

Law Library Records Series, Library of Congress Archives

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

2024

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2021086444>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadlca.lc023002>

Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

Finding aid encoded by Manuscript Division staff, 2023

Collection Summary

Title: Law Library Records Series, Library of Congress Archives

Inclusive Dates: 1905-1963

Bulk Dates: 1926-1943

ID No.: MSS86444

Creator: Library of Congress. Law Library

Extent: 2,500 items

Extent: 5 containers

Extent: 2 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English with some in Spanish

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2021086444>

Summary: Law Library of the Library of Congress. Correspondence, bibliographies, speeches and writings, printed matter, travel files, a guest book, and photographs largely documenting the operations of the Law Library under John T. Vance from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Acquisition Information

The records of the Law Library were transferred from the Central Services Division to the Library of Congress Archives in two installments in 1970 and 1988.

Processing History

The records of the Law Library were arranged and described by John D. Knowlton in 1991. The finding aid was encoded and revised in 2021 by Melinda K. Friend and then revised in 2023 by Shandra Morehouse.

Additional Description

A finding aid for the Library of Congress Archives is available at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadlca.lc017001>.

Copyright Status

Materials from the Law Library Records Series, Library of Congress Archives, are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Law Library Records Series, Library of Congress Archives, is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Law Library Records Series, Library of Congress Archives, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Administrative History

Date	Event
1832	Act of July 14 created a separate "Law Department" of the Library of Congress, establishing the Law Library and its statutory relationship with the Supreme Court Law Library moved into separate room in the United States Capitol adjacent to main library
1833	Charles H. W. Meehan appointed as "assistant at law," becoming first law librarian
1842	Law Library moved to the United States Capitol's ground floor across from the Supreme Court Chamber
1860	Supreme Court moved to former Senate Chamber; Law Library moved to former Supreme Court Chamber
1888	Act of July 11 provided that Law Library must be kept open whenever either chamber of Congress was in session
1897	Thomas Jefferson Building opened to house Library of Congress; Law Library remained in United States Capitol
1911	Edwin Borchard appointed law librarian
1914	Legislative Reference Service, predecessor to Congressional Research Service, established under direction of law librarian
1917	Main site of law collection established in Northeast Pavilion of Thomas Jefferson Building; Law Library remained in Capitol Building
1921	Law Library made responsible for congressional requests for foreign law research; Legislative Reference Service made responsible for American law and public policy congressional requests Directorship of Legislative Reference Service made separate position
1924-1943	John T. Vance served as law librarian; helped establish Law Library as foreign law research center
1932	George W. Wickersham founded Friends of the Law Library
1935	Supreme Court Building opened; official administrative ties between Law Library and Supreme Court end
1943-1946	Eldon R. James served as law librarian
1949-1963	Lawrence Keitt served as law librarian and general counsel
1940s	Law Library Reading Room opened in Thomas Jefferson Building, 1941 Foreign law divisions established
1981	Law Library moved into James Madison Memorial Building
1990	Law Library renamed Law Library of Congress

Scope and Content Note

The records of the Law Library, a part of the Library of Congress Archives, span the years 1905-1963, with the bulk of the material dating from 1926 to 1943. Most of the series consists of correspondence or papers of the law librarian, John T. Vance. This series documents the operations of the Law Library and includes correspondence, bibliographies, printed matter, photographs and a guest book. The collection is organized into two groups: general office files and John T. Vance desk papers. General office files mainly include general Law Library correspondence as well as correspondence with donors. Specific correspondence relates to efforts to establish a collection of works in the Law Library to honor the memory of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.. Also included is correspondence with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover in 1933 relating to the possible establishment of an institute of criminology in Washington, D.C. Also included in the general office file is a guest book for the Law Library and periodicals. The John T. Vance desk papers cover Vance's time as law librarian (1924-1943) and includes general correspondence, Vance's speeches and writings, photographs, and newspaper clippings in Spanish.

Arrangement of the Collection

This collection is arranged in two groups, general office files and John T. Vance desk papers, and thereunder alphabetically by name of person or organization or by type of material.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr., 1841-1935.

Hoover, J. Edgar (John Edgar), 1895-1972--Correspondence.

Vance, John Thomas, 1884-1943. John T. Vance desk papers. 1920-1943.

Organizations

Law Library of Congress (U.S.)

Library of Congress. Law Department.

Library of Congress. Law Library.

Library of Congress. Library of Congress archives.

Subjects

Law libraries--Washington (D.C.)

National libraries--United States.

Titles

Library of Congress archives, Law Library records series

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	General office files
BOX 1	General correspondence, 1905-1942 (4 folders)
BOX 2	General correspondence, 1943-1955, undated (3 folders)
BOX 2	Bibliographies, 1917-1941, undated
BOX 2	Catchings, Benjamin Silas, 1943
BOX 2	Consentini, Francesco, 1931-1938
BOX 2	Frensdorff, Ferdinand, 1931-1932
BOX 2	Friends of the Law Library
BOX 2	General, 1932-1934, July
BOX 3	General, 1934, Aug.-1939
BOX 3	Membership list and miscellany, 1937, undated
BOX 3	Hispanic matters, Latin America, 1928-1942
BOX 3	Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Jr., memory of 1934-1938
BOX 3	Hoover, J. Edgar, 1933
BOX 3	Landsberg, Ernst, library of 1931-1932
BOX 3	Legal literature, 1908-1943, undated (2 folders)
BOX 3	Oettingen-Wallerstein Library, Maihingen, Bavaria, Germany, 1911-1934
BOX 4	Guest book, 1945-1963
BOX 4	Periodicals, 1912-1937, undated
BOX 4	Travel, 1926-1944, undated
BOX 4	Wilbur, James B., Trust, 1928-1932
BOX 4	Vance, John T., desk papers
BOX 4	General, 1925-1943 (4 folders)
BOX 5	General, undated
BOX 5	Board of Christian Work in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1927-1940 (2 folders)
BOX 5	Newspaper clippings, undated
BOX 5	Photographs, 1925, undated
BOX 5	Speeches and writings, 1934-1939, undated
BOX 5	Troop, John R., estate, 1920-1930