

a signature\* at each level; in most cases an initial\* is all that is required but at each level a handwritten\* comment may be added to the document for clarification, which may or may not be intended to go on to the file copy.

## 5. The Signing Authority

The signing authority is the chain which determines who has the signing authority to sign a particular document. It is determined by accountability and established criteria and directives. It can be delegated. The signing authority can range from desk officers to Ministers depending on the subject-matter. For example, the Senior Trade Commissioner at a Post can delegate to the junior Trade Officer authority to sign all telegrams originating in the Trade Section during the time period he accompanies a trade delegation to Canada.

The "catch" to all these chains is that not only can they be either **consecutive** or **simultaneous**, depending on the document and the subject-matter, but that also the process may be either **single-chained** or **multi-chained**. All of these considerations need to be borne in mind when possible alternative workflow arrangements are contemplated. Remember, the send command on a computer is not like the mail system. Once it is sent you cannot get it back.

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\* The concepts of "signature", "initials", and "hand-written" comments still stand, although with new technology they now have electronic equivalents.