



RICE UNIVERSITY
Fondren Library



Exhibiting Democracy:

Creative Strategies for Government Information Outreach

Anna Xiong



Head, [Kelley Center for Government Information and Civic Engagement](#), FDLP Coordinator
Fondren Library, Rice University
jax2@rice.edu

Abby Stovall



Research Services Librarian,
Fondren Library, Rice University
as622@rice.edu

Federal Depository Library Annual Conference, September 23 2026

Agenda!

- Overview of Fondren Library and the exhibit
- Exhibit planning process
- Exhibit installation process
- Promotion and Impact
- Lessons Learned
- Future plans

About Fondren Library

- Located in Houston, Texas, Fondren Library Supports the teaching and research needs of the students, faculty and staff of Rice University.
- Fondren Library is the Federal Depository Library (#0608C) for the 7th Congressional District in the State of Texas.



Aerial shot of Fondren Library at Rice University

About the exhibit

- Part of America250@Fondren initiative and Fondren's exhibit program

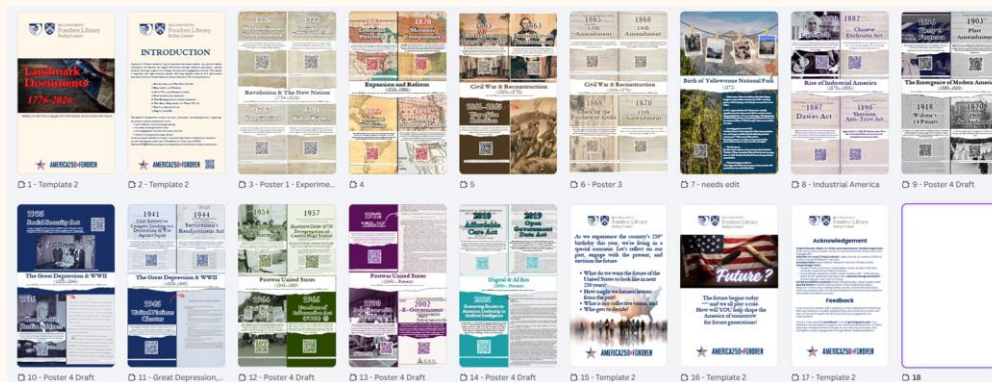
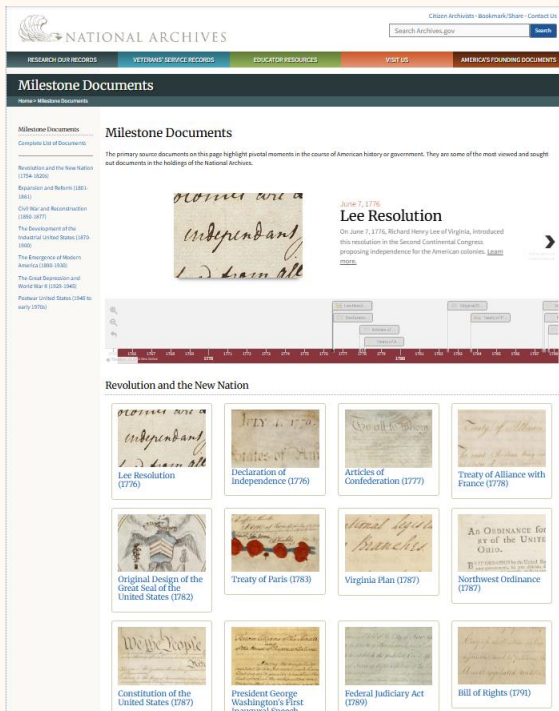


About the exhibit

- Landmark Documents 1776–2026
- Launched July 1st, 2026



From here



To here



How did we achieve it?

Content Planning

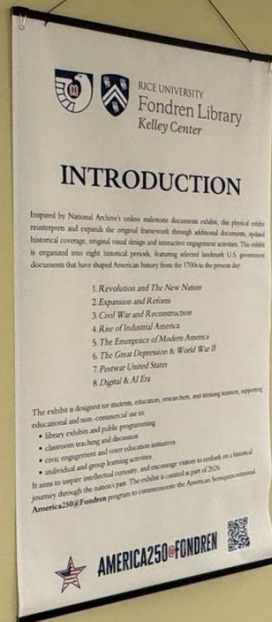
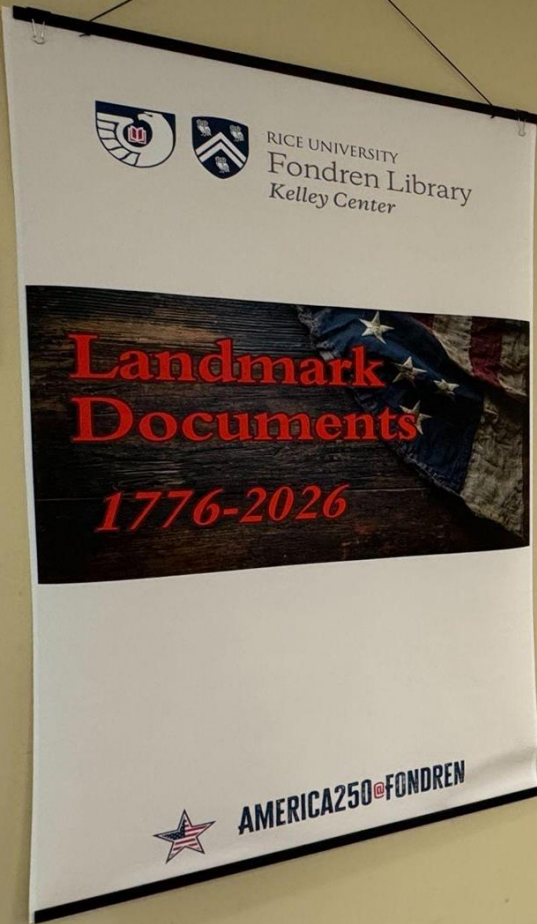
- Exhibit starting point
 - Inspired by NARA milestone government documents
 - Expanding upon their framework
- Selection criteria
 - Input from students and colleagues
 - Considered the scope/focus of future America250@Fondren programming



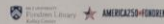
Space Design

Initial Questions

- What is the ideal size of the wall area for our exhibit?
- What is an ideal and realistic number of government documents to include?
- Should we use canvas, glossy paper and/or any other materials for our exhibit?
- How elaborate should the graphic design be?
- When should we launch the exhibit—January, March, or July? What are the pros and cons of each option?
- Do we have sufficient time, staff, budget, and supplies?
- What permissions or approvals do we need?



Visitor Guide



Welcome to our exhibit "Landmark Documents: 1776-2026!"

This exhibit explores key government documents that have shaped the history of the United States. By examining these documents within their historical context, visitors are invited to reflect on the ideas, events, and decisions that have influenced American society and to consider the important role government information plays in documenting, informing, and shaping our nation. As you explore the exhibit, we encourage you to think critically about the past, engage with the present, and consider the future of democracy, civic participation, and informed citizenship in an increasingly digital and AI-driven world.

During Your Visit

Reflection questions. Look for reflection questions and interactive activities designed to encourage deeper thinking, meaningful discussion, and engagement with the topics.

QR codes. Scan the QR codes to access full-text documents, videos, audio recordings, and additional resources for richer learning experience.

Guestbook. Share thoughts and feedback in the guestbook located at the end of the exhibit.

Group Visits

For class visits, group tours, or customized learning experiences, contact: govhelp@rice.edu

Free Takeaways

Visitors are welcome to pick up complimentary pocket U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence, bookmarks, stickers, and buttons at the Kelley Center Information desk while supplies last. We also love to hear what you prefer most.

This exhibit is part of the **America250@Fondren Program**, commemorating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the **Declaration of Independence**, also encouraging exploration of American history through government information, civic engagement, and informed dialogue. Educators, librarians, and community organizations are encouraged to adapt, share, and build upon this exhibit framework for educational purposes. When referencing or using this exhibit, please use the following citation:

America250@Fondren Program. (2026). Landmark Documents: 1776-2026. Exhibit. Fondren Library, Rice University.

Thank you for visiting!

Reflect on the Past • Engage with the Present • Envision the Future

Fondren Library Information Center for Government Information and Civic Engagement: govhelp@rice.edu

Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1810s)

Questions:

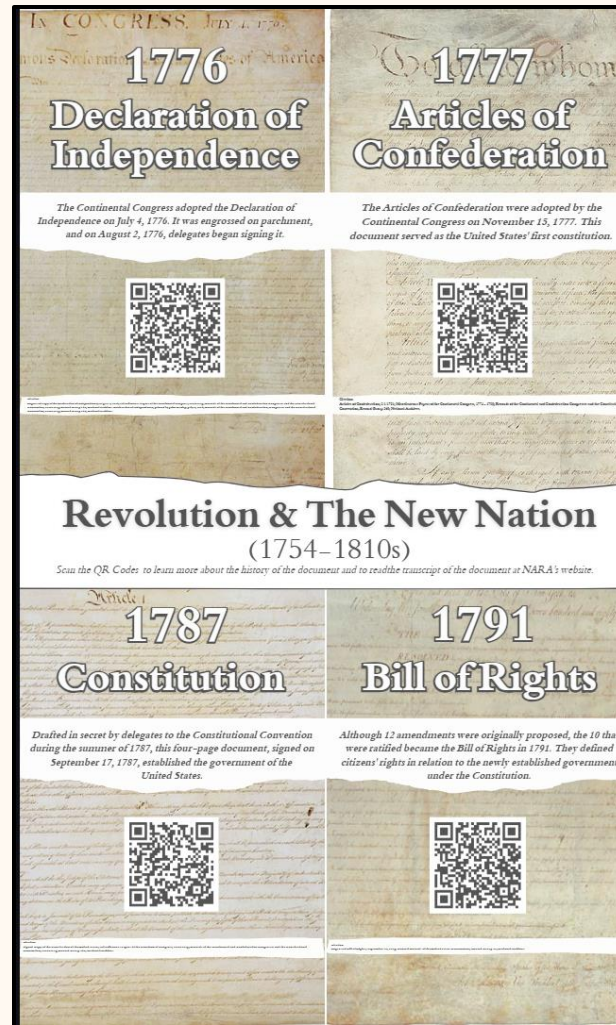
- Declaration of Independence:** What grievances are listed as the reason for separating from Britain?
- Articles of Confederation:** Why did the Articles of Confederation fail?
- Constitution:** Imagine you are a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Which part of the Constitution would you consider vital? Why?
- Bill of Rights:** Which rights are guaranteed in the First Amendment? What connects them; why are they all in one amendment?

Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1810s)

Questions:

- **Declaration of Independence:** What grievances are listed as the reason for separating from Britain?
- **Articles of Confederation:** Why did the Articles of Confederation fail?
- **Constitution:** Imagine you are a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Which part of the Constitution would you consider vital? Why?
- **Bill of Rights:** Which rights are guaranteed in the First Amendment? What connects them; why are they all in one amendment?

Canva Design and Reflection Question



1863 War Department General Order 143

The War Department issued General Order 143 on May 23, 1863, creating the United States Colored Troops. By the end of the Civil War, roughly 176,000 Black men (10 percent of the Union Army) served as soldiers in the U.S. Army, and another 19,000 served in the Navy.



1863 Emancipation Proclamation

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, announcing, "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious areas "are, and henceforward shall be free."



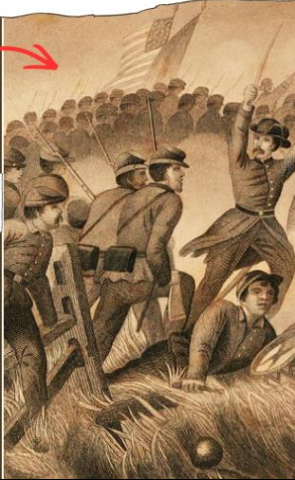
Civil War & Reconstruction (1860s-1870s)

Scan the QR Codes to access the cited documents and learn more about it.

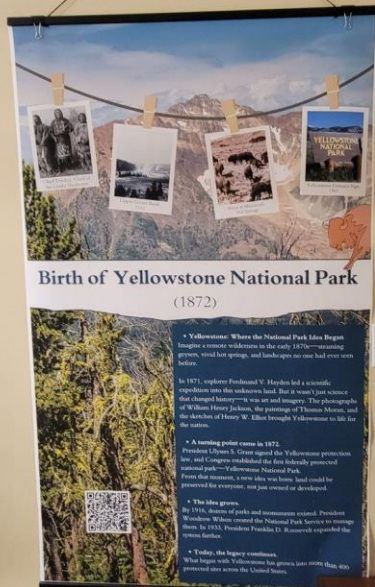
1861-1865 War of the Rebellion

The War of the Rebellion is a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies that were published by order of Congress by the Government Printing Office between 1881 and 1901.









- **Yellowstone: Where the National Park Idea Began**
Imagine a remote wilderness in the early 1870s—steaming geysers, vivid hot springs, and landscapes no one had ever seen before.

In 1871, explorer Ferdinand V. Hayden led a scientific expedition into this unknown land. But it wasn't just science that changed history—it was art and imagery. The photographs of William Henry Jackson, the paintings of Thomas Moran, and the sketches of Henry W. Elliot brought Yellowstone to life for the nation.

- **A turning point came in 1872**
President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone protection law, and Congress established the first federally protected national park—Yellowstone National Park. From that moment, a new idea was born: land could be preserved for everyone, not just owned or developed.

- **The idea grows**
By 1916, dozens of parks and monuments existed. President Woodrow Wilson created the National Park Service to manage them. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt expanded the system further.

- **Today, the legacy continues**
What began with Yellowstone has grown into more than 400 protected sites across the United States.



Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

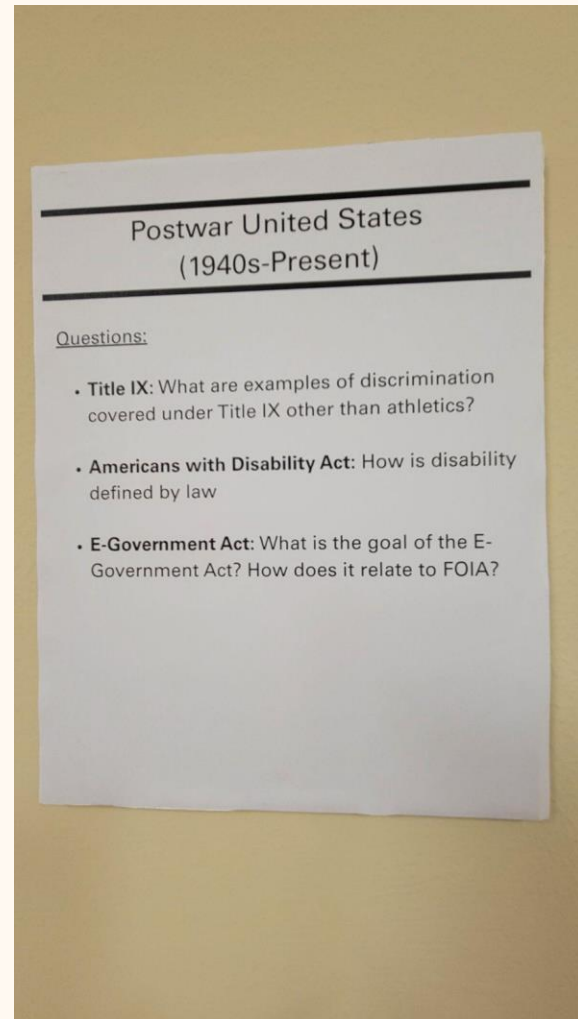
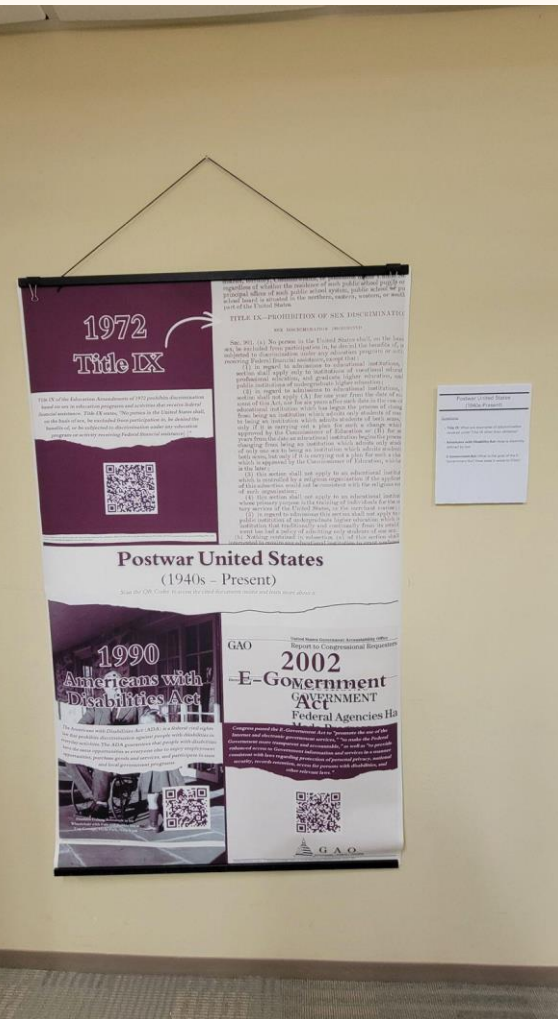
Questions:

- **Plessy v. Ferguson:** Who is Jim Crow and what does he have to do with Plessy v. Ferguson.
- **Platt Amendment:** What limitations were placed on Cuba's independence by the United States.
- **Wilson's 14 Points:** What is ironic about President Wilson's creation of and campaign for The League of Nations OR Why did Wilson's 14 Points not succeed?
- **19th Amendment:** Since they couldn't vote to approve the amendment, what strategies did women use to get the Amendment passed?



Link to online video resource





2010

Affordable Care Act

[As Amended Through May 4, 2010]

Office of the Legislative Counsel

The Affordable Care Act, effective as of September 8, 2010, is the largest health care reform in the United States to date, and is the most comprehensive health care reform in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States.



2019

Open Government Data Act

[As Amended Through May 4, 2019]

Office of the Legislative Counsel

The Open Government Data Act, effective as of September 8, 2019, is the largest health care reform in the United States to date, and is the most comprehensive health care reform in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States.



Digital & AI Era

(2000s - Present)

From the 19th Conference on the United States and from the 19th

2025

Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence

[As Amended Through May 4, 2025]

Office of the Legislative Counsel

The Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence Act, effective as of September 8, 2025, is the largest health care reform in the United States to date, and is the most comprehensive health care reform in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States.



2025

Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence

[As Amended Through May 4, 2025]

Office of the Legislative Counsel

The Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence Act, effective as of September 8, 2025, is the largest health care reform in the United States to date, and is the most comprehensive health care reform in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States. The Act provides for the creation of a new health care system, which will be the most comprehensive health care system in the history of the United States.

Digital and AI Era
(2000s-Present)

Questions:

- Affordable Care Act:** What industry was most radically overhauled and subject to numerous regulations by the Act?
- Open Government Data Act:** What two previous acts are related to this Act?
- Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence Executive Order:** What executive order does this presidential action revoke? Compare/contrast the E-Government Act, FOIA, Open Government Data Act, and these 2 executive orders?

Digital and AI Era
(2000s-Present)

Questions:

- For the Panel Open Government in the Digital Age:** Does making government information available online guarantee equal access for everyone? What challenges remain?
- Can government information be made open, accessible, trustworthy, and sustainable while protecting privacy and national interests?**

Digital and AI Era

(2000s-Present)

Questions:

- Affordable Care Act:** What industry was most radically overhauled and subject to numerous regulations by the Act?
- Open Government Data Act:** What two previous acts are related to this Act?
- Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence Executive Order:** What executive order does this presidential action revoke? Compare/contrast the E-Government Act, FOIA, Open Government Data Act, and these 2 executive orders?

Digital and AI Era

(2000s-Present)

Questions:

- For the Panel Open Government in the Digital Age:** Does making government information available online guarantee equal access for everyone? What challenges remain?
- Can government information be made open, accessible, trustworthy, and sustainable while protecting privacy and national interests?**



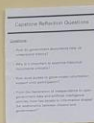
RICE UNIVERSITY
Fondren Library
Kelley Center

As we experience the country's 250th birthday this year, we're living in a special moment. Let's reflect on our past, engage with the present, and envision the future.

- What do we want the future of the United States to look like in next 250 years?
- How might we harness lessons from the past?
- What is our collective vision, and
- Who gets to decide?



AMERICA250@FONDREN



Capstone Reflection Questions

Questions:

- How do government documents help us understand history?
- Why is it important to examine historical documents critically?
- How does access to government information support civic participation?
- From the Declaration of Independence to open government data and artificial intelligence policies, how has access to information shaped the relationship between citizens and government?"



RICE UNIVERSITY
Fondren Library
Kelley Center



The future begins today
— and we all play a role.
How will YOU help shape the
America of tomorrow
for future generations?



AMERICA250@FONDREN

- crafts, hands-on activities, bookmarks and stickers
- visit library.rice.edu/america250 for all the information



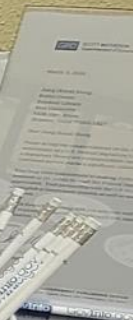
EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

CONTACT

Anna Xiong, Head of Kelley Center for Government Information and Civic Engagement, at jax2@rice.edu, Office: B38A, library basement, or email ask@rice.libanswers.com.

The program is a non-partisan, non-political, educational and engaging initiative. It is a cross-library collaboration and aims to be integrated into your learning, teaching, research, and daily life, supporting the Rice University Moment@ Strategic Plan and the new Fondren Library Strategic Plan.

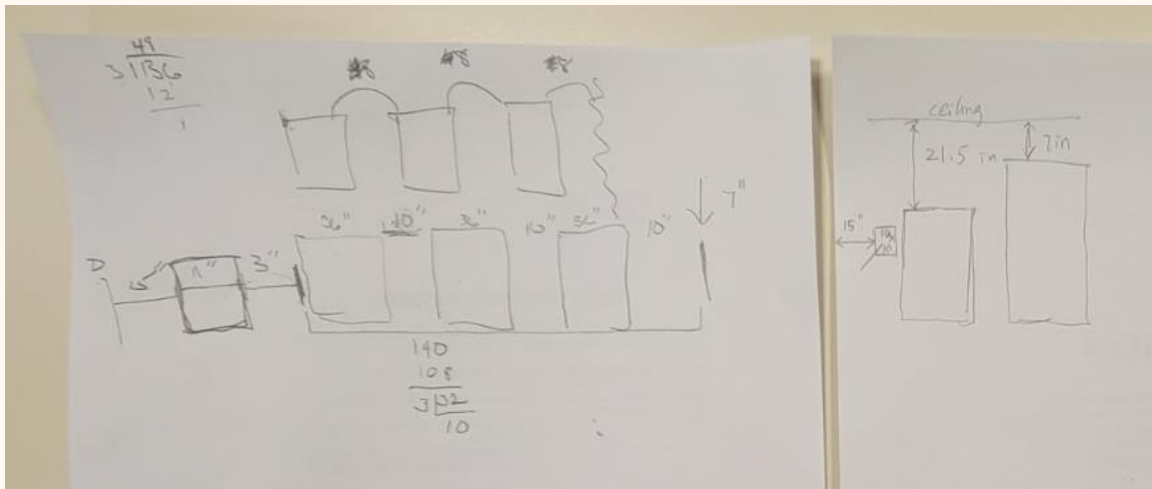
Follow Us!





Installation









\$13.96 60 Pack Large Binder Clips 1.6
Inch, Big Paper Clamps Clips Black

\$2.94 [Pen + Gear Push
Pin, clear, 200 Count](#)

\$38.99 [Artmag 4 Pack
Magnetic Poster Hanger
Frame 36 x 48](#)

\$55 [Susan B Anthony
Cardboard Cutout Standup](#)

\$55 [Life Size Cardboard
Cutout Historical Figure, 6ft
Abraham Lincoln](#)



In house printing 36 x 60 in





Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1810s)

Questions

- Declaration of Independence: What provisions are listed as the reasons for separating from Britain?
- Articles of Confederation: Why did the Articles of Confederation fail?
- Constitution: Imagine you are a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. Which part of the Constitution would you consider vital? Why?
- Bill of Rights: Which rights are guaranteed in the First Amendment? What concerns from why are they all in one amendment?

proposed, the 10 that
1791. They defined
published government
n.

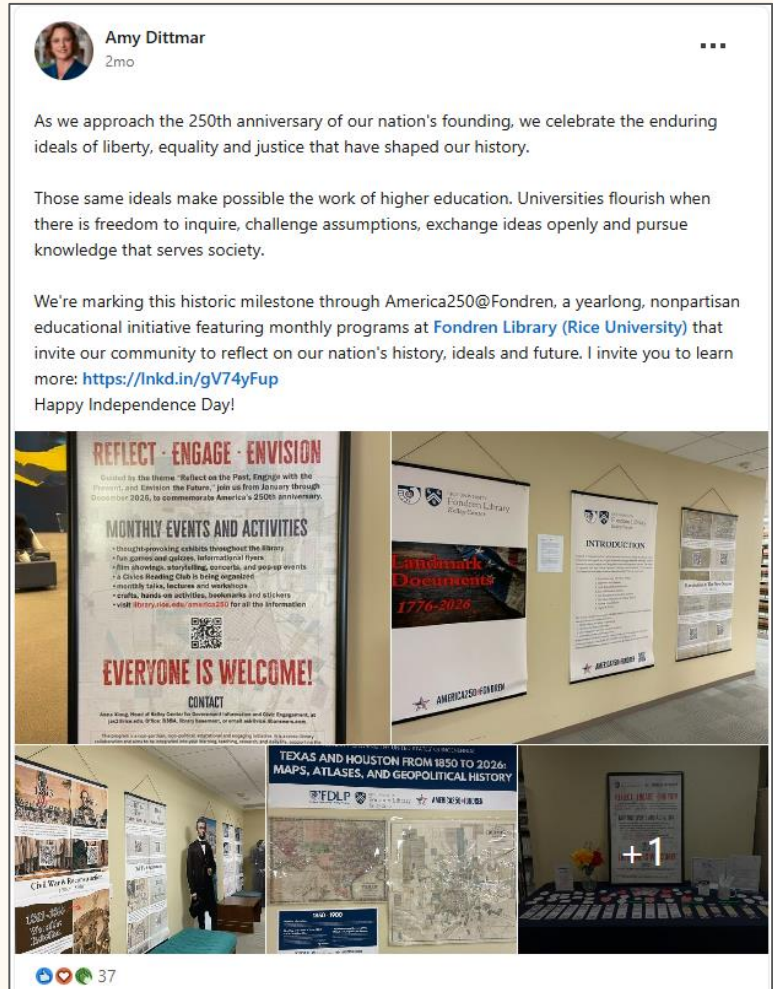
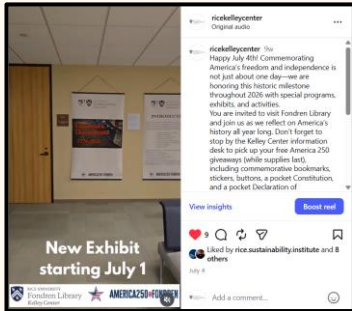
Promotion and Impact

- [Texas America250 Event Website](#)
- Local venues
- Social media highlights

[Instagram reel](#): How to find Kelley Center and this exhibit

- Video created by a student, for students!

[LinkedIn post](#): A post from a Vice Provost on July 4th highlighting the exhibit and our library's year long programming efforts. (See the screenshot to the right)



Lessons Learned

- Involve students (or your audience) in the exhibit creation process
 - Student workers, colleagues, library guests
- Use events and programs to cross promote exhibits
- If your library has younger visitors, a similar exhibit might need more structural reinforcements

Future Plans

- Teaching, hosting classes and other groups
 - Upcoming Constitution Day panel discussion
- Archiving the exhibit
 - Institutional Repository
 - [Texas America 250 Collaborative Web Archive](#)
- Using this equipment and knowledge to support future exhibits

References

America250@Fondren Planning Committee, Rice University Fondren Library. (2026).

America250@Fondren—Commemorating America's semiquincentennial anniversary. Rice University. <https://library.rice.edu/america250>

Xiong, A., Stovall, A., Kelleher, M., et al. (2026). Landmark documents, 1776–2026 [Onsite wall exhibition]. Rice University, Fondren Library, America250@Fondren Program.

National Archives. (2021, April 9). Milestone documents. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/list>

Rice University. (2024). Aerial shot of Fondren Library [Photograph]. PhotoShelter.

https://rice.photoshelter.com/search/result/I000095cYG.z76Zc?terms=fondren&include_tags=true&

Acknowledgement

Project Director, Editor-in-Chief, and Lead Selector; Student Supervisor:

Anna Xiong, Head of Kelley Center for Government Information and Civic Engagement

Selection Co-Lead / Project Advisor : Abby Stovall, U.S. History & Political Science Librarian/Research Services

Assistant Editor: Mary Kelleher, Research Librarian 1/Kelley Center

Visual Design Team:

- Student Team Lead: Rocio Vides/Kelley Center student staff; Rice University sophomore, Political Science
- Visual Design Assistants: Kelley Center student staff – Griffin Brooks, Nana Annor, Apollinaire Mendoza (also **Question Design Assistant**), Andrea Nguyen, and Joshua Cheng.

Exhibit Installation Assistant: Daira Posada/Kelley Center student staff

Special thanks to Norie Guthrie and Dr. Portia Hopkins/Woodson Research Center, Mary Kelleher/Kelley Center, and all other librarians, staff, and students who contributed feedback to the document selection and exhibit installation process.



AMERICA250@FONDREN

Questions?

Thank You!

Anna Xiong



Head, [Kelley Center for Government Information and Civic Engagement](#),
Fondren Library, Rice University
jax2@rice.edu

Abby Stovall



Research Services Librarian,
Fondren Library, Rice University
as622@rice.edu



library.rice.edu/gov



ricegovinfo.blogspot.com



[@ricekelleycenter](https://www.instagram.com/ricekelleycenter)