

# That's a Lot of Books!

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Over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday, our family watched 'National Treasure.' The movie stars Nicholas Cage as Benjamin Franklin Gates, a historian who is searching for the hoarded wealth of the Knights Templar, which ended up in the hands of the Freemasons. Gates needs to find our national treasure before the bad guys.

The map to the treasure can be found on the back of the Declaration of Independence. When Gates fails to convince the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the National Archives that bad guys are out to steal the historic document, he's left with only one option: to steal the Declaration of Independence himself.

To figure out a way to steal the Declaration, Gates' techie buddy, Riley Poole, brings him to the Library of Congress, the biggest library in the world. There, they inspect blueprints of the archive room, where the Declaration is stored, to figure out a way to steal it.

While the movie is a work of fiction, much of it is based on fact, such as the Library of Congress. It truly is the biggest depository of books on earth, having more than 167 million registered works. Housed in three buildings on Capitol Hill and several warehouses, the Library has 838 miles of shelving to hold its collection.

The idea for a congressional library was first proposed by James Madison in 1783. The library was designed to allow members of Congress to do research necessary for the implementation of laws. While the Library is open to the public, which is how Gates and Poole were able to look at blueprints, only high-ranking government officials and Library employees may check out books and materials.

President John Adams signed an act of Congress on April 24, 1800, to officially establish the Library of Congress. Books were moved from Philadelphia to the new capitol in Washington. As part of the legislation, \$5,000 was appropriated "for the purchase of such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress... and for fitting up a suitable apartment for containing them."

In 1802, President Thomas Jefferson signed a bill allowing the president to appoint the Librarian of Congress and established a Joint Committee on the Library to regulate and oversee it. The new law also extended borrowing privileges to the President and Vice President. Jefferson further contributed to the Library by selling his personal collection of 6,500 books to it after the British burned the Library during the War of 1812.

After another fire destroyed many of its works in 1851, the Library's efforts to regrow were boosted by Congress' adoption of the Mandatory Deposit law. The Library houses the U.S. Copyright Office. Under federal copyright law, all publishers of copyrightable works are required to furnish the Library with two copies of the work within three months of it being published. This is required even if the work isn't registered for copyright protection.

The law applies not only to books, but to albums, photographs, audio and video recordings, artwork, maps, comic books, and even movies like 'National Treasure.' The law has 'mandatory' right in the title, so publishers who fail to deposit their works face a fine of \$250 plus the retail cost of the work. If they continue to fail to comply, the fine ratchets up to \$2,500. The law serves its purpose, as an estimated 15,000 new items arrive each business day at the Library.

My son suggested I wrap up this week's column with a knock-knock joke about America. I told him there's no such thing, because freedom rings.

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