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 the National Archives and on every Agency that reviewed records under the JFK Act.   The costs of creating the JFK database were enormous.   Resources allocated to RIF production could have been 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 most knowledgeable on the subjects.   Thus the database was often of limited value to researchers.

But the JFK database opened information on the records in the JFK collection to a broad public, especially when it was made available on-line.   The RIFs which were thoughtfully prepared furnished focused information to researchers.   Further, the identification aids facilitated the page by page review that was adopted by the Review Board by providing a means to track individual records through the process.

Many of the flaws in the RIF database can be blamed on the extremely short time period of 45 days permitted by Congress for its creation.   Other weaknesses, such as the uneven quality of information on the RIFs, may be endemic to a process that places great demands on finances and manpower.   On the other hand, advances in computer technology since the early 1990s can make electronic information more flexible and efficient.   These advances promise an unprecedented access to information.

Any future decisions concerning indexing of records need to take into account the problems and the benefits of creating RIFs for individual records and consider the manner in which the records will be reviewed.   Much of the information provided on the identification aids could be included in a finding aid keyed at the folder level.   Future processing efforts should also attempt to take advantage of the advances in information technology.   Ultimately, indexing decisions may be determined by a need to balance the application of resources between review and indexing.