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Front Cover: Doré's illustration of the poem's narrator sitting by the fire while death pictured as a skeleton sits beside him on the ground and angels appear behind them. From The Raven illustrated by Gustave Doré (1884) located in the California History Section.

Back Cover: *Ambrose Bierce*, painting by J.H.E. Partington. c. unknown. Coutersy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

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CSL Celebrates America's 250th

By Jeff Barbosa, CSL Information Officer

Representatives of the state executive, legislative and judiciary branches, joined veterans, educators, community leaders, and librarians in the California State Library's Gillis Hall on July 8 for a celebratory reading commemorating the 250th anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Though it was adopted on July 4, 1776, the first public reading of the Declaration did not occur until four days later.

At 3 PM Pacific Daylight Time, similar events were occurring in all 50 states, five U.S. territories, the District of Columbia, and 46 sites outside America, as part of the "Sharing the Spirit of America" program. Readings occurred at more than 1,100 locations on all seven continents, according to the program's website.

At Gillis Hall, Jessica Knox-Jensen, State Library Services bureau chief, read introductory remarks highlighting the Declaration's "bold and world-changing idea: that people are born with inherent rights, that governments exist to secure those rights, and that legitimacy flows from the consent of the governed."

The Declaration, though, is a product of its era and contains moral contradictions, she explained. Its principles set a standard and each generation of Americans must recommit to the "work of liberty and equality for all."

State Librarian Greg Lucas started the ceremonial reading of the Declaration of Independence, and it concluded with Associate Justice Ronald R. Robie of the Third District Court of Appeal. In between, Deputy State Librarian Rebecca Wendt, other librarians, public servants, and a representative of the Sons of the American Revolution, read short sections of the Declaration.

Following the ceremony, guests visited the library's United States of America 250 exhibit, exploring the legacy of, not only the Declaration, but the Constitution and First Amendment, too.

Displays in Gillis Hall featured seminal speeches in American history, such as Washington's Farewell Address, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, President Franklin Roosevelt's and President John F. Kennedy's inauguration speeches, and Reverend Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" address from the March on Washington.

In his own way, King sought to get America to recommit to its founding principles. He described the Declaration of Independence as a "promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

There is no better place in the public arena for communities to explore these rights than a library. Collectively or individually, having the freedom to a vast amount of knowledge, resources and history can enable anyone to pursue their goals and dreams.

One need look no further than the Founding Fathers who availed themselves of the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia, founded by Benjamin Franklin, as they created the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Two-hundred-fifty years after the Declaration's first public reading, the spirit of America is still being shared in libraries across the United States.



Jeff Barbosa is an Information Officer at the California State Library. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from San Jose State University. He worked for the California State Legislature for 28 years before joining the library in 2023.


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WRITINGS OF
THE FOUNDERS


SPEECHES THAT
DEFINED AMERICA



1 Pileopsis. 2 Calyptera. 3 Crepidula. 4 Ancylus. 5 Bullœa.
6 Bulla. 7 Aplysia. 8 Dolabella. 9 Parmacella. 10 Limax.
11 Testacella. 12 Vitrina. 13 Helix. 14 Carocolla. 15 Anostoma
16 Helicina. 17 Pupa. 18 Clausilia. 19 Bulimus. 20 Achatina.
21 Succinea. 22 Auricula. 23 Cyclostoma. 24 Planorbis
25 Physa. 26 Lymnea. 27 Melania. 28 Melanopsis. 29 Pirena
30 Valvata. 31 Paludina. 32 Ampularia. 33 Neritina.
34 Navicella. 35 Nerita.

P.S. Duval, Lith. Phil.ª