

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conduct of Canada's external relations involves a continuous complex process of gathering and collating information derived from a multiplicity of sources. The nature and timeliness of the information directly affect the quality of action taken or of advice tendered to Ministers. The efficiency of the Department is thus largely dependent on the existence of an adequate information storage and retrieval system.

In executing its mandate the project team concentrated much more on identifying "user" requirements than upon the operation of the Records Management Division or upon the nature of modern automation equipment. To this end a broad survey was conducted of the "users" in the Department, with emphasis on the desk officers, but covering also senior levels and the requirements of the various specialized operational units.

The Departmental survey resulted in confirmation that the initiation of the project had been fully justified. The records management sector had been starved of manpower and other resources over a period of many years when all other Departmental activities had been undergoing continuing rapid expansion. As a result the system had not itself been able to generate solutions to its many problems. It was abundantly evident that to correct this situation substantial changes would have to be made and that these should be carried out through a coherent overall plan. It was also clear that the planning should be based on dynamic rather than static concepts. Any major changes made at the outset should be such as to accommodate future organizational and technological developments as well as the continuously evolving Departmental requirements. To achieve optimum development over time, the new system should be designed to promote a close and constant interactive relationship with the substantive and policy formulation sectors of the Department.

In the course of the Departmental survey it was found useful to distinguish between Bureaux engaged in substantive programme activities and those providing support or "housekeeping" functions. From another perspective Departmental activities were seen as ranging from desk officer responses to events at Level I to analysis, policy coordination and foreign policy management at Levels III and IV. (See Figure 3 on page 29)