

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 106 172

SO 008 258

**AUTHOR** Hawke, Sharryl  
**TITLE** Bringing the John F. Kennedy Library into the Classroom. Profiles of Promise 45.  
**INSTITUTION** ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Boulder, Colo.; Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., Boulder, Colo.  
**SPONS AGENCY** National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.  
**PUB DATE** [75]  
**NOTE** 5p.; For related documents, see ED 084 214, ED 081 686, and ED 077 828; Not offered in hard copy due to marginal reproducibility of original document  
**AVAILABLE FROM** Social Science Education Consortium, 855 Broadway, Boulder, Colorado 80302 (\$7.50 for numbers 31-45 in the series)  
**EDRS PRICE** MF-\$0.76 HC Not Available from EDRS. PLUS POSTAGE  
**DESCRIPTORS** Audiovisual Centers; Community Education; Educational Resources; Elementary Secondary Education; Government Libraries; Higher Education; Libraries; \*Library Collections; Library Programs; \*Library Role; Museums; Primary Sources; Program Descriptions; \*Social Studies; Social Studies Units; Teacher Education; Teaching Techniques  
**IDENTIFIERS** John F. Kennedy Library; Presidential Libraries; \*Profiles of Promise

**ABSTRACT**

This document describes how a presidential library and its resources can be used in the classroom. The John F. Kennedy Library attempts to reach three publics: the senior-level scholars; the general public; and teachers and educators interested in bringing the resources to the classroom. The library contains a variety of resources including historical documents, museum objects, audiovisual materials, and oral history interviews. From these resources, eight educational learning units were developed for use in the classroom, with considerable variation in the amount of structure and the kinds of activities. The focus of each unit is to provide students with primary source materials--letters, memoranda, records, transcripts, articles, readings--pertinent to the subject of the unit. It is up to individual teachers to determine the best use of the materials for their classrooms. The library also disseminates films, document reproductions, and selected bibliographies. (Author/JR)

# BRINGING THE JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY INTO THE CLASSROOM

What is a presidential library? Is it a memorial to a former president? A collection of books? A repository of documents and memorabilia? An historical museum? The John F. Kennedy Library staff believes a presidential library is all of these--and much more.

Working out of temporary headquarters in Waltham, Massachusetts, while awaiting completion of the permanent Library facility in nearby Cambridge, the Kennedy Library staff has specified education as the basic goal of the Library. "We are aiming, in everything we do, to raise people's level of understanding about the political-governmental processes of our country," explains John Stewart, Assistant Director for Archives. The staff believes President Kennedy would enthusiastically endorse their approach.

Dan H. Fenn, Kennedy Library Director, is confident that presidential libraries, and the Kennedy Library in particular, are uniquely equipped to perform an educational service. Three assumptions underlie his belief and the development of educational programs at the JFK Library:

- 1) studying the recent historical past is of vital significance in helping young people understand contemporary American life;
- 2) events in the career and administration of John F. Kennedy can fruitfully be analyzed by those seeking an appreciation of certain basic concepts about American political and governmental processes;
- 3) imaginative teachers can successfully use manuscript material and other unique resources of archival institutions to help students develop intellectually and to heighten their interest in particular academic subjects.

Working from these assumptions, Fenn and Stewart began some two years ago to develop an educational program based on the resources, both printed and human, available in the Library. With the additional assistance of Barbara Waters, Coordinator of Instructional Development, the Library is now ready to extend its services to interested teachers in classrooms across the nation.

## THE KENNEDY LIBRARY COLLECTION

Before focusing on the education program developed at Kennedy Library, it is useful to explore the nature and function of the Library itself. In discussing the Library, Stewart begins by explaining that the institution's primary function is not to memorialize the former president. The building structure will serve as a memorial but the operation of the Library will not. "We are not interested in perpetuating Camelot...or in trying to make of the facts of President Kennedy's life something that never existed," says Stewart.

If the Kennedy Library is not primarily a memorial, what is it? A brief survey of the Library's many holdings and services will help answer that question.

As part of the National Archives and Records Service of the federal government, the Kennedy Library is first and foremost a repository for many kinds of historically significant documents--some 25,000 boxes of materials holding 22 million documents. There are 150 distinct collections of manuscripts and archives in the Library.

One category of materials is the collection of John F. Kennedy papers which includes everything from handwritten drafts of speeches, to microfilm copies of important official records, to letters received by the Kennedy family after the president's assassination. In addition to JFK's papers, there are collections of personal papers donated by other persons prominent in recent American political history--John Kenneth Galbraith, Robert F. Kennedy, James Warburg, Thomas P. O'Neil, and Theodore White, to name but a few.

Also housed in the Library is an extensive collection of memorabilia, or museum objects. These items relate mainly to President Kennedy and include his rocking chairs, decorative items from his office, and gifts given to the president and his family during his years of public service.

Another Library collection is the holding of printed or published resources. Although not primarily a book library, the JFK Library staff is endeavoring to gather an exhaustive collection of material written by and about President Kennedy. They are also amassing a general collection of books on mid-twentieth century American political history.

A fourth category of materials is the audiovisual collection. A sample of these materials are photographs of the president and his family, audiotapes of presidential speeches, news footage donated by television networks and other organizations, and a large holding of political and social documentary productions.

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An important collection still being developed is recorded oral history interviews with more than 1,000 people who have important insights into the Kennedy administration and other subjects of interest to the Library.

In addition to gathering and organizing the varied holdings of the Library, the staff is equally interested in developing programs which will encourage and help people use the Library's resources. Some programs include the direct use of Library collections. One such project currently being undertaken is called a "decision film." This film, based on collections in the Library relating to JFK's executive order on housing discrimination, will place the audience in the president's chair and will pose, at several points, alternative decision choices. The staff plans to use the film as a prototype for other decision-making exhibits in the Library; it will also be available for use in classrooms and other educational settings.

Some Library programs do not directly involve the use of the Library collections but do call upon the expertise of the Library staff and other persons interested in mid-twentieth century governmental affairs. The Library's community visitor program, for example, brings leading public figures to communities in the Boston area for a day of meetings and discussions with school and civic groups.

#### WHO DOES THE LIBRARY SERVE?

The Kennedy Library staff hopes to serve three "publics." One group is the senior-level scholars--graduate students, professional historians, writers--people having a specialized interest in the unique materials available at the Library. A second group is the general public, people who will come to the Library to observe the exhibits or explore the Library collections. The third public is persons involved in formal education programs--teachers, students, school administrators, curriculum specialists, textbook publishers--educators interested in bringing the resources of the Library to young people.

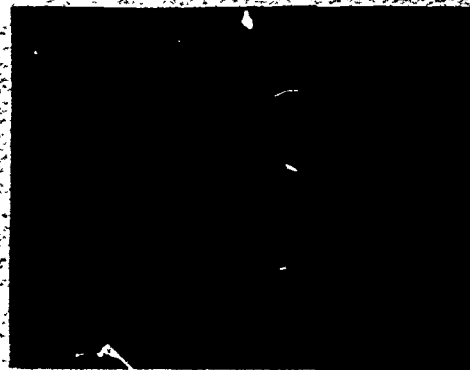
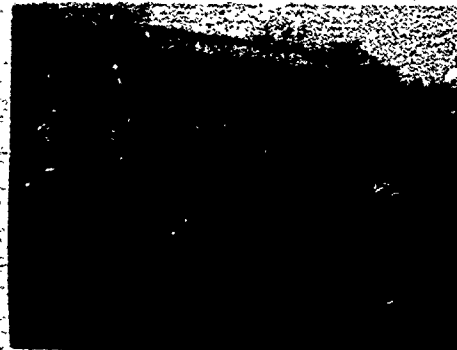
It was this third public that Fenn, Stewart, and Waters had in mind when they organized a meeting in February 1972 of some 20 people from public and private secondary schools and university schools of education. At this meeting the Library staff and the educators explored approaches for making the Library's resources available and useful to teachers and students. The meeting resulted in the concept of educational learning units. The purpose of the units was to put the unique resources of the Library into a format that would be adaptable to many classroom situations and needs. Now, two years later, the JFK Library has eight educational units available for field testing.

#### EIGHT EDUCATIONAL UNITS FROM THE KENNEDY LIBRARY

Over the past two years the Kennedy Library staff has experimented with a number of learning units. The eight units which they have selected for publication are briefly described by the developers as follows:

- 1) *Seven Roles of the President: A Social Studies Learning Package for Grades Seven Through Nine* (teacher's guide and student copy) combines Kennedy Library documents and audiovisual resources in an individualized instructional format to teach the roles of the president and to enable the student to interpret the president's activities as seen on television and in the press.
- 2) *The President Informs the People: A Learning Program on Presidential Press Conferences* (teacher's guide and student resource materials I-VI) includes a number of suggested activities and a lengthy series of documents relating to President Kennedy's November 20, 1962 press conference.
- 3) *An Ambassador Communicates with Washington: A Packet of Documents from the Papers of John F. Kennedy* illustrates techniques and problems in transmitting international relations information to and from Washington. The documents selected focus on the Dutch-Indonesia dispute over West New Guinea and were collected from national security and the presidential office files.
- 4) *The President Communicates with His Staff: A Collection of Memoranda Sent by John F. Kennedy to Members of the White House Staff* provides a small sample of memoranda from President Kennedy to his White House staff illustrating how a president establishes a working relationship with his staff based on delegation of decision making and assumption of a leadership role within a federal bureaucracy.

#### Cambridge area students tour the Kennedy Library's temporary facility

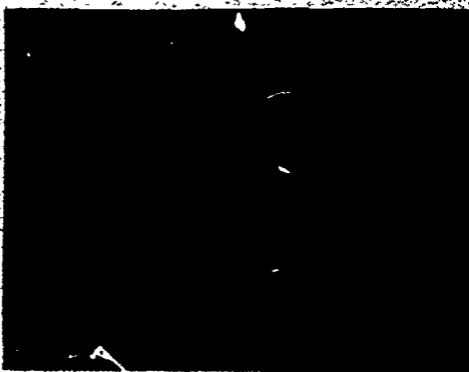


#### Kennedy Library staff and educators evaluate learning units during the



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5) *Memoranda for the President: A Collection of Documents Prepared for John F. Kennedy by Members of the White House Staff* is a collection of memoranda (with suggested activities and discussion questions) to illustrate the important role of the president's staff in providing the president with information. This collection of memoranda to the president illustrates the large number of issues confronting the president, staff suggestions regarding issues, decisions that the president is asked to make, informally the president requests, briefing format for the president's numerous meetings, and the written format of top-level communication.

6) *The Presidential Press Secretary: A Collection of Documents Illustrating the Relationships of the President's Press Secretary and of the White House Press Corps Members* provides a narrative on presidential press relations in recent history and a series of documents illustrating the range of issues with which a press secretary must deal.

7) *The Expectations for a New Administration: A Collection of Messages Received by President Kennedy after the Election of November 8, 1960* provides a broad sample of hopes and expectations for a new administration.

8) *The Freedom Riders: A Collection of Documents Relating to Attempts in the Spring of 1961 to Desegregate Bus Facilities in Seven States in the South* consists of a sampling of memoranda, telegrams, and other communications received during the civil rights demonstrations in the spring of 1961.

There is considerable variation in the amount of structure and the kinds of activities within the eight units. Perhaps the most structured unit, and the only one directed specifically toward junior high students, is *Seven Roles of the President*. The teacher's guide for this packet specifies the overall unit objective--"to enable a student to master the concept that the American presidency is a bundle of specific responsibilities which often overlap"--details specific performance objectives, gives suggestions for incorporating the unit into a general curriculum, outlines activities, suggests discussion questions, lists materials, and presents pre- and post-tests.

The student material begins with an introductory filmstrip on the seven roles of a president: Chief of State, Chief Executive, Chief Diplomat, Commander in Chief, Legislative Leader, Political Leader, Popular Leader. Copies of original documents, such as letters, appointment calendars, and speeches generated by President Kennedy are then made available to students, along with slides of JFK performing various presidential functions. In working with these materials, students are asked to identify the role the president is performing in the different situations. Used together, the student packet and instructor's guide provide a structured, complete unit of study.

Another highly structured unit is *The President Informs the People*, prepared in cooperation with John S. Gibson, Lincoln Filene Professor, Tufts University. The objective of this unit is to help students understand how the president of the United States seeks to inform the American public about the duties of his office and the important issues of the day. The presidential press conference is emphasized, with most learning activities centering on President Kennedy's November 20, 1962 press conference, which concerned the provisional settlement of the Cuban missile crisis.

The student material contained in this unit includes six types of document replicas: memoranda concerning the physical arrangements and format of the press conference; background information on the issues discussed; briefing papers used by the president in preparing for the conference; the official transcript of the conference; articles and editorials relating to the conference; and background reading material on the relationship between the president and the press. Both a 16 mm film and cassettes are available for purchase or rental from the Library to accompany this unit.

The remaining six units available from the Library are less structured. Most of the units include some brief background material for the teacher and some activity suggestions. However, the focus of these units is to provide students with primary source materials--letters, memoranda, records, transcripts, articles, readings--pertinent to the subject of the unit. It is up to teachers to determine the best use of the material for their students.

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## EVALUATING THE UNITS

To date, field testing of the Kennedy Library educational units has been limited. However, a group of 15 classroom teachers from the Boston area were invited to the Library last summer for a three-day institute during which the units were reviewed and evaluated.

Stewart reports the general response of the teachers was quite positive. They felt that having reproductions of authentic documents would bring a sense of reality to the study of history and government. Their major concern about the units was the high vocabulary level of the primary materials provided in the student packets. They questioned student ability to read and comprehend some of the sophisticated language and complex content of the documents. The Kennedy Library staff recognizes the vocabulary problem and is hopeful that teachers field testing the units will discover ways to handle or adapt the materials without losing the realism of the original documents.

## HOW TO ACQUIRE THE KENNEDY LIBRARY EDUCATIONAL UNITS

The eight learning units described in the preceding section are presently available for pilot testing from the John F. Kennedy Library (see address information below). If you are interested in field testing one or all of the units in your classes, the Library staff would welcome your help. They are eager to determine how the materials will work with students of different ages and abilities, and they are interested in knowing how students respond to the materials and techniques in the packets. The staff will ask each teacher receiving the packets to complete a short written evaluation of the materials.

In addition to the educational units, the Kennedy Library has other materials available to teachers and interested persons. Three films, *One Thousand Days*, *The Kennedy-Nixon Debates*, and *J.F.K. Speaks to Houston Ministers on the Religious Issue*, are available for rental. A packet of document reproductions, including a letter written by young John Kennedy to his father and a personally edited copy of the speech given by President Kennedy in West Berlin, is available. The Library also produces selected bibliographies and informational handouts on its resources. Contact the Library for further information on any of these materials.

To many people, the image of a presidential library is that of an imposing building with a "do not touch" atmosphere. The John F. Kennedy Library hopes to change that image. By using the Library's unique resources to develop useful and interesting learning experiences, the staff hopes to bring its users into closer contact with the realities of political and governmental process in the United States.

## ERIC DOCUMENTS

- ED 084 214 - *How to Visit a Museum*. By Pierre Rebetez. 203 pp. MF-\$ .75, HC-\$10.20, plus postage. Available from Manhattan Publishing Company, 225 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y. 10012 - \$5.50. The primary aim of this document is to encourage schools and museums to unite their efforts to further the use of the museum for teaching purposes and to promote the full development of creative facilities.
- ED 681 686 - *Museum Resources Center. Final Evaluation Report*. 20 pp. MF-\$ .75, HC-\$1.50, plus postage. This is the final report of a project which was designed to integrate field trips to museums and historic sites in social studies courses, to develop primary source materials, and to disseminate information about the project and available educational resources which can be used by teachers and students.
- ED 077 828 - *Museums, Imagination, and Education*. 148 pp. Available from Unipub, Inc., 650 First Ave., New York, N. Y. 10016 - \$6.00. Twelve authors offer creative ideas for using museums to further worldwide education. International trends in museum education are discussed.

For further information, write:

John Stewart  
John F. Kennedy Library  
380 Trapelo Road  
Waltham, Massachusetts 02154

If you know of other significant practices write a one page description, including the name and address of a person to contact for further information, and send to:

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