Scar assassinated Simba’s father, the rightful King Mufasa. “Corrupt Legislation”, in bedroom slippers and with her gown sliding down to expose her left breast, has a



sluttish rather than classical appearance. On the left, her “client”, a rich industrialist is putting his money on the scale. He has his account book open; the floor is covered with cash bags, a strongbox, and an urn spilling out purchased votes. The belching smokestacks behind him represented prosperity in the nineteenth century, in contrast to the idle smokestacks behind the



barefoot beggar on our left. The goddess appears to be recognize the girl's plight, even giving her a sympathetic look as she stretches out a hand -- empty. The book, rather than being a font of knowledge, has become just a ledger.

For Gutenberg, the affordable Bible was more

than a book to sell. One of his goals was to make books as beautiful as the monks'. His columns, for example, line up perfectly justified on the left and the right. Today, computers can use "kerning", the spacing between letters, to make straight columns. In Gutenberg's day, the typesetter used a combination of hyphens and standard abbreviations to make the columns straight.

No technology is always error-free, so when a perfect Gutenberg Bible, one of the three extant, passed through Washington, Representative Ross Collins of Mississippi said we can't let it go. It's owner, Dr Volbehr, had brought a collection of 15th -Century books which included the Bible. He offered to donate half the collection if the Library would pay \$1.5 million for the other half. Congress agreed in the 1930s.

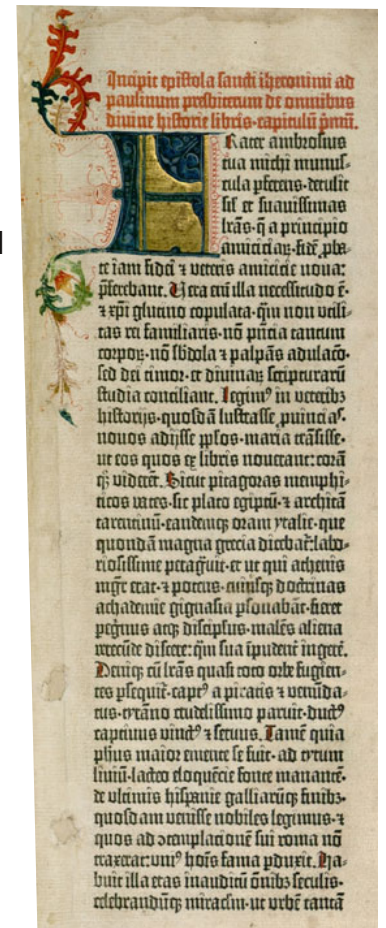
The Gutenberg Bible actually has two volumes, which rotate every few months. Their pages, perfectly justified, are turned about every ten days. Extra police attend these turnings, which -- sorry if one hopes to see them --happen when the library is closed.

Guides who are asking "When will the Mainz Bible return . . ." will be disappointed again: the Giant Bible is "in conservation heaven", and there is no plan to bring it back in the near future.

McKelvey points out that Gutenberg's press helped make American democracy possible. The Declaration of Independence we see at the Archives is the formal copy. The Dunlop broadsides printed on July 4th in Philadelphia are what George III, newspaper editors throughout the colonies, and our future French allies actually read.

Jefferson was the only one of its authors who was not born in a costal urban area. Shadwell Virginia, is remote even today. Perhaps this is why he gave so much thought to the "Western Reserve", the territory between the Appalachian mountains and Mississippi river. The Treaty of Paris granted this territory to the new United States. Or to the individual states? Or to . . .whom?

What became of this territory is one of the most unique stories in human history.



To the left of the Great Hall is the Buell map: one of the Library's rarest. It is the first map officially recognizing the United States of America, with the flag and a liberty cap. Abel Buell was a talented entrepreneur and engraver. He was also quite loyal to his native state of Connecticut.

At that time, its governor was feuding with New York over boundaries. One could notice that New York is the only state without a name. And if one looks westward, Connecticut, temporarily interrupted by Pennsylvania, continues through most of that state all the way to the Mississippi. McKelvey notes that most guests have trouble identifying the states created from the Western Reserve, and points out that the Buell map "is proof that the Articles of Confederation would never work". First, how could states settle their differences without a strong federal government? And then, as the country grew, how would then new areas be organized?

For most of human history, land that was conquered or purchased became colonial territory. Jefferson, who grew up on the frontier, knew that this situation would not stand. The people on the frontier would not be ruled as second-class colonial citizens. So Jefferson drew up a plan to create new states. And these states would be equal to the original states like Virginia, which had purchased the land in the first place. A radical change, since the original 13 states could be outvoted by the states they created. (If you are interested in the plan and processes which expanded the country, Mark Stein's "How the States Got Their Shapes" is a book which spawned a History Channel series.)



This expansion created the “elephant in the room” dilemma: would the new states be slave or free. Jefferson lobbied to keep slavery out of the Western Reserve, and proposed a four-point plan to eliminate slavery:

1. No more tobacco. It required too much labor, as well as exhausting the soil.
2. No more transatlantic slave trade. We know this point would be written into the Constitution.
3. A definite date for the end of slavery: all children born to slaves after a certain date would be free.
4. All former and current slaves would be returned to Africa, since the races could not co-exist.

This last point brings us to the other elephant in the room: Sally Hemmings, one of Jefferson’s three loves.

Jefferson’s only wife, Martha, died young. She did have six children, of which one survived. Afterwards, most know that Jefferson took up with Sally Hemmings, and enslaved woman. Some are surprised on learning that Hemmings reportedly resembled Martha Jefferson, who was her half-sister. Martha’s father, John Wayles, had fathered Sally with his mixed-race Betty Hemmings. Sally was an octoroon, one-eighth African-American, so the resemblance is possible. No print or portrait of Hemmings has been authenticated, so we have only descriptions. She left no diary, no opinions we can cite. But in the late 1990s, DNA testing revealed that Jefferson fathered at least one of her children. In 2003 descendants from both sides met at Monticello, with the African-Americans finally acknowledged and welcomed home.

The third love of Jefferson’s life was Maria Cosway, married to painter Richard. Mc Kelvey asked us not to tell the eighth graders about Jefferson’s love letter to her. It is written as argument between his head and his heart. Since Jefferson is known mostly as a thinker, the letter is his heart’s debut. “By all accounts he was the type of listener who could make you feel you were the only person in the room,” Mc Kelvey reported.

Music was another way Jefferson could share love. Visitors reported that Jefferson and his wife really did make music together, and that Jefferson put down his violin for months after Martha died.

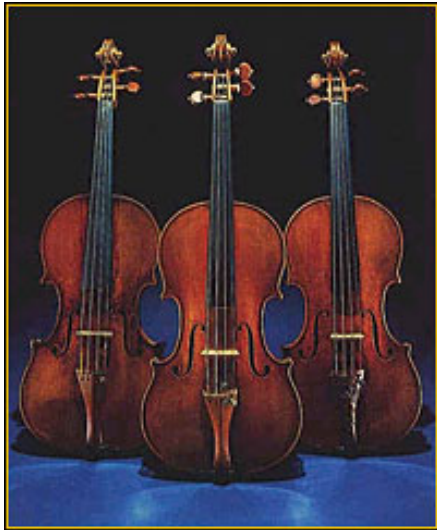
His claims to have practiced the violin an hour a day cannot be verified, but his original library does include music books where he made notes on the fingering. This is one of the precedents for the library collecting even more than the written word.

Jefferson’s personal library was one of the largest in the United States, with 6,487 books. He could have made more money selling them piecemeal, but wanted the collection to stay together. His argument, that Congress would need to make laws on all subjects, finally closed the sale. Ten wagonloads of books arrived.

The Music Books were one surprise within them. After the fire of 1857, Librarian of Congress Ainsworth Spofford successfully lobbied to have the copyright law changed. It mandates that all publications, including musical scores, be sent to the Library. In the early twentieth century, the musical tradition mushroomed with the gifts from two philanthropists: Gertrude Clarke Whittall and Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.

Mrs. Coolidge loved chamber music, and thought the Library should have a venue for it.

Since it was Congress' library, they had to pass enabling legislation to accept her very generous gift. That was done in six months. The auditorium named for her was one of the first wired for radio, fulfilling her wish to disseminate music throughout the country. Chamber music was her passion, so she limited the orchestra pit to 13 musicians. Virtually every notable 20th-century composer was commissioned to write at least one piece for the auditorium, including Aaron Copeland. His Appalachian Spring has 13 parts.

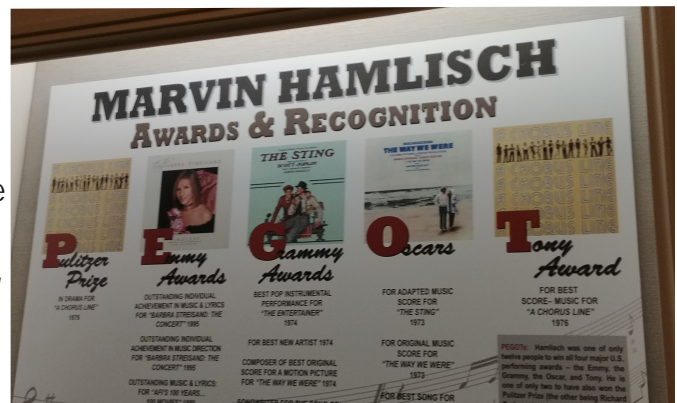


Today's Coolidge Auditorium features a spectrum of genres: modern and classical chamber music, folk, soul, rock, gospel. And, of course, it is the venue to hear library's stringed instrument collection, including the five Stradivari violins, donated by Mrs. Gertrude Clarke Whittall. She was noted in Washington society for her musical soirees, and donated her violins on the condition that they be used in free public concerts. Since then, the Library has acquired additional stringed instruments made by artisans from Cremora, Italy. Violinists describe the difference between the Stradivari and Guarneri instruments as something like the journey from cheesecake to dark chocolate. We have no recorded opinion on the subject from one of the most famous violinists on the subject. Paul McCartney played Yesterday at the Library.

The instruments are displayed in the Whithall Pavilion, which includes original Rodin sculptures, tapestries, and a few samples from the Dayton C. Miller Flute Collection. It includes over 1700 flutes and other wind instruments, from all around the world. The Library also has original manuscripts from Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and others.

Since the Whithall Pavilion does not have everything behind glass, it is closed to the public except for specific open houses. One can request a tour for groups from about ten to twenty people. Arrangements are made by the Music Division.

One exercise guides can do, possibly enroute to the Gershwin Brothers' exhibit, is to ask guests who has seen a real Emmy, or Grammy, or Oscar or Toni Award. Of if anyone has ever heard of a Pegot award. Marvin Hamlisch has won all five, and his estate has lent the actual trophies to the library.



This musical tradition is one of Jefferson's legacies which make the LOC unique among national libraries.

Another is the wide array of languages represented. The many foreign-language books among the ten wagonloads set this precedent. Today, other national libraries collect from

within their borders only. Jefferson's passion for learning languages persists at the LOC. This passion was so strong that Jefferson would buy the same book in English and another language, cut out paragraphs, and paste them one above the other. He created his own Rosetta Stone learning program.

No, he did not cut up first editions. Despite his love of books, he wouldn't buy the "beta" versions –first editions for the less tech-savvy. They might have had printing errors. "Early adopters" paid a premium even in the eighteenth century.

The aluminum "gilding" in the skylight above the Great Hall represents the premium paid for the new high-tech metal, aluminum. Valued about the same as gold, it represented electricity, and the future.

Guild Guide Amy Mierly emphasized the theme of light, representing the spread of knowledge, the Enlightenment, of Jefferson's time. The bare bulbs, now seen mostly as accent lighting in restaurants, were the high-tech miracle in the first federal building lit with electricity. Why would one hide them behind glass?



There is even a high-tech putto (plural putti) on the side of the stairwells. Cute chubby babies usually romped around Italian art, but here in America they were put to work. If one looks to the left, the second baby down from the top of the stairs is holding the earpiece of that new invention, the telephone. Officially called "The Electrician", he is just below and beside "The Astronomer".

Going up the stairs one sees light breaking through the clouds at the Minerva mosaic. The Civil War has just ended, and the sun is dissolving the clouds. The goddess of both wisdom and war has set down her shield, her spear points downward. She contemplates a scroll with all the fields of knowledge listed, somewhat like a GI-Bill student selecting a major. The "Art of War" is the last discipline listed. There is a wise owl in the lower left, and Meirly points out that Victory, now small in peacetime, is a bit sulky.

Continuing up to the Reading Room Observation deck, we may be reminded that the them of universality continues. The marble facing us comes from three continents. At the base is light Tennessee marble, The columns in the center are from Sienna, Italy while the reddish stone on the sides is from Algeria.

The painting around the dome, officially "The Evolution of Civilization" takes us around the world from Egypt to a young Lincoln, representing American practicality, or engineering. After all, the engineer takes knowledge and puts it to use. Of course, we cannot see the cupola unless we are studying below. Human Understanding is lifting the veil of ignorance, surrounded by two cherubs. If one is taking students through,



there are reproductions of both paintings in the Library Tunnel and in the gallery below.

Leaving the Reading Room, we descend to the Hall of the Book. The Declaration of Independence was once on display here. Now, Frank Benson's paintings of the Four Seasons grace the South Wall. Each is in a plaster frame, topped by what Mierley playfully calls "Smurf Caps". After she has her students' attention, she explains the Roman Liberty Cap, which the Statue of Freedom across the street almost wore. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis objected.



Beneath the seasons, one finds inspiring quotes in red lettering on gold leaf. They were selected by the President of Harvard. Perhaps he liked a larger font, so there are no attributions. When questioned, he replied that since they are in a library, one can look up the author. Could he foresee how easy that would become in our digital age?

Accessibility through digital searches is just one of the three objectives of the Library's current digital mission. Digitized books, pictures, recordings, periodicals and other items are increasingly available to download. There is no restriction on who can avail themselves of Congress' library, which continues the openness represented in the Great Hall.

After accessibility and availability, preservation is another aim of digitization. One might recall that an author is required to submit two copies of each book. Jefferson might have appreciate this 19th-century version of offsite storage. A researcher today, for example, could request that a book be brought to one of the Library's reading rooms, or to a backup facility near Fort Meade, MD. When books or other items are digitized, the files are stored in redundant server farms throughout the country. This was not Jefferson's idea of spreading knowledge throughout the country, but it works. He would be proud.



Appendix: The Statues in the Main Reading Room:

Each of the continental 48 states' seals decorate the windows. True, some were not yet states, but they were on the way. Around the windows are eight figures representing fields of knowledge. On either side of the allegorical statues are two practitioners in its field :

Art
Michelangelo and Beethoven

Commerce

Christopher Columbus and Robert Fulton.

History

Herodotus and Edward Gibbon

Law

Solon (c. 630BCE–c. 560), Athenian statesman, known as one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece. He ended exclusive aristocratic control of the government, substituted a system of control by the wealthy, and introduced a new and more humane law code, and James Kent (July 31, 1763–Dec. 12, 1847), jurist whose decisions and written commentaries shaped the inchoate common law in the formative years of the United States.

Philosophy

Plato and Francis Bacon, a British lawyer, statesman, and philosopher.

Poetry

Homer and Shakespeare

Religion

Moses and Saint Paul, the Apostle

Science

Sir Isaac Newton and Joseph Henry

