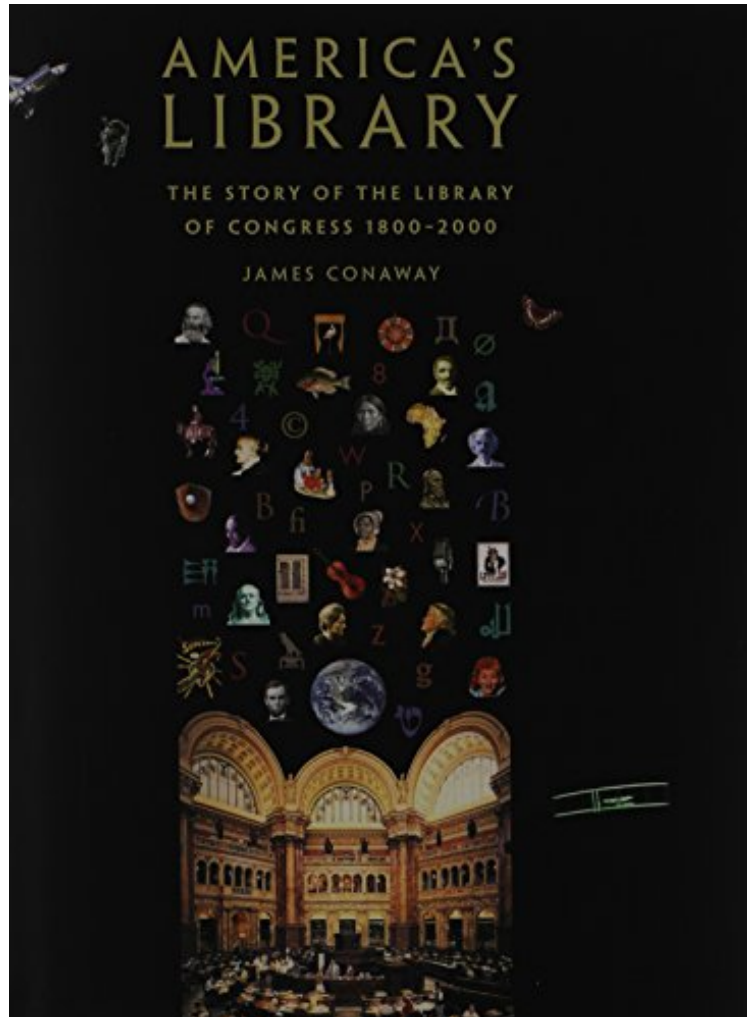


(Download pdf) America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800-2000

America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800-2000

James Conaway

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James Conaway : America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800-2000 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800-2000:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Good Coffee Table BookBy John M. FordThis book presents an interesting overview of 200 years of the Library of Congress. "Overview" describes its strengths and its limitations. It does give a sense of the library's place in our nation's historical timeline. It is a worthwhile read along with Presidents: All You Need to Know to see how major events in the Library's history coincide with the tenure of our presidents and major political and economic developments in our history.It has the strengths of a good coffee table book. It has attractive photographs that provide readers with a feel for the majesty of the Library's architecture and the look and feel of some of its many books and other documents. It can be read in a hit-or-miss fashion, allowing readers to benefit

from whatever they have time to read while waiting by the coffee table for a party or dinner date to begin. My favorite "quick nugget" is the anecdote about one of the Librarians of Congress coming across the last contents of Abraham Lincoln's pockets hidden away in a safe, lost and forgotten for decades. Fascinating stuff! The book disappoints by lacking the more detailed historical treatment you would expect to find on the bookshelf next to your host's coffee table--or on the hallowed shelves of the Library itself. Some of the past Librarians merit greater attention, more analysis of their motives and machinations. The actions of Congress and influential donors of collections could be further connected to concurrent historical events. My appetite for Library lore was whetted by this offering, but not sated. If you have a similar yearning for more history after reading this book, I highly recommend moving on to *Encyclopedia of the Library of Congress: For Congress, The Nation The World*. This book is a particularly good second course if your tastes extend to a detailed description of the current Library, its collections, administrative organization, and staff of experts. Enjoy!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Torsten W. Strmeralles ok, netter Kontakt, immer wieder
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By bryanGreat price and in really good condition.

The Library of Congress, considered by many to be the greatest library on earth, holds over 110 million items: books in 450 languages, irreplaceable national documents, priceless art works, and objects of cultural fascination. From a modest collection of 740 books purchased by the Congress in 1800, the Library has grown to house hundreds of miles of bookshelves. Laid end to end, they would stretch from Washington, D.C., to Chicago. This book tells the continuously interesting story of the first two hundred years of the Library of Congress. It is a vast history, filled with an immense cast of characters ranging from presidents, poets, journalists, and congressmen to collectors, artists, curators, and eccentrics. James Conaway centers this history around the thirteen men who have been appointed by presidents to lead the Library of Congress. The author investigates how the Librarians' experiences and contributions, as well as the Library's collections, have reflected political and intellectual developments in the United States. Each Librarian confronted great challenges: the entire Library collection was lost when the British burned the Capitol in 1814; in the 1940s, a backlog of one and a half million objects waited to be catalogued; the gigantic task of replacing the card catalogue with a computerized system was undertaken in the 1980s. Yet each Librarian also enjoyed the excitement of acquiring unique treasures: from Walt Whitman's walking stick to the papers of the Wright brothers, from the Civil War photographs of Mathew Brady to the archives of Leonard Bernstein. This lively account of the Library of Congress and those who guided its progress over two centuries is the history of an American institution that today is truly a library to the world, serving readers and researchers everywhere.

From Publishers Weekly
Founded in 1800 as a resource for lawmakers, the Library of Congress is one of the greatest libraries in existence, with more than 110 million items in holding, including books in 450 different languages, national documents and art works. Conaway (*The Smithsonian*) investigates the Library's history from the vantage point of the 13 Librarians of Congress, to illustrate how their experiences and contributions have reflected political and intellectual developments in the U.S. Several Librarians of Congress stayed on for decades, dedicating their lives to the institution. The first, John J. Beckley, appointed in 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson, was confronted with an enormous challenge when the original collection was engulfed in flames during the British's burning of the Capitol by the British in 1812. Ainsworth Rand Spofford, appointed by Abraham Lincoln, succeeded in securing copyright deposit at the Library, thus ensuring its place as the national repository. Appointed by William McKinley, Herbert Putnam made the cataloging system available to U.S. libraries, while Archibald MacLeish, appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, established the Library as an important cultural center through his acquisitions and literature programs. The current Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington, appointed by Ronald Reagan, has made a good portion of the collection available electronically. This is an engrossing and comprehensive read, as much a history of the people who made the Library of Congress what it is today--a library to the world--as it is a rich chronicle of the magnificent institution. 100 bw and 12 color illus. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Booklist
The venerable Library of Congress, source of pride and source of perplexity for America's librarians, has reached its bicentennial. Since its inception in 1800 with the gift to the U.S. of Thomas Jefferson's personal book collection, the library's expansion has paralleled that of the nation it serves. Often opportunistic, driven by political as well as social and educational goals, the Library of Congress has grown on a vast, exuberant scale into the world's premier repository of the printed word. Conaway has chosen to organize his history of this institution around that tiny, hardy band of men and women who have used both political acumen and intellectual vision to build the library's collections and establish those services that make the LC library to both Congress and nation. Richly supplemented with photographs, this history reaches out to touch all who love libraries, not just professional scholars and librarians. Conaway's prose flows smoothly, avoiding jargon and placing the library's history in the context of the nation's development. Mark Knoblauch
Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "The vivid story of the Library of Congress, one of the world's great intellectual and cultural repositories." -- Choice