John Shaw Billings Encyclopedia Article

John Shaw Billings

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1838-1913

American surgeon and librarian who is credited with developing the first system for organizing medical literature in the United States. Between 1864 and 1895 Billings developed the Army Medical Library, which eventually became the National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical reference library. In 1879 he began the *Index Medicus,* a monthly guide to medical literature, which is still in use in the United States today. Billings spent the last 17 years of his life as the first director of the New York Public Library.