

ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR.
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Take a look at our present world. It is manifestly not Adolf Hitler's world. His Thousand-Year Reich turned out to have a brief and bloody run of a dozen years. It is manifestly not Joseph Stalin's world. That ghastly world self-destructed before our eyes. Nor is it Winston Churchill's world. Empire and its glories have long since vanished into history. The world we live in today is Franklin Roosevelt's world.

—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Profile of Franklin Roosevelt,
TIME 100, April 13, 1998

Arthur Schlesinger was a great American patriot. He believed profoundly and wholeheartedly in democracy, in the Constitution, in the Bill of Rights. He served his country in wartime and fought for it in peacetime—always with courage, principle, boundless energy, candor, and joy. He was the consummate liberal of our time. He believed in the force of ideas, of reason, of debate, of persuasion. He was the powerful enemy of totalitarianism wherever it took root.

His strength, his optimism, his leadership refreshed the Rooseveltian soul in bad times and held it to its highest standards in good. He was an unrepentant New Dealer to the final day of his life—“the people” mattered—it was their welfare that government was about.

Arthur Schlesinger taught all of us the importance of history. “History is to a nation,” he would say, “as memory is to the individual. As persons deprived of memory become disoriented and lost, not knowing where they have been or where they are going, so a nation denied a conception of the past will be disabled in dealing with its present and its future.” He was fond of quoting the great Dutch historian Pieter Geyl who had written that “history is indeed an argument without end.” Arthur would add: “That, I believe, is why we love it so.”

—William J. vanden Heuvel, Founder and Chair
Emeritus, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute

It seems to me that the dedication of a library is in itself an act of faith.

To bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men and women in the future, a Nation must believe in three things.

It must believe in the past.

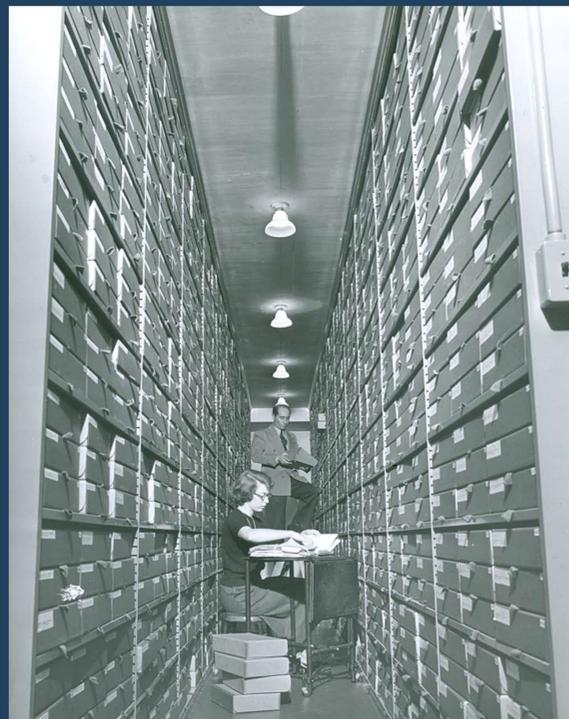
It must believe in the future.

It must, above all, believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain in judgment in creating their own future.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Remarks at the Dedication of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, June 30, 1941.



Library Director Herman Kahn holds a press conference in the Library's original "search room" the day before the official opening of the Roosevelt Papers, March 16, 1950.



Archivists Gloria Kidd and Robert Jacoby organize the Roosevelt Papers in the Library's stack area, January 25, 1950.

Franklin Roosevelt was the first president to give his papers to the American people. In 1941, his papers, books, and memorabilia began arriving at the Library from the White House and the Roosevelt home. By the end of his presidency, FDR's papers totaled some six million pages.

Roosevelt hoped to participate in the organization of his historical materials. After his death in 1945, an intense process of review and organization began and 85 percent of the papers were opened to researchers on March 17, 1950. The speed and efficiency with which the vast majority of the President's papers were released was unprecedented at the time and unmatched since.

The original Library "search room" was located in a small room on the main level of the 1941 building. It opened to the public on May 1, 1946. After the

addition of the Eleanor Roosevelt wings in 1972, the Research Room moved to more spacious quarters in the north wing, directly below the present Research Room. As the Library's education and exhibition missions expanded, the current space on the upper level was created.

Today the Roosevelt Library houses 17 million pages of manuscript materials in 400 distinct collections; 51,000 books, including FDR's own personal collection of over 20,000 volumes; and 150,000 photographs, negatives and audiovisual items. Its Research Room is among the busiest in the presidential library system, serving several thousand on-site and remote researchers each year.