

collect the insects with equipment supplied by the Department of Agriculture and place them in containers designed for preservation and later ship them back to Ottawa. The Commissioner then solicited the cooperation of members stationed in the north and on a voluntary basis, collecting insects started. This service lasted into the 1950s.

A check with Agriculture Canada revealed that these insects became part of the National Insect Collection and they are still being used in research by scientists in entomology. This service may seem insignificant to many people, but when one examines the importance of these insects to the entomologists and the National Insect Collection, it is evident that there is a social value in these records, and that the service offered was an essential one.

A Link with the Country — Lost History

The role of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer as a "Servant of the Public" is reflected in the performance of the daily functions dating back to the origins of the Force. As stated previously, the policeman was often the only link between posts in the far north and the rest of the country. However, many people are not aware that these services existed and often are still available today. There is a wealth of information documented in the Force's records.

With early records management practices being what they were, no set procedures were established, and archival programs were not developed to enable the retrieval of this information. Records which were thought to be of historical value or of value to researchers were simply filed away in a corner of the file room for someone to do something about "one of those days." Very often the caption of the records

would not reflect the content of the files, and in order to retrieve a particular file, one would have to know the exact title and do an index check to obtain the file number. Many of the services offered by the Force are not known simply because the information is not easily retrievable and, therefore, is lost to the Canadian public. Services such as the collection of rare insects will never be made known unless a sound archival program is enacted and measures are taken to preserve this valuable information.

The Establishment of an Archival Program

The Force has always strived to maintain a good records system which is structured in a way to meet the needs of its users and at the same time allows for disposition of material after its retention period. Inactive files were reviewed, and if judged to be insignificant, they were destroyed by central registry staff. Historical files were simply stored on the shelf for transfer to Public Archives at some point. However, with new legislation being enacted, and the need for information by the population, it soon became apparent that a more structured method of disposing of these records was urgently needed.

In 1977, the RCMP created its own Archives Unit. The main functions of this unit are to store inactive records, destroy records of no value, preserve records of an historical nature and offer a research service. Retrievability of this information was a major concern. If records are going to be useful to researchers and historians, it is necessary to design a system which will allow for easy access. Records Management took a good look at the type of information contained in these holdings and from that, an historical index was developed. It was evident that this information could