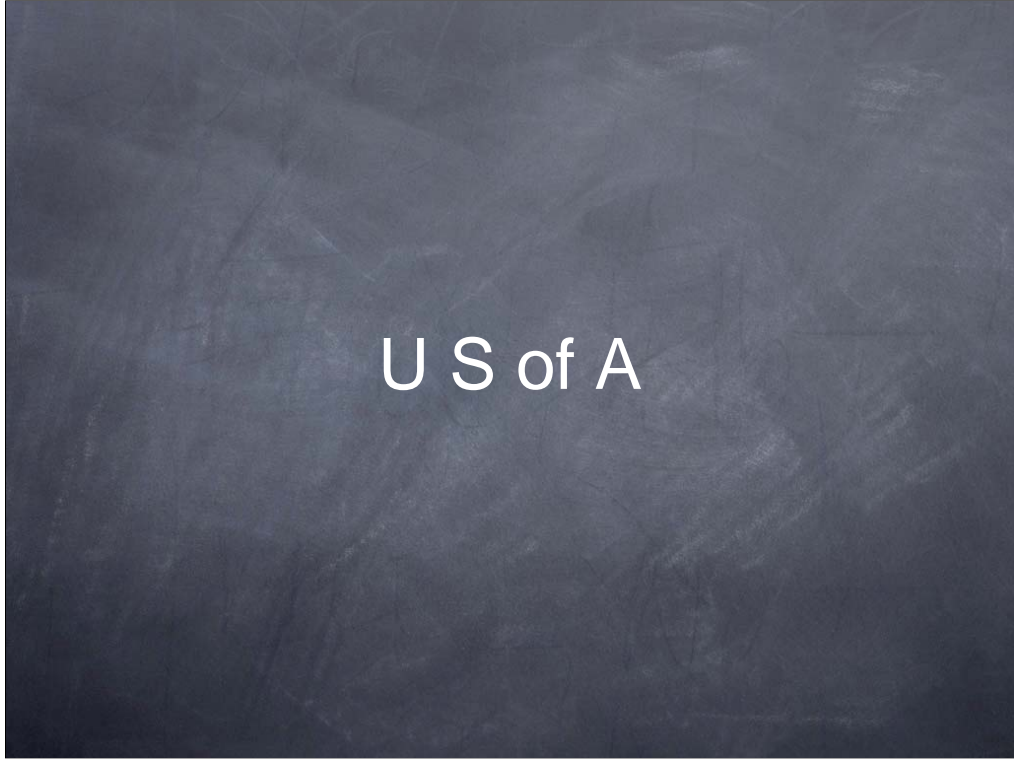


# The Library & Founders

A short history of the role of information in the  
founding of the USA

Karen Coyle  
kcoyle@kcoyle.net



The United States of America



new country

Was founded as a new country in 1776 on the continent of North America.



without mass media

This was an era without mass media, in a geographically large area with a small population.



informed populace

The founders of the nation believed strong that an informed populace



democracy

... was necessary for democracy.



informed government

They also believed in an informed government...



science

... that promoted science...





... industry ...



business

... and business.

# information retrieval

They were facing an interesting problem of information retrieval...



information delivery

... and information delivery.



2

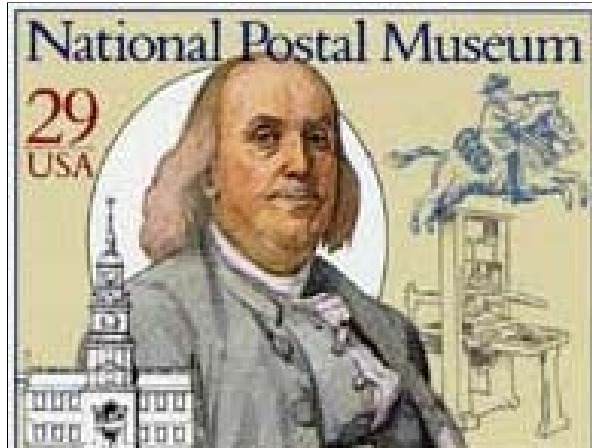
Two institutions aided the new government.

# 1) The postal service

1) The postal service

## 2) The Library of Congress

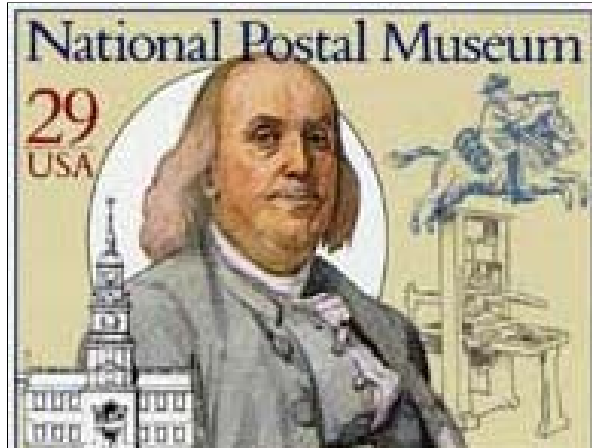
1) The Library of Congress



1737

The postal service was begun in 1737 by the British government which ruled the colonies in North America. Benjamin Franklin was the first postmaster.





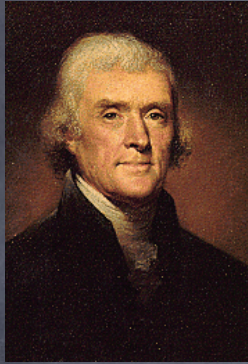
1774

Franklin was dismissed from his British post in 1774 for “revolutionary activity,” at which he was quite successful...



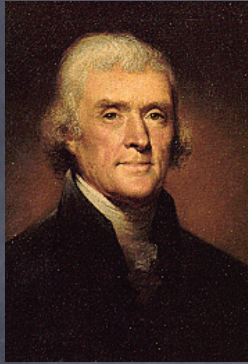
1776

... because shortly afterward, the new country was born.



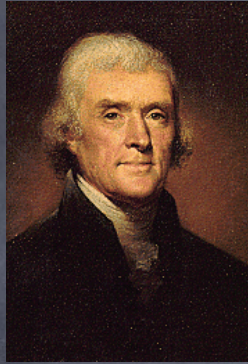
## 1790 Postal Act

In 1790, Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, signed the Postal Act.



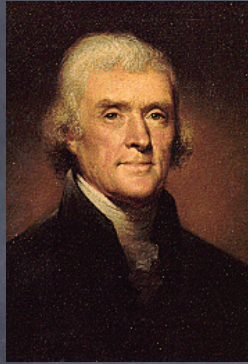
## newspapers

Under this act, newspapers, the primary communication of information to citizens, as well as the main outlets for political speech, were mailed at low rates to encourage this communication channel.



private communication

In addition, postal communication was declared to be private, so that people could write and read freely without fear.



“I cannot live without  
books.”

Jefferson was also a great lover of books. At the time, books primarily came from Europe, and were rare and precious in the new world.



1800

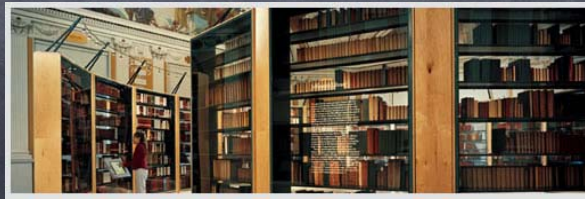
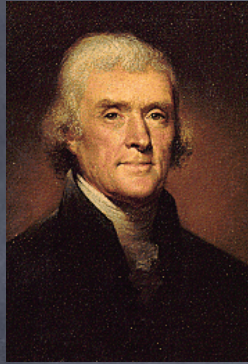
A library was founded in 1800 by Congress to give legislators access to information. This was the beginning of the Library of Congress.



1814

The library was burned to the ground in 1814 by British forces during the War of 1812.





Thomas Jefferson then offered the over 6.000 books of his personal library to rebuild the Library of Congress.

sciences

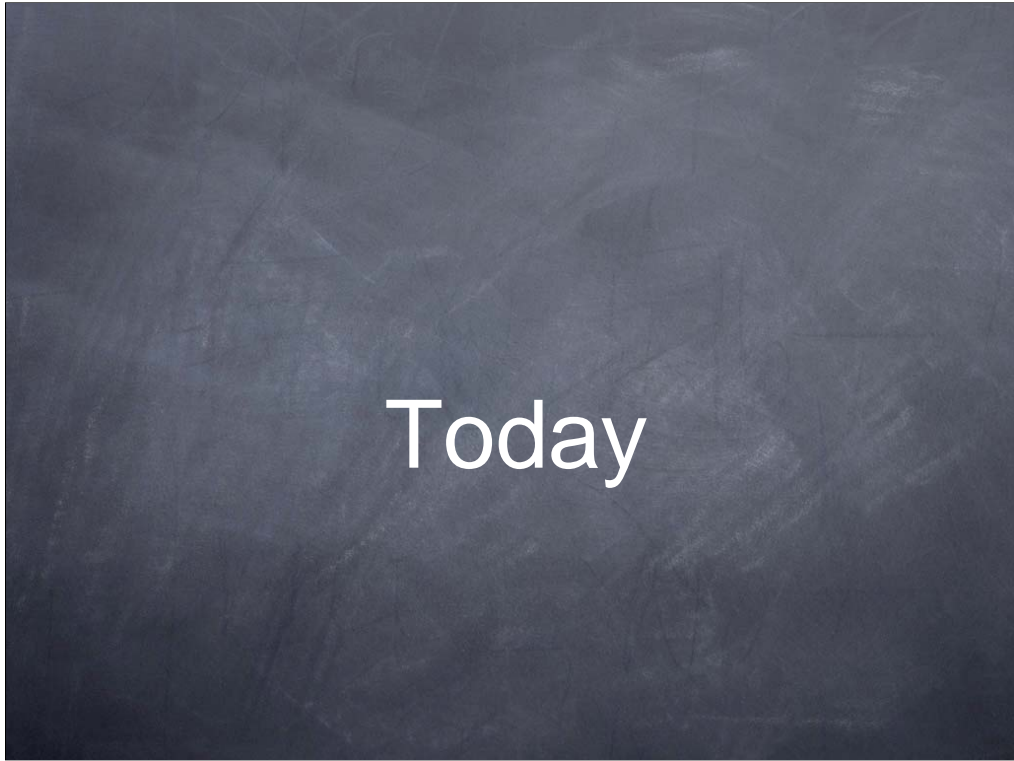
history

philosophy

literature



His collection covered every topic imaginable, not just law. This was his view of the information needed in the New World. Much of his original library has been preserved and is on exhibit at the Library of Congress.



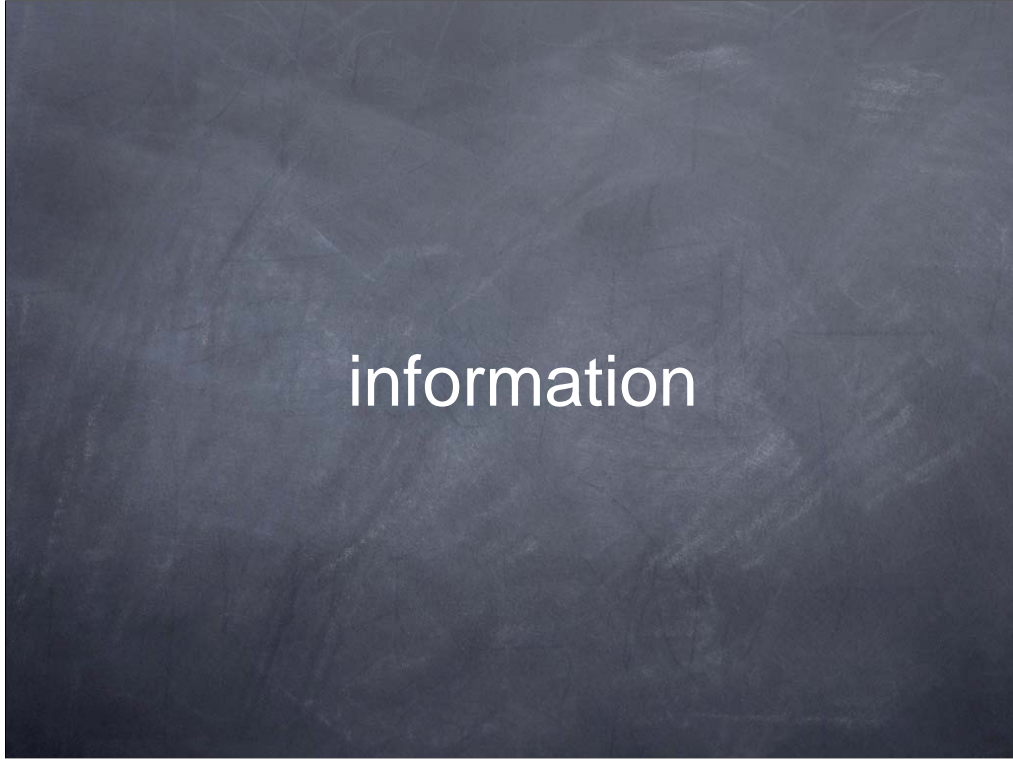
Today...



The Library of Congress is one of the largest libraries in the world with around 130 million items (books, manuscripts, films, etc.)



... things are very different. Mail is delivered electronically, radio and television bring the news, and libraries are a mixture of books and computers.



This is a world in which information ...



communication

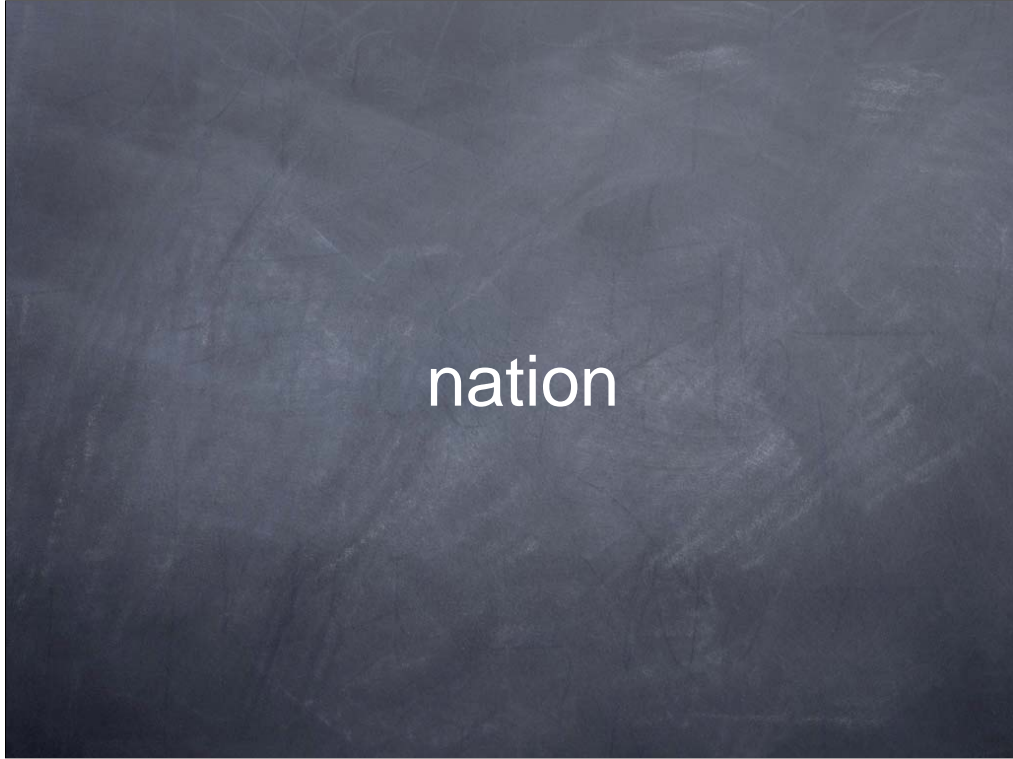
... and communication are absolutely vital for civic life.

Library of Congress



# Congress

It still reports to and serves Congress. The Library conducts research for members of Congress so that they are informed in their efforts.



It also serves the nation in many ways.

# A Century of Lawmaking For a New Nation

U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates

**Search** All Titles

*Continental Congress and the  
Constitutional Convention*

**Journals of the  
Continental Congress**

**Letters of Delegates  
to Congress**

**Elliot's Debates**

**Farrand's Records**

*Statutes and Documents*

**Bills and Resolutions**

**Statutes at Large**

**American State Papers**

**U.S. Serial Set**



*Journals of Congress*

**House Journal**

**Senate Journal**

**Senate Executive  
Journal**

**Maclay's Journal**

*Debates of Congress*

**Annals of Congress**

**Register of Debates**

**Congressional Globe**

**Congressional Record**

It is the nation's archive for history ....

AMERICAN MEMORY   EXHIBITIONS   THOMAS   GLOBAL GATEWAY   VETERANS HISTORY   ◀ PREV   ▶ NEXT   OGER TRJ  
CAMP  
READ  
ROOK  
ON TRI

## AMERICAN MEMORY

American Memory provides free and open access to historic maps, photos, documents, audio and video.

→ GO



## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

\*\*\*

The Library of Congress recognizes the creativity, imagination and vitality of women throughout U.S. history, highlighting the 2008 theme "Women's Art: Women's Vision."

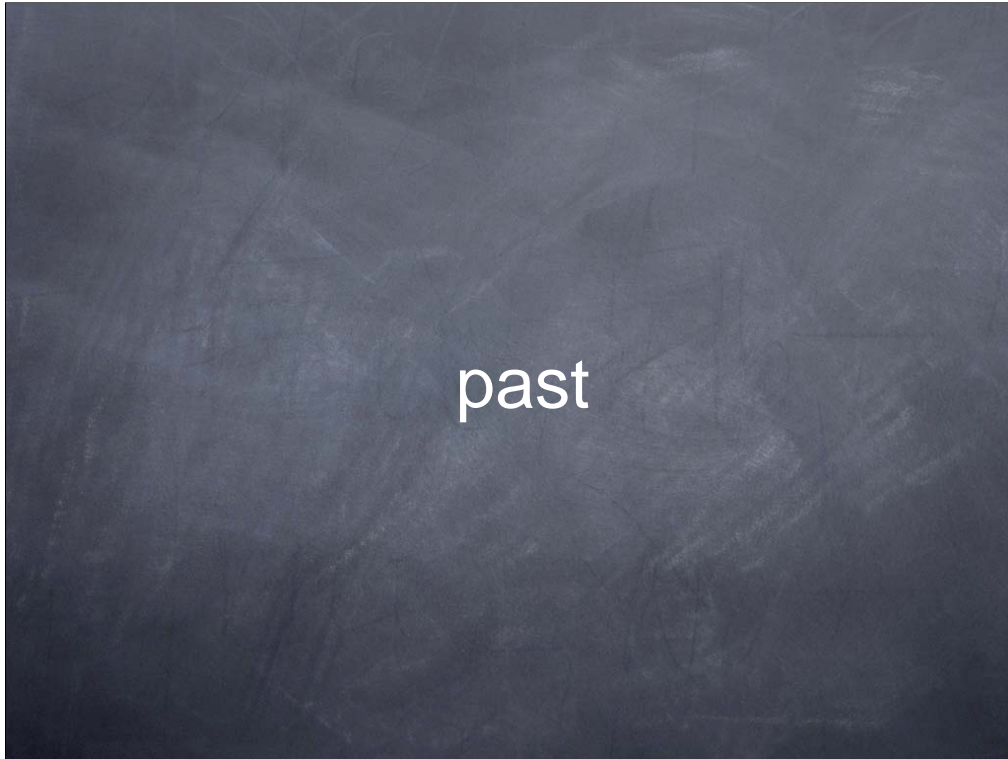


... and culture.

The image shows a screenshot of a legislative website interface. It is divided into several sections:

- Legislation in Current Congress**: A search bar with a "SEARCH" button and radio buttons for "Word/Phrase" (selected) and "Bill Number". Below it, a "Browse Bills by Sponsor" section with dropdown menus for "Select a Representative" and "Select a Senator", each with a "GO" button.
- Find More Legislation**: A list of links including "Search Multiple, Previous Congresses", "Appropriations Bills", and "Public Laws".
- Current Activity**: A list of links including "Yesterday in Congress", "Congressional Record Latest Daily Digest", "On the House Floor Now", and "Schedules, Calendars".
- Learn**: A list of links including "The Supreme Court", "The Legislative Process", "Declaration of Independence", "U.S. Constitution", "Constitution Day (Sept. 17)", and "More historical documents".
- Features**: A section header at the bottom right.

It also provides daily updates to citizens on the activities of the legislature and on every bill that is considered, from the time that it is first proposed, through all of its revisions, to the final vote. Although the country spans nearly 5,000 kilometers, everyone has quick access to legislative activity.



The key message is that libraries may be an archive of the past...



present

... but their value is in their service to the present ....



... and their support of the future of those who use it.



Thank you