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A number of problems plagued the creation of the NARA electric identification aid database. Generating an identification aid for each record placed a heavy burden on NARA and on every Agency that reviewed records under the JFK Act. The costs of creating the JFK database were significant. Resources that the Review Board and the agencies allocated to RIF production were resources that agencies could have applied to review and release of records. The information included on the RIF was often sketchy since indexers who created the forms were not always the individuals most knowledgeable on the subjects. Thus, the databases do not always provide completely accurate or complete search results.

The JFK databases did, however, open information on the records in the JFK collection to a broad public, especially when NARA made the databases available on the internet. Those identification aids that agencies did prepare in a careful manner furnished useful information to researchers. Further, the identification aids facilitated the page by page review that the Review Board adopted by providing a means to track individual records through the process.

Many of the flaws in the databases can be blamed on the extremely short time period of 45 days permitted by Congress for its creation. On the other hand, advances in computer technology since the early 1990s may make electronic information more flexible and efficient. These advances promise an unprecedented access to information.

The Review Board recommends that any future decisions concerning the indexing of records take into account the problems and the benefits of creating separate identification aids or individual records. Much of the information that agencies provided on the identification aids might have been more useful to researchers if it had been indexed according to folder, rather than to individuals documents. Ultimately, indexing decisions may be determined by a need to balance the application of resources between review and indexing.

H.   Conclusion

The Review Board's most basic tasks were to review postponements claimed by agencies in their assassination records, and to vote either to sustain or release the information at issue. The review of claimed postponements consumed more Review Board staff hours than any other task and was the primary focus of most of the Review Board's interactions with the agencies. The Review Board voted on approximately 25,000 documents in which the agencies had requested that the Review Board postpone information. Each of these documents required the attention of a Review Board analyst to shepherd the document through the process of: 1) evaluating the postponed information the Board's guidelines; 2) presenting the document to the Review Board for a vote; 3) recording the Review Board's vote on the postponed information; 4) notifying the agency of the Review Board's decision; 5) publishing the decision in the Federal Register;   and 6) preparing the document for transfer to the JFK Collection. The Review Board's review process, as described in the JFK Act and as applied by the Review Board, thus ensured that it scrutinized each piece of withheld information was scrutinized so that the American public could rest assured that records in the JFK Collection were opened to the fullest

extent possible, and that the Review Board did not postpone any information that adds significantly to our understanding of the assassination of President Kennedy.