Background Information

The visible Library of Congress comprises three imposing structures near the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC: the huge Jefferson, Madison, and Adams buildings, which sit on adjacent city blocks (and interconnect via underground walkways). The Jefferson Building (which we will NOT visit) is architecturally and artistically the most magnificent, and is the site of frequent daily guided tours for the general public (highly recommended—some other day!). The Library is structured into several divisions and departments distributed between these three buildings as well as in remote facilities; some departmental units have public functions while others maintain behind-the-scenes-type operations. **Our visit will involve the Madison Building only.** If you arrive early, you could visit the small fast-food court (Subway, Dunkin Donuts) on the below-ground level (Rm G47) or the cafeteria on the 6th floor (Rm 625). After the orientation, you are free to go, or to stay to conduct your own research (or even consult with a research librarian).

There are several different reading rooms for specific reference collections. The **Performing Arts Reading Room** (where one can access the music, theater, and dance collections) is located in the Madison building, as is the Newspapers Reading Room (where one can access several hundred American and foreign newspapers dating back to the 1700s) and the Copyright Division. Be aware that some items in the various collections may be stored at off-site locations; if needed, these must be requested in advance, and retrieval may take a number of days.

All books, scores, recordings, periodicals, etc. held by the LOC are for **on-site reference use only**—no items can be borrowed. Also, these materials are largely located in closed stacks—except for common reference items and a small selection of current journals, patrons cannot generally browse the stacks, but rather must search the various catalogs/finding aids and request specific items at the desk using call-number slips; the desired items (no more than three at a time) will be retrieved and delivered to you by a stacks attendant (retrieval typically takes 5-10 minutes in Performing Arts, but 30-45 minutes in Jefferson Building’s main reading room).

Security and access

As at many Washington DC buildings and attractions, entrances are controlled and all persons entering must pass through airport-style security checkpoints—be prepared to empty your pockets of coins and keys, remove wristwatches or jewelry, etc. Your belongings may be inspected both on the way in and the way out. Most reading rooms and archives have restrictions on the kind of items you may bring in (e.g. **no coats or jackets, no large bags or backpacks, no food/beverages**, etc.), so travel “light” and take advantage of cloakrooms. You can bring laptop (without its case), notepaper, and **PENCILS** (pens make them nervous). Digital cameras are OK.

Obtaining a reader card and a copy machine card

To be admitted to any of the reading rooms, you must have an official reader card displaying your name, photo and a unique LOC-assigned ID number; this can be obtained by any adult after completing a computerized registration form (mailing address, institutional affiliations, research interests, etc) and showing a valid state-issued photo ID showing residence address. There is a room on the main floor of the Madison Library where first-time researchers typically do this; the process takes a few minutes per person (unless there is a long line).
In most reading rooms (including Performing Arts Reading Room) you must present your card at a desk upon entrance and sign yourself into a visitor logbook. You also display your reader card when requesting items from the stacks (the call-slips must include your name, ID, and seat). To use copy machines or printers, you will need to obtain a separate print card and load it with money; get this in the Periodicals Reading Room on the main floor of Madison.

**TRAVEL DIRECTIONS**

Because of **traffic congestion and limited, expensive parking**, it is not recommended to drive to the Library of Congress—use the subway! Take Metrorail to the **CAPITOL SOUTH station** (Orange or Blue lines). As you exit the subway station via the escalator (shown in the center of the map on the right), you will see the Cannon office building directly in front of you across C Street, and the back of the LC’s Madison building ahead and to your right, diagonally across C Street and 1st Street. **The public entrance to the Madison building** is in the center of its north side (facing Independence Ave.).

So, from the Metro merely walk one block north up 1st Street to Independence Avenue, turn right, and proceed to the entrance in the middle of the block. To enter you must go through a security checkpoint metal detector; the **information lobby** is just beyond. **WE WILL MEET IN THIS LOBBY by 1:30 pm** and proceed to the reader registration room for our ID cards (feel free to do this on-your-own if you arrive early). After obtaining ID cards, we’ll continue to Performing Arts for a 90-min. orientation to the Music Division and a 20-min. intro to the nearby Recorded Sound Center; we’ll be done between 3:45 and 4 pm.

For Metro station maps, trip planning, time-points, fares, parking ramp cost, and other useful information, consult [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com). CUE buses and a campus shuttle run from GMU to the Metro station regularly. Metro fares will *probably* be $3.60 into DC and $5.90 (“peak” fare) outbound—but management frequently changes the rates. Give yourself plenty of time (better to show up at LC early and eat lunch (in the 6th floor cafeteria or the ground-floor mini food court) than to miss our group and wander the halls aimlessly). **When there is no empty parking spot in the ramps at the Vienna station, I move on to the lot at West Falls Church**... (wasting 15 minutes)...