

## Duality of Place: Conflicting Messages at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum

Shannon C. Harris

*The University of Texas at Austin*

The Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas, offers a unique perspective toward who makes presidential history and how that history is made through geographical space and representations at the Library. This research argues that part of the purpose of the massive, contemporary structure and its placement on campus was to promote ideas of social stability during the turbulent 1960s. Indeed, the actual structure and landscape around it bear many symbols typical of monuments as well as university campus design. That iconography pointed to ideas of power, permanence and stability. Yet, the presentation in the museum exhibits, the ideas implicated by the president's own words, which are heavily referenced in the museum, and the opportunities the Library offered to the public to engage on social and political issues was in direct conflict with ideas about limiting social conflict reflected in the Library's physical appearance and placement. Studying presidential libraries offers opportunities to examine who makes history in museum settings and how each library's message resolves itself to fit the particular public places connected with these libraries as well as the personality of the men they represent. The second Texas presidential library, the George H.W. Bush Library, and the proposed George W. Bush Library offer a chance to observe different presentations. All of these factors contribute to how museums, in this case, a particular kind of museum, shape public memory, both in Texas and in the rest of America. *Key Words: Presidential libraries, museums, LBJ, social memory, iconography.*

The exterior of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum (LBJ Library) on the University of Texas at Austin exudes a straightforward message of strength and prominence because of its architectural style and placement on campus. Situated on a hill on the eastern edge of the sprawling campus in central Austin, the massive building made of white Italian travertine rises eighty-five feet above its plaza. The hill on which the Library sits is a perfect place on which to situate a landmark equal to that of the University of Texas Tower, a three hundred and seven foot monument at the heart of the campus visible from nearly any vantage point in the city. By its association to the Tower, recognized as the iconographic symbol of the University along with



**Figure 1.** The fountain in front of the LBJ Library and Museum at night, with the UT Tower in the background. Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Charles Bogel, 2005.

the famed longhorn logo, the Library effectively serves as an anchor between the more recently built east end of campus and the historic core of the University. This is because the Library, its plaza and large, circular fountain perfectly align with the East Mall, one of the three malls that radiate from the centrally located Tower in three cardinal directions (Figure 1).

Yet, the message of grandeur and strength generated by the exterior setting and monumental design of the LBJ Library contrast remarkably with many messages visitors experience once they enter the building. President Johnson desired to “tell the story of our time with the bark off” (1971), a statement he made during the Library’s dedication and echoed throughout the museum exhibits. His idea of offering symposia at the Library to discuss various social policies such as civil rights—thereby inviting debate during the turbulent years at the end of the Vietnam War—was the very thing many planners preferred to avoid. Those symposia continue today although they are not targeted to the average tourist. Similarly, the exhibits allow opportunity for the public to raise questions about how the Johnson administration functioned and to allow glimpses into the complex, conflicting personality of Johnson himself. Additionally, the Library more effectively advertises public access to Johnson’s tapes, papers and other historical documents than the Bush Library in College

Station, Texas, thereby more readily bringing attention to this function of the Library and inviting discussion about issues contained in those historic documents.

Using the LBJ Library as a case study, I examine the inherent conflict in presidential library presentation between historical facts and the messages a particular president desires to convey to the public about those facts. Geographer Karen Till states that museums, “provide a spatial context within which stories of citizenship are preformed, enacted, understood and contested” (2001, 273). Presidential libraries often solidify certain social and political ideas through the iconography of their landscapes and through the memory production their museums. This includes idealized views of patriotism and promoting “official loyalties” (Bodnar, 1992) to specific individuals just as statues of war heroes celebrate loyalty to the ideas of the person memorialized. Yet, the commentary offered in each library differs according to the views and desires of the president for which it is built, offering a unique perspective of place in each locale.

I also briefly compare and contrast the commentary inherent in the LBJ Library presentation with the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The research touches on how presentation differs in the two existing libraries and how it may differ in the proposed George W. Bush Library at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Each library works out its message in ways that often conflict, making the study of presidential library presentation both important and fascinating.

The ongoing research conducted for this article began in 2006 and is based on qualitative analysis of the following: primary textual analysis, participant observation and interviews, and historical museum exhibit analysis (Hoelscher 2006, Kammen 1997, Bodnar 1992). I relied heavily on primary material available in the archives at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, including letters and transcripts of taped interviews with the architect, designer, the President of the Board of Regents at the University, and President and Mrs. Johnson. Other primary material included, mostly from press coverage of the construction and early years of the museum, came from archives at the Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin. Content on design issues and the early desires of President Johnson relied on extensive interviews with the former director of the museum. Several other interviews with current Library staff confirmed the themes and strategies evident in the current exhibits and activities at the Library. Ethnographic content in the article comes from several short, informal interviews of tourists and guests on their way to or from the Library and on participant observation during twice-weekly visits to the Library in spring 2007. Library officials do not allow interviews to be conducted in the museum, nor do they allow researchers access to visitors’ com-

ments in the guest books collected by the National Archives and Records Administration. Additionally, I relied on textual analysis in the actual exhibits themselves. The research on the Bush library also came from similar participant observation and textual analysis of museum exhibits during visits in 2007.

### **Presidential Libraries: Unique Places of Personal Vision**

Geographers examine ways in which people attach meaning to buildings and spaces, and this research is relevant when applied to areas of presidential commemoration, such as presidential libraries. Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove explain that “iconographic study sought to probe meaning in a work of art by setting it in its historical context and, in particular, to analyze the ideas implicated in its imagery” (1988, 2). Mona Domosh expands this definition of iconography to include the city as a work of art. She states that a city “can be read as both a product, a creation of individuals living in a particular time period and place, and as a commentary on that time and place” (1996, 3). Similarly, public buildings such as presidential libraries are creations that spring forth from the imaginations of the presidents they represent. Presidents, or as we will see in the case of the LBJ Library, a governing body of an institution as well as the President, decided what vision they wanted to create in the physical structure of a presidential library. Presidential libraries are inherently structured in such a way that they present history from the point of view of one person and therefore offer one particular commentary on the few years of history they represent. Complicating this iconographic view of presidential library space is the idea that space can be “simultaneously home to conflicting performances” (Foucault quoted in Mitchell 2000, 215). The images that these buildings outwardly represent often change once a visitor enters the exhibit space.

The history of presidential libraries is fairly recent, adding to a vast new crop of public places cultural geographers can explore. These buildings actually function in two ways: they are both museums and archival repositories. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), located in College Park, Maryland, operates all presidential libraries. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first president to conceive of a privately built, publicly maintained library (Cochrane 2002). He built his library in a building next to his home in Hyde Park, New York, in 1940. During Dwight Eisenhower’s term as president, Congress enacted the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955, giving all subsequent presidential libraries statutory authority (Cochrane 2002). Currently, twelve presidential libraries exist in America, belonging to the following past presidents: Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Ford, Reagan, G. H. W. Bush and Clinton.

Presidential libraries are popular sites for tourists, also making them an interesting place for cultural geographers to study. In 2006, 44.5 million peo-

ple visited presidential libraries and museums nationwide (NARA pers. comm.). Many of the libraries are located in the hometowns of former presidents. Up until the Johnson Library planners set a precedent by deciding to locate on the campus at the University of Texas, the Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower libraries had been built on the actual site of either a birthplace of a president or a family home.

Occasionally, a city that receives a presidential library seems to have very little connection to a president. The Bush Library in College Station, Texas, is one such library. College Station is neither President Bush's hometown, nor did he go to college there. Rather, George Bush located his library in College Station on the campus of Texas A&M University because "he liked the atmosphere of the community and the opportunity to integrate the Library into the university community" ([www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)). This statement holds the key to the very concept of creating commentary in a presidential library and museum. Former President Bush deliberately tapped into a particular idea of place already established at Texas A & M University, which we will discuss later, and capitalized on those ideas in order to integrate them into the message and vision he wanted to convey in his presidential library.

Johnson and his library planners had similar motives in mind by locating on the University of Texas campus in Austin. Yet there is a tension present at the LBJ Library which contrasts monument design concepts, which, as Nuala Johnson explains, seeks to elevate the status of the person to whom they are dedicated (1995), with LBJ's own claim that he enjoyed interacting with the public in as personal a way as possible, thereby deflating his status to the level of fellow Texans. This duality in presentation at the LBJ Library is no accident and is part of the commentary this particular library offers to the public. It is part of the claim that the Library makes about the President: That this complexity and intrigue was a part of Johnson's personality. The Library acts as a physical and lasting manifestation of this president's personality by putting these ideas in concrete form.

### **Cultural Strategies at Work in Presidential Library Presentation**

Presidential libraries, as we have discussed, are a new type of museum, and are shaped, both inside and out, by strategies that take advantage of new ideas in popular culture. Don Mitchell offers several different definitions of culture which include the "actual, perhaps unexplained, patterns and differentiations of a people," the "processes by which these patterns developed" and "the way these patterns...are represented" (2000, 14). For the purpose of examining how and why messages are preformed in this particular museum setting, however, a look at planning and presentation strategies that are rooted in recent cultural trends is helpful.

Cultural strategies at play in presidential library commemoration include using architectural elements and location to convey certain ideas and meanings, or in other words, using iconographic strategies (Domosh 1996, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). FDR's Dutch colonial building complemented the traditional design of his Hyde Park, New York, home (Hufbauer 2005, 68). In stark contrast, an overbearing, modern structure such as the LBJ Library would have been utterly out of place on the banks of the Hudson River. But the University of Texas, already glowing from the accomplishment of a "grand urban ensemble" (Speck 2006, 127) created by the connection of the University to the State Capitol by way of the South Mall axis, must have welcomed the idea of another monumental building on campus with which to broaden the borders of the original forty acres and promote their ideas through architecture (Speck 2006), just as other presidential libraries make similar connections to their sites.

Texas presidential libraries take full advantage of public presentation since both existing libraries, as well as the planned George W. Bush Library, are located on university campuses. It is interesting to note that prior to 1940, there were only two material manifestations of an individual presidential memorial: The Washington and Lincoln monuments in Washington, D.C. The Jefferson Memorial was completed in 1943 ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)). As Benjamin Hufbauer (2005) points out, the American presidency since 1940 yields the type of power that affects the entire world, not just our country. University campuses, themselves powerful places of influence in their communities, offer presidential libraries prestige by association, as well as readily available researchers and scholars (Glenn 2007). Consequently, presidential libraries reflect that power and prestige in their architecture, exhibits on domestic and foreign policy and exhibits on the economy and social policy in America. Hufbauer (2005, 5) claims that the modern presidency has come to symbolize for many people, "the person who embodies the nation, and the presidential library is a material manifestation of this reality." This cultural trend elevates the president to hero status, complete with a monumental building to symbolize his power.

Another cultural strategy at play in presidential libraries is that presidential commemorations have become more streamlined in the last fifty years, the result of which filters a myriad of values down into one consumable image available in a museum or monument setting. The president becomes an "official" image suitable to display in a public place, rather than on private property at his historic home site. For example, if a president is commemorated at his home, as is FDR, the public observes artifacts from the public as well as the private man in the original setting. At his Hyde Park, New York home office, visitors see FDR's wheelchair and other personal items that remind us of his handicaps and humanness, qualities often missing in hero presentations (Office of Presidential Libraries).

Additionally, at the LBJ Library and many other presidential libraries, the building and its contents are used as monuments. Because of their specific subject matter—the American Presidency—presidential libraries and museums uphold ideas about democratic government. This parallels the way that subjects of many monuments uphold the values of the people who build them, (N. Johnson 1995). Nuala Johnson argues that monuments are material manifestations of how the public imagines the nation in which they live (1995, 52). As monuments, presidential libraries offer a permanent space to reflect on the nature of those governments and their leaders. In the case of the LBJ Library the outside space is typical of many American public sites dedicated to remembering or memorializing public officials. Yet, visitors will agree and disagree on various ideas portrayed in exhibits inside the museum, thereby challenging the idea that a monument's message is permanent and unchanging.

Geographer Karen Till (2001, 271) along with Jeff Crump (1999, 299) point out that the trend to establish memory is especially urgent during times of social turmoil. Till argues that “the physical presence of traditional places like museums, archives and memorials provides a tangible marker of historical continuity and stability in times of perceived dramatic change.” The planners at the LBJ Library invoked ideas of permanence and stability through social memory-making devices such as the use of artifacts in exhibits at the Library. This technique has been used at the George H.W. Bush Library as well. The LBJ Library opened just after the social and cultural upheaval of the late sixties and before the Vietnam War ended. Yet, as we will see later, most of the exhibits did not address social upheaval or war, but instead offered sanitized views of American life. Till states that social memory is the “process by which groups ‘map’ their myths (in an anthropological sense) and values on to particular times and places” (2001, 275). If museums are agents of social memory, then memories the planners of presidential libraries may want to promote may be different than reality had to offer during the actual administration.

The Library's landscape as a new type of public culture naturalized a relationship with those in power at the University. Considering Karen Till's (2001) discussion above of how museums can help to re-focus debates during national crisis, the role the LBJ Library played was significant for people who had power on campus. For example, William W. Heath left the Chairmanship of the Board of Regents in 1966, handing power over to Frank C. Erwin. During the 1960s, protests occurred regularly at the University of Texas (Kuhlman 1995). Some of the unrest that occurred involved the integration of African American students (Kuhlman 1995), and during Erwin's tenure as Chairman he once forcefully had student protesters removed from trees about to be cut down along Waller Creek (Holland 2006). Erwin was determined to “turn back the tide of unruly and unkempt students that were threatening to turn his beloved campus into a battleground similar to those that made the evening

news” (Holland 2006, 58). Erwin and other leaders on campus, through their dedication in making sure the Library got built at the University, agreed that it could be a stabilizing force. The Library’s research facility had the potential to attract top-notch students and scholars, an orderly group desired by the University leaders (Heath 1970). John Bodnar (1992) maintains that public officials such as those at the University construct certain public memories emphasizing an idealized view of patriotism such as that which would be presented in a presidential library. Those patriotic themes stress social order and have the power to promote “official loyalties” in the public (Bodnar 1992, 14). Loyalties to ideas of stability were much more desirable than the chaos that had consumed other campuses, such as the riots at Columbia University in New York City in 1968. The creators actively sought to establish a landscape that would promote ideas of stability. With its massive, commanding architecture exuding strength, solidity and permanence, the LBJ Library succeeded in meeting the goal of promoting stability (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Exterior of the LBJ Library and Museum, Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Charles Bogel, 2001.

### **Everything’s Bigger in Texas: The LBJ Library Complex**

The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum opened its doors to the public on May 22, 1971. All of the circumstances of its physical existence add much to the discussion of how the President and Library planners wanted the



Library to appear to the public. First and foremost, the location symbolizes power. Just as the South Mall axis connected the campus with the State Capitol, the East Mall connected the University to the President and legitimized that connection. Lawrence Speck (2006, 128), writing about the history of design at the University, states that the South Mall – State Capitol connection “establish[es] a parallel between the University and state government [which] allowed the campus to borrow some of the grandeur of the State Capitol [building]”.

The architectural design of the actual Library building itself, by its sheer size, makes a statement, surely not lost on a president who himself, at 6’3” towered over most of his contemporaries. The LBJ Library is a large modern building anchored on the east and west sides with tapered supports that extend out eight feet at the base, creating a graceful flare. The building rises eighty-five feet from its plaza and is clad entirely in white Italian travertine, a natural material favored by Gordon Bunshaft (Hufbauer 2005), a renowned architect with the firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in New York City who designed the building. The Library occupies 134,695 square feet and is the largest of all presidential libraries, 402 square feet larger than the next largest library, the Kennedy Library. Its square shape and light color evoke the images of other memorials such as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., thereby utilizing the monument concept and iconographic strategy to convey ideas of prestige (N. Johnson 1995, Domosh 1996).

By the very nature of the closed plan of the complex, open only on one side toward the campus, the landscape at the LBJ Library and complex became an anchor on the east end of campus (Figure 3). Its orderly design and symmetrical features invited a sense of calm rather than chaos, thereby “limiting social conflict” (Crump 1999), an idea favored by University planners. Yet it sits on a campus which was full of students that often protested various issues (Kuhlman 1995). This resulting presentation revealed the way in which officials of the Library and the leadership of the University of Texas at Austin attempted to redirect ideas about national issues by using this closed design.

The exhibit space inside the Library negotiates an ideological position, just as the exterior spaces, but when the Library first opened that position came from a few competing sources and was the reason for the duality of presentation at the Library. Lady Bird Johnson, who was deeply involved in every aspect of the library planning, offered her own ideas about the exhibits. She wanted to portray a “better reflection of the man, the period, and his influence on the period” (1970, 313). One entry in her diary suggests that she envisioned President Johnson greeting school children in the library as she had been told Truman did in his library. She called this aspect of the museum “the most delightful of all” (1970, 181). She related her vision of President Johnson talking to students about the Office of the Presidency (1970, 182) (Figure 4).



**Figure 3.** Aerial photo of the LBJ Library. Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Frank Wolfe, 1971

Among Lady Bird Johnson's contributions was the idea of showcasing the archives behind glass in the Great Hall (Frantz 1974, Middleton 2007). She recognized that the archives were not being used enough by scholars during a trip to the Truman Library (C. Johnson 1970). The LBJ Library proudly displays its archives behind glass in a powerful presentation in the Great Hall of the Library and its docents and exhibit text often remind visitors that tapes, papers and presidential records are constantly being released to the public. This is in contrast to the Bush Library where docents immediately announce to visitors that the archives are not open to the public, a fact not entirely true since a researcher, who may be a member of the public writing a book, can request admission. All presidential libraries have archives, but the fact that the



**Figure 4.** President Lyndon Baines Johnson talks to a group of tourists in the Oval Office replica. Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Frank Wolfe

archives are showcased at the LBJ Library and Museum again contributes to the monument effect (N. Johnson 1995). The visible archives remind visitors that the Office of the Presidency is no normal office, just as the display of the archives in bright red buckram boxes with gold presidential seals behind a wall of glass four stories high is no ordinary presentation (Figure 5). Lady Bird Johnson's idea to make the archives a prominent feature in the displays at the museum sends a message to visitors and scholars alike that access to information at the LBJ Library is important, which parallels LBJ's own claim that he was accessible to the American people.

The early exhibit areas contained very little information regarding legislation passed during the Johnson administration. Harry Middleton, director of the Library from 1971 until 2002, stated that this resulted partially from the fact that the interior designer, Arthur Drexler's "chief interest was in art objects" (2007). According to Middleton (2007), Drexler actually designed niches that were built into the interior walls to hold and display gifts of state the First Family received during their time in the White House. The original layout of the exhibit space in the Library interior was designed not to change (Hufbauer 2004). These built-in niches and display cases for the objects in the museum created a clean, sleek look that complemented the modern architectural design. Photographs from the interior of the Library when it first opened



**Figure 5.** The archives as visible from the Great Hall in the LBJ Library. Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Charles Bogel, 1998.

looked like it was a modern art museum rather than a place where tourists came to learn about history (Figure 6). Under pressure from LBJ and Lady Bird Johnson, Bunshaft eventually agreed to build the Oval Office replica, interrupting the art museum vision he had in mind. When the Library first opened, some presentation styles contrasted with others and added a layer of complexity to the story the Library told about President and Mrs. Johnson.

In another presentation anomaly in the early museum, there was a small Vietnam War exhibit on the main floor. Middleton (2007) stated that Johnson remarked to him just before the Library opened that “we did more than just accept gifts of State”. In an effort to change some of the artistic displays before the Library opened to the public, one room reserved for gifts of State displays became a Vietnam exhibit. As far as portraying other domestic policy issues of the administration, the museum curator explained to Middleton that “domestic issues could best be told in film” (2007), a relatively new display technique. Accordingly, upstairs on the second exhibit level, the Library team placed three television monitors that showed films on Great Society legislation. These two areas of the museum frustrated the attempt to promote a single view of the administration that would not invoke controversy. Johnson himself wanted to confront controversy in the way the displays told the stories of the administration. Johnson told Middleton that he wanted the Library to be “open” (2007). Johnson’s comments on what he wanted included in the



**Figure 6.** Lady Bird Johnson discusses items on exhibit with Marietta Brooks and Harry Middleton. Credit: LBJ Library Photo by Frank Wolfe, 1971.

Library lead us to believe that being open meant being frank about the failures and successes of his administration. During the dedication ceremony on May 22, 1971, Johnson made this comment:

There is no record of a mistake, or unpleasantness, or criticism that is not included in the files here. We have papers from forty-some very turbulent years of public service. And we've put them all over here in one place for friend and foes to judge, to approve or disapprove. I do not know how this period will later be regarded in the years to come. But that's really not the point. This library will show the facts, not just the joys and the triumphs but the sorrows and the failures, too (L. Johnson 1971).

Johnson's words show how he reinforced the commentary he wanted to make in the public space of the library regarding his presidency. In this speech, he sought to verify the claim that his administration was open to criticism. Additionally, the idea of holding symposia opened up discussion in the public arena and was new to a presidential library. In an article in the *Austin American Statesman* in the early 1970s, Middleton explained that "President Johnson had the idea ...that the Library should become a center for a great deal of intellec-

tual searching” (Jackson 1974). Middleton claims that Johnson wanted people to “gather and discuss and debate topics of central importance” (Jackson 1974). Within one year of the opening of the Library, it held its first symposium on education at the same time the Library released the education papers. This practice continues today and is part of the reason that the Library has such a complex and interesting public presentation.

### **A Present Day Look at the LBJ Library and the Bush Library**

The interior space of the LBJ Library changed significantly in 1995 during a renovation of the exhibit space. The new exhibition of the 1990s reflects the conflicts of the Johnson Presidency more extensively and gives an expanded explanation of Johnson’s life prior to the Presidency. The majority of the display niches in the wall have been covered by new interpretive exhibits. One exception to this is on the second floor of the museum which showcases the gifts of State in the original niches and display cases. In a prime example of the concept of “space[s] of multiplicity” (Foucault quoted in Mitchell 2000, 215), this section of the museum, in which there exists a sophisticated remnant of the original art director’s plan, there stands an exhibit entirely opposite in nature. A robotic, life-sized LBJ, clad in khakis and a western styled shirt, tells jokes at the push of a button. This area of the museum epitomizes, more quickly than anywhere else in the museum, the differing messages about the president that library planners want to convey. On one hand, Johnson was a United States President, who served in official capacities that called for refinement, especially when dealing with foreign dignitaries. On the other hand, he was no different than many typical Texas ranchers who were never too busy to stop and tell a good joke.

The exhibit space within the Library also continues to shape public memory from the perspectives of those in power. For example, the area on the first floor that deals with Johnson’s Great Society legislation is set in the middle of a number of images that convey chaos and confusion, but there is a reason the exhibit is structured in this way. One enters this area of the museum and immediately hears various popular songs from the 1960s. These songs relate to photographs hanging on the walls: a scene from the movie, *The Graduate*; a photo of a tattooed hippie; a photo of Carol Channing in *Hello Dolly*; and scenes from race riots in American cities. This space is a jumble of fast-moving images and sounds, and only when visitors turn the corner to the inner room are they greeted by some semblance of order. There are photos of President Johnson signing his Great Society legislation and a display of pens used to sign them. By using the technique of chaos all around the actual exhibit, the creators convey the idea that President Johnson and his legislation were calming forces during the mid-sixties, thereby further promoting the idea of stability from the point of view of the planners, exactly the message that Karen Till

presents in her piece about re-focusing debate during times of national crisis (2001). This technique, also stressed by Bodnar, creates positive public memories surrounding the Johnson administration, thereby also creating “official loyalties” (1992). In the case of this particular exhibit, it is the power of the administration to orchestrate positive social change in the midst of social crisis that Johnson Library curators prefer we remember.

Other exhibits more accurately reflect social events of the sixties than did the original. Rather than most of the exhibits becoming a continuation of the outside message of stability, the message inside today is that although President Johnson’s legislation was a stabilizing force, problems existed. Chaos still defined America in the late sixties, which is evident in the images and audio in the museum. The presentation is a blend of the chaotic and the stability-seeking forces of government, mirroring the dual message of the Library.

The Bush Library planners at Texas A&M University created a different message in the landscape and interior of that Presidential Library. The Bush Library and Museum seeks to highlight one ideology of the Bush administration, just as the LBJ Library highlights another in its library. President Bush’s Library, which opened in 1997, tries to capitalize on the President’s vision of moral stability and good will toward others. The exterior and landscape surrounding the building are unremarkable, with the exception that the Bush Library building bears a striking resemblance to the Jefferson Monument in Washington, D.C. (Figure 7). Inside, the exhibit presentation builds upon the “thousand points of light” rhetoric Bush used throughout his presidency to promote the idea of community service. Messages in text and audio throughout the museum appeal to Americans to dedicate themselves to personal integrity and service. In “analyzing the ideas implicated in the imagery” (Cosgrove and Daniels 1998) the overwhelming message to the visitor is that volunteerism and service to one’s country are very important and that the Office of the Presidency should be memorialized through traditional monumental structures.

Additionally, President Bush and his library planners also borrow a theme from the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M University. In a film in the orientation theater at his Library, Bush says he wanted it built at A & M because of the “spirit of the place, mood of the campus, the Aggie Spirit...I love it!” The Aggie spirit he speaks about is linked to the Corps of Cadets, a group that defines the atmosphere at the University. The Corps of Cadets, a military-styled group of students that originated when the university was founded, “trains leaders for service to the state and nation” ([www.tame.edu](http://www.tame.edu)) through its program which is a Reserve Officer Training Corps program. The Corps stresses such characteristics as loyalty, spirit, honor, sacrifice and service, the same qualities emphasized in the Library. Cadets wear uniforms to class and attend formations and drills. Cadets are not required to go into military service when



**Figure 7.** The Bush Library. Credit: George Bush Presidential Library and Museum

they finish at the University, but many do. The Corps is so much a part of the public face of Texas A&M University that images of the Corps are incorporated into logos representing the University. The University website states that the institution has “developed a rich heritage of traditions that have helped to develop character, leadership, unity and public service in all its graduates” ([www.tamu.edu](http://www.tamu.edu)). That ideology carries over to the presentation at the Bush Library and is one of the themes that he and his planners use to create a certain sense of place, different in many ways, from the LBJ Library.

The messages at the Bush Library do not contradict themselves in the same way that they do at the LBJ library. Instead, a visitor receives a straightforward message emphasizing community service and integrity. Additionally, the separate entrance for staff sends a message to the visitor that there is a separation between those in power and the public. This is in contrast to the admission-free and unencumbered entrance at the LBJ Library.



## Conclusions

Social tensions in the mid-1960s offered the image-makers at the University of Texas an opportunity to capitalize on ways to quell that tension with a new landscape for the campus. They did this by building a monumental-sized library. Inside the building, the museum component of the presidential library told a story from the point of view of planners and a president interested in reminding Americans of happier memories than reality had to offer in hopes of re-directing that social memory in a positive direction. He also used the forum of exhibits, text and symposia to further his message that he was approachable and interested in positive changes for the country. The Library achieved a more balanced presentation when additional exhibits about Vietnam and administration legislation were added in the 1990s. The planners capitalized on the new-found relationship with the University of Texas and its LBJ School for Public Affairs, adjacent to the Library, and offered additional opportunities for some members of the public to engage in discussion through the use of its archive and symposia. The theme that the LBJ Library derived from a university setting both enabled it to be a stabilizing place on campus, and one where questioning was allowed in a controlled way. This mirrored the way that Johnson portrayed himself: both as enforcer and comforter during the turbulent 1960s.

The Bush Library followed the precedent set by the Johnson Library planners and located on a university campus, thereby letting the President and planners take advantage of its theme as well as the university's prestige and expertise (Glenn 2007). At A&M, the George H.W. Bush Library planners capitalize on the conservative, service-oriented theme of the Corps of Cadets to promote ideas of service to one's community and personal integrity. The presence of the archives is minimized, the entrance is encumbered by security, and the public has to enter through a separate entrance than staff and officials, thereby implying that the role of the Presidency and those associated with him is elevated above the role of the public.

Although the George W. Bush Library is only in the initial stages of planning, its leadership has already announced a development new to presidential library presentations. Rather than following the non-partisan tradition of all of the previous schools associated with the president because of their proximity to the libraries, the Bush school will be a partisan think tank, devoted to promoting this one particular president's ideas about government (Burka 2007). President Bush's papers, already severely compromised by his suspension of the Freedom of Information Act, may be decades away from being released, further limiting access to records (Burka 2007). Although the building is years away from completion, the commentary President Bush wants to make about his presidency and administration is already taking shape through announce-

ments such as these. These announcements form the basis for what we can assume will be a large part of the message at the newest presidential library in the state.

Texas will soon boast more presidential libraries than any other state. These libraries as museums are “a complex type of place that localizes and spatially communicates narratives of time and identity” (Till 2001, 277). As we have seen, they also communicate presidents’ visions and messages as he wants the public to experience them regardless of whether they are exactly accurate or not. They reflect power and prestige in their buildings and surroundings. They offer a look at recent developments in public culture and presidential commemoration. Presidential libraries are places that are ripe for cultural geography research and exploration and in Texas, students and researchers interested in cultural geography studies need not travel far to find one.

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