

FINGERPRINT BANK PLANNED BY F.B.I.

Agency Develops Computer to Memorize Information

WASHINGTON, March 19 (AP)

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has developed a computer that can read the fine lines and minute details of a human fingerprint in the blink of an eye.

In the five minutes it takes

a trained technician to classify the prints of a single individual, the computer can analyze in greater detail and memorize the prints of 60 persons.

After a decade of research, the F.B.I. plans to let contracts for production of the first working models of a computer system that could eventually do away with 2,000 technicians' jobs and save the millions of dollars and countless hours that are spent on fingerprint identification.

The success of the research compounds the current problem over the extent of the bureau's fingerprint files.

Row upon row of dingy

green cabinets in the identification division now contain more than 158 million fingerprint files, including the fingerprints of 60 million living persons, almost a quarter of the nation's population.

21 Million Criminals

The records on criminal offenders include the fingerprints of 21 million persons.

The seriousness of the problem is seen when officials ponder how many of these files to inject into the instant-recall computer. The decision undoubtedly will be influenced by legislation pending in Congress.

Several bills would limit the

computerize the entire operation. With the assistance of the National Bureau of Standards, the work progressed to the point that a contract was awarded to the Cornell

Aeronautical Laboratory, now the Calspan Corporation, in Buffalo, to produce a prototype of a fingerprint reading computer.

The model was delivered in August, 1972, and, since then, the bureau's computer experts have been experimenting with its capabilities.

The F.B.I. now has requested bids on construction of as many as five production models to put the operation into service.

The project so far has cost \$1.5 million, and the agency's budget for the fiscal year 1975 requests an additional \$147,000. It could take a year or more to build and install the working models after the contracts are awarded this summer.

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collection and distribution of criminal records and would require some files to be sealed. The purpose is to provide new safeguards for individual privacy.

John M. Jones, a bureau spokesman, said the computer experts had reached the point where they must begin building a data bank of fingerprint files. The initial computerization will involve about 10,000 files.

"There are going to have to be decisions made. There's a real question about what ought to go into the data bank," Jones said.

For example, he said, should

the first group include the fingerprints of individuals who have committed no crime for the last few years? The proposed legislation would require that those files be sealed, but the bureau's director, Clarence M. Kelley, has testified against that provision, insisting that no criminal records should be sealed to law enforcement authorities.

Search of the Files

As Inspector Beverly E. Ponder described the operation, the identification division receives about 24,000 fingerprint cards daily from state and local law enforcement agencies and other

contributors. Many of these require a search of the files to supply the contributing agency with the individual's prior criminal record, a positive identification, or a notification that there is no prior crime record.

The processing involves several time-consuming steps to narrow the search based on a code of fingerprint characteristics—the whorls and arches and peculiar details that make each person's fingers unique.

The search finally narrows to perhaps 200 fingerprint files and from that group, a technician may find the perfect match in 15 minutes.

In 1965, the F.B.I. set out to