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Confidential Prints

To a man like Pope, concerned so much with the proper ordering of documents and archives for easy reference, the original connotation of the term "diplomacy" would peculiarly appeal. Etymologically, a "diploma" (from the Greek verb *διπλωω*) was simply a doubled or folded thing. In mediaeval Europe the term came to be used for certain types of official documents, relating in the main to a state's external affairs, which were folded for pigeon-holing in its archives. Diplomacy was then the the archivist's job of keeping such documents in good order. Later, by extension, the work became the jurist's job of studying and interpreting the archival collection of documents. Only toward the end of the eighteenth century was the word "diplomacy" first used to denote the actual conduct of foreign relations.⁽¹⁾ In its mediaeval sense, the collection of documents was the main task of the diplomat.

It had long been the practice in Great Britain, and also in Australia, to collect and "print" confidential dossiers of correspondence and other official documents on specific topics, for circulation to officials or other departments concerned and to Missions abroad. These were commonly known as "Foreign Office Prints". Pope introduced this practice as soon as possible, which meant as soon as his Department was able to collect and assemble relevant papers. Among the first of a long series of these collections was one on the North American Fisheries Arbitration. These prints were only for the confidential use of Ministers and their confidential officials directly concerned, and were not to be laid

⁽¹⁾ Harold Nicolson: Diplomacy; Lord Strang: The Foreign Office, p. 168.