

The Prologue Is Past

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A FEW YEARS AGO I MADE THE REMARK that I would like to be president of the Society of American Archivists so that I could have the opportunity to give a presidential address. The time has now arrived and I cannot for the life of me understand why I made such a foolish remark. Looking back on my year as president of the Society I feel a good deal of satisfaction. True, we have not done all of the things we had hoped to accomplish; however, we have acted on or considered a number of projects relating to the development of the Society and the profession: ethical principles, education, accreditation, international ties, openness of procedures, the role of each in defining new national archival policies. This Council I have worked with, never docile, has been a stimulating group and, to be sure, there has been enough criticism of the president so that I never felt neglected. In sum, I have enjoyed it all up to this point.

In searching for a subject, I narrowed the choice to two topics. One of these was the important topic of professionalization of archives, which is a major concern of this meeting in Salt Lake City. I have, however, decided to talk on the second topic, the presidential library system—the Ford Library in particular. In a sense, though, the two blend together, because, as you will note, some of my concluding recommendations are indeed components of the movement toward archival professionalism. Surely the presidential libraries, which receive so much national attention, should particularly be viewed as representing the highest degree of professionalism. In presenting my thoughts I am actually going contrary to one of my beliefs. That is that we, meaning the archival profession, have paid too much attention to presidential documents and their care and access. We have almost a fixation on presidential papers, a fixation which I think has done harm to the archival profession in general, diverting our energies from other vital concerns. In some respects, presidential documents have clouded our relationships with the historical profession perhaps more than anything else in recent years. Surely the whole issue of presidential papers was a major factor in the unfortunate confrontation between archivists and historians at the conference held in New Harmony, Indiana, last fall.¹ Yet here I am contradicting my own tenet and paying further attention to these materials. Nevertheless I think it is appropriate for me to say something on this topic, not only because these documents have in the last three or four years received such an enormous amount of attention and have made the archival profession much better known than be-

This article is the presidential address delivered on October 5, 1977, in Salt Lake City, at the Hotel Utah, to the Society of American Archivists at their forty-first annual meeting.

¹ Reports of this conference, held October 20-21, 1977, at New Harmony, Indiana, are scheduled for publication in 1978 by the Organization of American Historians. I attended the conference and my conclusion about the meeting is my own.

fore, but more particularly because I found myself involved in presidential papers in a very direct fashion.

I well remember a Saturday in early September 1973, when all members of the Michigan Historical Collections staff were doing overtime work moving into our new building. During a lull in the activity, I casually remarked, "Wouldn't it be funny if Nixon appointed Gerald Ford Vice President, and something happened to Nixon and Ford became President of the United States and we would have presidential papers on our hands." Everyone laughed at the preposterousness of this idea and we all returned chuckling to our work.

In this address, I propose to give you a history of the Ford papers and the negotiations leading to their location in Ann Arbor. I will then comment on the Ford papers agreement, particularly as it effects the presidential library system, and will conclude with a few general observations on the future development of this system.

The story for us began in 1964. At that time Ruth Bordin, a member of the Michigan Historical Collections staff, took a leave of absence to accompany her husband on a year-long mission in Washington, D.C. Ruth volunteered to do field work for us, and since at that time our travel budget was small, her offer was enthusiastically accepted. The director and I outlined a number of possible contacts we wanted her to make. Among them was Gerald R. Ford, United States Congressman from the Fifth District of Michigan. We felt that with his years of service he was becoming one of the more influential congressmen. On March 4, 1964, Mrs. Bordin visited Gerald Ford and invited him to place his papers in the Michigan Historical Collections. In accordance with our usual practice, she wrote a full trip report of her visit, and stated, among other things: "I saw Gerald Ford yesterday about depositing his papers in the MHC. Like all of them, he is a busy man and our conversation was brief—ca. 20 minutes or so. . . . He had never before given the matter a thought. . . . He was sympathetic, and we have a relatively firm oral commitment. Ford was a little taken aback—he did not yet see himself as 'history.'"² Incidentally, I should report with some chagrin that this was not our first contact with Ford. In 1957 I wrote to him, not for his own papers, but for his help in tracking down papers of such great historical figures as Huntley Russel, Roger Wykes, and one or two other Grand Rapids citizens.³

We should record one sad note at this point. It will quickly become apparent to scholars working on Gerald Ford's career that, with a few modest exceptions, all of his papers relating to his congressional service before 1963 no longer exist. This fact results from no conspiracy against history, but simply reflects a facet of Mr. Ford's character and personality. His natural and genuine modesty and his refusal to recognize his own self-importance all are characteristics that most of us admire, but in this case they had a serious negative effect on the archival record. Until we suggested that he save his papers, Mr. Ford and his staff had regularly and systematically thrown them out every two years to make room for new material.⁴ He thought no one would ever be interested in the papers of the

² Ruth Bordin to Bob [R.M. Warner] and Clev [F.C. Bald], March 5, 1964, Michigan Historical Collections files, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, hereafter cited as Bentley Library.

³ Warner to Ford, September 25, 1957, MHC files, Bentley Library. Ford replied immediately with helpful suggestions. Ford to Warner, October 11, 1957, *ibid.*

⁴ Bordin to [Warner & Bald] March 5, 1964, *ibid.*

congressman from Michigan's Fifth District. Professor Richard Kirkendall, writing in the *American Archivist* of July 1966, complained of the dearth of materials relating to Truman's early years.⁵ I am afraid that historians have been spoiled by FDR, whose mother even saved his childhood letters. The Truman case and the Ford case are much more common. As far as the Ford papers are concerned, however, we should not bewail what is lost but be grateful for the fact that beginning with 1963 the papers are virtually complete. This means we have papers for over a decade before Ford became President.

These congressional papers were accepted under the condition that they be closed for a five-year period after which the subject of their opening would be reconsidered.⁶ Since they were not opened, the papers were only briefly inventoried and then placed in storage, awaiting the time when they would be processed and made available for research. The rest of the story until 1973 is humdrum. Every two years we would receive a letter from Mr. Ford saying that another shipment was on its way. Occasionally there were extra deposits, such as, for example, the records of his participation on the Warren Commission. All of these accessions were recorded in the published annual reports of the Michigan Historical Collections.⁷ Since the materials were closed, we did not even move them into our new building, but left them in our storage facility at Willow Run airport. This situation suddenly and dramatically changed on October 12, 1973, when Richard Nixon nominated Gerald Ford to succeed Spiro Agnew as Vice President.

I recall very well indeed the television announcement on the Friday evening. My family and I were away for the weekend in the northern Michigan village of Harbor Springs, staying in the town's only motel. The TV set was old and the reception poor, but the message came through. Our reaction was one of surprise and excitement, coupled also with the realization that we now had a much greater archival responsibility and that the Ford papers were not safely housed in our new building but were still in storage at our warehouse. I decided they should be moved at once. The problem was the accomplishment of this when 250 miles away from the papers. I walked through the rain to a pay telephone and made my first call to the secretary of the university. All I got was the baby-sitter. I then called the senior vice president of the university. Here too I got an answer, but the information that he was out. By this time I had exhausted my supply of coins and had gotten no action. My next call was to the president of the university, and since I had no more money for the pay phone I called him collect. Perhaps acting on the assumption that archivists are a bit strange or always broke, President Fleming accepted the call. He too had heard the announcement. When I explained to him the problem of records being at our annex, he quickly agreed that the situation should be remedied promptly. He said he would see that the move was placed on the highest priority list by our plant department. The next day I made some other calls to arrange for the staff at the library to receive the materials. Very promptly at eight o'clock on Monday morning the Ford papers arrived at the Bentley Library.

⁵ Kirkendall, "A Second Look at Presidential Libraries," *American Archivist* 29 (July 1966): 371-86.

⁶ Ford to F. C. Bald, December 28, 1964, MHC files, Bentley Library.

⁷ See *Report of the Michigan Historical Collections, 1964-1965* (Ann Arbor, 1965), p. 1; 1966-1967, p. 3; 1967-1968, p. 3; 1968-1969, p. 2; 1969-1970, p. 10; 1970-1971, p. 17; 1972-1973, p. 11; 1973-1974, p. 17; 1974-1975, p. 19.

I was pleased we had taken this action, because right away we started getting phone calls from the press, radio, and television asking about the Ford papers and I could tell them that they were housed and secure in our fire-protected modern quarters. But that really was not what interested the reporters. They did not ask about the scholarly value of the papers, their potential usefulness, or their value as a historical resource. Without exception the question that was always raised was whether or not Mr. Ford had taken an income tax deduction for the papers. I answered that they would have to ask Mr. Ford, but to the best of my knowledge no deduction had been taken and I assured them that no appraisal had ever been made of the collection. The facts, of course, were that Mr. Ford did not take a tax deduction for his papers which he gave to the University of Michigan.

For brevity's sake, I will skip the details of the next few months except to mention one or two highlights. Correspondence followed concerning possible new arrangements for the papers in the future. This led directly to an invitation for me to confer with Vice President Ford in February of 1974. Needless to say I welcomed the opportunity, not only because it gave me a chance to carry out my work with these newly important papers, but also, quite frankly, because I looked forward to it as an exciting adventure. I was not disappointed.

For our part we had secured a three-year grant from the office of the university president allowing us to add a full-time staff member to process, arrange, and describe the Ford papers. Our archivist, who already had experience in our library, began the project immediately with a survey of the existing records. At this time we decided to keep the materials generally in their existing order, but to remove them from their acidic files and refolder them in acid-free folders. We also decided that the inventory should be a more detailed one than we would ordinarily make for such a large political collection.⁸

In my meeting with Mr. Ford in his vice presidential office on February 2, I outlined these decisions and received his consent to proceed. At this meeting also I urged him to create a record that would be useful for history beyond the formal paperwork that would go through his office. This meant, among other things, creation of memorandums on important phone calls and conferences. In this request I was seconded by Mr. Ford's two assistants. He listened to these requests, and this led to a joking exchange that among the documents created to reflect his administration there surely would be no tape recordings. The pleasant meeting concluded with an invitation to Vice President Ford to visit our library, an invitation which he tentatively accepted and which materialized on May 2.⁹ On that day he came to Ann Arbor to give the commencement address, receive an honorary degree, and visit the Bentley Historical Library. His tour of the library was thorough, and in some respects precedent-setting as far as archives are concerned. Up to this time I do not believe any Vice President, soon to become President, had ever had an extended discussion on such topics as arrangement, description of papers, and the construction of finding aids; yet this is

⁸ See the three-volume guide to the Gerald R. Ford Papers, located in the Bentley Historical Library. A copy also was given to NARS, Ford Papers Project. The Ford congressional papers amounted to approximately 1000 linear feet. In the course of the project, the Bentley Library Archivist, William McNitt, in addition to other duties in the library, refoldered, labeled, and reboxed the collection and prepared the 400-page finding aid mentioned above.

⁹ The summary of this meeting is based on my trip report of Feb. 4–6, 1974, MHC files, Bentley Library.

what occurred. Mr. Ford was interested in the procedures and asked good questions about the processes. Accompanied by the press and television personnel, he visited every part of the library, until we got to the stacks which for obvious reasons of security we closed to all but Mr. Ford, the president of the university, and me. We were afforded also a place to have a quiet discussion.

Mr. Ford liked the library and the procedures for handling his papers. He suggested that we should work out arrangements for continuing their disposition in Ann Arbor. In all it was a very satisfactory meeting. As with any donor, it is always useful if you can show him what you are doing rather than tell him.

There continued further correspondence and meetings with the Ford staff, leading to agreements that all remaining congressional papers should be sent to Ann Arbor soon so they could be included in the processing then going on. Also included was a comprehensive collection of scrapbooks, particularly important since they dated to the beginning of Ford's political career. By coincidence the agreed upon date for our library to receive these papers and transport them to Ann Arbor came on Monday, August 12, 1974. Now, as you may remember, Mr. Ford became President of the United States on Friday, August 9. We went ahead with the arrangements for the transfer of papers, but as Watergate events moved even more rapidly we began to wonder whether the schedule could be kept. Also at the time, complicating matters a bit, was the fact that I was to leave for a long-scheduled Florida business and vacation trip on Friday afternoon. As tension mounted on Wednesday and Thursday, I expected cancellation of the move of the papers. None came, so late Thursday morning I placed a call to the White House, or tried to but found all lines were busy. I finally did manage to get through, and I talked with one of Mr. Ford's long-time secretaries. The conversation indicated that Mr. Ford would soon become President of the United States. The secretary said that she would try to find out if the move was still on as far as the papers were concerned, but if we heard nothing we should proceed with our plans. Again I was surprised, for I felt that in those tumultuous times the Ford staff would not want to be bothered with the problem of transporting several hundred feet of records to Ann Arbor two days after Ford became President.

On Friday I watched Mr. Nixon's farewell speech and saw Mr. Ford sworn in as the thirty-eighth President of the United States, fulfilling my casual humorous prediction made many months before. It is hard to describe reactions at that time. For myself and the staff, I think our emotions were mixed. By this time, with the experience of the vice presidency, we had become used to White House phone calls and public attention. Ford's rise in status had, to be sure, produced some problems for us, but generally it had been an interesting, pleasant, and exciting experience. Our reaction, I think, was to continue to do the best job we could with the collection that had now grown much more important, doing our utmost to serve the donor's needs, giving it the highest quality archival treatment, and looking forward to providing a documentary source useful and valuable to researchers.

After the television coverage of the swearing in, I set out on the vacation and business trip, admittedly worried about what might transpire. Sure enough, the weekend proved a busy and frustrating one for the staff at the library. Several members of the staff got White House calls on the first day of Ford's presidency, seeking to locate me. The White House got the information. Thus when we

reached Florida on Sunday we were greeted on the marquee of our motel with a big sign saying "Welcome Warners." I was dumbfounded. But the reason for the attention became apparent when we went to register. There was much excitement in the office, for the motel had received at least two calls on the first full day of Ford's presidency. I was left a message to call a particular White House exchange. The call itself came from Ford's legal counsel and was indeed anticlimactic. In short, it said "Cancel the trip on Monday!" The call, however, did have considerable personal effect. The Warner family received the most excellent and attentive treatment during our stay. I am quite sure the motel operator was convinced that Ford had asked me to be his Vice President; in any case, during our week at that motel I received almost as much attention as the large shark that was caught on the nearby beach.

The transfer of the records was only postponed, however. The move was eventually rescheduled for November 7, 1974. We then had the problem of transporting these materials in a secure fashion. We had thought through the problem before and had concluded that the best protection we could offer the records in transit was to maintain an extremely low profile. After reexamining the situation we arrived at the same conclusion. Thus, instead of the papers of the President being sent out to Ann Arbor with armed guards and a good deal of public attention, they were in fact quietly and unobtrusively moved by Bentley Library staff members from the Executive Office Building to Ann Arbor, in a rented truck. It is interesting to note that this large truck was parked all night at the EOB and was driven out around the ellipse of the White House with no one discovering the move. The papers were safely in Ann Arbor the same night.

Let us skip to December 1976 when the question of the disposition and location of the Ford papers was finally resolved.¹⁰ Negotiations covering the Ford papers did not take place until after the 1976 election. To have initiated them earlier would have signified defeatism during the primary and general election campaigns. True, there were attempts to push the negotiations during this period. For example, the executive director of the AHA wrote to both Mr. Ford and Mr. Carter about their plans for the disposition of their papers, but this pressure had no effect.¹¹

For the sake of brevity, I will not go into the details of the negotiations. I can give only a portion of the University of Michigan side, in any case. In essence, the university sought

- (1) to locate the papers in Ann Arbor;
- (2) to accept whatever Ford wanted with regard to a joint or separate archives/museum, although we knew that he favored a separate museum facility for Grand Rapids;
- (3) to have the papers deeded to the United States; and
- (4) to have them administered by the Michigan Historical Collections through a contractual arrangement with the government.

Though we realized that the last point modified the traditional pattern of presidential libraries, we thought it to be justified in the light of the long and

¹⁰ A tacit understanding between Ford and the University of Michigan, namely that his papers should all be located in the university, was first publicly announced by Counsel to the President Philip Buchen, at a meeting of the Public Documents Commission held at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library on June 22, 1976. A transcript of this statement is in the Johnson Library and the Bentley Library.

¹¹ See *AHA Newsletter* 14 (September 1976): 5–7.

satisfactory relationship Mr. Ford had had with the university, his relatively short term as President, and the rather substantial savings to the taxpayer we were convinced would accrue by this arrangement.

On December 17, President Ford, Archivist of the United States James B. Rhoads, and President of the University Robben W. Fleming signed an agreement stipulating that (1) the papers were to be located in Ann Arbor, (2) the museum was to be located in Grand Rapids, (3) the papers were to be deeded to the United States, and (4) placed under the direct control of the National Archives rather than the University of Michigan as we had suggested.¹²

The bare facts do not give a clear understanding of this unusual and precedent-making agreement, however, so let us discuss several of the points. First, the provision by which Ford gave his papers to the United States was precedent setting because it was the first time that a President while in office had given his presidential papers to the United States. As far as the Ford papers are concerned, this action effectively removed the ownership issue. In the gift, however, Ford stipulated that certain materials of a personal nature were reserved, with the President retaining the option as to whether and when they should be placed in the Ford Library. If the recommendations of the Public Documents Commission regarding presidential papers are carried out, and I think they will be, the official papers of future Presidents will automatically be declared public property.¹³

Such legislation regarding presidential papers would have the effect of formally recognizing that some presidential papers are private and must be acquired by negotiation. This may cause a problem with future presidential collections, for often strictly personal materials, letters exchanged between husband and wife, for example, can be of great significance as far as the historical record is concerned. As for the Ford papers, I do not think this will be a problem. I think all of the papers will ultimately end in the Ford Library. I do think, however, that it is a matter future presidential libraries will have to meet.

A second major departure from an existing practice, and one which caused much comment, is the separating of the museum and the archival functions. I think it is fair to say that it is this point which the National Archives finds the most objectionable in the agreement. A similar problem with the Kennedy Library led to considerable discussion and ultimately resulted in the library not being located at Harvard University. As I see it, the decision in the Ford case is not one against museums, it is a decision *for* archives. It is a decision which has, I personally feel, much merit. The criticism of some existing presidential libraries is that they are in effect modern pyramids, shrines glorifying "the great man." There is truth in the charge. In fact, it could well be argued that under the present system *library* is the wrong term to describe the existing structures and perhaps the National Archives is the wrong parent. The Smithsonian, for example, might be a more logical sponsor. The major use of presidential li-

¹² Three copies of the agreement were signed, one sent to the Archivist of the U.S.; another to President Ford and another to President Fleming. The university's copy is in the Bentley Historical Library. One important precedent not covered in this address concerns access. The maximum date for opening all the papers except those covered by statute or federal regulation is thirteen years—two years less than the Public Documents Commission recommended. *Final Report of the National Study Commission on Records and Documents of Federal Officials*, March 31, 1977 (Washington, 1977) Recommendation 6, p. 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Recommendations 2 and 5, pp. 29–30.

braries today is to serve as museums, or so the statistics imply. In 1975, for example, there were 213,776 visitors to the museum at Hyde Park, while research visits there numbered 1,770. At Abilene the same year 199,099 visitors came to the museum, whereas there were only 625 research visits to the library.¹⁴ The argument that the professional scholar or student needs both has little validity. I have never heard a single student of George Washington or Abraham Lincoln complain that he did not have Mount Vernon or Springfield immediately at hand to facilitate his research, nor have I ever heard complaints by tourists touring Mount Vernon or Springfield that the presidential papers were not also in the vicinity.

Separation does have advantages that, I feel, may well outweigh the disadvantages, and it is time it should be accepted as a legitimate modification of the system, particularly if it helps to insure that the archival facilities are located at sites which are sympathetic, complementary, and supportive of the kind of research activity that goes on in a vigorous archives. I hope it will prevent the location of presidential papers in a remote, non-supportive setting. I think the Eisenhower Library, for example, has suffered and will continue to suffer as a center for historical research because of its relatively remote location removed from research activities. In any case, the agreement dividing the Ford papers from the museum objects offers an excellent opportunity to see how well a separate museum-archives functions.

A third difference from earlier agreements envisions a closer working relationship with the host institution. Of course, presidential libraries belong to all the people and not just to the host institution, but there is no doubt that their service to the public can be enhanced if the facility is integrated into its local environment. I see the Ford Library on the university campus enhancing, complementing, and stimulating the growth and life of existing archival agencies already in Ann Arbor. In like manner, being in a center with well established archival institutions may be helpful and stimulating to the new institution.¹⁵

A fourth point in the agreement provides that the library will be administered by the National Archives. This provision is not new, of course, but is a continuation of the existing pattern. At the university we were disappointed that a new precedent was not attempted here. We believe it would have been a valuable and useful experiment to try a somewhat different arrangement, but we understood the reluctance of the National Archives to concede this point, and we accept it. The agreement does contain some modest modifications of this provision. For example, it creates a university-appointed advisory committee as part of the structure. Only time will tell if this is a wise and effective provision. In theory it should be helpful in the integration process and it should assist the library in performing its public service role more effectively.

I now return again to the theme of professionalism in archives. The advisory role of the university pertains also to the selection of the director. This provision, too, remains untested; but it can be a positive gain for archives in general, assisting in professionalizing the position. If presidential libraries are to be professional establishments representing all the people and free from political con-

¹⁴ The use figures are from data compiled by the National Archives and Records Service.

¹⁵ At the University of Michigan are located the Bentley Historical Library, established in 1935 as the Michigan Historical Collections; and the William L. Clements Library, founded in 1923. Both are independent historical libraries with well developed programs.

trol, then they must be staffed by professional archivists. We cannot have it both ways: we cannot use staff members of former presidents, or government bureaucrats without archival experience, to run presidential libraries and at the same time, as the law proposed by the Public Documents Commission would have it, insist on public control of the records by an objective, non-partisan archival agency.

Another positive gain stemming from the Ford agreement, although not spelled out in the document, has been the planning of the library building itself. Under present law these buildings must be built by private funds. I am afraid that in the past the monumental aspects have intruded on good archival practice in the construction of presidential libraries. I do not know for a fact, but I have a strong suspicion, having visited most presidential libraries and talked with their staffs, that archivists had little or nothing to do with the planning of these buildings. This should not be the case. For the Ford Library, the basis on which the plans are being drafted is strongly archival in point of view, beginning with the site selection which was done with extensive and decisive input by archivists from both the University of Michigan and the National Archives. Again, we must compliment President Ford for having the foresight to let archivists and architects plan a strong functional building which meets the archival needs of the staff, the needs of the readers, and minimizes the monumental and ceremonial aspects.

To insure a system in which archivists control the building plans and see that they are modest, well-designed structures, perhaps we should consider abandoning the current practice of requiring private funding for these buildings. Why not make the cost of the building itself a public responsibility? An objective formula based on length of service could easily be worked out. Such provisions would allow strong archival voice in the building and eliminate the necessity and potential for embarrassment of the President of having to seek these funds.

In the beginning I said that the title of my address was "The Prologue is Past." By that I mean that after almost forty years of experience with presidential libraries, with the construction of six, with one underway, and with the construction of the Ford Library hopefully scheduled for the next year or two, we have a broad base of experience from which to reach some conclusions and view the future of the system. It seems to me very likely that for the foreseeable future presidential libraries are here to stay. The gigantic bulk of a president's papers makes such an arrangement almost imperative. It is probably inefficient to house all presidential papers together in one gigantic central archives. Such a thought to most archivists or researchers is appalling. Decentralization in itself is probably a good thing and should be encouraged. It allows for more innovation and experimentation.

Presidential libraries will have to accept the fact that the research usefulness of these institutions needs reexamination. To bring more visitors to view museum displays does not answer the problem of limited research use of the archives. With the exception of the Franklin Roosevelt Library and perhaps one or two other modern presidential libraries, the research interest in them will probably decline in years ahead, as we know it has in the past even for such important presidents as Andrew Jackson or Theodore Roosevelt. I am sure that the National Archives has already given this question careful thought, and as a result there are some useful and innovative programs coming out of these libraries. For

example, the national seminars of scholars and public officials, hosted by the Johnson Library on current and past governmental programs, have proved useful in broadening the library's archival mission. A program recently undertaken by the Kennedy Library, with the assistance of the National Endowment for the Humanities, sought to develop with community colleges a collaborative program in the form of a summer workshop on the use of documentary resources for community college courses.¹⁶

But there can be many more of these types of activities and boldly innovative new programs. Though the proposal to tie a presidential library to an existing archives, as we had suggested in Ann Arbor, was rejected, in another case and in another era a similar solution may come to pass which might have the effect of broadening the mission of both institutions. If such a future arrangement is worked out, the National Archives might find such an arrangement not a lessening of its effectiveness but an enhancement. It also might help solve another potential threat to the presidential library system: cost. Cost may be the ultimate question in determining the survival of presidential libraries. The question of cost was raised by the press at the news conference announcing the Ford Library agreement and it will be raised increasingly, we can be assured, as the years go by.¹⁷

There are no doubt other areas that might be planned to broaden the archival role of presidential libraries. Perhaps these institutions should take over more of the functions of the regional centers and acquire some of the materials being collected there by the National Archives, so they can serve as repositories for a wide variety of federal records instead of documents relating to only one particular presidential administration. Such a departure would cause no threat to existing archival institutions in the area and would enhance the service role of the library. In turn, particularly if they are located in established research centers such as Ann Arbor or Austin, they could build up large microfilm collections of materials either from the parent holdings of the National Archives or from other sources. To be sure, some of this work is already being done, but perhaps it could be expanded.

Conservation and preservation are major archival concerns across the nation. Here presidential libraries perhaps could take a leadership role in initiating conservation centers, providing conservation technology not only for their own materials but for the regions they serve. For example, they could be equipped with well-equipped photographic laboratories which could handle not only their own materials but perhaps broaden their role to serve the archival public in the region as well. All these areas could lead to still another area where the role might be enhanced, particularly when associated with universities as are the Kennedy, Johnson, and Ford libraries. This area is service as laboratories for the training of archivists not only in the federal system but beyond. These are but a few possibilities for a broader role for presidential libraries.

So we have a new presidential library, the Gerald R. Ford Library. Its physical appearance will be, we think, attractive and functional and will reflect the modesty and straightforwardness of Mr. Ford himself. We hope it will be seen as

¹⁶ See NEH News release No. 104, "National Endowment for the Humanities supports library-community college collaborative program at the John F. Kennedy Library."

¹⁷ *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, Monday, December 20, 1976, Vol. 12, No. 51, pp. 1714-1717. Pages 1709-1714 contain the full text of the Ford Papers Agreement.

more, that it will symbolize the end of the so called "imperial presidency" reflected by Mr. Ford's immediate predecessors. The library's potential is great. We feel fortunate in having it located in Ann Arbor and we enthusiastically welcome it. It has set new precedents. The agreement setting it up is different, and because of it the presidential library system will never quite be the same again. James O'Neill, a former presidential library director, now deputy archivist of the United States, concluded in his survey of the presidential library system in 1973, "They [presidential libraries] may change; they probably will."¹⁸ My conclusion is stronger: they will change and they must change if they are not to become expensive fossils of limited use to the research community and to the archival profession.

¹⁸ O'Neill, "Will Success Spoil the Presidential Libraries," *American Archivist* 36 (July 1973): 339-51.