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Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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Declassification of Presidential Papers: The Eisenhower Library’s Experience

David Haight

In 1972, eleven years after Dwight D. Eisenhower left the White House, archivists at the Eisenhower Library began processing his high-level presidential papers. The library submitted its first mandatory declassification review request to United States government agencies in 1973; sixteen years later this declassification process continues with no completion date in sight. ¹ The Eisenhower Library’s experience demonstrates that declassifying recent presidential papers is difficult, expensive, and often frustrating both for the requestor and the library.

¹ William J. Stewart, "Opening Closed Material in the Roosevelt Library," Prologue 7 (Winter 1975): 239-241. Stewart described the Roosevelt Library’s successful declassification of almost all of its classified holdings within thirty years after the end of the Roosevelt administration. This thirty-year time frame will not be approximated by more recent presidential libraries.

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Nineteen seventy-two was an important year in the history of the United States government's declassification programs. In March, President Richard Nixon issued Executive Order 11652 entitled "Classification and Declassification of National Security Information and Material." This order contained explicit provisions for the declassification of papers created by presidents and their White House staffs, thus removing these materials from a declassification limbo. The order authorized the archivist of the United States to review for declassification all White House-classified materials over thirty years old. More importantly for presidential libraries with classified holdings less than thirty years old, it established the mandatory classification review system which enabled members of the public to request agency reviews of specified security-classified documents. While the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) allows individuals to request reviews of classified documents among official government records and within official presidential records created after 20 January 1981 (after five years from the time the president leaves office), the mandatory review system covers presidential papers created prior to 20 January 1981 and other donated historical materials excluded from coverage under the FOIA. Executive Order 11652 was superseded by subsequent orders, but the mandatory review provisions survived virtually intact and remain an important part of the current executive order governing national security information, Executive Order 12356, issued by President Ronald Reagan in 1982.

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3 The texts of pertinent executive orders and directives implementing the orders are published as follows:
Also in 1972, the Records Declassification Division was established within the National Archives with a mandate to review systematically all World War II-era classified information in the archives within three years and to provide overall guidance in handling other security-classified material. The division declassified almost 200 million pages of records within the three-year period, most of which were dated prior to 1946. But the end of World War II marked the end of an era, and the high degree of success in declassifying most records of this period may


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have been illusory. Declassification of post-1945 materials in the National Archives and in the presidential libraries has proven to be more difficult.

During the early processing of President Eisenhower's papers, the library staff, working under guidance from the National Archives's Office of Presidential Libraries and the Records Declassification Division, developed mandatory review procedures. Yet, the declassification of Eisenhower's papers is progressing slowly. The processing of papers housed in presidential libraries involves the usual steps: arrangement, refolding and reboxing, taking preservation measures, and preparing finding aids. Before most bodies of White House files and personal papers may be opened for research, however, they must also be reviewed page-by-page to segregate security-classified documents as well as materials withheld for other reasons specified in the donors' letters of gift. 5

Locating and withdrawing security-marked documents is only part of the job. Complicating the task is the presence within presidential papers of numerous documents bearing no security markings, which, nevertheless, contain foreign government information provided in confidence, intelligence data, or other potentially sensitive information. Many letters in the holdings of the Eisenhower Library from heads of foreign governments do not bear security markings although they were transmitted to the president in strictest confidence and some deal with delicate foreign relations issues. Numerous "flimsies" whose security markings are barely visible constitute another hazard. Consequently, the processing of these materials requires

5 Raymond Geselbracht, "The Origin of Restrictions on Access to Personal Papers at the Library of Congress and the National Archives," American Archivist 49 (Spring 1986): 142-162. This is a useful discussion of the application of access restrictions to personal papers in presidential libraries.
partial care and knowledge on the part of reviewing archivists. Carelessness can result in the inadvertent disclosure of national security information and, therefore, security violations leading to possible sanctions. On the other hand, excessive cautiousness may close documents which are no longer sensitive. Archivists’ reviewing decisions are sometimes criticized by scholars frustrated by the quantity of national security material withdrawn from presidential collections, and the complaint "everything on my topic is classified" is often heard in the library’s research room. Thus, the library’s staff is caught in the middle between unhappy researchers whom the staff is trying to serve and the stringent regulations governing national security information. Adding to the staff’s burdens is the enormous amount of time consumed typing withdrawal sheets inserted within file folders to tell users what materials have been withdrawn. It often requires eight or more hours for a staff member, frequently a GS-11 or GS-12 archivist, to segregate the classified from the unclassified contents of one archives box (eight hundred pages) and to prepare withdrawal sheets for that box. Only basic arithmetic is, therefore, needed to calculate the significant cost of initially processing a one hundred-box collection of predominantly classified documents.

During the years from 1972 to 1985 the library staff opened for research at least twenty-five manuscript collections containing substantive quantities of security-classified documents. These include such key collections as Dwight D. Eisenhower’s papers as president (known as the Ann Whitman

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6 See Alonzo Hamby and Edward Weldon, eds., Access to the Papers of Recent Public Figures: The New Harmony Conference (Bloomington, IN: Organization of American Historians, 1977) for several expressions of frustration over access problems at presidential libraries. One of these papers, highly critical of the Eisenhower Library, is Blanche Wiesen Cook’s “The Dwight David Eisenhower Library: The Manuscript Fiefdom at Abilene.”
File), the records of the White House Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, the records of the White House Staff Secretary, and the papers of secretaries of state John Foster Dulles and Christian Herter. These twenty-five collections total approximately 1,080,000 pages with an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 pages withdrawn because of security classification during the initial processing. In addition, smaller quantities of security-classified documents were removed from numerous other collections during this period, and processing of national security materials still goes on. By early 1989 the staff had prepared for research use (typed withdrawal sheets) about 50 percent of the 260,000 pages of security-classified pages of National Security Council staff files sent to the library in 1982.

When a collection is opened for research, withdrawal sheets listing all security-classified and donor-restricted items are inserted within individual file folders. Usually these listings contain the names of correspondents, dates and subjects of documents and number of pages per item unless such information is, itself, classified. In all cases, however, sufficient data is provided to enable individuals examining the collection to know when documents have been withdrawn. Researchers use this information to submit mandatory declassification review requests by filling out forms provided by the library.

7 These figures are estimates and do not include classified documents in collections currently unprocessed because of various restrictions, including the records of the United States Secret Service Presidential Protection Unit and a large body of Federal Bureau of Investigation investigative files. The figures also do not include the thousands of security classified World War II documents found in the library’s military collections because these are not presidential papers. The library’s classified holdings at the beginning of 1972 may have totalled 350,000 pages, but this is merely a rough estimate.
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A relatively small percentage of the researchers coming to the library, plus a growing number of mail order researchers, submit mandatory review requests. Some of those who do ask for one hundred or more documents. The Eisenhower Library does not limit the size of requests because the staff realizes that mandatory review is the principal means of declassifying presidential papers and knows that large requests usually result in more material being reviewed for declassification. Requests are scheduled and processed in a manner that insures fair treatment for all users.

When the library receives a mandatory review request, an archivist examines it carefully to determine whether any documents may be declassified on-site by applying agency declassification guidelines which were not available at the time of initial processing. The staff also checks for items published in the Department of State's Foreign Relations series or other sources and looks for document duplicates previously declassified elsewhere in the library's holdings. Upon determining that requested documents must be submitted to agencies for review, the staff identifies the originating agency for each item, assigns case and document control numbers, and prepares submission lists and transmittal letters to accompany photocopies of requested documents to the appropriate agencies. Requestors are provided typed copies of all submission lists and are also given instructions on appealing denials. Unlike the Freedom of Information Act, however, the mandatory review system offers no recourse to litigation.  

During an average month, the library may receive several new researcher-initiated requests, and agencies return large numbers of documents on which actions have been completed. The staff has found it more efficient to concentrate on one phase,

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usually the submission phase first, for a varying period of up to three or four weeks in order to clear out backlogs of new requests. Once the submission backlog is cleared, the staff switches to the returned materials and proceeds to declassify, sanitize, copy, bill, contact researchers, and finally refile declassified material in the open stacks and material remaining classified in the vault. At the library most newly requested items are submitted within twenty days, while returned cases may, because of staff shortages, sit for as long as two months before being processed. Thus, two to three months is usually the maximum time a request is at the Eisenhower Library. During the remaining time, often several months to a year or more, the cases are in transit or are in the agencies' custody awaiting review.

Security is an extremely important consideration in every step of the mandatory review operation. All personnel working with classified materials must have TOP SECRET clearance. Classified documents must be stored in security vaults and containers which meet strict specifications. The control numbers within each submission are essential. Since agency letters normally cite document numbers in indicating declassification and denial actions taken on specific requests, a typographical error or misnumbering of a document could have unfortunate results. The security problems are sometimes exacerbated by agency errors which include: failure to notify the library (and even requestors) of actions taken, renumbering documents, losing or misplacing document copies, and failure to heed library recommendations stated in transmittal letters.

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9 These are specified in the National Archives and Records Administration Security Manual, copy in mandatory review office files, DDEL.
When agencies return requests after acting on them, the library staff must carefully check the material to see that each agency decision is clear and any required coordination with other agencies has been performed. Often documents are returned with instructions to release them only in part. Thus, sanitized copies with portions redacted must be prepared. This is a tedious process involving the deletion of words, sentences, portions of sentences, full or partial paragraphs, or entire pages from copies, with the original documents remaining in the security vault until they are finally declassified in full. Although time-consuming, sanitization does reflect a commitment by reviewing agencies to release as much information to the public as possible. (Obviously, it takes less time to deny a document in its entirety.) Declassified and sanitized documents must be copied with the released materials being placed in the open files for use by other researchers and the copies sent to requestors who are billed for the reproduction costs.

It should be apparent that the mandatory review system involves a large investment of time by library and agency personnel alike. Often an agency must seek concurring opinions from other agencies or from various offices within the originating agency. Agency declassification offices are often understaffed. As a result, backlogs of pending cases build up, and delays in responding to requests are the norm. For example, the National Security Council (NSC) is responsible for reviewing interest in most White House-originated documents. Consequently, the NSC received the majority of requests transmitted from the Eisenhower Library and large numbers from other libraries as well. But mandatory review requests must compete for reviewing time from the NSC's small staff with FOIA requests, compiled Foreign Relations volumes awaiting clearance for publication, various litigation matters, and political crises such as the Iran-Contra affair. The Department of State also receives numerous requests from the Eisenhower Library, with other agencies such
as the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency receiving smaller numbers. Other agencies’ reviewing operations also appear to be understaffed. Some agencies use on a part-time basis reviewers who are rotated in and out with a resulting loss of continuity in processing requests. This problem might be alleviated with the use of more full-time personnel to maintain reviewing schedules.

Because of the large backlog of requests stacked up at agencies and recurring notification problems, some mandatory review cases have been carried on the library’s books as incomplete for several years. Since 1979 the library has sent letters to delinquent agencies asking them to act on cases outstanding for a year or more. These reminder letters have netted mixed results with a few agencies responding and others failing to do so. These letters are now sometimes followed with telephone calls. Because of the various delays seemingly inherent in the cumbersome mandatory review process, most requests require from a few months to a year or more to complete. Therefore, many researchers on a tight deadline, and probably a tight budget, do not submit requests.

All researchers using the library’s national security collections do, of course, benefit from the cumulative results of years of mandatory review actions, but it is a relatively small number of users working on long-term projects who initiate the majority of requests. While, as previously indicated, the submission of a large number of documents on behalf of a few people will usually accomplish significant declassification, the results are often skewed as the types of materials submitted for mandatory review depend on the interests of the users. During a given year, several scholars may conduct research at the library on identical or similar documents repeatedly. Consequently,

10 Mandatory declassification review office files, DDEL.
more material has become available on certain topics than on others. Documents on many countries and topics appear to remain unavailable largely because no one has asked for them while other items are repeatedly submitted and denied.

Declassification success is poor for some subjects. For instance, the Eisenhower administration's covert activities and its nuclear weapons strategy are popular research topics at the library, but only a small percentage of documents requested on these subjects are declassified. Foreign government documents, especially those under thirty years old, are seldom declassified although often requested. Declassification success also varies among geographic areas and countries. For example, a high percentage of requested items on Eastern Europe is consistently withheld because United States policies toward this region have not changed significantly over the years. In contrast, most materials on Vietnam have been declassified when submitted for review.

Although it is often difficult to predict with confidence what types of materials are likely to be released in individual requests, the library staff through experience recognizes certain types of information and documentation for which it can expect many denials. A listing of broad categories of sensitive information, frequently denied, has been incorporated in an information sheet on mandatory review which the library distributes to researchers.\textsuperscript{11}

Research trends help shape and limit the scope of mandatory review declassification actions as do the agencies' inability to commit adequate staff resources to declassification. In addition, a few restrictive features not included in previous orders have been written into the current executive order on national security information, Executive Order 12356. The order permits only United States citizens or permanent resident aliens to submit

\textsuperscript{11} Mandatory Review Information Sheet, DDEL.
mandatory review requests. This exclusion of foreign researchers has had a significant impact at the library. From 1983 through 1989 over two hundred foreign citizens (about 16 percent of total researchers during this period) have conducted research in the Eisenhower administration, with most of their work covering aspects of United States foreign policy. In this regard, the mandatory review system differs from the FOIA which does not exclude use by foreign citizens. Some agency officials criticize the act for this reason and urge restricting its use to United States citizens, also.  

The executive order's provision for reclassifying previously declassified information is also worrisome. The order states that the president or an agency head or designated official may reclassify previously declassified information if it is determined in writing that (1) the information requires protection in the interest of national security and (2) the information can reasonably be recovered. Fortunately, the directive implementing the executive order contains specific criteria to be considered before a reclassification action may be taken. These include the time elapsed since the disclosure of the information, the nature and extent of disclosure, the ability to inform the persons to whom the information was released of the reclassification action,

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12 See John R. Burke, "The Freedom of Information Act Ten Years On," Perspectives, American Historical Association Newsletter, 24 (January 1986): 24-25. Ambassador Burke, formerly Deputy Assistant Secretary, Classification/Declassification Center, United States Department of State, suggests at least some of the rationale behind this citizenship limitation, citing costs of the FOIA to the United States taxpayers. Burke urged that the act be available only to U.S. citizens as he commented that the Department of State has been obliged to supply information to communist or anti-American newspapers overseas with the results being publication of slanted versions of the information at the expense of U.S. taxpayers.
the ability to prevent further disclosures, and the ability to retrieve the information voluntarily from persons having received it. There have been only a few instances where this was done—and no cases in the past several years.

The presence of numerous duplicates in the library’s holdings poses the continual possibility of submitting copies of previously declassified documents and receiving more restrictive actions on the duplicates. The staff, therefore, searches for duplicates when processing requests. The resubmission of previously sanitized documents also occasionally results in reclassification problems. Researchers often ask that sanitized documents be reviewed again, hoping that more information will be released. The library will resubmit such items when two years have passed since the original sanitization action was taken. Instructions are placed on such documents, indicating to the reviewing agencies which portions have already been released. In spite of these instructions, a few years ago an agency indicated to the library its intention to reclassify sizeable portions of a previously sanitized document knowing that these portions had been open for over five years. The agency was informed of the recoverability test and withdrew its reclassification request.

Finally, in contrast to Executive Order (EO) 11652 which was issued in the wake of the Pentagon Papers controversy, with public availability of government information a major issue, and EO 12065, issued by a president publicly committed to more openness in government, the current executive order appears more restrictive in tone than its predecessors. This restrictive-

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sounding language disturbs many scholars. 14 The library's experiences, however, suggest that the current executive order merely expresses in writing the attitudes and practices carried on by reviewing agencies which belied the more liberal-sounding previous orders. Executive Orders 11652 and 12065 were not implemented as progressively as many had hoped, and EO 12356, flawed though it may be, is not as bad as it appears. No sharp curtailment of declassification actions on mandatory review requests through the library has occurred under EO 12356, although agency reviewing appears to have become more restrictive in certain areas, particularly intelligence, foreign government information, and relations with European countries.

How successful is the labor intensive and costly mandatory review system? Statistics can tell part, but only part, of the story. From 1973 to 1976 the library, and undoubtedly other government agencies as well, experimented and struggled to develop workable procedures. An accurate assessment of mandatory review success during this period is difficult to make because of inadequate recordkeeping, but the library did submit a few thousand pages with some declassification accomplished particularly on materials relating to normally less sensitive topics.

The Eisenhower Library's institutional memory really began in 1977 when current procedures and formal reporting requirements were established. During the period from 1977 through 30 June 1989, 16,323 documents (60 percent) totalling 52,971 pages (46 percent) were declassified in full after being submitted for agency review. During this time 4,705 documents (17 percent) totalling 35,943 pages (31 percent) were released in

sanitized form while 5,975 documents (22 percent) and 25,810 pages (22 percent) were denied in full. About 78 percent of all documents acted on during these years were declassified in full or in part. For example, one can compare the 79 percent release rate for 1,348 documents acted on in FY 1979 during the Carter administration with the 79 percent release rate for 3,349 documents reviewed in FY 1982 during the Reagan administration. Other years could also be compared with similar results.¹⁵

Statistics, of course, do not tell everything. Not included in the above totals are data on documents still pending action after lengthy delays. As of 31 July 1989 the library still had 985 pending cases requested by 197 researchers with approximately 356 of the cases at least two years old. The statistics also fail to indicate the quality of historical materials being declassified and do not reveal the subjects covered.¹⁶ The library’s declassification accomplishments can perhaps be best illustrated by describing a major category of documents which have been subjected to heavy mandatory review action.

The Eisenhower administration’s conduct of national security policy is recorded in several types of documents. These include summaries of NSC discussions; memoranda of conferences with the president prepared by his White House staff secretary; the president’s communications and conversations with his secretaries of state and defense, members of the Joint Chiefs of

¹⁵ Statistical Data, Mandatory declassification review office files, DDEL.

¹⁶ The Information Security Oversight Office’s annual reports to the president are primarily compendiums of declassification statistics with little analysis. Thus, ISOO Annual Report to the President FY 1986 describes mandatory review as "a highly successful mechanism for the declassification of information," but does not mention the problems of the system.
Staff, and his national security advisors; his correspondence and memoranda of conversations with heads of foreign governments; and reports, messages, and files reflecting the functioning of various White House offices, presidential commissions and committees. All of these types of materials have been subjected to mandatory review. By the end of 1989 about 530 (80 percent) of White House Staff Secretary’s Memoranda of Presidential Conferences had been declassified in full or in part, and most summaries of NSC meetings through 1959 had been released in part. Consequently, sufficient declassified material now exists to make research on most aspects of the Eisenhower administration’s foreign policy feasible.

The publication of the Department of State’s *Foreign Relations* volumes for the Eisenhower years is ongoing with most volumes for the years 1952-54 printed and many for 1955 to 1957 also in print. These volumes will have an important impact on the library’s declassification program for years to come. To summarize briefly a project conducted at the library over several years: historians from the Department of State’s Historical Office, with clearances, gained access to and drew heavily upon the library’s classified holdings. As a result of this extensive research, many documents from the library have been selected and printed in the department’s *Foreign Relations* series after having been submitted to the thorough declassification review process applied to all *Foreign Relations* prior to publication. The appearance of these volumes gives the staff a useful tool to

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17 Most of the White House Staff Secretary’s Memoranda of Presidential Conferences, called (Andrew) "Goodpaster memcoms" at the library, are found in Dwight D. Eisenhower’s papers as president (Ann Whitman File), DDEI, with the majority filed in the DDE Diary and ACW Diary series in this collection. The declassification figures are based on a survey of these documents and withdrawal sheets.
consult when processing mandatory review requests. This publication is also used in conducting systematic reviews because it contains titles of papers, names of individuals, and details on subject areas. The publication of the library's highest level documentation on many national security matters will significantly influence research at the library and will require the staff to continue examining these volumes. When preparing documents for submission to the agencies, one expects to release some documents immediately and submit fewer for agency review.

Much still remains to be done. As of 31 July 1989, an estimated 380,000 pages remained classified. This sheer volume of documentation is one of the major impediments to declassification as the library is forced to rely on the mandatory review system for wholesale declassification. This system was not intended to be used as a program for large-scale declassification; instead, it was established to satisfy individual researcher's needs for limited numbers of documents. Nevertheless, the library each year transmits thousands of pages via the cumbersome mandatory review route.

Along with volume, the existence of still currently sensitive information in high-level presidential papers holds up their declassification. A frequently stated misconception, possibly fostered by the provisions of Executive Orders 11652 and 12065 for scheduled downgrading and automatic declassification, is that high-level documents can be readily released to the public after a specified time period (thirty or even twenty years). Intermingled throughout the countless numbers of routine memoranda, drafts of public statements, and other items which clearly should be unclassified, are scattered items which may still be sensitive even after twenty-five or thirty years or else are technical in nature. Such materials require review by experienced and expert agency personnel.
Are there any viable alternatives to the expensive mandatory review system? On-site systematic review is often mentioned as a possibility. The Records Declassification Division's experiences with World War II, and now even cold war era, documents are cited as models to follow. The Eisenhower Library received guidelines from the principal agencies allowing the staff to declassify most military and diplomatic information in its holdings created prior to 1946. Consequently, the library's significant body of World War II documentation is almost entirely unclassified. The staff has continued to apply guidelines to documents created during the late 1940s and even to the much larger body of presidential papers created during the 1950s. In contrast to the guidelines for the World War II period, however, guidelines covering 1950s information are more limited in scope, and key agencies, such as the NSC, have issued guidelines which preclude the release of substantive documents by the library. The guidelines for declassification and release of White House-originated classified information, issued by the archivist of the United States in cooperation with the NSC, are helpful in declassifying routine items such as social correspondence and transmittal memoranda, but do not cover most NSC and presidential materials involving substantive foreign relations and national security matters. Most of these materials must still be submitted to the NSC for review.

Other important agencies have, however, developed adequate guidelines which archivists at the library have used to declassify over 5,500 documents totalling 15,700 pages since 1980. These guidelines are limited by their time frame and coverage. For instance, many State Department guidelines currently cover materials created before 1955, although guidances for the 1955-59 period are in use for some countries and regions and are being developed for others. Nevertheless, systematic review continues at the Eisenhower Library as a limited operation which achieves the declassification of much routine material (some would say
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"junk") and a limited number of substantive documents whose subject matter is clearly specified as nonsensitive by the guidelines.  

Attempts have also been made with only limited success to induce agencies to send declassification teams to the library to review documents. These have been fairly useful, with the NSC visits being particularly productive because of the preponderance of White House materials. But, the need for inter- and intra-agency coordination is an impediment to on-site reviewing by agency declassification teams. The various agencies may believe they do not have the time and money to invest in a broad cooperative systematic review effort, and there seems to be little incentive for agencies to ask Congress to fund agency systematic review of such materials. The current executive order permits agencies to undertake systematic review of classified materials in their custody but requires only the National Archives to do so.

The Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), established to monitor the implementation of EO 12065 and now 12356, advocates in its annual reports to the president the need for increased systematic reviewing within the National Archives. While acknowledging that systematic reviewing, either on-site by archivists or by agency personnel in Washington, D.C., is expensive, it might be fair to ask a few questions. Should the National Archives, pursuant to ISOO's recommendations, invest more money and personnel into assisting various agencies develop guidelines or conducting systematic review? Should the archives help pay for a representative of the NSC, alone or with other agency representatives, to spend an extended period at the Eisenhower Library reviewing classified materials? Should the

18 Monthly declassification reports, mandatory declassification review office files, DDEL.

National Archives request a supplementary congressional appropriation to fund such declassification activities? While these questions may not be easily answered without considerable study, they might suggest possible future courses of action. For any of them to be answered positively means that the Eisenhower Library’s and the National Archives’s relationship with agencies must be based on cooperation and trust.

In the meantime, the Eisenhower Library staff expects to continue to invest much time and effort in the mandatory review operation because at present it is, in effect, the "main declassification show in town." The library, aided by increased automation, will continue to strive to improve its mandatory review procedures. Many forms, standard letters, agency addresses, and other data can now be stored on and readily retrieved from computers; perhaps other applications of automation can be found to streamline the process.

Certainly, the library’s declassification efforts appear to be justified by public demand and by results. As many as two out of every three researchers at the library work on national security-related topics. The staff receives and processes a large number of requests every year with no appreciable change in activity likely anytime soon. The library tries to inform researchers of declassification developments with its "Quarterly Listing of Declassified Documents," an in-house listing of all documents declassified through mandatory review. This listing is often purchased or borrowed through inter-library loan. Despite the efforts, however, the library will probably never succeed in fully satisfying users. Research on many important issues of the 1950s will continue to be hampered by the classification problem. Researchers working on files which have largely been declassified still complain about the occasional item remaining classified or sanitized.

In summary, the Eisenhower Library, through the expenditure of considerable resources, has achieved the full or
partial declassification of over ninety thousand pages of high-level documents since 1973 plus several thousand pages of routine material. Many research projects, impractical a few years ago, can now be undertaken at the library with satisfactory results. Nevertheless, entire series remain largely classified, and the mandatory review procedure must continue indefinitely. On-site systematic reviewing at this and other presidential libraries will probably remain secondary in importance to mandatory review, in contrast to the systematic reviewing conducted at the National Archives. It is clear that the Eisenhower Library staff will still be deeply involved in declassification years beyond 1991, the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the Eisenhower administration. Consultations with archivists at more recent presidential libraries with even greater quantities of security classified materials indicate that these libraries also face many long years of declassification work. For the Eisenhower Library, after years of processing national security collections, the declassification picture is a mixed one, with some success, some disappointments, and many headaches and frustrations. Declassification will not occur automatically. It will be accomplished only through the combined efforts of archivists and agencies responding to researchers’ demands.

David Haight, an archivist at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library since 1971, has been involved in the declassification process from the beginning. This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, St. Louis, Missouri, 27 October 1989. The author expresses his appreciation for the assistance and support provided by many people including Carol Briley, Linda Ebben, John Fawcett, Nancy Smith, Mack Teasley, Alan Thompson, and especially Barbara Constable and Linda Smith who are largely responsible for operating the Eisenhower Library’s mandatory declassification review program. The opinions expressed herein, however, are solely the author’s.