Database of Presidents and Vice Presidents

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LIBR 202-03

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Table of Contents

Scenario:

Database Purpose: This is a database for an undergraduate history class at a local college. The class is an introduction to the history of the United States from the Reconstruction to the Present. The course emphasizes the role played by our nation's Presidents and Vice Presidents on shaping the nation. The instructor will focus on the upbringing of the Presidents and Vice Presidents and how it effected their administration. There will be a midterm exam where students will be given a list of Presidents/Vice Presidents and they will have to write short biographical essays. At the end of the course, students will be required to write a biographical research paper comparing and contrasting multiple Presidents and Vice Presidents on their position and policies on one theme or event in U.S. History. For example, one could write a paper comparing the policies of FDR and Hoover during the Great Depression or compare the civil rights positions of the Clinton/Gore administration and Bush/Cheney administration.

User Group: The primary users of this database are the students in this class. The database will assist them in locating initial biographical information on United States Vice Presidents and Presidents for their research paper and studying for their midterm exam. Many users will be known item searchers with experiences with more common Presidents, but many will also search by keyword or decade.

Data Structure

Field	Name	DBTextRule	Assignment Compliance	Instructions For Data Entry
1	**Record #**	Rule 1: Automatic Generator	Control Field	
		Rule 2: N/A		
		Rule 3: N/A		
		Rule 4: N/A		
		Rule 5: N/A		
		Rule 6: N/A		
2	**Name**	Rule 1: Text	Identifier	List as Last Name, First Name, Date.
		Rule 2: Word indexed amd Term indexed	Controlled Vocabulary Through External Thesaurus	Control using Library Of Congress Authorities (authorities.loc.gov)
		Rule 3: Required		
		Rule 4: Unique Entries Only		
		Rule 5: Single Entry Only		
		Rule 6: No Content Validation		
3	**Date Of Birth**	Rule 1: Date		List as mm/dd/yyyy.
		Rule 2: Term indexed		
		Rule 3: Required		
		Rule 4: Not		

Unique Entries

Rule 5: Single
Entry Only

Rule 6: No
Content
Validation

4	**Date Of Death**	Rule 1: Date		List as mm/dd/yyyy.

Rule 2: Term
indexed

Rule 3: Not
Required

Rule 4: Not
Unique Entries

Rule 5: Single
Entry Only

Rule 6: No
Content
Validation

5	**Place Of Birth**	Rule 1: Text		Enter as City, State. (There is no need to list what country the individual is born in since all Presidents and Vice Presidents have to be born in the United States in order to be eligible for office.)

Rule 2: Word
indexed

Rule 3: Required

Rule 4: Not
Unique Entries

Rule 5: Single
Entry Only

Rule 6: No
Content
Validation

6	**Political Party**	Rule 1: Text	Validation List:	Choose one from validation list:

			Multiple Choice	Republican, Democratic
		Rule 2: Term indexed		
		Rule 3: Required		
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Single Entry Only		
		Rule 6: Content Validation		
7	**Executive Position**	Rule 1: Text	Classification	Choose one from the following: President, Vice President
		Rule 2: Term indexed	Validation List: Multiple Choice	
		Rule 3: Required		
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Not Single Entry		
		Rule 6: Content Validation		
8	**As President Served With**	Rule 1: Text	Controlled Vocabulary Through External Thesaurus	If the individual is a President, this field lists the Vice President that serves or served alongside the President.
		Rule 2: Word indexed and Term indexed		Control using Library of Congress Authorities (authorities.loc.gov)
		Rule 3: Not Required		
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Not		

		Single Entry		
		Rule 6: No Content Validation		
9	**As VP Served Under**	Rule 1: Text	Controlled Vocabulary Through External Thesaurus	If the individual is a Vice President, this field lists the President that serves or served alongside the Vice President.
		Rule 2: Word indexed and Term indexed		
		Rule 3: Not Required		Control using Library of Congress Authorities (authorities.loc.gov)
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Not Single Entry		
		Rule 6: No Content Validation		
10	**Years In Office**	Rule 1: Text	Classification	Validation list will include: 1860s, 1870s, 1880s and it will proceed all the way to the 2010s. List all years that are applicable. (For example: Bill Clinton would have both 1990s and 2000s as his years served since he was President during part of both of those decades.)
		Rule 2: Term indexed	Validation List: Multiple Choice	
		Rule 3: Required		
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Not Single Entry		
		Rule 6: Content Validation		
11	**Profession**	Rule 1: Text	Uncontrolled Description	Enter Professions that the individual has either studied or pursued. (For example: Lawyer, Journalist, Professor, etc...)
		Rule 2: Word indexed and		

Term indexed

Rule 3: Required

Rule 4: Not
Unique Entries

Rule 5: Not
Single Entry

Rule 6: No
Content
Validation

12	**Religion**	Rule 1: Text	Uncontrolled Description	List the religion(s) that the individual is directly associated with. (For example: Christianity, Methodist, Baptist, etc...)
		Rule 2: Word indexed and Term indexed		
		Rule 3: Not Required		
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Not Single Entry		
		Rule 6: No Content Validation		
13	**Military Service**	Rule 1: Text	Validation List: Yes/No	Choose between: Yes, this individual performed military service or No, this person did not perform military service.
		Rule 2: Term indexed		
		Rule 3: Required		
		Rule 4: Not Unique Entries		
		Rule 5: Single Entry Only		

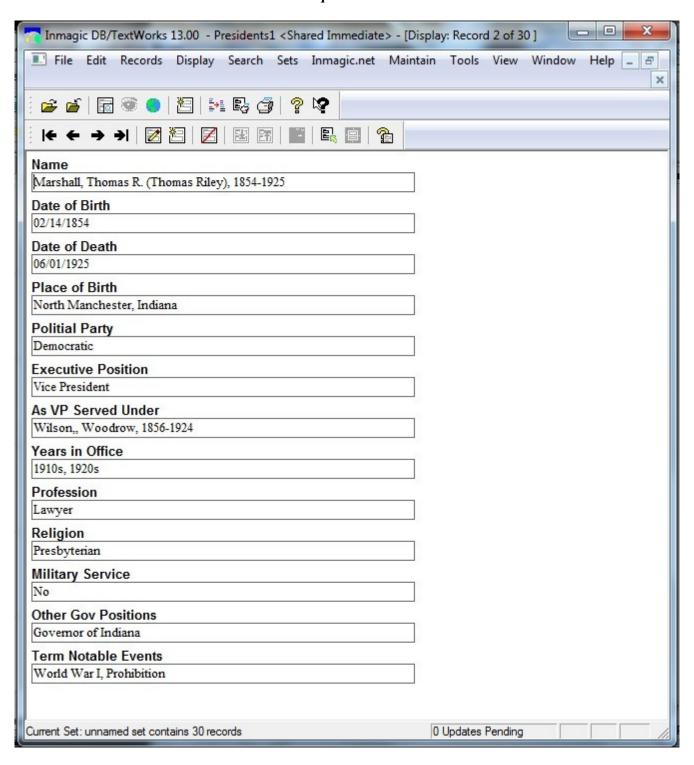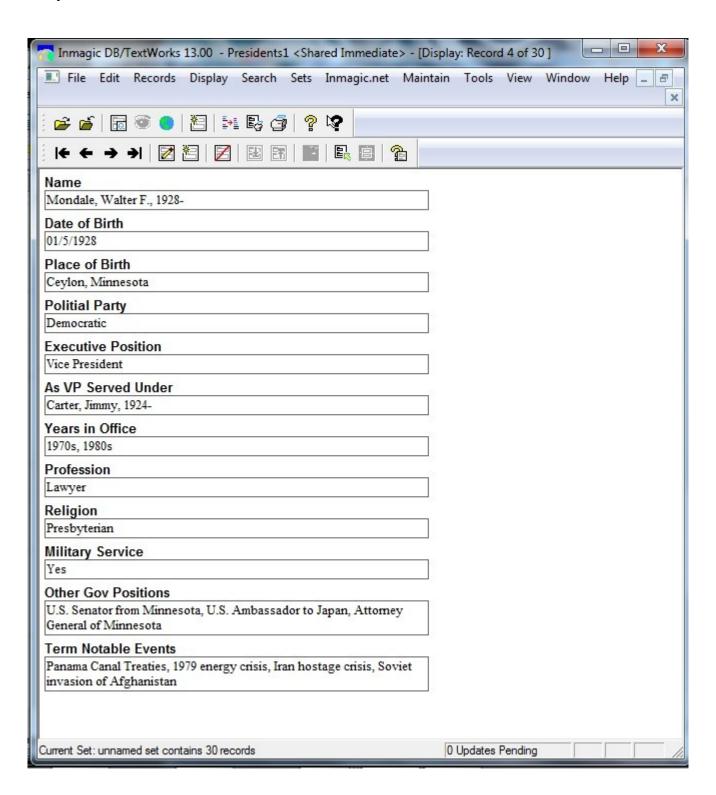|				
		Rule 6: Content Validation		
14	**Other Gov Positions**	Rule 1: Text Rule 2: Word indexed and Term indexed Rule 3: Required Rule 4: Not Unique Entries Rule 5: Not Single Entry Rule 6: No Content Validation	Uncontrolled Description	Entries consist of other governmental positions that the individual has held within his lifetime (For example: Governor, U.S. Senator, Chief Justice, etc...)
15	**Term Notable Events**	Rule 1: Text Rule 2: Word indexed and Term indexed Rule 3: Required Rule 4: Not Unique Entries Rule 5: Not Single Entry Rule 6: No Content Validation	Uncontrolled Description	List any memorable events during the individual's term in office. (For example: Great Depression, The Gulf War, Cuban Missile Crisis, etc...)

Sample Records

Inmagic DB/TextWorks 13.00 - Presidents1 <Shared Immediate> - [Display: Record 2 of 30]

File   Edit   Records   Display   Search   Sets   Inmagic.net   Maintain   Tools   View   Window   Help

Name
Marshall, Thomas R. (Thomas Riley), 1854-1925

Date of Birth
02/14/1854

Date of Death
06/01/1925

Place of Birth
North Manchester, Indiana

Politial Party
Democratic

Executive Position
Vice President

As VP Served Under
Wilson,, Woodrow, 1856-1924

Years in Office
1910s, 1920s

Profession
Lawyer

Religion
Presbyterian

Military Service
No

Other Gov Positions
Governor of Indiana

Term Notable Events
World War I, Prohibition

Current Set: unnamed set contains 30 records   0 Updates Pending

Inmagic DB/TextWorks 13.00 - Presidents1 <Shared Immediate> - [Display: Record 4 of 30]

File   Edit   Records   Display   Search   Sets   Inmagic.net   Maintain   Tools   View   Window   Help

Name
Mondale, Walter F., 1928-

Date of Birth
01/5/1928

Place of Birth
Ceylon, Minnesota

Politial Party
Democratic

Executive Position
Vice President

As VP Served Under
Carter, Jimmy, 1924-

Years in Office
1970s, 1980s

Profession
Lawyer

Religion
Presbyterian

Military Service
Yes

Other Gov Positions
U.S. Senator from Minnesota, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Attorney
General of Minnesota

Term Notable Events
Panama Canal Treaties, 1979 energy crisis, Iran hostage crisis, Soviet
invasion of Afghanistan

Current Set: unnamed set contains 30 records   0 Updates Pending

Experiential Log

This is an account of my experience with this assignment. I will describe the design process, how I made the decisions I did, how I revised, and what I learned.

The fields, rules and DBTextworks data entry instructions:

1.   **Record Number**: This field is automatically generated by DBTextworks and serves as a control field in the database.

2.   **Name**: This field is the identifier field. Each entry is required, unique, single entry, and controlled vocabulary using Library of Congress Authorities. It should be entered as Last Name, First Name, and Birth Date to Death Date (if applicable).

3.   **Date of Birth**: This field is a date, entered as mm/dd/yyyy. It is single entry, required, and not unique. Every one is born, and birth dates and years may be the same for different people.

4.   **Date of Death**: This field is a date, entered as mm/dd/yyyy. It is single entry, not required, not unique. Not every one has died yet, but they will have only one date of death. There also maybe duplicate death dates.

5.   **Place of Birth**: This field is entered as City, State only. It is required, not unique, single entry only. Any one who has served as President or Vice President must have been born in the United States in order to be eligible for office, so the country is not needed. There is only one possible birth place, but more than one person may have been born there.

6.   **Political Party**: This field is a validation list multiple choice. The choices are Republican or Democratic. It is required, not unique, single entry and required content validation. I had initially liked the idea of having the Moose party, but no one had ever served in office under any other parties than the two mentioned above. Also, this field cannot be unique if there are only two choices and 30 records. I decided to change it after thinking for a moment about the inherent conflict between have to have unique entries, but only two selections.

7.   **Executive Position Served**: This is a classification and a validation list multiple choice. The choices are President, Vice President or Both. The are required, not unique, not single entry, and require content validation. This field cannot be unique because there are only 3 choices for 30 records. This one I also chose to change from unique entry only. This is the only way the database can work with the data at hand. I decided to add the Both option after creating a record of a Vice President who became President after an assassination.

8.   **As President Served With**: This field is controlled vocabulary through an external thesaurus the Library of Congress Name Authorities. It is text, not required, not unique, and not single entry. It's not required because not all the record entries are Presidents. There is also the possibility of multiple Vice presidents, like with FDR, or one Vice President serving under more than one President.

9.   **As VP Served Under**: This field is controlled vocabulary through an external thesaurus the Library of Congress Name Authorities. It is text, not required, not unique, and not single entry. Not every record is a Vice President. There may be multiple Presidents that a Vice President has served under.

10.   **Years in Office**: This field is a classification and has a validation list with multiple choice. We decided to have the validation list include decades for ease. List all the years that are applicable. For example, Clinton would be both 1990s and 2000s as his years served since he was President during part of both of those decades. They are required, not unique entries, not single entry and require content validation.

11.   **Profession**: This field is an uncontrolled description of what the individual had either studied or pursued. For example, Lawyer, Journalist. They are text, required, not unique entries, not single entry, and do not require content validation. Many of our records have pursued or held a variety of positions before going into the government.

12.   **Religion**: This field is an uncontrolled description of what religion(s) the individual is directly associated with. For example: Christianity, Baptist. They are text, not required, not unique, and not single entry. Though the majority of Presidents and Vice Presidents have religions they are associated with, there are a few that do not.

13.   **Military Service**: This field is a validation list of Yes/No where Yes indicated that this individual performed military service or No, this individual did not perform military service. They are text, required, not unique entries, single entry only, and require content validation. An individual can only answer yes or no to this question.

14.   **Other Gov Positions**: This field is an uncontrolled description of other governmental positions that the individual has held within his lifetime. For example: Governor, U.S. Senator, Chief Justice. They are text, required, not unique entries, not single entry, and do not require content validation. Some entries had multiples, while others only had one entry.

15.   **Term Notable Events**: This field is an uncontrolled description of any memorable events during the individual's term in office. For example, the Great Depression, the Gulf War. They are text, required, not unique, not single entry and do not require content validation. This was the most subjective area of the record.

Evaluation

I have been the undergraduate student in a U.S. History class, fiendishly trying to keep track of who served with which President and memorizing years and events. I think my experience helped me and our group choose what fields to include. I remember doing a few sample records to help us clarify which fields we wanted and I realized that we had no section for years in term.

Areas to Change

There are some areas that I would want to do differently in the future. For one, I would like a controlled list of notable events that everyone could reference. It would make is easier for the data entry person to have a clear, agreed upon list of what exactly is a notable event for what decade. This would immensely help the student user since that is one of the things they would be most keen on searching for, notable events, in their midterm and main papers.

I would also make the list of term years more specific so that a student user could search for a specific year, like 1932, and see who was President and Vice President and what the notable events were in comparison to 1939. It may be the same decade, but the Presidents/Vice Presidents and notable events are very different. I know that the time it would take to enter in every year from 1865 to 2011 into DBTextworks would be time consuming and we would have struggled to find a classification list but still. The perfectionist in me wants to make an easier database for an user to search with more granularity. However, it would be easier for them to browse decades which may be helpful under the right circumstances.

I would also try to create a better way of organizing the Professions list. I noticed that there were a great number of lawyers and in hindsight I wonder if we could have approached that aspect differently. I know that one of my group members researched into a controlled vocabulary to use for professions and looked at the Library of Congress. There were hundreds of professions, so that idea was scratched. I wonder now if it may have been a better idea to make our own list.

Overall, I feel that the database works well for the student/users. They have some knowledge of the major events that happened in the term of the President or Vice President they want to search, so they can try the notable events, or they know the names, years, political parties and search that way. I would add a note that name searches must be carried out using the Library of Congress Name Authorities. I feel that the controlled vocabularies used were very effective because there are only two political parties, and only three options for executive service. I wish that these were not flat records, and that we could link Presidents entries with their Vice Presidents.

DBTextworks Software

I was surprised in how simple it was to me to pick up DBTextworks. I hadn't really looked at it much but my experience with database systems like Access and others that I've encountered in jobs gave me a familiarity. I read the different buttons and followed the rules we agreed upon. When I entered by first few records, I noticed some issues, but promptly dealt with them. I'm delighted with how my database turned out.

Conclusion

I think this database addresses the needs of the student/user group and functions correctly. There are many ways to aggregate and discriminate the flat records, allowing the user to see greater patterns in the data, or focus specifically on one record. The records are concise and contain useful information for the student/user to refresh their knowledge.