



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BICENTENNIAL

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS celebrated its Bicentennial on April 24, 2000. (See also the Bicentennial Chronology following this chapter and appendix A: Bicentennial). With a theme of “Libraries, Creativity, Liberty,” the Library’s Bicentennial provided a special opportunity to feature the Library’s collections, its role in American life, and the importance of libraries in a democratic society as providers of free and open access to knowledge and information. A yearlong program of events was planned by the Bicentennial Steering Committee, led by cochairs Chief of Staff Jo Ann Jenkins and Center for the Book Director John Y. Cole, with support from the Bicentennial Program Office under the direction of Bicentennial Program Manager Roberta Stevens. In partnership with the Library staff, Congress, federal agencies, the American Library Association (ALA), national and international libraries, private donors, and Americans throughout the nation, the Bicentennial celebrated the importance of libraries and librarians as collectors and preservers of history and culture.

In recognition of the Bicentennial, a proclamation was issued on April 21, 2000, by President Bill Clinton, calling on “the people of the United States to observe this occasion with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate the many contributions the Library of Congress has made to strengthening our democracy and our national culture.” A concurrent resolu-

tion from the U.S. Congress (H. Con. Res. 269) commended the Library and its past and present employees for 200 years of service to the Congress and the nation. A resolution passed by the American Library Association on January 19 cited the collaborative efforts of the Library of Congress and the ALA in celebrating the Bicentennial and promoting all libraries. In a resolution passed on January 12, the California State Senate used the occasion of the sesquicentennial of the California State Library and the Library's Bicentennial "to underscore the vital role libraries play in a democratic society and the leadership of the Library of Congress as it embarks upon its third century." Mayor Anthony Williams of the District of Columbia issued a proclamation on April 24 noting the city's participation in the Bicentennial's Local Legacies project and the Center for the Book, as well as the Library's service through twenty-one reading rooms on Capitol Hill.

The James Madison Council and other private-sector donors generously supported every aspect of the commemoration.

GIFTS TO THE NATION

The Bicentennial Gifts to the Nation program allowed the Library to acquire many significant items and collections identified by the Library's curators and specialists. Through the generosity of the James Madison Council and contributions from other donors, the Library received gifts of Americana, maps, atlases, globes, rare books, foreign rarities, and performing and visual arts collections, as well as support for a number of Library programs. At the end of the fiscal year, the Gifts to the Nation program had resulted in 315 gifts totaling \$106 million.¹ During the year, the Gifts to the Nation program was expanded with an invitation to the nations of the world to present a gift expressing their country's heritage on the occasion of the Library's anniversary. Eighty-three embassies responded with more than 1,200 items (see also appendix A: Bicentennial).

A special element of the Gifts to the Nation program was the effort to reconstruct Thomas Jefferson's personal library, which was the original nucleus of the Library's collections and which he sold to Congress after the British burned the U.S. Capitol (the former home of the Library of Congress) in 1814. Although two-thirds of Jefferson's Library was tragically lost in a second fire on Christmas Eve 1851, the handwritten catalog survived. A generous contribution of \$1 million from Madison Council members Jerral and Gene Jones provided

1. As of December 31, 2000, the Gifts to the Nation program resulted in 384 gifts totaling \$109.8 million.

the support for a global search, acquisition, and preservation of the missing titles and editions of this landmark collection. As part of the *Thomas Jefferson* exhibition, the reconstructed library was on public display for the first time since its sale to Congress in 1815 and was in the original order devised by Jefferson.

As its Gift to the Nation, the Library exceeded its goal of making 5 million items freely available on the Internet through the efforts of the National Digital Library program and other collaborating institutions.

COMMEMORATIVE COINS

On the Library's official Bicentennial date, April 24, 2000, bimetallic (gold and platinum) and silver commemorative coins were issued at a ceremony in the Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building. Participating were Treasurer of the United States Mary Ellen Withrow and the coins' engravers and sculptors, Thomas D. Rogers Sr. and John Mercanti. The U.S. Mint experienced record-breaking sales for a first-day event. The Treasurer and the Mint's engravers and sculptors were on hand to sign the coins' certificates of authenticity.

The bimetallic and silver coins were deemed "the coins of many firsts"—the first commemorative coins of the year 2000, the twenty-first century, and the millennium and the first U.S. Mint commemorative coins honoring a library. The bimetallic coin was the first such coin ever issued by the U.S. Mint. The bimetallic coin's obverse side features the hand of Minerva raising the torch of learning with the flame in the gold border. The reverse side features the Library's seal. On the silver coin's obverse side is an open book superimposed over the torch of learning. Its reverse side shows an architectural rendering of the Jefferson Building's dome.

The Mint's extensive direct-mail marketing to the numismatic community, the largest customer base for the coins, was enhanced by the Library's efforts to market the coins to its constituencies. At the end of the fiscal year, more than 235,000 silver and nearly 32,000 bimetallic coins were sold; a surcharge of approximately \$2.8 million from the sale of those coins will be used to support Library activities, including educational and outreach programs.

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

The U.S. Postal Service issued the Library's Bicentennial commemorative stamp on April 24 in the Great Hall. On that day, 46,000 stamps were sold. The Bicentennial Program Office designed a special first-day cover, which was available through the Library's Sales Shops and featured a silk cachet of the Minerva mosaic that appears at the head of the staircase to the Main Reading Room's overlook. The first-day cancellation, which was based on the bimetallic



Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and Edward Knight, chairman of the board of the Library of Congress Federal Credit Union, plant the bicentennial tree. The tree was donated by the credit union in celebration of its sixty-fifth anniversary. (Photo by Larica Perry)

coin's design of the hand of Minerva and the torch of learning, was also prepared by the Bicentennial Program Office in collaboration with the Postal Service. All Library staff members received free envelopes with a black-and-white drawing of the Jefferson and Capitol Buildings' domes by former Library employee, Paul Boswell. After the ceremony, the stamp's designer, Ethel Kessler, and officials of the Postal Service autographed hundreds of the first-day covers, the Postal Service's official program for the ceremony, and the other philatelic memorabilia available for enthusiastic stamp collectors.

The Library's Bicentennial Program Office worked closely with the Postal Service to develop a site program for the second-day issue of the commemorative stamp, a program designed for libraries across the country. Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), along with the ALA's Chapter Relations Committee, provided assistance in publicizing this opportunity to libraries nationwide. Beginning on April 25, more than 200 libraries in forty-three states, along with their postal and governmental officials, held second-day issue events for the commemorative stamp (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). The cere-

monies, which received considerable publicity at the local level, often featured the stamp's poster.

NATIONAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

On April 24, a National Birthday celebration attended by more than 5,000 people was held on the East Lawn of the Capitol with the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building as the backdrop. The program opened with a speech by the Librarian of Congress, who emphasized that this was "a national celebration, not just of an institution, but of the role of libraries everywhere." Political analyst Cokie Roberts served as mistress of ceremonies. Her mother, Ambassador Lindy Boggs, was honorary Bicentennial cochair with retired Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield. Among the program's celebrities were General Colin Powell, then-retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Roger Baum, great-grandson of L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*; children's author and illustrator Maurice Sendak; magician and illusionist David Copperfield; and Big Bird of "Sesame Street."

The U.S. Army Blues Band and a host of other artists provided a wide variety of American music. In a concert led by former Grateful Dead musician Mickey Hart, performers included fellow Grateful Dead member Bob Weir, Latin percussionists Tito Puente and Giovanni Hidalgo, folksingers Pete Seeger and his grandson Tao Rodriguez, jazz singer Dianne Reeves, jazz saxophonist David Sanchez, rhythm and blues guitarist and fiddler Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, country singer Kathy Mattea, the bluegrass band Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, the Native American Smokey Town Singers, soul crooners and balladeers the Chi-Lites, Lance Bass and Justin Timberlake of 'N Sync, the Kan Kouran West African dancers, Washington's Eastern High School Choir, and the "Saturday Night Live" backup band.

Among the program's special honorees were eighty-four Living Legends, individuals selected by the Library for their significant creative contributions to American life (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). Thirty-four Living Legends were on hand to accept their medals, among them cardiovascular surgeon Michael DeBakey, author Beverly Cleary, dancer Suzanne Farrell, technology innovator Vinton Cerf, photographer Gordon Parks, political cartoonist Herbert Block (Herblock), physician T. Berry Brazelton, and former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick.

AMERICA'S LIBRARY WEB SITE

America's Library, a new Web site for children and families, was launched with a press conference, on April 24, 2000. This easy-to-use, colorful, and in-

teractive site, which is accessible at <www.americaslibrary.gov>, is designed to make learning about history fun. Through stories, accompanied by photographs, maps, prints, manuscripts, and audio and video recordings from the Library's collections, the site invites users to learn about their nation's past. Interactive elements such as a "Scavenger Hunt" and "Send a Postcard" encourage exploration of the site. Suggested questions invite children to talk to their family and friends about what they have learned.

EXHIBITIONS

John Bull & Uncle Sam: Four Centuries of British-American Relations, which opened on November 18, marked the second in a series of Bicentennial exhibitions that began in fiscal 1999 and celebrated the theme of Libraries, Creativity, Liberty (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). (The first Bicentennial exhibition, *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention*, was on display from May 20 to September 4, 1999.) The *John Bull* exhibition featured nearly 300 rare and original treasures from the collections of the Library of Congress and of the British Library, and it illuminated the common history of those two nations.

The Wizard of Oz: An American Fairy Tale exhibition opened on April 21. Its opening marked the centennial of the copyright registration of one of America's most beloved books, as well as a celebration of the Bicentennial theme of American creativity. The exhibition drew thousands of viewers with its array of Oz-related items, including play scripts, books, posters, drawings, sheet music, films, games, and toys.

The major Bicentennial exhibition, *Thomas Jefferson*, opened on April 24 with treasures from the collections illuminating the legacy of Jefferson as a founding father, farmer, architect, inventor, slaveholder, book collector, scholar, diplomat, and third president of the United States. Jefferson's personal library, the seed from which the Library's present-day collections grew, was included in the exhibition. An evening reception to mark the exhibition opening featured remarks by Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), and historian David McCullough.

LOCAL LEGACIES

The Local Legacies project was a grassroots Bicentennial initiative. Working through their congressional representatives and with local organizations and groups, people from all walks of life documented America's cultural heritage at the turn of the millennium. Local Legacies teams documented the creative arts, crafts, and customs representing traditional community life; signature events

such as festivals and parades; ways that communities observe local and national historical events; and the sites and occupations that define a community's life. Seventy-seven percent of Congress (414 of the 535 members) registered nearly 1,300 projects from every state, trust, territory, and the District of Columbia (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). All told, 4,000 Americans participated by providing photographs, written reports, sound and video recordings, newspaper clippings, posters, and other materials as part of their projects. At year's end, nearly 1,000 projects were received. These projects are now in the process of being preserved in the Library's American Folklife Center. In appreciation for their efforts, participants were offered three days of special tours of the Library's facilities, and a reception was held in the Great Hall on May 23. Two thousand participants, including members of Congress, attended the reception, which featured slide show displays of images from various Local Legacies projects. Project descriptions and at least one image from each Local Legacies project are available on the Bicentennial Web site.

POETRY FOR THE NATION

In honor of the Library's Bicentennial, the Librarian of Congress named Robert Pinsky to an unprecedented third term as poet laureate. In a series of "once-in-a-century" appointments, the Librarian also named former Poet Laureate Rita Dove, along with Louise Glück and W. S. Merwin, as special consultants to contribute to the Library's Bicentennial celebration of poetry. In April 1998, Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky launched the Favorite Poem Project. The aim of the project was to record 1,000 Americans reading poems they love and to deposit those audiocassettes and videotapes in the Library's Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature. The first fifty videotapes were presented to the Library on April 3, 2000, as part of the program "Poetry in America: A Library of Congress Bicentennial Celebration," which was broadcast live on the Library's Web site.

The April 4 symposium "Poetry and the American People: Reading, Voice, and Publication in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" provided perspectives on the historical context of poetry, the state of publishing, and the concept of poetry as a medium of expression. The symposium, which was cosponsored by the Library, the Poetry Society of America, and the Academy of American Poets, was also cybercast live on the Library's Web site.

SYMPOSIA

In addition to the poetry symposium mentioned previously, a series of symposia were held during fiscal 2000 in conjunction with the Library's Bicenten-

nial (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). Sponsored by the Congressional Research Service, “Informing the Congress and the Nation” was held on February 29 and March 1 and was open to congressional members and their staff members. The symposium featured a keynote presentation by historian Merrill Peterson on “the great triumvirate” of the nineteenth-century Congress—Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and Daniel Webster—as well as panel discussions exploring how Congress informed itself in the nineteenth century.

On March 7–10, “Democracy and the Rule of Law in a Changing World Order” examined the relationship between the rule of law and the spread of democracy in many parts of the world. Cosponsored by the Law Library of the Library of Congress and the New York University School of Law, this symposium focused on how countries with differing legal traditions confront major common problems under a constitutionally provided rule of law. The symposium, which included the Chief Justice and four U.S. Supreme Court Justices, was cybercast live on the Library’s Web site.

Planning continued on three Bicentennial symposia to be held in fiscal 2001: “National Libraries of the World: Interpreting the Past, Shaping the Future” (October 23–26, 2000); “To Preserve and Protect: The Strategic Stewardship of Cultural Resources” (October 30–31, 2000); and “Bibliographic Control for the New Millennium: Confronting the Challenges of Networked Resources and the Web” (November 15–17, 2000).

PUBLICATIONS

In commemoration of the Bicentennial, four new publications were issued during the year (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). *America’s Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800–2000*, by James Conaway is the first full narrative history of the Library of Congress in more than half a century. *Thomas Jefferson: Genius of Liberty*, a companion volume to the Bicentennial exhibition *Thomas Jefferson*, examines the life of a central figure in the history of the Library of Congress and the nation. *The Library of Congress: An Architectural Alphabet* is a visual introduction to the Library’s Jefferson Building, a landmark both in the nation’s capital and in the nation’s architectural heritage. From “arch” to “zigzag,” photographs are paired with antique letters from the Library’s collections for an illustrated tour of the art, architecture, and sculpture created by some fifty artists and artisans. The first guidebook in more than a decade, *The Nation’s Library: The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*, is filled with photographs of the three buildings on Capitol Hill, as it leads the reader through the Library’s history and present-day organization. At year’s end, work

continued on *Encyclopedia of the Library of Congress*, the final Bicentennial publication, which is scheduled for publication in 2002.

CONCERTS

“I Hear America Singing,” a multiyear series of concerts, recordings, and educational programs to commemorate the Library’s Bicentennial, continued during the year (see also appendix A: Bicentennial). Taking its title from Walt Whitman’s poem that explores America’s musical heritage from colonial days to the end of the twentieth century, the series offered a number of musical events during the 1999–2000 concert season. These included Bobby Short and his orchestra performing songs by American composers Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern, Harold Arlen, and Stephen Sondheim; a performance of the works of great American songwriting teams such as George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Bolcom and Weinstein, and Rodgers and Hart; and a seventieth birthday tribute to American composer Stephen Sondheim on May 22.

STAFF PROJECTS

The Library’s staff suggested a number of initiatives in conjunction with the Library’s Bicentennial, including publishing a series of articles in the *Gazette* highlighting staff achievements over the years, planting a Bicentennial tree, and creating Bicentennial gardens around the Jefferson Building. The staff continued to collect objects and prepare a Bicentennial time capsule that would be sealed at the end of calendar year 2000. The time capsule, to be opened on the Library’s Tricentennial on April 24, 2100, will include items representative of the Bicentennial celebration and will reflect the organization and its work, activities, preoccupations, and milestones in the year 2000.