

**WHAT DESIGN FOR A PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY?  
COMPLEXITY, ORDER, ATYPICALITY, AND HISTORICAL  
SIGNIFICANCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Research shows that preference for scenes rest more in the character of the scene than in the observers. What features fit the design of a presidential library, such as the one under consideration by President Clinton? The present study used six color photographs that represented various styles of architecture for institutional buildings such as a library or museum. The study used the photos to gather two kinds of data. For the independent variables, one sample of eight observers rated each building each building on four features: goodness of example, order, complexity and historical significance. For the dependent variable, interviewers had a cluster sample of 130 respondents in central Ohio evaluate each building. The interviewers asked them to pick the building they liked the most for a presidential or senatorial library, the building they liked the least for that purpose, to report the reasons for the choices, and to rate each building on five seven-point evaluative scales. The analysis confirmed that importance of building over respondents features in the evaluations; and it showed that participants preferred designs with moderate levels of complexity and order, and moderate to high goodness of example. Open ended responses also indicated a preference for historic significance and symbols of popular over high style.

**INTRODUCTION**

Research shows that judgments of beauty in places rest more in the character of the place than the observer. Studies repeatedly show major effect sizes associated with appearance and little to no effects associated with individuals or subgroups