

38. Another important need identified was that of country data banks, both as a general proposition and to meet needs in particular areas, such as Canada/U.S. relations. Without positive information support the coordination role was seen as being difficult to develop effectively. The possible establishment of data banks holds promise of substantial benefits for various sectors of the Department and was explored in some depth with the Policy Analysis Group and the United States Division.

Working Files

39. Of the fifty or so desk officers interviewed in the study only two relied exclusively on Registry files. These officers made positive decisions to make their association with the Registry work and appear to be succeeding fairly well but the question must be raised whether the Registry, as at present constituted, would have the capacity to serve all officers equally well if all made similar demands on the system.

40. The normal situation is for desk officers to rely heavily upon their working files, as can be seen from some of the responses to a questionnaire used in the summary:

- * working files were thought sufficient to satisfy day-to-day needs in sixty to ninety per cent of the cases;
- * usually one to two drawers full of working files are maintained, with the occasional officer maintaining in excess of one filing cabinet;
- * organization is generally by subject, as is that of the Registry, but the subjects are at the sub-file level in order to satisfy operational needs;
- * selection of material for these files varies from strict criteria such as immediate operational use, key papers and policy statements to almost no criteria resulting in files resembling the Registry counterpart in volume;
- * some attempt is generally made to weed out and perhaps reorganize the predecessor's working files, although frequently they are regarded as being geared too much to another person's foibles to be of much continuing use;
- * desk officers expect to inherit some files from their predecessor but usually wish to see only current material plus important background on policy papers;
- * in more than seventy-five per cent of the cases requiring information (from any source) the desk officer goes back less than one year in his search. (N.B. average depth of working file - one-and-a-half years);
- * working files generally rank higher than Registry files as a source of information;