

HISTORY OF THE LINDA HALL LIBRARY

The Linda Hall Library, the world's largest privately endowed library of science, engineering, and technology, is recognized internationally for the breadth and depth of its holdings and for its renowned History of Science Collection. The Library was created by a bequest from Herbert Freeland Hall and his wife, Linda Southall Hall, who left their estate and six million dollars to establish a "free public library for the use of the people of Kansas City and the public generally."

Herbert Hall (1858 – 1941) grew up in South Paris, Maine. At the age of eighteen, he journeyed west and taught school in Wisconsin and California before migrating back towards the Midwest. Around 1881, he was hired to run a grain elevator in Chapman, Kansas, and in 1883, he was transferred to Kansas City to sell wheat. Mr. Hall won respect for his integrity, business acumen, initiative, and courage. In 1887, he co-founded the Hall Robinson Grain Company; a 1903 merger created the Hall-Baker Grain Company headquartered in the Kansas City Board of Trade. Under Mr. Hall's direction, Hall-Baker grew to be the largest exporter of grain from the United States. When Congress nationalized all American grain exports in 1930, he sold the company's facilities to the Farmers' National Grain Corporation and retired.

Linda Southall (1859 – 1938) moved to Kansas City from Richmond, Virginia, as a young woman. She married Herbert Hall on December 23, 1885. The couple had no children, and Linda devoted much of her time and considerable resources to philanthropy. The Halls were prominent members of Kansas City society, adventuresome international travelers, and ardent collectors of antiques. In 1912, they build their Georgian-style home on this site and created an arboretum on the surrounding acres.

The Halls' wills named the original trustees and directed them to determine the type of library the Linda Hall should be. In the aftermath of World War II, the trustees, under the direction of Paul D. Bartlett, Sr., concluded that a research library focused on science, engineering, and technology would best support the development of Kansas City. They hired Joseph C. Shipman to be president of the Linda Hall Library and acquired the library of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston to provide a nucleus for the Linda Hall Library's collections. This library traced its origins back to John Adams, and included a significant number of rare books and journals that formed the basis of the Linda Hall Library's current history of Science Collection.

The Linda Hall Library opened in 1946 in the Hall's home. From its beginning, the Library's collecting policy emphasized the collection of contemporary journals, books, and technical reports that were not duplicated locally. The collection has been enhanced by major acquisitions from the Franklin Institute and the Engineering Societies' Library. A 90,000 square foot building opened in 1956 to accommodate the growing collection; in 1964, the Hall's home was razed to make way for a new wing. Two additions to the main Library were completed during the 190s, and a three-story addition to the west wing was completed in 2006.