

Fire!

The Librarian's Foresight

It is thanks in large part to the first Parliamentary Librarian, Alpheus Todd, that the Library was preserved from the fire that destroyed Canada's main parliament building on February 3, 1916. He suggested to the building's architects that a hallway and fireproof iron doors separate the Library from Centre Block.



Library and Archives Canada

Saving the Library

By ordering the iron doors shut, Library clerk Michael MacCormac ensured that the Library could survive the 1916 fire. The above photo shows the iron doors before their removal in 1918, during reconstruction.



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A Fiery History

Two other fires have scorched the Library of Parliament: one in 1849 destroyed the pre-Confederation parliament buildings in Montréal, and another in 1952 damaged the Library alone in its Parliament Hill location. Following the 1952 fire, books damaged by water were difficult to dry because of the thinness of paper and the thickness of volumes.

The historic plaque located at the Canadian Museum of Nature

After the fire, Parliament was housed in the Victoria Memorial Museum Building (now the Canadian Museum of Nature). Only lightly damaged by the fire, the Library remained in service throughout, shuttling documents and books the 1.6 kilometres to parliamentarians in their temporary location.



Courtesy of Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and the Canadian Museum of Nature

