Guide to the Dr. David Derge Collection  
(1967-1972)

Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Dr. David Collection

Creator: David Richard Derge (1928-1996)

Repository: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
18001 Yorba Linda Boulevard
Yorba Linda, California 92886

Abstract: This collection comprises materials documenting the development and use of polling data by the Republican Party and the Nixon White House between 1967 and 1972. The bulk of the collection consists of surveys commissioned between mid-1968 and mid-1971 by Derge in his capacity as consultant to the Republican Party and from 1970 to the Executive Office of the President. The materials include final and draft reports, executive summaries, computer printouts, survey forms, and, in many cases, work papers, including timelines, fee schedules, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and articles from periodical literature. The collection also includes a number of memoranda and subject files, documenting in particular Derge’s role in the development and implementation by the Republican Party and the Administration of regular polling to continuously monitor and evaluate the attitude of the public to the Administration and its policies (PRIM, or Presidential Ratings studies).

Administrative Information

Access: Open.

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Biography

David Richard Derge, political science professor, college administrator and Republican pollster, was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on October 10, 1928. He received his AB from the University of Missouri in 1950 and his AM and Ph.D. from Northwestern University in 1951 and 1955, respectively. He joined the faculty of Indiana University in 1956, becoming professor of Political Science in 1965 and dean of administration and executive vice president in 1968. He became President of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale in 1972, but his administration was controversial, and in 1974 he resigned the presidency and returned to the classroom as professor of Political Science, a position he held until his death on December 26, 1996.

In addition to his academic activities, Derge was a leading Republican pollster. In 1968, he founded Behavioral Research Associates of which he was president until his death. The date of his earliest polling activity for the Republican National Committee is unknown, but he was heavily involved in polling for the 1968 national election, and as consultant to the Executive Office of the President, he was the Republican party’s principal pollster from 1970 until 1972, when he resigned to take up the presidency of Southern Illinois University. During this period, Derge was instrumental in developing and implementing the concept of on-going periodic polling, in particular Presidential Ratings polls (PRIM).

Polling Practices

The majority of the surveys in this collection were carried out by Chilton Research Services, of Philadelphia, PA, and Opinion Research Corp., of Princeton, NJ. While most surveys carried out by each service are unique, there are some overlaps in 1970. The Survey Detailed Statistics (Series 1, Subseries 1) indicate that Derge considered Chilton Research Services the primary research service in 1970, and Opinion Research Corp in 1971; the change being effected at the time of the State of the Union Address in late January 1971. Although most surveys were taken over a single period of between one and seven days, more important surveys were taken in “waves”; the 1968 Presidential Election poll (Series 1, Subseries 2) was taken in four separate waves, each of several days’ duration, between July and October 1968. The Republican National Committee considered the surveys conducted by national polling services such as the Gallup organization to be not only inaccurate gauges of public opinion but also slow in indicating changes in public opinion. After analyzing the shortcomings of the Gallup poll (Series 3, “Gallup Presidential Ratings” subject file) Derge and others developed a system of “continuous attitude evaluation” of the Administration and
its policies (PRIM, or Presidential Ratings studies); records of the first five of these PRIM studies, issued between May 1969 and July 1970, are in Series 1, Subseries 2.
Scope and Content Summary:

The collection comprises materials documenting the development and use of polling by the Republican Party and the Nixon White House between 1967 and 1972.

The bulk of the collection consists of surveys commissioned between mid-1968 and mid-1971 by Derge in his capacity as consultant to the Republican Party and from 1970 to the Executive Office of the President, from Chilton Research Services, of Philadelphia, PA, and from Opinion Research Corp., of Princeton, NJ. The polling materials include final and draft reports, executive summaries, computer printouts, survey forms, and, in many cases, work papers, including timelines, fee schedules, and correspondence. The collection also includes a number of memoranda and subject files, documenting in particular Derge’s role in the development and implementation by the Republican Party and the Administration of regular polling to continuously monitor and evaluate the attitude of the public to the Administration and its policies (PRIM, or Presidential Ratings studies).

These files include correspondence between Derge, members of the Republican National Committee, and officers of Chilton Research Services and Opinion Research; copies of items from periodical literature on the nature and science of polling; and extensive newspaper clippings documenting public opinion on a wide variety of subjects, in particular the image of the President himself. The collection also includes an Information Binder, dated June 1968, prepared for the Presidential election campaign, as well as a four-volume Political Databank, compiled during his presidency and continuously updated, detailing, respectively, candidate and President Nixon’s positions on various topics.

Series 1: Surveys
   Subseries 1: Survey Detailed Statistics
   Subseries 2: Opinion Research Corp. Surveys
   Subseries 3: Chilton Research Services
   Subseries 4: Other Surveys (1968 Presidential Election)
Series 2: Memoranda and Subject Files
Series 3: Handbooks
Series 4: Publications and Teaching

Related Collections:

   Campaign 1960 Collection
   Campaign 1968 Collection
Container List

General Note: Derge frequently made use of materials from earlier projects in later work, with the result that materials that might logically be expected to be in one folder will be found in another (see, in particular, Series 2: Memoranda and Subject Files, and Series 4: Publications and Teaching).

Series 1: Surveys.

Series 1 comprises records of surveys commissioned by Derge for the Republican National Committee and the Administration between 1967 and mid-1971. The series is arranged in the following subseries:

Subseries 1: Survey Detailed Statistics
Date: 1970-1971
Extent:

The subseries consists of two binders, one each for 1970 and 1971. These contain detailed computer statistics from each of the major surveys carried out that year, and serve as summary guides to the full surveys. (Note, however, that full surveys do not survive for all surveys included in the Survey Detailed Statistics, in particular the volume for 1971.) Each binder is arranged in reverse chronological order; the 1970 binder also includes detailed statistics for President Nixon’s European-Asian trip of August 1969, mistakenly filed as though the date were August 1970.

Survey Detailed Statistics, 1970
1) President Nixon’s European-Asian Trip. August 7-9, 1969. 1:6
4) Chilton #6478. Issues & Personalities Study. April 10-12, 1970. 1:11
6) Chilton #9448. Public Opinions Regarding President Nixon’s 4-30-70 Announcement of His Decision on American Involvement in Cambodia. April 30, 1970. 1:9

Box: File
Survey Detailed Statistics, 1971

1) Chilton #9582. Television Appearance of January 4, 1971 1:26
4) ORC #69006. National Study, March 6-7, 1971. 1:23
5) ORC #69007. National Study, April 1, 1971. 1:22
6) ORC #69008. National Study, April 7, 1971. 1:21
7) ORC #69009. National Study, April 8, 1971. 1:20
9) ORC #69012. National Survey, April 22, 1971. 1:17

Subseries 2: Opinion Research Corp. (ORC) Surveys

Date: April 1967-May 1971
Extent:

The largest number of surveys in this subseries date from the first half of 1971; however, the bulk of the materials consists of the records of the 1968 Presidential Election survey. The materials also include five PRIM (Presidential ratings) surveys, published in May, August, and December 1969, and in May and July 1970. Surveys prior to January 1971 have a 3-digit number, usually followed by one or more letters; those from January 1971 have a 5-digit number, beginning in “6”. The surveys are arranged chronologically. The records for each survey are arranged as follows: full report, executive summary, draft report(s), survey forms, and work papers; oversize computer printouts are filed separately. The records for the 1968 Presidential Election survey are arranged as follows: statistical analysis, survey forms, work papers. The computer printouts for this survey are arranged as follows: general (multi-state) statistics, by wave; individual waves, by state; flash runs, by date; flash runs, by survey question number.
Statistical Analysis
Special Analysis, Waves I-IV, with particular reference to the effect of the George Wallace candidacy
Special Analysis with particular reference to Nixon v. Humphrey

Work Papers
9 State Voters, Flash Runs, September 15-19, 1968
9 State Voters, Questions 1-21, October 14-28, 1968
8 and 4 State Voters, Question 59, July 1968
4 State Voters, Question 4, Wave 3
Learners and Uncommitted, Flash Runs, August 30, 1968
Learners and Uncommitted, September 3, 1968
Semantic Differential
Statistical Analysis, Illinois
Survey Forms
Switchers Analysis, Wave 2
Wallace Voters

Computer Statistics
Compiled
Wave 1 (July 1968) [ORC #798-W]
8 State and 3 State Telephone Survey [ORC #798-X]
8 State – Coded Questions [2 copies]
8 State Means and 4 State Means
8 State Voters
4 State – Coded Questions
“Extras” [1 file]
Wave 2 (September 1968) [ORC #798-Y]
9 State
4 State
Switchers
Wave 3 (September 1968) [ORC #798-Y]
9 State Political

Individual States
Wave 1 (July 1968) [ORC #798-W]
Michigan
Missouri [mold]
New Jersey
[799-C on cover]: New York State Political
[799-C on cover]: New York State Political – Codes
New York State – Means
North and South Carolina
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Texas Voters [mold]
Texas Means [mold] 27:3
Texas – Coded Questions [2 copies] [mold] 27:4-5
Wisconsin 16:2

Wave 2 (September 1968) [ORC #798-Y]
  Illinois 17:1
  Michigan 17:2
  Missouri [mold] 28:1
  New Jersey 17:3
  New York State 17:4
  N/S Carolina 17:5
  Ohio 17:6
  Pennsylvania [mold] 28:2
  Texas 18:1
  Wisconsin 18:2

Wave 3 (September 1968) [ORC #798-Y]
  Illinois 18:3
  Michigan 18:4
  Missouri [mold] 28:3
  New Jersey 18:5
  New York State 18:6
  N/S Carolina 19:1
  Ohio 19:2
  Pennsylvania [mold] 28:4
  Texas Political 19:3
  Wisconsin 19:4

Wave 4 (October 1968) [ORC #798-Y]
  Michigan 19:5
  New Jersey 19:6
  New York State 20:1
  Ohio 20:2
  Pennsylvania 20:3
  Texas 20:4

ORC #799-U. Public Appraises the Nixon Administration and
Key Issues, May 1969 [NB = PRIM I; carried out April 25-May 2,
1969]
  1) final report; 4:1
  2) computer statistics 20:5

ORC #790-AA. Vermont Public Appraises the Nixon
Administration and the ABM Issue, June 1969 [NB: carried out
May 29-June 1, 1969]
  1) report 4:2
  2) computer statistics 20:6
ORC #794-B. Public Appraises the Nixon Administration and Key Issues (with Particular Emphasis on Vietnam), August 1969 [NB: = PRIM II; carried out July 28-August 4, 1969]

1) final report; 4:3
2) computer statistics; 4:4-5
3) draft questionnaire; work papers.


1) final report (copy 4 of 5); 4:8-9
2) draft report (copy 6 of 7); 4:10
3) computer statistics 4:11


1) report 5:1-2
2) summary report 5:3
3) computer statistics 5:4
4) PRIM IV requests

ORC #791-AA. Public Appraises the Nixon Administration; with special emphasis on the Asian war; inflation and the economy; student unrest (June 1970). July 1970 [NB: = PRIM IV; carried out June 17-23, 1970].

1) report (revised) 5:5-6
2) report 5:7
3) summary report 5:8
4) computer statistics, all political parties 21:1
5) computer statistics, Democrats 21:2
6) computer statistics, Independents 21:3
7) computer statistics, Republicans 21:4
8) PRIM V working papers I 5:9
9) PRIM V working papers II 5:10

2) ORC #69005. March 1971.
3) ORC #69006. March 1971.


ORC #69001. Public Opinion on Key Domestic Issues; A Nationwide Survey, May 1971. 5:11-12

ORC #69003. Public Appraises President Nixon and His Administration; with Special Emphasis on the Public’s Perception of President Nixon; His Performance as President; the Nixon Administration; Trends on Specific Issues. May 1971. 6:1-5

1) report (2 vols.)
2) RMN Image 1971
3) semantic differential 6:6-7 6:8

Subseries 3: Chilton Research Services.
Date: June 1969-February 1971
Extent:

The bulk of this subseries is comprised of computer printouts for state studies for the 1970 mid-term election. Surveys have a four-digit number beginning in “9”. The surveys are arranged chronologically; oversize computer printouts are filed separately.

Survey Related to President Nixon’s June 19 [1969] Press Conference. 6:9


1) Questionnaire
2) Computer statistics 22:1

CRS #9301. Special Massachusetts Congressional Election Study. 22:2

12


CRS #9331. Haynsworth Nomination Study. November 1969. 6:11

1) Methodology 6:12
2) Computer statistics 22:4

1) report 6:13
2) computer statistics 22:5

Postal Workers Study. March 1970. 6:14

1) Summary Reports 6:15

1) Report 6:16
2) Computer Statistics 22:8

1) Report 6:17
2) Computer Statistics 22:9


1) Report 6:18
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies) 23:1-2

1) Report 6:19
2) Computer Statistics 23:3

1) Report 6:20
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 23:4-5

1) Report 6:21
2) Computer Statistics 23:6

1) Report 7:1
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 23:7-8
3) Handwritten notes by Derge 7:2

1) Report 7:3
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 24:2-3

1) Report 7:4
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 24:4-5

1) Report 7:5
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 24:6-7

CRS #9536. Wisconsin Study. October 1970.
1) Report 7:6
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 25:1-2

CRS #9537. New Mexico Study. October 1970.
1) Report 7:7
2) Computer Statistics (2 copies; binder/stapled) 25:2-3


1) Copy 1 25:5
2) Copy 2 29:2

1) Copy 1 29:3
2) Copy 2 29:4

Subseries 4: Other Surveys.
Date: 1968
Extent:

Three surveys concerning the 1968 Presidential election, compiled by other research services. Arranged chronologically, by date of compilation or publication.

Binder containing the following:
1) “Important Problems” (Open End)
2) “Areas of Concern” (Structured List)
3) Reasons For & Against Candidates.
Compiled from ORC Baseline Study by Market Information Department, Fuller & Smith & Ross. August 1968.

Electoral Vote Analysis, October 1968 [in ORC binder]

Series 2: Memoranda and Subject Files.
Extent:

This series comprises a series memoranda and subject folders relating to the nature and science of polling and the development and implementation of polling
practices by the Republican National Committee and the Administration. The materials include:

1. A memorandum by Derge, dated May 3, 1971, and addressed to John Whittaker on environmental issues.

2. The “Surveys” subject file contains fragmentary correspondence from 1967 on the costs of surveys; copies of items from periodical literature on the nature and science of polling; sample survey forms; and several sample surveys.

3. The “Gallup Presidential Ratings” subject file documents the development and implementation by the Republican Party in 1969 and 1970 of a polling system more suited to its needs than the Gallup polls. The papers include a PRIM schedule for 1969-1972, and schedules of costs for PRIM III-VI. (For additional records of PRIM I-V, see Series 1). The file also includes newspaper clippings from March-May 1970 relating to President Nixon’s approval ratings, as well as compiled lists of Presidential Events, Principal News Events, Consumer Price Index, and Popularity Trend Summary for January 1969-February/April 1970. The file also includes analyses of responses to several survey questions, taken from surveys included in Series 1.

4. The “Political Current” subject file contains material from 1969-1970, and appears to have been originally intended as a “holding” file for materials of immediate interest to Derge. The materials include an undated draft memorandum concerning information gathering systems, and an undated proposal by Derge detailing a proposed Institute for Attitude Research at Indiana University. The file includes correspondence between Derge, members of the Republican National Committee, and officers of Chilton Research Services and Opinion Research. The file also includes copies of a number of articles from periodical literature relating to polling, in particular with relationship to the 1968 Presidential election, and a list of proposed state studies for the 1970 mid-term election (for records of these studies, see Series 1, Subseries 3). Derge’s typed and handwritten notes include lists and descriptions individuals willing to work on survey data. The file also contains brochures and project proposals from several research firms.


Box: File

Surveys

Gallup Presidential Ratings

Political Current
Series 3: Handbooks.
Dates: 1968-1971
Extent:

This series comprises two items, a Nixon Information Binder, dated June 21, 1968, prepared for the Presidential election campaign, and a Political Databank, formerly in four loose-leaf binders, compiled during his presidency and continuously updated. Both detail, respectively, candidate and President Nixon’s positions on various topics, and include appropriate quotes from newspaper and magazine articles, speeches, and interviews.

Box: File 8:4-8

Political Databank. 4 volumes.
1) Vol. 1 9:1-4
2) Vol. 2 9:5-9
3) Vol. 3 10:1-4
4) Vol. 4 10:5-7

Series 4: Publications and Teaching.
Dates: 1969, 1974
Extent:

This series includes correspondence and other materials concerning a proposed article for POQ [Public Opinion Quarterly] on the 1968 election. The materials appear to be taken from other folders (see General Note to Series Descriptions above), include a copy of a letter, dated July 6, 1968, formalizing the terms for the 1968 Presidential Election survey (Opinion Research Corp. survey 798); a copy of survey form 798-Y, Wave 3; switches in voting preference between mid-July and early September 1968; a final electoral vote projection, dated November 4, 1968; and a handwritten outline by Derge. The series also includes notes of an administrative nature concerning a class session Derge took over from a colleague at Southern Illinois University in 1974.

Publications and Teaching
Box: File 10:8

Transfer Sheets
10:9