

One of my favorite buildings in our country is the Library of Congress. It is a strikingly ornate structure celebrating our history and heritage as embodied in our most valued literary works. As a member of the House of Representatives' Library of Congress Caucus, committed to raising awareness of this very creative institution and the plethora of programs it offers, I would like to call your attention to the Library of Congress' latest endeavor, the World Digital Library.

Imagine the following: Handwritten letters from Christopher Columbus. Timeworn maps of newly-discovered lands. Ancient Mayan, Aztec, and Chinese stele and hand-illuminated manuscripts by European monks. Drawings of captive slaves of the Amistad and videos of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in 1906. These are just a few cultural treasures now available online thanks to the U.S. Library of Congress' new free online World Digital Library collection.

The Library of Congress recently launched this unprecedented initiative to bring free public online access to many of the world's most significant cultural works. This enriching collection shows some of the world's greatest treasures, enhancing the teaching and learning experiences of educators and students worldwide. The Library of Congress is incorporating the World Digital Library into its Teaching with Primary Sources program to improve research opportunities available to elementary, secondary, and college students, and is working to help our teachers incorporate these primary source documents into their American and world history, art, foreign language, and other lesson plans.

Each item is accompanied by thorough bibliographic information and descriptions written by curators and experts across the globe that answer the questions, "What is this item and why is it significant?" Various manuscripts, maps, rare books, musical scores, recordings, films, prints, photographs, architectural drawings, and more may be easily searched or browsed by place, time, topic, type of item, and institution from which it was contributed.

Interactive maps also allow one to search the works of a particular continent and an interactive timeline permits searching works between 8000 BC and 2009 AD. Want to know more about Egyptian antiquities through 640 A.D.? What about developments in science and technology in China from 500 A.D.? Slide the timeline bar, and selected works are at your hands. These tools are very helpful to teachers and students of world history.

The World Digital Library is a joint venture between the U.S. Library of Congress, the National Archives, several U.S. partners, and 28 institutions from 19 countries, including the national libraries of Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Russia, Serbia, and Sweden and two Mexican cultural institutions. Material is translated in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish (the official languages of the United Nations), and Portuguese. The cooperation and collaboration of these partners has produced an invaluable resource for the use of generations to come.

Whether you are a student, educator, or a general lover of learning, I highly encourage visiting—and bookmarking—the World Digital Library online today at [www.wdl.org](http://www.wdl.org).