

Execution of the Mandate

12. Much previous work in the area of records management in the Department has been directed principally at adapting the Registry to external physical and related problems and to correcting shortcomings within the organization. To have continued this approach would have tended to focus attention on the attributes of advanced modern technology with the attendant risk of trying to adjust Departmental operations to fit the characteristics of the technology. The introduction of any new equipment would, of course, involve adjustment to some extent. It seemed advisable to try to avoid the difficulties earlier experienced by many public and commercial institutions where enthusiasm for in-house computer units has found eager salesmen ready to supply expensive high-powered packages of equipment which, unfortunately, have often had only marginal application to the actual operations of the organizations concerned.

13. Following presentation of a "Work Plan" to the Electronic Data Processing Committee on October 1, 1974, the project team therefore proceeded with the first task of a thorough survey of the Department's needs. Many of these were immediately identifiable in ordinary operations. In addition, the study focused on several Divisions which were trying to find better ways of carrying out specific assigned programme activities. Thirdly, attention was given to the important sector of senior management and central policy formulation where it was seen that in an increasingly complex environment various special needs would have to be met if the full potential of the Department was to be realized.

14. Once the nature of the principal needs of the Department had been determined it was possible to develop a statement of the objectives to be attained by the information systems of the Department. From these objectives the main characteristics of the systems to be proposed were derived and various options, both for organizational purposes and for equipment, were examined. Out of this was developed the "Preferred System" and some description of its main features. Having reached a number of tentative conclusions, a presentation on the work done so far was made to the Electronic Data Processing Committee on February 17. While a number of questions were raised the general scope of the approach was accepted and the "go ahead" given for the submission of a written report.

15. Owing to several Departmental developments extraneous to the project, somewhat more time has been devoted to Phase I than originally planned. This has permitted more elaborate development of the concepts presented on February 17, some additional work on the financial aspects (precipitated by the FY 1976/77 "B" Budget exercise) and some study of technical and organizational features in the greater depth that would have formed a part of Phase II. This has produced a much clearer picture of what will have to be done in Phase II itself and it can now be seen that this second Phase may well cover some areas originally thought of as belonging to Phase III.