Believing at age 32 that an “ample and well chosen Assortment of Books” could serve seven possible ends—Fame, Fortune, Power, God, Country, Clients, and Fellow Men—John Adams (1735–1826) began assembling one of the greatest private libraries in early America. This extraordinary collection of more than 3,500 volumes is the culmination of the second president’s lifelong endeavor. John Adams’s personal library provides a unique window into the mind and heart of this remarkable founding father as he built and used this collection throughout his active personal and political life.

“One of the largest private libraries of its time, the John Adams Library is one of the few early American book collections to survive intact. This library is a treasure house of knowledge, its contents spanning centuries and continents, offering invaluable insight into the mind of a truly great figure. The library is a testament to the power of books and their ability to shape and be shaped by the human spirit.”

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Special Thanks Massachusetts Historical Society

National Park Service, Adams National Historical Park

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Tour Coordination American Library Association Public Programs Office, Chicago, IL

Unknown artist, John Adams, undated. After the original 1783 portrait by John Singleton Copley. Courtesy of National Park Service, Adams National Historical Park

John Adams Unbound is a national traveling exhibition for libraries organized by the Boston Public Library and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. It is based on a major exhibition of the same name on display at the Boston Public Library, Copley Square, in 2006 and 2007. To learn more about the John Adams Library, please visit www.johnadamslibrary.org.

The traveling exhibition and tour have been made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to the Boston Public Library. John Adams Unbound has been designated as part of the NEH’s We the People initiative, exploring significant events and themes in our nation’s history and culture and advancing knowledge of the principles that define America. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.