

A Library Lover's Guide to Washington, D.C., Libraries

By Pamela J. Gregory

Washington, D.C., is a virtual librarian's paradise, and a wonderful place to visit libraries. The libraries featured in this article are among the city's most beautiful and most notable. The Local Advisory Committee is sponsoring a unique opportunity for conference attendees to visit some of these "library shrines." There may still be openings for the Thursday, July 22, Library Tours. Please contact the Library Tours Subcommittee members Pamela Gregory (pgregory@clark.net) or Jennie Meade (jmeade@burns.nlc.gwu.edu) for further information. In addition, there will be tours Tuesday, July 20, and Wednesday, July 21, for which you can sign up at the Hospitality Desk.

The United States Supreme Court Library (1 First Street, N.E., 202/479-3037) Reading Room with its chandeliers and wood paneled carved arches is

perhaps one of the most elegant rooms in the city. This room has the staff at one end, and its vast seating and antique table space at the other. Of particular note is the library's Elbridge Gerry special collection, which includes many rare materials. The Gerry collection includes books from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. These beautiful materials are among the most precious of our nation's legal literature, and its records and briefs of the court the most valued. The library is not open to the public, so a chance to tour this magnificent space is truly a privilege.

Though registrants will visit **the Library of Congress** (10 First Street S.E., 202/707-5000) for the Opening Reception, once is not enough to view the largest library in the world. Housed in three buildings, with 21 reading rooms open to the public, LC alone could sustain a week-long busman's holiday. Be sure to visit the Law Library Reading Room (202/707-5079) in the James Madison Building (101 Independence Avenue, S.E.), the world's largest collection of law books and resources from all countries. Besides providing research and legal information to Congress, the Courts, and Executive Agencies, it also offers reference services to the public. Library exhibitions in the Madison Building include *By Securing to Authors: Copyright, Commerce, and Creativity in America*, highlighting items copyrighted in America—ranging from the original Ken and Barbie dolls to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

The Folger Shakespeare Library (201 East Capitol Street S.E., 202/544-4600, open with restrictions) is an independent research library, privately endowed and administered by the Trustees of Amherst College. Opened in 1932, the Folger was a gift to the American people from Henry Clay Folger and his wife Emily Jordan Folger. The Folger houses the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, in addition to a magnificent collection of other rare Renaissance books and manuscripts on all disciplines: history, politics, theology and exploration, law and

the arts. It has 280,000 books and manuscripts, 250,000 playbills, and 27,000 paintings, drawings, engravings and prints, musical instruments, costumes, and films. At one end of the Elizabethan Reading Room is a replica of the bust of Shakespeare in Stratford-on-Avon's Trinity Church. At the other end is a stained glass window showing the "Seven Ages of Man" as described by Jaques in *As You Like It*. Not to be missed is a gift shop with T-shirts advertising "First, Let's Kill All the Lawyers!" See www.folger.edu for times and special events. The Folger, directly across the street from the Supreme Court, is a personal favorite.

While **the National Library of Medicine** (8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Maryland, 301/496-6095) may not be the obvious choice for a law librarians' tour, this 5.1 million volume library is definitely worth the visit. NLM offers tours and access to an interactive visit with Grateful Med and Medline. The lobby of this huge and well maintained facility pairs specialized medical databases with images from the history of medicine. The LOCATORplus database allows searching of all the NLM catalogs, including medical periodicals. There are telemedicine video demonstrations and special information programs for view, such as HIV/AIDS resources, and services for libraries. Among these services is the ability to subscribe to the *NLM News* and to receive e-mail updates. Even if you only occasionally do medical research, a trip to NLM is worthwhile for a unique chance to see how this renowned library is organized and to explore the services it offers.

Other libraries worth a visit include **the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Library** (100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, S.W., 202/479-9717, <http://library.ushmm.org/library/indexrt.htm>). The Family History section is one of the best developed Holocaust genealogy tools extant. The 30,000 volume library, open to the public, offers research assistance. Just a block from the Convention Center is **the District of**

Links to Libraries for Library Lovers in Washington, D.C.

The Library of Congress —
<http://www.loc.gov/>

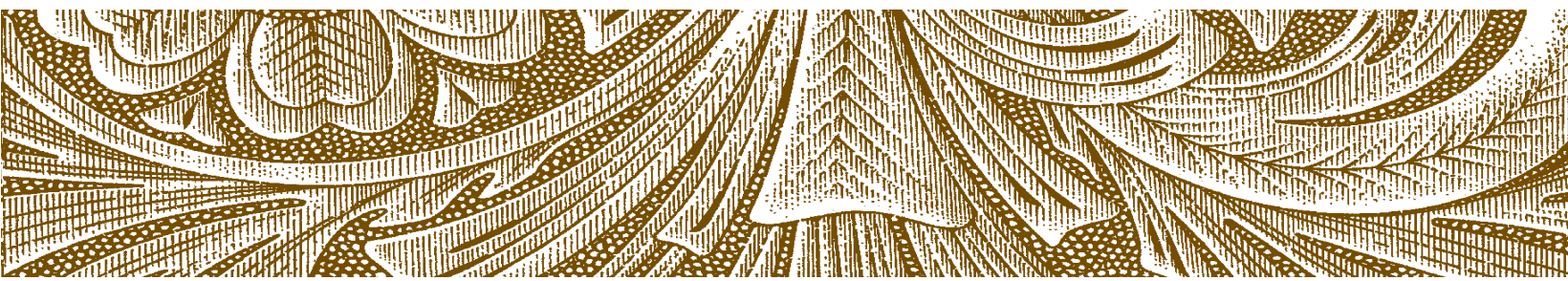
Virtual Tour of the US Supreme
Court Building — <http://court.it-services.nwu.edu/oyez/tour>

Folger Shakespeare Library —
<http://www.folger.edu>

US Holocaust Memorial Museum
Library — <http://library.ushmm.org/library>

National Museum of American
Art/Library and Special Collections
— <http://nma-ryder.si.edu/study/library.html>

District of Columbia Public Library
— <http://www.dclibrary.org/>



Columbia Public Library–Martin Luther King Memorial Library

(901 G Street N.W., 202/727-1101). This is the main library of the 26-branch system. Of particular note is the library's Washingtoniana Local History Collection.

The **Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art** shares its Library and Special Collections (202/357-1886) with the **National Portrait Gallery**. With the Slide and Photograph Archives, they form the Study Center, one of the premier resources for the study of American art. The 100,000 volume library ranges from works on American art, history, and biography to auction catalogues and scrapbooks.

Countless national associations are headquartered in D.C., many with their own libraries that are open with restrictions, for example, to members or clients. You may have access by virtue of your employer or a personal membership. The *Washington Area Library Directory* (Washington, D.C.: District of Columbia Library Association, 1996) profiles numerous area libraries—perhaps the one you visit today will hold the answer to a reference question you will need in the future!

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County Law Library in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.



The Supreme Court Library.

Photographer: Franz Jantzen. Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.