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**THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: ONLINE RESEARCH SOURCES
IN THE U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION**

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the official repository for documents and other materials that the United States federal government creates in its work. Approximately 1-3 percent of all documents and materials are deemed significantly important for legal and historical reasons to merit preservation.[1] The online services include America: History and Life, Ancestry, Family Search, Heritage Quest, and much more.

For research on the American Presidency, the thirteen presidential libraries provide the most comprehensive collections for every president from Herbert Hoover onward. Until the 1930s, presidents and their families decided what to do with presidential papers, which were considered the president's private property. In 1939, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt requested that the National Archives take custody of his papers and administer a presidential library, which would be built with private funds, about his life and career. Former President Harry S. Truman decided to do the same in 1950, and in **1955**, Congress enacted the **Presidential Libraries Act**, which said presidential libraries would be constructed with private funds and then maintained by the federal government.

Presidential papers were still considered private property until the **Presidential Records Act of 1978** decided that all presidential records belong to the government. NARA's Presidential Libraries webpage explains the history and operation of presidential libraries and provides links to each library website (resources in each library are discussed in individual guides):

Presidential Libraries
http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/about/history.html

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[1] See NARA "Getting Started Overview" page for more information about the National Archives -- http://www.archives.gov/research/start/ .

In addition to the presidential libraries, NARA also houses many records that are of interest for research in presidential studies. While an onsite visit to the Archives is the best way to identify research sources, several online resources are available as well, as discussed below.

Online Research Tools and Aids
http://www.archives.gov/research/start/online-tools.html

NARA provides extensive online resources for research that may be relevant to presidential studies, including databases, guides, exhibits, microfilm holdings, and more. This website provides links to all of the online material available in these areas.

Online Public Access Catalog
http://www.archives.gov/research/search/

This portal identifies electronic sources available through NARA's archives, including the presidential libraries as well as Presidential/Vice Presidential Electronic Records.   Nearly one million records in the Electronic Records Archive are not available elsewhere online. The portal also provides location information for archival material in the presidential libraries that is not available online. Photographs, speech texts, and electronic copies of documents are among the materials available through this portal.

Access to Archival Databases
http://aad.archives.gov/aad/

This portal provides access to documents on genealogy/personal history, wars/international relations, government spending, indexes to photographs, and other files. More than 85 million electronic records from more than 30 federal agencies are available here.