

## **AEJMC *Spotlight* presentation .....**

AEJMC's Washington, D.C., Conference, The Renaissance Hotel Downtown, Exhibit Hall  
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### ***Only in Washington: Tips for Navigating the Library of Congress***

Facilitator: Joe Campbell, American, [wjc@american.edu](mailto:wjc@american.edu)

(1) ***What is the Library of Congress?*** It is a premier research and cultural institution, the research arm of Congress, and the world's largest library. The Library's main campus is on Capitol Hill and includes the Jefferson, Madison, and Adams buildings. They are connected by heavily traveled and well-lighted subterranean tunnels. A center for audio-visual conservation is off-site, in Culpepper, VA. The Library's centerpiece is the majestic, domed Jefferson Building, which was opened (under budget) in 1897 at the corner of First Street and Independence Avenue, SE. Before then, the Library was housed at the Capitol.

(2) ***How to begin navigating the Library?*** Begin online, and start the sign-up process for a reader identification card. The card is required to enter any of the Library's two dozen reading rooms. Pre-register at: <https://www.loc.gov/readerreg/remote/>  
Complete the registration in-person at registration stations at the Jefferson and Madison buildings.

(3) ***How to get there?*** From the conference hotel, the easiest commute is by Metro (Blue, Orange, or Silver line trains) from the Metro Center station. The Library campus is a short walk uphill from the Capitol South stop. (The Library campus is about 35 minutes by foot from the conference hotel.)

(4) ***What are some peculiarities of the place?*** The Library's stacks are closed and books may not be checked out. Each major reading room has its own rhythm — even its own hours. (All reading rooms are closed Sundays.) The Manuscript Reading Room (Madison Building) requires researchers to register at the information desk, for example. At the Newspaper Reading Room (Madison Building), some newspaper titles on microfilm are accessible in self-serve drawers, but most are not. The Main Reading Room (Jefferson Building) is spectacular, and worth a visit just to admire the architecture, with or without a research objective in mind.

(5) ***What about the Library's having every book published in America?*** Myth. But the Library says it has “more than 164 million items,” including 38.6 million cataloged books and other print materials in 470 languages. It's home as well to huge collections of maps, photographs, films, and A/V materials. Thousands of items are added to the collections every day.

(6) ***How technologically up-to-date is the Library?*** It's not bad, overall. Digitizing its vast holdings and making them accessible online is inevitably a tedious process. A few years ago, the Library was criticized by the Government Accounting Office for “significant weakness” in managing Information Technology resources. Such criticism led to the departure of James Billington, the long-serving Librarian of Congress who retired in 2016. He was 86 and succeeded by Carla Hayden, the Library's first female and first African American leader.

(7) ***How about taking a tour?*** Good idea. Docent-led tours are conducted throughout the day from the main floor of the Jefferson Building. A centerpiece of the tours is the Great Hall of the Jefferson Building, with its marble floors, columns and staircases, its mosaics and sculptures. The Madison and Adams buildings are not so tour-worthy.

(8) ***What about shopping?*** Also a good idea. The Library's small gift shop is in the Jefferson Building and has on sale a variety of Library-themed merchandise.

