to improve the general quality and would be welcome. There were indications
that CR's posted abroad do not relish registry assignments as compared to
other tasks. This attitude naturally affects their work and may be a reflec-
tion of inadequate conditioning and training before departure from Ottawa.

44.   A valid complaint, and one which to some extent echoed Ottawa-
based officers, is that not enough selected key or policy information reaches
the posts. This situation will be alleviated to some extent as the Selected
Documents series is stepped up in production, and would further benefit as
the important material in the Department is identified and made accessible
to users through general improvement of the information system. Some officers
abroad enquired about the use of microfiche and video tape techniques and
country data banks.

The Records Management Division

45.   Annex III contains detailed information on the structure and procedures
of the Records Management Division as at present constituted. What follows is
a view of the Division largely taken from the perspective of Departmental users.

46.   Throughout the years and in a number of studies it has been
recognized that the Department is dependent on its substantive files, and that
the Division charged with managing them should be provided with the requisite
people, skills and procedures to carry out this task effectively. In practice,
however, the Records Management Division has tended to be relegated to low
priority levels for both resources and skills.

47.   A recital of historical problems in this area would serve little
useful purpose, but it is instructive to cast back to the period just prior
to and after the move to the L.B. Pearson Building. When the Department occupied
a number of buildings sub-registries were a necessity. Access to files was
psychologically easier because of physical proximity in most cases (although
less so after some consolidation within buildings) and thus the phenomenon of
working files, while still present, was not so pervasive or well developed as
it is today. Many of the complaints regarding the contents, filing and organiza-
tion of the material one hears today were also being voiced at that time.

48.   The move to a new building in which special facilities would be
provided was generally expected to result in a much improved service. Experience
has unfortunately proven otherwise. In some measure the problems can be and were
ascribed to failures in the mechanical equipment features of the new system. For
instance, frequent breakdowns of the Randtriever caused large backlogs in the
placing of items in their subject files and long delays in retrieval since the
automatic mechanism used to pull files from the storage shelves was inoperable.
Compounding this problem was the almost daily stoppage in the conveyor system due
to box-jams. Since desk officers could not rely upon the system their dependence
upon and the scope of working files grew considerably. It is an axiom of systems'
use that, having failed the user a number of times, it is extremely difficult to
regain his confidence; this is evident in the current system even though there
has been a reduction in most equipment faults. A danger exists that the visible
difficulties, which apparently explain so many of the recent operational problems,
could in fact obscure some of the more important elements which condition the
possibility of success or failure for the whole process. It is revealing, there-
fore, to compare some key factors in the Registry function with some other
information-handling groups in the Department, and with the Department as a whole.
Salient features of the comparisons are shown in Figure I, while Figure 2 gives
some indication of the scale of operations in the Records Management Division.