Lisa DeLuca

# Presidential research resources
## A guide to online information

This article highlights the breadth of freely available digital collections of presidential documents. These repositories are excellent resources for presidential, political science, history, and foreign relations research. From the resources listed in this article, librarians can choose multiple starting points for student and faculty research inquiries for primary and secondary sources that include handwritten documents by the founding fathers, interview transcriptions, digitized documents, and photographs, to name a few. This article does not contain public opinion, election, or media content sources, which are an important component of presidential research.

More presidential text is available as digitization efforts continue at the Library of Congress (LOC), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Miller Center at the University of Virginia, and the American Presidency Project (APP). Government resources for presidential research are located in multiple places within in these repositories in addition to the Government Printing Office (GPO). Because of born digital content in current presidential administrations and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, new digital content is created daily.

FOIA requests are housed in electronic reading rooms in several government agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the State Department.[1] The sites described in this column are described as government funded sources (with agency location), academic repositories, and privately funded libraries. Additionally, sources for U.S. foreign relations research, including declassified documents, are explained.

Highly regarded sources for presidential research include the 14 presidential libraries maintained by NARA, APP, and the Miller Center. Newer resources include the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington, which opened in 2010, FOIA Reading Rooms, and the Collecting Presidential Collections project (CPC) at the Miller Center. Researchers may have their own preferred sites for Presidential research, however, the number of repositories and digital collections continues to grow across the country, making it easier to locate digital content about the U.S. presidency.

## U.S. government resources

• **American Memory Project (LOC).** This gateway to LOC's resources of digitized American historical materials contains more than 9 million items that document U.S. history and culture. Presidential material includes the Coolidge Era, the Abraham Lincoln Papers, and U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates (1774–1875). *Access:* https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/ListSome.php?category=Government,+Law.

Lisa DeLuca is social sciences librarian at Seton Hall University, email: lisa.deluca@shu.edu

• **Chronicling America (LOC).** This site from LOC contains America's historic newspaper pages from 1789 to 1943. The U.S. Newspaper Directory located here contains information about American newspapers published between 1690 to present. OCR bulk downloads are available from 1836 to 1922 for text mining. *Access:* http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/.

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

• **Compilation of Presidential Documents (GPO).** From 1992 to the present, this collection consists of the "Weekly Compilation" and the "Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents," the official publications of materials released by the White House Press Secretary. The "Compilation of Presidential Documents" is published by the Office of the Federal Register and NARA and includes proclamations, executive orders, speeches, and White House announcements. *Access:* https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse /collection.action?collectionCode=CPD.

• **Congressional Record (GPO).** The official record of the proceedings and debates of the U.S. Congress, published daily when Congress is in session. The Congressional Record began in 1873 and continues to present day. Digital versions from 1873 to 2001 and from 2005 to 2009 are available. *Access:* https://www.govinfo.gov/app /collection/crecb.

• **Founders Archive Online (NARA).** The National Archives, through its National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), entered into a cooperative agreement with the University of Virginia Press to create this site in 2010. This partnership makes available historical documents of the founders of the United States. This archive contains more than 178,000 searchable documents, fully annotated, including records from George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. *Access:* https://founders.archives.gov/.

• **Presidential Libraries (NARA).** The 14 official presidential libraries managed by the Office of Presidential Libraries, which resides within NARA, are archives and museums. These libraries consolidate documents and artifacts of a president and his administration for the public and research community. Digital exhibits are updated often and are excellent sources for primary resources. One can search within each library or across all presidential libraries. *Access:* https://www.archives.gov /presidential-libraries/search.html.

• **Presidents of the United States: Resource Guides (LOC).** These guides provide links to Digital Resources across LOC's website and external sites. The LOC digital collections contain a large selection of primary source materials associated with the U.S. presidents, including manuscripts, letters, broadsides, government documents, prints, photographs, sheet music, sound recordings, and films. Research Guides are currently available through the Carter Administration. *Access:* http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib /presidents/.

• **Public Papers of the Presidents (GPO).** Each Public Papers volume contains the papers and speeches of the U.S. presidents that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the specified time period. The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. Photographic portfolios are also available. Currently, FDsys contains the Public Papers for Presidents George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. Obama's papers are available for bulk download by year. *Access:* https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse /collection.action?collectionCode=PPP.

## Academic/private sources

• **American Presidency Project (APP).** The leading source of presidential documents on the Internet, APP's archives contain 128,879 documents and is growing rapidly.

Hosted at the University of California-Santa Barbara (UCSB), APP has been a collaboration between John T. Woolley (UCSB) and Gerhard Peters (Citrus College) since 1999. APP is the only online resource that has the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, the Public Papers of the Presidents, the Weekly and Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents, plus an extensive collection of archives, consolidated, coded, and organized into a single searchable database. *Access:* http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/.

• **The Avalon Project (Yale Law School).** A digital library of documents relating to law, history, and diplomacy from Yale Law School's Lillian Goldman Library contains Presidential Papers from eight administrations. The project includes static text and links to supporting documents. The site has full-search facilities and a facility to electronically compare the text of two documents. *Access:* http://avalon.law.yale.edu /subject_menus/presiden.asp.

• **Columbia Center for Oral History (CCOH).** CCOH was founded by historian and journalist Allan Nevins in 1948. With more than 10,000 interviews, the CCOH Archives is one of the largest oral history collections in the United States. The Columbia Center for Oral History Archives is housed at the Rare Book & Manuscript Library in Butler Library. Collections include the Eisenhower Administration Project and the John F. Kennedy Project. *Access:* http://library.columbia. edu/find/oral-history-portal.html.

• **Connecting Presidential Collections (CPC) at the University of Virginia.** CPC is a free, centralized site for searching across presidential collections. The project is funded by the Institute of Museum and

Library Services and housed at the Miller Center. Users can browse by president or location. This site is the only place in the country collecting this data in this way. The site allows searching across the Miller Center's extensive collections, presidential libraries maintained by NARA, plus state historical societies, museums, and university collections that contain presidential digital collections. *Access:* http://presidentialcollections.org/.

• **Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington.** Digital Collections from the Washington Library include original manuscripts, letterpress copies, and retained copies or handwritten drafts from Washington's secretaries. The black-and-white images come from microfilms of the manuscripts. Additionally, the collections include letters to and from Washington; letters from members of his family, household, and staff; and reports from Mount Vernon farm managers. Washington's annotated copy of the U.S. Constitution is also here. *Access:* http://catalog.mountvernon.org/.

*The Fred W. Smith*
NATIONAL LIBRARY
*for the Study of*
GEORGE WASHINGTON
*at Mount Vernon*

• **The Miller Center (University of Virginia).** The well-known Presidency Collection includes biographies, presidential speeches, presidential oral histories, and Secret White House tapes, with a redesigned website in 2017. American President is a notable source for deep background on America's presidents. On each president's page, you'll find biographical information,

speeches, essays, related videos, interviews, and other Miller Center resources. The Miller Center has all the Secret White House Tapes, from FDR through Nixon, many of which are transcribed. Interviews with the Administration contains transcripts and recordings of in-depth interviews with hundreds of top officials from each of these administrations. *Access:* https://millercenter.org/the-presidency.

• *President Studies Quarterly (PSQ).* A paid subscription, this interdisciplinary journal focuses on the American presidency. *PSQ* is published by Wiley-Blackwell for the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress in Washington, D.C. *PSQ* is an indispensable resource for understanding the U.S. presidency with articles, features, review essays, and book reviews covering presidential decision making and the operations of the White House. Worth noting is that researchers can search the journal archive by president. *Access:* http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1741-5705/homepage/search_by_president.htm.

## Foreign relations/declassified documents

These are research resources for researching foreign policy related to the presidents. The 1996 amendments to FOIA mandate publicly accessible "electronic reading rooms" with agency FOIA response materials and other information routinely available to the public.

• **Central Intelligence Agency, FOIA Electronic Reading Room.** Material in the CIA's Electronic Reading Room ranges from the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, the CIA's Internal Investigation of the Bay of Pigs, and many historical collections. Searching by collection at the bottom of the site page gives the most comprehensive overview of content. *Access:* https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/search/site.

• **Defense Intelligence Agency, FOIA Electronic Reading Room.** This site includes Chief FOIA Officer Reports, FOIA Logs, and records searchable by country or keywords, such as Detainee Recidivism Reports and Medical Records. *Access:* http://www.dia.mil/FOIA/FOIA-Electronic-Reading-Room/.

• **Department of State Document Search.** The collections can be searched by title or by using the Virtual Reading Room Documents Search tool. The documents within each collection are included in the number of total searchable documents. Secretary Clinton emails; the Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, and Guatemala declassification projects; and Henry Kissinger telephone transcripts can be located here. *Access:* https://foia.state.gov/Search/Search.aspx.

• **Electronic Resources for U.S. Foreign Relations (Department of State–Office of the Historian).** Search by Administration or search collections, such as Department of State Telegrams, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, and Pre-1861 Resources. *Access:* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/other-electronic-resources.

• **Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS).** FRUS is the official documentary historical record of major U.S. foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity. Search within the volumes from Truman to Reagan. See also a list of all pre-Truman volumes. *Access:* https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments.

• **National Archives Electronic Reading Room (NARA).** This site shows recently posted FOIA requests and commonly requested documents, such as digitized FBI files and the John F. Kennedy (JFK) Assassination Records Collection. Frequently requested records, such as Census records and Federal Prison Records, are also available here. NARA processes FOIA requests for operational and archival records. Operational records are the records created by NARA, and its employees are in the process of carrying out its mission and responsibilities as an executive branch agency. These records include contracts, agency policies, employee directories, and other types of policy, administrative, and

personnel records. These requests are processed by NARA's Office of General Counsel. Archival records subject to FOIA are the records created by executive branch agencies and the White House and are the legal custody of the National Archives, including records subject to the Presidential Records Act that have been transferred to NARA since the Reagan Administration. Archival records are located at NARA's archival facilities and at Presidential Libraries. *Access:* https://www.archives.gov/foia/electronic-reading-room.

• **National Security Archive (GWU).** Founded in 1985 by journalists and scholars, the National Security Archive's holdings now total 8 to 10 million pages of declassified documents. The Archive's holdings start in 1945, with the beginning of the Cold War, to the present. Electronic Briefing Books, covering topics in U.S. foreign policy ranging from Cuba, North Korea, and NATO Expansion, are excellent research resources. Sourcebooks are also available by subject with relevant declassified documents. The Digital National Security Archive is a paid ProQuest subscription within the site. *Access:* http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/.

**Note**

1. For more information, see library.shu.edu/presresearch. ✍

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*("It's all relative?," continues from page 75)*

Such knowledge will further enable us to develop pedagogies that invite students to critically evaluate and reflect on not only individual information sources, but also on their social worlds, relations, and experiences. In so doing, we can develop information literacy education that responds to students as social and emotional beings. We can develop pedagogies that acknowledge that students' experiences are, like our own, in many ways constructed and contextual, but also shaped in powerful ways by the material and social worlds that we inhabit.

**Notes**

1. ACRL, "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," January 2016, www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.

2. "Relativism," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* November 16, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/relativism.

3. Jack Donnelly, "Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1984): 401.

4. Ibid., 400.

5. Kum-Kum Bhavnani, "Tracing the Contours: Feminist Research and Feminist Objectivity," *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, no. 2 (January 1993): 96. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(93)90001-P.

6. Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 773.

7. William G. Perry, F*orms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999); Deanna Kuhn, *The Skills of Argument* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Barbara K. Hofer and Paul Pintrich, "The Development of Epistemological Theories: Beliefs About Knowledge and Knowing and Their Relation to Learning," *Review of Educational Research* 67, no. 1 (1997): 88–140.

8. Mark Lenker, "Motivated Reasoning, Political Information, and Information Literacy Education," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 16, no. 3 (2016): 511-528; Geoff Walton, "Information Literacy is a Subversive Activity: Developing Research-Based Theory of Information Discernment," *Journal of Information Literacy* 11, no. 1 (2017): 137–55.

9. Maureen Linker, *Intellectual Empathy: Critical Thinking for Social Justice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Susan A. Ambrose et al., "Why Do Student Development and Course Climate Matter for Student Learning?" in *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 153–87. ✍