

The Presidential libraries: an update

NARA's Presidential libraries have been in the news lately. Allow me to bring you up to date on some of that news.

As you may know, President George W. Bush has chosen a site on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas for his Presidential library. It will join two other Presidential libraries in Texas: the Lyndon Johnson Library in Austin, on the campus of the University of Texas, and the George H. W. Bush Library in College Station, on the campus of Texas A&M University.

A private foundation has been formed to raise funds to purchase the land and build the library. Once the new building meets NARA environmental and archival specifications and Congress approves, the National Archives will operate the library as a Federal facility. Until the library is ready, Presidential records and other materials documenting President Bush's administration will be stored in a leased secure facility.

NARA staff is already working on the Bush records. Last year, four archivists and a museum registrar were hired and are in training for the new Bush Library. In addition, later this year we will hire a supervisory archivist and two more archivists; I will appoint a director next year. The records of the two-term Bush administration are subject to the Presidential Records Act of 1978, which, among other things, declares Presidential records to be public records and establishes a process for restriction and public access to those records.

On that subject, you have probably read about efforts by the media and other groups to gain access to the papers of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton created during her years as First Lady. The Clinton Library continues to respond to numerous Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for Clinton Presidential records. Library staff has completed processing



Meanwhile, the “dean” of the 12 Presidential library directors, **Dan D. Holt** of the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, KS, will be retiring soon, after serving as director since 1990. I will appoint a successor shortly thereafter.

The Presidential libraries also continue to collaborate on public programming and conferences and to expand their national presence in education and outreach. Last November, they jointly sponsored a two-day symposium on the Presidency and the Supreme Court, held at the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, NY. The keynote speaker was former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and other speakers included academic experts on the court and the Presidency, media representatives who cover the court, and former White House counsels. This event followed the successful symposium on the Vietnam War at the Kennedy Library in early 2006.

In September 2008, the libraries will sponsor, together for the first time, a National Issues Forum at each of the 12 libraries. The public will be invited to each library for open discussion and dialogue on important national issues, such as health care and the energy crisis. These forums will bring citizens, and perhaps new visitors, to the Presidential libraries. They will also expose visitors to the

approximately 11,000 pages comprising the appointment schedules of the First Lady throughout the eight years of the Clinton Presidency; they were released on March 19.

accomplishments of individual Presidents and make them aware of the archival collections, museum exhibits, and education and public programs that these libraries offer.

This system-wide forum is being sponsored with the generous financial support of NARA's partner, the Kettering Foundation. I am particularly pleased with this partnership as it complements my efforts toward a renewed emphasis on civic literacy. The Presidential libraries play a major role in that effort, with groundbreaking programs such as the White House Decision Center at the Truman Library and the Five Star Leaders program at the Eisenhower Library.

NARA's Presidential libraries, attracting more than two million visitors each year, continue to play a major role in creating the public perception of the National Archives—as well as providing a rich source of history for the American people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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