

HISTORY OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT

Prior to 1940 a new series of files was started each year. There was no subject classification system and files were numbered sequentially as they were opened, although some attempt was made to carry over file numbers from year to year. In 1940, the practice of starting a new series each year was discontinued because of the work involved in making up new files. Nevertheless it became increasingly difficult to locate particular subjects in the ever-expanding file lists.

It was the practice, even prior to 1940, to index substantive correspondence. The quality and depth of indexing fluctuated in accordance with the availability and capabilities of personnel assigned to this task. When the present subject classification system was introduced in 1963, indexing was reduced because it was felt that satisfactory retrieval could be accomplished through the classification system with some assistance from source indexes alone. However, experience soon demonstrated the need for indexing in greater depth.

Chronologically since 1940 the following changes have been made:

- In 1948 sub-registries were established to service individual divisions. Eventually there were sixteen of them.
- In 1951 sub-registries in each building were combined but the organization of the registries and filing practices continued on a divisional basis.
- The present file classification system was introduced in 1963.
- In 1971 an alphabetical listing of key words (KWOC - Key Word Out of Context) in the 1940-63 series was developed, using computer listing techniques. While the KWOC index is used occasionally, the original indexes have proven to be the more useful tool for retrieving information.
- In 1973 the Department moved into its new headquarters building and files were consolidated in one area, with the exception of files on personnel, finance and administration. At the same time the Records Management Division was provided with some new equipment, notably the Randtriever.
- In 1975 files used by the Consular Bureau were moved to an area close by to provide more effective service.

A number of studies have been carried out in the post-World War II period. The first of these, started in 1950, resulted in the Dench report of January, 1954. This report recommended major organizational changes, more non-rotational staff, improved status for the Registry and the development of a file classification system. No significant action was taken as a result of the Dench report. In subsequent years the following studies dealt with records management matters: