

**AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES:
A MODEL FOR ESTABLISHING PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES
IN THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA***

Chang C. Lee**

ABSTRACT

The first American Presidential Library, the Roosevelt Presidential Library, was created in 1941. Since then, every succeeding president has established one. In contrast, the Republic of China (ROC) is eighty years old and still no presidential libraries have been established there. Based on the American Presidential Library System, the author proposes that presidential libraries be established in the ROC.

Introduction

The purpose of creating Presidential Libraries is to preserve and make accessible to the general public American presidential documents. For instance, tremendous contributions to the preservation of national heritage and stimulation of study, research, and general public education as well as the promotion of patriotism have been made by these institutions.

The Republic of China, the first Republic in Asia, is eighty years old. Since the proclamation of its constitution in 1946, there have been four presidents. Although there is a Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, no Presidential Library has been established.

In less than nine years, the world will enter the year 2000 and a new information age. To meet the information needs of researchers, historians,

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** University Librarian and Archivist. University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, U.S.A.

and the general public, now is the time for the people and government of the Republic of China to establish such new institutions -- Presidential Libraries.

This paper begins by exploring the historical background, development, and management of Presidential Libraries in the United States. Subsequently, policies and guidelines for establishing Presidential Libraries in the Republic of China will be discussed base on the American Presidential Library System.

Personal Property

When George Washington completed his presidency in 1797, he shipped all of his official documents and materials to his hometown in Mount Vernon, Virginia. He claimed that all these documents and materials were his personal property. He carried over this tradition of ownership from England.¹ John Adams and ensuing presidents followed Washington's example by taking all papers and documents home after their terms had ended. Since presidential papers and documents were their personal property, they could sell, destroy, or loan them to whomever they desired.

As a result of private ownership, the papers of former Chief Executives of the United States were often lost, destroyed, or demolished by fire. For example, most presidential papers of Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, and William Henry Harrison were burned by fire; a portion of the presidential documents of Martin Van Buren, Franklin Pierce, Ulysses S. Grant, Millard Fillmore and Chester A. Arthur were destroyed by themselves or their heirs.² Some of Andrew Johnson's papers were loaned to a friend and lost; James Monroe and Thomas Jefferson's papers were scattered among several libraries; and Abraham Lincoln's documents were not open to researchers and scholars until 1947, eighty two years after his death.³

In addition to the influence of English tradition, there were two other reasons why George Washington brought his papers home: (1) At the time of his completion of eight years' presidency, there was no federal statute stipulating that presidential materials had to be preserved by the Government; and (2) the lack of a safe place to deposit his presidential papers.⁴

Presidential papers and documents are considered an important part of a nation's heritage. Due to the tradition of private ownership, the preservation of these priceless papers and documents was neglected for more than half a century. The Government was gradually made aware of the

importance of preserving these documents. In 1849, the State Department was appropriated \$20,000 to acquire the manuscripts and papers of George Washington.⁵

In 1897, one hundred years after George Washington left the Presidency, the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress was established. Its main mission was to take of the twenty-three presidential papers acquired beginning with George Washington and ending with Calvin Coolidge.

The First Presidential Library

The idea of establishing a Presidential Library was initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1934 he created the National Archives. In 1938, in order to preserve his presidential papers as well as materials relating to his past services to the government, such as New York State Senator, Governor of New York, and his gifts and mementoes, Roosevelt invited a group of prominent historians and archivists to the White House to discuss and prepare for the establishment of an archival depository.

His concept of a Presidential Library was to built by private funding, and maintained and managed by the National Archives. Roosevelt indicated he would like to donate his land in Hyde Park, New York, and all his presidential materials, related papers and documents, gifts and mementoes to the United States Government.⁶

During the preparation meeting, there was no name for the Presidential Library. Names such as "Depository", "Institution", "Manuscripts", and "Collection" were mentioned. Finally, it was decided to use the name of "Franklin D. Roosevelt Library"⁷ even though the name was agreed reluctantly by President Roosevelt. He also objected to using the word "Memorial".⁸

The proposal of establishing a Presidential Library was subsequently approved by the Congress in 1939. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, the first American presidential library, was officially opened to the general public in 1941.

Before the Roosevelt Library was built, two prototype facilities existed in this country. One was the Rutherford B. Hayes Library, which was established in Ohio by members of President Hayes' family, and maintained by the Historical Society of Ohio. Although the Hayes Library was operated by a private organization, it served as a model for President Roosevelt to

develop his presidential library. The second prototype facility was the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. President Herbert Hoover established such a special collection at his alma mater library. However, taking advantage of the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955, President Hoover established his Presidential Library in 1962 at West Branch, Iowa, his birthplace.⁹

Two factors affected President Roosevelt's decision to establish the Presidential Library as a new institution:

- (1) The great increase in presidential papers and documents, particularly the volume of letters received from the American people (at the rate of 2,000 letters a day) which made it difficult for the president to personally take care of the documents; and
- (2) Having majored in history and government at Harvard University, Roosevelt enjoyed collecting and preserving books in the fields of naval history, ornithology, New York colonial history, and juvenile. During his four-term presidency, an abundance of gifts and souvenirs poured into the White House from within the country and abroad. Mrs. Roosevelt considered returning the gifts to the senders. However, the President's advisors told her that it was unwise and would be misunderstood to do so. In order to dispose of these gifts and his personal collections, as well as to preserve the multitude of presidential papers and documents, Roosevelt conceived the idea of creating a single institution to preserve these documents.¹⁰

The purpose of establishing Roosevelt Library was not merely to preserve his presidential papers and personal gifts. President Roosevelt indicated the collections of the Library should be opened as soon as possible and accessible equally to all people. He did not appreciate presidential papers and materials places on a long-term restriction and accessed only by a few privileged persons.

In facts, the main function of presidential libraries is to preserve and disseminate presidential papers and materials. This is premised on the belief that access will stimulate study, research and general public education, and perhaps lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of American national heritage.¹¹

Presidential Library System

Since the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library opened in 1941, nine other Presidential Libraries had been built. The Presidential Library System consist of these ten Presidential Libraries, which are administered by an assistant archivist, Office of Presidential Libraries, the National Archives and Records Services. The libraries are all located in different places. Most of them were built in the places where the presidents were born or raised. Three libraries (Johnson, Ford, and Carter) were built at or are associated with universities: University of Texas at Austin, University of Michigan, and Emory University.

The following are the ten U.S. Presidential Libraries and the dates which they were opened (dedicated):

1. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York in 1941.
2. The Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri in 1959; the Museum in 1957.
3. The Herbert Hoover Library and Museum in West Branch, Iowa in 1962.
4. The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas in 1966; Museum in 1962.
5. The Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas in 1971.
6. The John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts in 1979.
7. The Gerald R. Ford Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1980; Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1981.
8. The Jimmy Carter Library and Museum in Atlanta, Georgia in 1986.
9. The Ronald Reagan Library and Museum in Thousand Oaks, California in 1989.
10. The Richard Nixon Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California in 1991.

Centralized or Decentralized Libraries

Whether Presidential Libraries should be centralized or decentralized was an issue bitterly debated. The disadvantages of presidential libraries scattered around the country are: (1) inconvenience to

researchers and scholars who need to use more than one set of presidential papers and materials at the same time; and (2) that in theory, they could save the costs of management and construction such as the best utilization of staff and space.

The advantages of decentralized Presidential Libraries are: (1) much safer in case of war, fire, or disasters; (2) providing cultural resources to regions and stimulating local and regional interest; (3) convenient to the retired presidents for his own use of his presidential documents and materials, unless he chose to stay at Washington, D.C.¹²

Theoretically, the centralized Presidential Library would be more economic; realistically, it would be prohibitively expensive. The cost of centralized construction would be three times higher than decentralization.¹³ In addition, a centralized library could discourage donations of presidential materials and gifts; and the potential funding donors could be severely curtailed.¹⁴ Since the advantages of a decentralized system exceed the disadvantages, today Presidential Libraries are built in different locations throughout the country.

Laws on Presidential Libraries

The cornerstone of Presidential Library law is the Presidential Libraries Act, passed in 1955, authorizing the Government of the United States to accept "any land, buildings, and equipment offered as a gift to the United States for the purposes of creating a presidential archival depository"; to deposit and manage the presidential papers, documents and other historical materials; to cooperate with any university, foundation, or other organization or qualified individual to conduct study or research; to charge the admission fees for visiting the museum; and to accept gifts or bequests of money for maintaining the presidential archival depository.¹⁵

The first Presidential Libraries law never touched on the subject of personal property. In other words, all presidential papers and materials were still owned by presidents before they were donated to the presidential libraries. This had been in practice since Roosevelt's time. However, it was later challenged by President Richard Nixon when Watergate occurred. During the Watergate hearings, President Nixon refused to submit some of his tape recordings to Congress. He claimed that all presidential materials and tapes were his personal property. This prompted the Congress to pass

the Presidential Recordings and Preservation Act of 1974,¹⁶ and the Presidential Record Act of 1978.¹⁷

The Presidential Record Act of 1974 provides that presidential tape recordings and other materials shall not be destroyed; they shall be preserved and accessible by the Office of Watergate Special Prosecution Force. The latter stipulates that beginning on January 20, 1981, the next Presidential Inauguration, the United States reserves and retains complete ownership and control of all presidential records. Beginning with President Ronald Reagan, the tradition of personal ownership of presidential papers was abolished.

The amount of presidential papers and records has increased substantially. For instance, President Nixon produced forty-five million documents, an amount three times higher than that produced by President Roosevelt.¹⁸ The original projected cost of operating a presidential library was estimated at \$150,000. The actual cost of maintaining the presidential libraries is considerably higher. For example, the one-time cost of equipping the Kennedy, Johnson, and Ford Presidential Libraries was approximately a half million dollars each.¹⁹

The size of Presidential Library building has grown significantly over the years. For example, President Roosevelt, who served three full and one unfinished terms, had a 51,000 square-foot presidential library while President Ford, who served less than one term, built a total of 78,000 square feet of library and museum.²⁰

Because of the increase in the amount of presidential records and maintenance costs, the Presidential Libraries Act of 1986 was passed by the Congress to reduce the costs of operating presidential libraries.²¹ The Act requires that the donators contribute the total costs of land, buildings, and equipment, plus 20 percent of the deposit for the maintenance of the buildings; and the size of library and museum shall not exceed 70,000 square feet.

Management of Presidential Libraries

The Assistant Archivist for Presidential libraries, National Archives and Records Service is responsible for the operation of all presidential libraries. The guidelines and policies for managing presidential libraries were developed by the Office of National Archives in 1985.²² Each Presidential Library should be a nonpartisan and non-political institution. Although the directors of Presidential Libraries manage their individual libraries according

to these guidelines and policies, each Presidential Library has its special characteristics.

The Director of Presidential Libraries should have a doctoral degree in history or other related field, with several years of professional archival experience, so that he or she will understand the needs of researchers and historians to further establish good relationships between them. Lack of knowledge on each side of occupation could lead to tension and misunderstanding between the researcher/historian and archivist/librarian.²³ The Director should also supervise a number of professional archivists, librarians, curators, museum specialists, and other supporting full-time staff members.

The staff of the Office of Presidential Libraries includes the White House Liaisons. Before leaving the White House, the President selects a proposed site for his library and proposes funding for the buildings, and processes some presidential papers.²⁴ The White House Liaison Office is to ensure that the presidential papers and materials are transferred smoothly.

The policies for acquiring presidential materials are started in the *Presidential Libraries Manual*.²⁵

Materials related to presidents--before, during, and after their presidency--are collectable. Presidential materials may include books, correspondence, memorandums, documents, papers, pamphlets, works of art, models, pictures, photographs, plates, maps, film, motion pictures, audio-visual materials, electronic or mechanical recording. The White House papers are the core of Presidential Libraries' holdings. Oral history projects were carried out by a number of presidential libraries, i.e., Johnson, Truman, Kennedy, and Eisenhower.

In addition to acquiring the materials relating to presidents, some Presidential Libraries collected materials representing presidential reading habits or special interests. For example, the Eisenhower Library developed a collection on military history; and the Kennedy Library houses the Ernest Hemingway Collection because of President Kennedy's admiration for this great American writer.²⁶

Access to presidential materials is one of the purposes for establishing Presidential Libraries. These materials shall be available to all people--historians, researchers, textbook writers, journalists, college professors, students, and the general public. Between 1946 and 1985, a total of 122,621 researchers visited eight Presidential Libraries (Roosevelt, Truman, Hoover, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford). During

the same period, nearly thirty million people visited seven presidential libraries museums (Roosevelt, Truman, Hoover, Kennedy, Johnson, and Ford).²⁷

Ideally, all presidential documentary materials should be fully accessible to the general public. However, it is necessary to pose some restrictions on these records. Based on the Presidential Records Act of 1978, the following categories shall be restricted for twelve years after President leaves office.

- (1) Information involving national defense or foreign policy;
- (2) Documents relating to a federal officer's appointment;
- (3) Confidential communications between the President and his advisors;
- (4) Trade secrets; and
- (5) Personal privacy such as personal bank statements and medical files.²⁸

The future outlook of Presidential Libraries is bright. Automation of the Presidential Library system is in progress. By the year 2000, Presidential Libraries may be linked by an on-line computer network.²⁹ At that time, local public and academic libraries would be able to access to Presidential Libraries.

Museums and Educational Programs

A Presidential Library typically consists of two parts: the archival depository, or library, and the museum. Starting with the Roosevelt Library, all archival depositories and museums were built together in the same location except for the Gerald Ford Presidential Library. Although separation has some advantages, it costs more to establish and maintain the facilities.³⁰

Presidential Libraries scattered in different regions make valuable contributions to the various local communities' culture and have even become tourist attractions. They attracted thousands of visitors to their communities and sponsored hundreds of educational programs to benefit their regions.³¹

The museums at Presidential Libraries exhibit the materials that reflect the life and accomplishments of the presidents, as well as significant decisions and events that occurred during their terms in office. For example, the Roosevelt Library pinpoints the success of New Deal program, the

Eisenhower Library displays his military accomplishments during World War II³², and the Carter Library exhibits the hostage crisis in Iran and the establishment of diplomatic relationships with the People's Republic of China.³³

Each Presidential Library has a supporting organization which was organized as a foundation to take care of fund-raising. As soon as the library is constructed, it continues to make efforts to support the library's programs and activities. Most of these programs are educational, such as providing research grants, patronizing scholarships, sponsoring scholarly conferences and seminars, and acquiring historical documents.

The Presidential Libraries particularly welcome school children to the museums. Some school teachers use the museums to supplement classroom instruction. President Harry S. Truman often appeared before student groups in his library's auditorium. He encouraged students to study and understand the Government of the United States and to participate in the Government work.³⁴

John F. Kennedy Library provides a teaching film on presidential decision-making and cooperates with the University of Massachusetts at Boston to sponsor an annual summer workshop for improving school teachers' teaching of politics and government.³⁵ Moreover, the Lyndon B. Johnson Library was the first institution built on a university campus--the University of Texas at Austin. In conjunction with the Presidential Library, the University of Texas established a School of Public Affairs to train individuals for public service.³⁶ The other two presidential libraries associated with universities are the Gerald R. Ford Library located at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and the Jimmy Carter Library which is associated with Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Criticisms and Complaints

It is unlikely the establishment and management of these presidential libraries will fully satisfy all users and the general public. Criticisms were heard even before the first Presidential Library was established.

While President Franklin Roosevelt proposed the creation of a presidential library, Congressman Hamilton Fish, who was elected from Roosevelt's own congressional district, rebutted in the Congress that "Establishing a memorial to a living man...is utterly un-American, utterly

undemocratic.... It goes back to the days of Caesar, who put up monuments of themselves, crowned them with laurel leaves, and posed as a gods.³⁷ Some researchers criticized that presidential libraries "are nothing but monuments operated by biased archivist who worship the GREAT MAN."³⁸ President Richard M. Nixon would have liked to build his library at Duke University, his alma mater, but the proposal was rejected by faculty members, students, alumni, and the public. One of the Duke faculty members argued that Presidential Libraries "have become museums for glorification of a man."³⁹

Some critics expressed that such a museum is regarded as "a piece of unnecessary self-memorialization." James E. O'Neill, Deputy Archivist of the United States, disagreed with these criticisms. He argued that the record and impact of presidential actions cannot be found only in his documents and papers. Other forms of materials and expressions such as gifts and audio-visual presentations should be collected and exhibited.⁴⁰

In general, complaints primarily come from the researchers and historians who use the archival materials. Some researchers and historians complain that decentralization of Presidential Libraries is inconvenient to their research. Some are unsatisfied with access restrictions. For instance, one student needed to use the papers of James Byrnes, Secretary of State under President Truman. The papers were not available at the Truman Library, but available at another location.⁴¹

Perhaps the Loewenheim Case was the most serious complaint. professor Francis L. Loewenheim of Rice University charged that the Roosevelt Library deliberately withheld archival documents which had already been published by the Harvard University Press. His accusations brought the National Archives Administration's attention. A special committee, consisting of representatives from the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the Society of American Archivists, was set up to investigate this charge. As a result some changes in accessibility to documents were made. An administrative appeal system was adopted.⁴²

Guidelines for Establishing Presidential Libraries in the Republic of China

In less than nine years, we will enter the year 2000 and a new information age. To meet the information needs of researchers, historians,

and the general public, the author proposes that Presidential Libraries should be established in the Republic of China.

Based on the development, system, and management of American Presidential Libraries, the following guidelines for establishing Presidential Libraries in the Republic of China are suggested:

1. The National Archives should be established in the Republic of China as soon as possible. The Director of the National Archives should directly report to the President or Secretary-General of the President of the Republic of China. The Office of Presidential Libraries should be created and supervised by the Director of the National Archives. The Director of the National Archivist and the Assistant Director for Presidential Libraries should be non-partisan and independent. Both Director and Assistant Director should possess a Ph.D. and have experience in archival work.
2. Each Presidential Library should be built by private funding. After the library is built, the land, buildings, equipment, and twenty percent of building maintaining costs should be donated to the Government. The size of building should be limited to 70,000 square feet.
3. All presidential and vice presidential papers and documents should be owned by the Government. The Government should process, control, and preserve these materials. Researchers and the general public should have access to these papers.
4. The Presidential Libraries should be decentralized. Ideally, they should be established at or associated with universities.
5. Each Presidential Library should consist of the archival depository (library) and museum. Both the archival depository (library) and museum should be built in one location.
6. The Office of Presidential Libraries should develop guidelines and policies for each presidential library to use.
7. All papers, documents, and materials related to the presidents--before, during, and after their presidencies -- should be collected and preserved. Materials representing presidential reading habits or special interests should also be collected.

8. The museum should exhibit materials that reflect the life and accomplishments of the presidents, as well as the significant decisions and events of their presidencies.
9. Presidential papers and documents relating to national defense, foreign policy, personal privacy, etc., should be restricted. The period of restriction is no more than 12 years.
10. The museum should hire a curator and museum specialists to take care of exhibits and other museum work.
11. Each Presidential Library's supporting organization should continue to make efforts to support its Presidential Library's educational programs and activities.
12. To keep user complaints at a minimum, an administrative appeal procedures should be developed.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of creating Presidential Libraries is to preserve and make American presidential documents and materials accessible to the general public. These institutions have made tremendous contributions to the preservation of national heritage and stimulation of study, research, and general public education as well as the promotion of patriotism.

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