

A Virtual Road Trip to Presidential Resources

It's late June, the candidates have finally been decided, and the United States presidential race is heating up. We at the public library strive to maintain a well-balanced collection of biographical and historical materials on our American presidents, while also trying to stay current with the flood of political commentary books that are published every week. Of interest to our current presidential race, a quick search of our catalog shows that we own five books authored by John McCain and both books authored by Barack Obama.

If your interest in presidents extends beyond the recreational into serious research, you're probably aware that most presidents of the 20th century have their own personal presidential libraries. Prior to the 1930s, "many Presidential papers and records had been lost, destroyed, sold for profit, or ruined by poor storage conditions" (www.archives.gov). Franklin D. Roosevelt changed this, however, by raising private funds to establish a permanent public depository of books and other presidential documents. His actions created the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, located in Hyde Park, New York. Now, every president from Hoover (elected 1928) to Clinton (elected 1992) has a presidential library that is run through the federal government's National Archives. All of these libraries feature in-depth websites that are very helpful for those that can not easily travel the country in search of presidential information. Here are some highlights that I learned while taking virtual tours of these places:

- "Hooverball" was a sport invented by Hoover's personal physician to keep the president in shape. The game basically involves throwing a medicine ball back and forth over a volleyball net. Those that can catch the ball (and not drop the ball while screaming in pain) are awarded points. Each year, the Hoover Library (in West Branch, Iowa) hosts a Hooverball tournament.
- A bargain researcher's dream! The Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas is the only such museum that does not charge admission.
- For those who would like to visit the White House but are intimidated by its gigantic grandeur, The William J. Clinton Library in Little Rock currently features a mini-replica of the White House that took over 30 years to create!
- Many presidential libraries feature a replica of the Oval Office, but only the George H.W. Bush Library and Museum in College Station, Texas specifically allows visitors to fully enter the replica and pose behind the desk.
- The Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California features Marine One- the actual helicopter used by Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. Made famous during Nixon's "farewell" from the White House after resigning, this helicopter was retired from White House service in 1976 and completely restored in 2006. On an unrelated note, if you're looking to mix amusement rides and politics, the Nixon Library is only fifteen minutes from Disneyland.

We invite you to explore Bartholomew County Public Library's resources on presidents and politics. Don't forget that we can also easily get books for you that are owned by other libraries and museums. Whether you are a casual observer or a serious political buff, the library can get you the information you deserve.

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