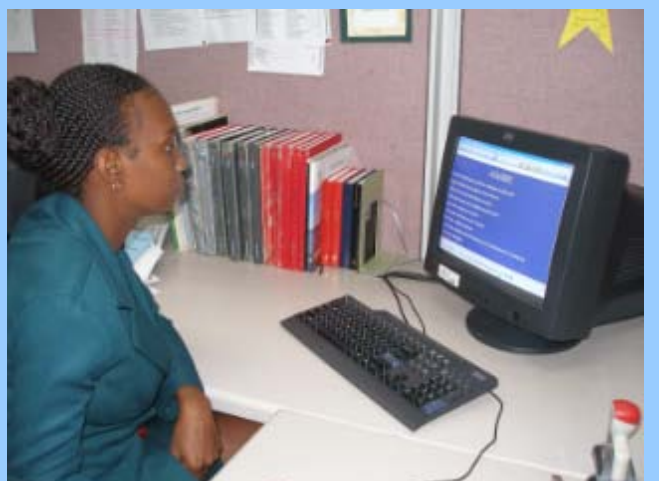




Records Management Procedures Manual for the Virgin Islands Public Service

2007

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Deputy Governor's Office
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Archives and Records Management Unit
Deputy Governor's Office
Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands
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Foreword

The Executive Council in May, 2004 endorsed a comprehensive action plan submitted by the newly appointed Chief Records Management Officer (April 2004) to establish an integrated National Archives and Records Management Programme along the lines recommended in 1998 by Victoria Lemieux, a Consultant from the International Records Management Trust.

Subsequently in April, 2005 the Executive Council also endorsed the policy on the principles, policies, procedures, plans and priorities of the National Archives and Records Management Programme. A copy of each of those documents is available from the Chief Records Management Officer upon request.

The Records Management Procedures Manual is being issued prior to the passage of the British Virgin Islands National Archives and Records Service Act. The Act will formally mark the recognition of improved records management as a support function critical to the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of government business, and as a key issue in the continuing administrative reform process. The law will cover current records in Records Offices, semi-current records and non-current records in Archives collections throughout Government Service.

Although the Archives and Records institution is not yet legally established, the programme under the policy, is committed as far as staff and accommodation resources would allow, to provide guidance on professional, efficient and consistent handling of Government records by implementing policies and procedures based on recognised principles and practices for the appraisal, organisation, maintenance, retention and disposition of Government records, including their systematic transfer to the Archives for preservation, arrangement, description and availability for research, reference and related purposes. The Records Management training courses, workshops and consultancies from which the Service has benefited, are examples of the strides that have been made since the initiation of the programme.

This Manual is another stride forward. It has been developed to underpin the recommendations of the Lemieux Report and the transition to well-

structured information systems. It provides detailed guidance on a range of topics relating to the provision of efficient and effective records services. It should prove a useful source of help not only to records staff but also to their line managers and trainers. I commend this work to be used for the steady improvement in the quality of records services and I applaud the Chief Records Management Officer and all who contribute so well to this development. I remain very excited about the prospects for archives and records management in the future.

Dancia Penn
Deputy Governor, 2006



Section One

Introduction

Introduction

1.1 Sound records procedures: the need

Neither the Government of the British Virgin Islands nor any other government could survive without written records. Because they are so important, records must be effectively managed at all stages of their existence, from their creation to their eventual disposal. Currently, responsibility for this rests with Permanent Secretaries and delegated officers within each Records Office, the Archives and Records Unit and the users of the records. The effectiveness of this partnership will depend upon the degree of understanding and co-operation between them. Authority for governing records is usually set out in Archives and Records Management legislation. There is currently no overarching legislation for British Virgin Islands records and archives. Existing legal statutes and regulations which govern some categories of records are, for example, **Financial Instructions, Section 164**, governing some financial records; **General Orders, Chapter 6.21- 33** and **Appendices 1 A & 1 B**, governing some aspects of Official and Personal Information, Correspondence and Records Management; and the **Registration and Records Act Cap. 67**, governing some Legal and Court Records. Some legal records are also covered elsewhere in Acts throughout the Virgin Islands Laws.

Reference will be made to facilities which do not yet exist in the Civil Service, for instance, 'Records Centre', 'Archives and Records Institution' etc. However, when the Virgin Islands Archives and Records Service Act is passed, new organisational arrangements and responsibilities will emerge along with commonly used terms in the literature.

This Manual describes the procedures for managing and maintaining current records. It also sets out procedures for transferring records to and retrieving records from the Records Centre or other storage once they are no longer in current use. It is intended as a generic guide for Records Office staff.

1.2 Terminology

In this manual, 'Records Office' is used to refer to the unit that creates and maintains current files. The manual refers to 'Archival Institution', 'Records Office', 'Records Centre' and 'Records and Archives Institution' in a general sense. The body that should control the Archival Institution, Records Centre and Records Offices is referred to as the 'Records and Archives Institution'. When written in lower case the term 'archives' refers to the materials; when capitalised Archives or 'Archival Institution' is used to refer to the Archives Repository itself.

1.3 Definition of Official Records:

Official records are recorded information in all formats, created and received by all government offices and bodies in conducting the business of Government. They include:-

- Correspondence, memoranda, reports, and forms whether in hard copy, electronic or other
- Maps, plans, or charts
- Photographs, prints and drawings
- Films, microfilms and videotapes
- Sound recordings

1.4 Functions of a Records Office

Records Offices exist in order to provide a service to the ministerial and administrative staff including action officers who need to use the records.

1.5 Responsibilities of Records Staff.

The essential duties of Records Office Staff are to:-

- Receive, record and distribute incoming and internally created mail of all categories (such as letters, memoranda and faxes)
- Open and index files, attach relevant papers and pass the files to action officers
- Build up and control all officially registered files and other documentation in their care, so that they can be produced quickly, by means of effective indexing, classification and tracking procedures
- Know the location of all officially registered files in their care and be able to produce them quickly, by means of effective indexing, classification and tracking procedures.
- Provide storage and reference services for all officially registered files and other documentation in their care.
- Record and arrange for the efficient and timely dispatch of all correspondence produced by the officers they serve
- Review and dispose of all outdated files or other records in accordance with retention periods as agreed between the records and archives institution, the organisation or department concerned and other relevant officials.

- Show users the maximum possible courtesy and co-operation
- Take every opportunity to learn the particular needs and requirements of the office and its action officers.
- React promptly to complaints by users, giving reasoned replies and explanations.
- Receive and actively encourage suggestions for improvements from users and implement them wherever possible.

1.6 Administrative Responsibility for Records Offices

Responsibility for the proper management of Records Offices may be shared with the Ministry and local line management with assistance from the Records and Archives Unit referred to generally as 'the Records and Archives Institution'. The records and archives institution should be responsible for all professional and technical matters relating to the delivery of effective and efficient records services including inspection. Local line management may be responsible for matters regarding the welfare, discipline and non-specialist training of records staff as well as non-technical issues relating to Records Offices. The separate responsibility of these two management chains must be closely co-ordinated.

The officer-in-charge or Head of the Records Office has immediate responsibility for the day-to-day work of the Records Office and the service it provides to users of records. He or she liaises with the records and archives institution on any technical records management or procedural matters.

1.7 Responsibilities of Users

Well run Records Offices depend upon an active partnership between Records Office staff and users. Records staff rely upon action officers to:

- Deal with files promptly and return them to the Records Office when they are no longer required
- Use the 'bring-up' system when action on a file needs to be temporarily suspended
- Keep files free of ephemeral material such as duplicates, drafts, rough notes etc.
- Include the relevant file reference on all outgoing correspondence
- Give clear guidance if required, according to the Classification system, on how they wish their mail to be indexed.
- Provide the Records Office with completed file movement slip whenever they pass a file to another officer or elsewhere other than through the Records Office
- Co-operate fully with all necessary records checks, including censuses and searches conducted by the Records Office.

1.8 The Records Office and the Life Cycle of Records

Records Offices are concerned with files in the earlier 'operational' phases of their lives, when they are used for the purposes for which they were created. It is important, however, that Records Officers know how and when to pass files on to the Records Centre or other place designated for the storage of in-active records.

The Records and Archives Institution manages all phases of the life of a record in order to ensure that the information requirements of all the government or organisation are met efficiently. In addition to its responsibilities for Records Offices, it will manage the records centres and archival facilities.

1.8.1 The Records Centre is a building specially designed or adapted for the low-cost storage and maintenance of semi-current records pending their ultimate destruction or transfer to an archives Repository. It provides a central storage and retrieval service for semi-current records. Semi-current records are records that are no longer needed for day-to-day use but which must be kept because they have a continuing legal and financial value. By making regular use of the Records Centre, records staff would be able to provide users of records with access to semi-current records that are no longer kept in the agency. Use of the Records Centre would achieve economies by freeing up office space and expensive off-site rentals. Working conditions in Records Offices would be improved as the offices would be kept clear of files not needed for current work.

1.8.2 The Archives Repository

An Archives Repository is a building in which archives are preserved for posterity and made available for consultation. Those records which are of permanent historical and cultural value *are* preserved in the Archives Repository. Once records have reached a certain age, as defined by legislation or regulation, they should be open to the public for reference and research. The mandate of 'The Archives' is therefore to serve as the official repository to preserve, arrange, describe and subsequently make available for research and reference those non-current Government records of enduring value transferred to its care, custody and control, in accordance with approved records retention and disposition authorities. Detailed information about the various functions carried out by the Archives is provided in the position paper on Government Archives and

Records Management Programme principles, policies, procedures, plans and priorities.

Unlike libraries where patrons are permitted to browse through the stacks and borrow books, archives normally do not allow access to storage areas by researchers, nor are researchers allowed to take irreplaceable records out on loan. Rather than sanction the risk of returning archival records to a transferring office on loan, the Archives will encourage such offices to have a staff member visit the Archives to do research or to accept photocopies. Circumstances may dictate that in some cases loans are unavoidable, and if it is judged that a loan is the only recourse, it will be well-documented and short term in duration.

Until the Virgin Islands Government provides an adequate facility to properly store, process and make records available for research and reference in a reading/study room environment, those interested in viewing and examining material transferred to the Archives should contact the Government Archivist to discuss the matter.

1.8.3 Rescuing the Archives

Phase 1

For several decades Virgin Islands records dating back to the 1700s were stored without air-conditioning and care, in two small rooms in the Old Administration Building on Main Street. They were left to the mercies of heat, termites and other insects.

During the months of May to November 2004, the termite eaten, infected papers and non-records were cleared from the nucleus of the Archives and incinerated. The rooms were renovated- tiled, painted, lighted and air-conditioned. Two windows were replaced; new shelving was installed and records were roughly sorted and boxed with the assistance of John Cantwell, an archivist volunteer from the British Executive Service Overseas (BESO)

The photos are recorded here as a reminder that such neglect to the archives must never be allowed to happen again. We each have a grave responsibility for the total 'life-cycle' care of records – from the time they are created to the time of their final disposition – that is, when they are either destroyed or preserved for posterity in an Archives Repository where the care is continued.



Insect-infected room and records.









Chief Records Management Officer Mrs. Verna Penn Moll with John Cartwell, BESO Archivist.

Section Two

**Incoming
Correspondence**

2. Incoming Correspondence

The efficient administration of the Government relies on the proper preparation, processing and timely distribution of mail. All staff who handle mail share that responsibility. The collection and delivery of mail rest with messengers or other persons so designated.

2.1 Types of Correspondence

Records Office staff must deal promptly and accurately with many different types of correspondence. Incoming correspondence will reach the Records Office in a number of different ways. Some will come through the traditional mail, some by hand, and some by telex, fax or electronic mail. There will also be differences in the way in which items are addressed. Some will be addressed to a ministry, department or agency and some to individuals either by name or by title of office. Other items may be inadequately or illegibly addressed. A smaller number of items will bear security or privacy markings, such as 'confidential' or 'personal.' Some mail may contain cheques, money or other valuables which will need to be carefully recorded and accounted for in the Records Office.

2.2 Opening Mail

Mail which is:

- Marked personal or confidential or is addressed to an officer of the Ministry/Department by personal name, not by title or position should be left unopened and passed on to the addressee immediately.

Mail which is:

- An obvious bill, receipt, statement or invoice
- Marked return to sender in cases when the sender's name is clearly identifiable
- Intended for a non – administrative Department

is left unopened and is placed in the appropriate dip/tray for further sorting and delivery. All offices should have at least one dip/tray identified for incoming mail into which unopened regular external mail is deposited.

Rules for handling 'confidential' and 'personal' letters and classified documents should be followed always. (*See Also* : **Handling Classified Documents and Files**). All other mail should be opened and date-stamped as soon as it is received by the Records Office. During this process letters should be kept in a box file or other suitable container.

Slit open envelopes across the top. Care must be taken to ensure the contents of letters are not damaged when the envelopes are slit. Many enclosures are received loose or separated from their covering documents. Attach such enclosures to the relevant documents, taking care not to damage cheques, certificates or similar items. All enclosures must be noted on the covering documents. This is particularly important when the enclosures are valuable or are personal papers.

Certificates, deeds and other legal documents require special care. Place such documents in separate envelopes, noting the contents and the reference number of the file on the outside. Record these in a register or Valuables Book and store in a safe place. Cross-reference on the file.

2.3 Registered Mail

- Incoming registered mail is picked up from the Post Office by a Records Office messenger at the set time. The messenger is required to sign for registered mail.
- The registered mail is then delivered, along with regular incoming mail to the Mail Desk in the Records Office. Procedures for registered mail are similar to ordinary mail described above.
- After registered mail or unregistered mail with cash has been processed it is hand delivered to the addressee by the Mail Desk Clerk, who ensures that the addressee signs in the Valuables Book as evidence that the mail was received.
- Once all signatures have been obtained, the Valuables Book is returned to the Treasury Cashier who reconciles the signatures with the money received

2.4 Inward Correspondence Register and Mail Folder

After the mail has been opened and all enclosures accounted for, each letter or memorandum must be registered by a designated officer in the Inward Correspondence Register. All columns of the Register must be completed. The details to be entered initially are:

1. Serial number (the next number in sequence)
2. Date of the letter
3. Date the letter was received
4. From whom the letter was received
5. Reference given by the writer of the letter
6. Subject of the letter

(See Chapter 12: Forms-Fig.1)

The Head of the Records Office or a designated officer will decide how items are to be handled. For example:-

1. Mark routine documents with filing instructions and pass to the officer responsible for filing (See Section 4 - Filing papers).

2. Place letters which are not routine in mail folders for circulation. The list will vary from agency to agency, but it is important that it is as short as possible so that the mail folder is returned to the Records Office quickly.

Officers on the circulation list should attend to the documents in the mail folder promptly. They should mark those letters that they would like to deal with personally or that they would like referred to their staff by indicating to whom they are to be sent. All such directions should be initialled and dated by the officer making them. Letters may not be removed from the mail folder. All must be returned to the Records Office for filing.

Where there are more than one circulation of mail each day, correspondence delivered after a circulation has been dispatched, should be held over and included in the subsequent batch, except for any that are marked 'urgent' which must be delivered immediately. Records Offices receiving mail once a day only, may find it necessary to have a second circulation to deal with hand delivered mail.

When the mail folder is returned to the Records Office the documents should be placed immediately on the appropriate files. Before the files are passed to the nominated action officers, Records Office staff should note on the relevant File Transit Sheet the name or title of the action officer and the date of transit (See - Section 7). The following information should be recorded in the Inward Correspondence Register:

1. Name or title of the action officer to whom the file was passed, and the date the letter was filed
2. Number of the file on which the letter was placed

The file must be delivered to the relevant action officers without delay.

2.5 Mail Containing Valuables

Post containing or likely to contain, cheques, bank drafts, money orders or other valuable items must be carefully safeguarded from the time it is received.

A written record of all postal remittances received each day must be prepared (in addition to the Inward Correspondence Register) and signed by the post opener. A Valuables Book or Remittance Register is used for this purpose. Records Office staff should record the following information in the Remittance Register:

1. Serial number
2. Date received
3. Name of person sending remittance
4. Amount
5. Details of remittance
5. Cheque number/ Bank sort code (cheques only)
6. Name and signature of officer opening remittance

Each sheet of the register must be serially numbered. Cash received should be counted and noted in the register as well as on the accompanying document by the post-opener. Erasures and pencils entries must not be made in the register. A wrong entry may be cancelled only by ruling it through and correcting it with a new entry that leaves the original entry legible. All such alterations must be initialled jointly by the post-opener and the supervising officer.

Examine all payable instruments (cheques, money orders, postal orders, bank drafts and so on) to ensure that:-

- the amount agrees with that on the remittance advice slip or other accompanying document
- the amounts in words and figures agree

- the date and payee details are completed correctly
- the remittances are signed (excluding postal and payable orders)

If the purpose of which a remittance was sent cannot be identified, include it with the daily banking and take action to obtain the necessary information as quickly as possible.

In cases where money apparently has been omitted or differs in amount from that stated on documents received by post, a note must be made on the document jointly by the post-opener and the supervising officer. The person who sent the remittance is then advised at once that there is an error. The cheque may be banked in the meantime.

. (See Chapter 12- Forms- Fig.2)

2.6 Telegrams and Faxes

- Place telegram in folders marked 'URGENT' immediately after they have been registered. These folders must then be passed without delay to a senior officer for directions on how they are to be treated.
- An increasing quantity of mail is received by fax. As 'junk' mail is sometimes sent by fax, check that faxes received concern genuine office business. The unnecessary use of fax should be discouraged and care should be taken in deciding whether faxes need to be treated as urgent. Routine non-urgent correspondence should not be sent by fax. The Head of the Records Office should consult the appropriate action officer if in doubt.
- Faxed material tends to fade if printed on thermal paper. Once it has been established that a fax concerns official business, the fax should be photocopied and the copy placed in the mail folder or on the appropriate file as necessary. The fax, as received, should then be placed on a file kept for original faxes.
- All incoming faxes on the fax file should be destroyed after six months as a matter of routine. If the original of the document faxed is received at a later date in the Records Office, it should also

be placed on the appropriate file. Both the photocopy of the fax and the original document should be retained on the file as the photocopy may have had comments written on it by action officers.

2.7 Electronic Mail

- Increasingly more communication is being received by electronic mail on action officers' desk computers. However, many e-mail messages are routine or unrelated to official business and will not need to be retained once they have been read.
- Officers sending or receiving electronic mail must decide whether each item of e-mail received or dispatched concerns official business and needs to be printed so that a copy is placed on file.
- In all cases when incoming electronic mail is printed for filing, any outgoing reply should also be printed and filed with the incoming message where possible.
- E-mail messages should relate to one subject only to facilitate filing. If an e-mail relates to several subjects, copies will need to be made and placed on the appropriate files. ((Rules for filing and retaining email electronically are being revised and developed continuously)

(See Also - Policy for electronic records management. Appendix 2)

2.8 Classified Documents and Files

The circulation of 'classified' documents should be strictly limited to those officers who need them for their efficient performance of their duties. They should have appropriate clearances.

Section Three

Outgoing Correspondence

3. Outgoing Correspondence

3.1 Outgoing Letters and Memoranda

- Every letter or memorandum leaving the Records Office must quote the full address and reference number (file reference and folio number) as well as the references of any other correspondence quoted in the text of the letter. Outgoing memoranda should also have a title or subject line (e.g. Re: Archives and Records Management Programme). 'Security' or 'privacy markings' are typed in a prominent position at the top and bottom of each sheet.
- If an incorrect reference code has been assigned to an outgoing letter or memorandum, staff in the Records Office will correct the reference code and notify the person who prepared it of the change.
- Once a letter or memorandum has been signed by an action officer it must be returned to the Records Office for dispatch.

3.2 Specifications for Outgoing Letters

To ensure that the image of Government as reflected in its outgoing correspondence is consistent and professional, it is suggested that outgoing letters should be prepared to the following specifications:

- 12 point Helvetia or Times Roman font. Do not use Courier fonts
- Typed on the appropriate Government letterhead. Letterhead should be printed in metric sizes
- Margins should be 1 inch
- The block style should be used

- The file reference number should appear at the top of the letter
- Author's and typist's initials should appear below the signature block
- Attachments indicated below sender's and typist initials
- Word processing file title code should appear at the bottom of the page when appropriate.

3.3 File Copies

A copy of all outgoing correspondence should always be prepared and sent to the Records Office for filing.

Placing the letters "F/C" next to the file number/reference code should indicate the fact that the document is a file copy of outgoing correspondence.

The file copy should then be placed in an inter-departmental mail envelope in dip/tray designated for documents/files and sent to the Records Officer. Do not let copies of documents accumulate for lengthy periods before sending them for filing as this will result in a filing backlog in the Records Office.

3.4 Outgoing Mail and Outward Correspondence Register

Preparing letters for dispatch:

Records Office staff is responsible for checking outgoing mail, ensuring that names, addresses and references are correct and that all attachments and enclosures are included. Once a letter has been signed and dated by an actions officer it must be returned to the records Office for dispatch. The Records staff is responsible for sorting outgoing mail into appropriate categories and for maintaining a record of what is dispatched. The following information about letters leaving the Office is noted in the Outward Correspondence Register:

Serial number

- date letter received for dispatch
- subject of the letter
- reference number of the letter
- name of the addressee of the letter
- mode of dispatch (by hand or post)

(See - Chapter 12: Forms-Fig. 3)

3.5 Office Assistant's Dispatch Book

Letters to be delivered by hand are recorded in the Dispatch Book. The following details will be entered:

- date letter dispatch
- reference number of the letter
- assistant's/messenger's name
- where sent (ministry/department/unit)
- name and signature of receiving officer and date

(See -Chapter 12: Forms- Fig.4)

3.6 Delivery of Mail

The Records Office will pass all mail ready for dispatch to an Office Assistant/ Messenger, together with the Messenger's Dispatch Book. When delivering the letters, the messenger must obtain the name and signature or initials of the persons to whom he delivers the letters. This is written in the last column of the Dispatch Book together with the date of receipt.



Dispatch Dip at the Land Registry Department

Section Four

Filing Correspondence and Papers

4. Filing Correspondence and Papers

4.1 The Registered File

The registered file is an organised assembly of documents kept together for use and relating to a specific subject, type of transaction or area of business. The registered file should have three components:

- A cover to protect the contents and act as a title page and a record of the file's circulation
- The contents
- A method of securing the whole together.

File covers (also known as jackets or folders) are usually made of rigid manila paper or board, cut larger than the dimensions of the documents to be filed, and folded to enclose the documents and minimise damage from handling and use.

The file cover should be pre-printed with the name of the agency and division or department if this is appropriate. It should include a space for the file title, file number, index headings or keywords, security marking, reference to previous, subsequent or related files, and file period (i.e. the date or year of opening, and closure) The cover should also have a grid (or ladder) for recording the file's circulation when in use.

Maintaining the order of documents within the file is a vital requirement of filing. This establishes the context within which decisions and actions were taken, and the sequence of those decisions and actions. Hence, papers should be filed in the same order as the transactions of which they form part. This is not the same as saying that the individual papers are filed in their date order. Place papers within a file in the order in which they are received in the Records Office for filing. For example, an outward letter dated 29th June, 2000 will be filed before an incoming letter

dated 26th June if the outgoing letter, with the later date, is sent out and a copy filed before the incoming letter, with the earlier date, is received.

Secure individual documents within a file so that they do not become misplaced or lost. The 'treasury tag' (plastic not metal) is still the cheapest and easiest method of securing documents within a file. There is a recommended method for using treasury tags. Holes are punched in the top left-hand corner of the front cover and inside back cover of the file, taking care not to lose information where the hole is punched. The tag is inserted through the front cover from the inside, passed round the 'spine' of the file on the outside and inserted through the back cover. Holes should be punched in the top left-hand corner of each document to be filed, three centimetres (one inch) down and three centimetres in from the edge. Documents are secured to the end of the tag which passes through the back cover to the inside of the file. (See *Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 5*)

4.2 Identifying the Subject

Mail received in the Records Office after registration or on return from circulation must be placed on files as soon as possible.

If no directions on filing have been given by senior staff or action officers and if the correspondence does not quote a reference to a file in the Records Office, the officer responsible for filing must read the letter carefully to determine its subject and place it on an existing file, if one already exists, or open a new file if there is no appropriate file.

Determining whether an appropriate file already exists requires a careful search of the file index or of the file plan. The procedures for opening a new file and assigning it a reference number are described in **Section 5**.

4.3 Numbering Papers on Files

Documents and the accompanying enclosures must be placed on files in 'date of receipt' order (the most recent on the top). Number each paper on the file consecutively in the top right hand corner with the number being enclosed in a small circle. This is called the folio number. If a document runs to more than one page, the whole document, not the individual pages, is numbered. If the document has several attachments, these must be given alphabetic suffices, for example:

- Main document
- First enclosure = A
- Second enclosure = B

4.4 Using Minute Sheets

The split file system is the standard method of maintaining registered papers on files. In this system, papers are divided as follows:-

- Incoming letters, copies of outgoing letters, memoranda, and notes of meetings, statistical data and similar documents are placed on the right-hand side of the file and secured with a treasury tag.
- On the left-hand side of the opened file is a series of 'Minutes Sheets' secured with a treasury tag. The purpose of these sheets is to enable action officers and Records Office staff to bring attention to particular action points arising from correspondence on the right-hand side of the file, e.g. a request for additional papers, a bring-up date or to point out clarification. The instructions should be short and to the point, addressed, signed and dated.

(See Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 6)

4.5 Cross-Referencing and Removing Papers from Files

If a single letter or other item of correspondence relates to more than one file it should be photocopied and the original placed on the file for which it has most relevance. Place the photocopies on the other files to which the letter relates. On the original letter note the file number on which additional copies have been placed. Similarly, note the location of the original on each copy placed on other files. Alternatively, if a photocopier is not available or photocopying is considered too costly, place the original on the file for which it has most relevance and put a note on each of the other files to which the letter relates, giving the date of the letter, its subject and the number of the file on which it can be found. Do not delay urgent mail by this process.

If a letter is received which refers to earlier correspondence, write the folio number of the previous letter on the new letter and then place it on the same file as the earlier letter.

Papers may be removed from files only in exceptional circumstances on the instruction of the Head of the Records Office. When this is done place a temporary note on the file at the point from which the paper (s) were removed and where they may be found. It must be signed by the member of staff responsible for the removal.

4.6 Sending Documents for Filing

The completeness of the files retained by the Records Office depends in large measure, upon staff in the Records Office, and departments sending documents for filing consistently and regularly. If this practice is not carried out key information may be missing from the file possibly resulting in poor decisions, inappropriate or inaccurate responses to correspondence, financial or other losses to Government and other negative consequences.

When documents for filing are not being sent regularly for filing and are being allowed to pile up in offices before being sent to Records Office, the Records Office cannot cope with the inundation when an accumulation of

documents is finally sent. This causes backlog of filing in Records Office and contributes to poor service. To prevent these problems, in cases when the recipient of a document needs to examine it for longer than two weeks from the date of receipt of the document, a photocopy of the documents should be made for reference purposes and the original forwarded to Records Office for classification and filing. Loose documents for filing should be placed in an inter-departmental mail envelope in the tray/dip designated for the Records Office.

4.7 What to Send for Filing

All documents which qualify as Government Records and which have been created or received by staff in Ministries, Departments/Units should be sent to the Records Office for filing.

Thus, all **incoming** Government mail must be sent for filing, regardless of method of transmission or receipt. Incoming documents which are in electronic form and qualify as Government records should be dealt with according to the procedures outlined in **the Policy for Electronic Records Management** or printed out and the print outs sent for filing.

In addition, a file copy should be made of all **outgoing** correspondence, including internal memoranda. All outgoing correspondence should carry the reference number of the file on which the file copy will be placed.

Write "F/C" (which stands for File Copy) on loose documents being sent to the Records Office to inform the staff that the documents are for filing, and placed them in an inter-departmental mail envelope. The inter-departmental mail envelope containing the documents for filing should then be placed in the tray/dip in the office area designated for pick-up by the attendant or /messenger.

4.8 What not to send for Filing

Government records, which have **not** been created or received by staff in the Records Office, Department/Unit and Ministry, should not be filed with the Records Office. For example, Library publications should not be filed with the Records Office but would instead be filed in the Library's own filing system.

Non-Government Records also do not require filing. Non-Government records include the following categories of material:

- Personal or private papers of Government staff
- Library system materials (e.g. journals and magazines)
- Superfluous copies of Government records (e.g. copies of circulars or notices, as a file copy would have been prepared by the person who is sending out the circular)
- Shorthand notebooks and drafts of Government records

4.9 Do not file

- Spare copies of letters, old drafts and so on, unless there is likelihood that they will be significant in the foreseeable future. Such documents should either be destroyed or, if there is a genuine need to keep them, stored away from the file.
- Published material and bulky reports. Much of the published material received in Records Offices has no relevance to the work of the agency. With the agreement of the line manager this material should be destroyed. Bulky published material or reports which are relevant should be marked with the file and folio number to which they relate, and stored separately. Mark the covering letter to indicate the location of the published material.
- Ephemeral material such as announcements of parties, greeting cards or advertisements of events that have no relevance to the agency.

4.10 Filing Checklist

Ask the following questions regularly:-

- Does the document belong on the file selected?
- Does the file reference on the document agree with the reference number of the file?
- It should, unless it is a copy being used for cross-referencing.
- Are all pages of a multiple page document present?
- Are all attachments present?



Filing Current Files

Section Five

Creating a New File

5. Creating a New File

5.1 Opening a New File

When a document comes into the Records Office, the records staff must decide whether an appropriate file already exists, as described earlier. If no appropriate file exists, create a new file and allocate a reference and a title. No new file may be opened before there is correspondence to go on it. Opening files in the expectation of future correspondence leads to waste of effort, waste of valuable file covers and most damaging of all, confusion in the file index. If there is any doubt at all about whether a new file is required, the Head of the Records Office will ask the relevant action officer for advice. Action officers should be encouraged to indicate their need for files.

If a new file is required, the Records Office staff must think carefully about what it will contain and how it will grow. Remember that each file should relate to a single subject, a well defined area of business or a particular type of transaction. *(The steps taken to record a new file are described in Section 6.)*

Not all papers need to be placed on registered files. Keep ephemeral papers off files altogether or on files that can be destroyed early. It is vital that files destined for early destruction contain only papers that have a short-term potential value. *(See Section 9 for File disposal procedures)*

5.2 Classifying Files

Classification systems are required to identify individual files and forms of records and to indicate the logical relationships between files and records. Without some system for classifying papers, it is not possible to show the links between related files or to file papers consistently and accurately. Whichever system is used in the Records Office, each file must have a unique identifying reference number. This may be a number or a combination of letters and numbers. *(Systems of Classification will be outlined in a separate Classification Manual)*

5.3 Classifying General Subject Files

Assigning reference code to documents, which belong in the General Subject Files series, involves analysing the subject-matter of the document to be classified, identifying the appropriate file in the series on which the document should be placed and assigning the appropriate reference file/code number to the document.

Determining the key words and phrases in a document is essential in the selection of proper file subjects and file numbers. The title or subject line on memoranda, the letterhead, the name of the addressee, and a signature/position title on the document will provide information needed to identify the content of document with some speed and consistency

Start the subject analysis by identifying the primary subject of the document and relating this to the appropriate sub-series in the General Subject File series (e.g. a document that deals primary with the subject of a Government Bank account would be assigned to the sub-series on Bank Accounts). Once the primary subject has been determined, the specific subject or file reference number under which the document should be classified can be determined. (e.g. In the Deputy Governor's Office classification scheme, if the document relates to house tax in the BVI, it would be assigned a reference code in the sub-series dealing with taxation on specific subjects, under the general reference code 22- 4, which deals with 'Finance. Taxation and Revenue.' The appropriate sub-series and reference numbers could be located by consulting the File Index

5.4 Committee Files

Committee files contain documents relating to meetings of Government committees. They may consist of members' appointment letters, committee terms of reference, committee operational procedures, correspondence relating to the arrangement of committee meetings, agendas, papers, minutes, and correspondence relating to follow-up activities.

The official corporate record of Government Board meetings is retained on the Committee files in the Records Office and should be bound as Committee minutes and papers volumes.

Committee secretaries may also have working files in their office related to Committees to which they provide secretarial service. Secretaries may destroy working files upon completion of each meeting or retain these files for future reference and destroy them at a later date provided the Records Office has received file copies of committee documents.

Committee members who receive copies of correspondence, agendas, papers and minutes related to a Committee on which they serve may also retain these documents in working files if they choose.

5.5 Organization of Committee Files

It is suggested that committee files be established and organized as follows:

1. Membership and Terms of Reference
2. Documents relating to meeting arrangements
3. Agendas/Papers/Minutes
4. Follow-up or action correspondence

Membership and Terms of Reference files should remain open for the life of the Committee. New parts should be created when the file contains approximately 200 enclosures or is 1.5 inches thick. All other Committee files should be closed off at the end of each year.

5.6 Case Files

Case files are files that are similar in content but relate to different individuals, organisations, projects, places, events, items of equipment or other common characteristics. The most common type of case file found in government agencies is the personal file containing official papers relating to an individual public servant. Other types of case files include

contract files (containing documents relating to contracts between a ministry and outside organisations or individuals); vehicle files (including records relating to specific government vehicles); or files containing similar information relating to individual non-government organisations (NGOs).

Because particular series of case files contain similar records and only differ from one another by being specific to a particular person, institution, geographical area and so on, they are easy to identify and should be assigned their own series codes. Within their own series, the simplest method of arrangement is by the characteristic which identifies them, whether it is a name, geographical area or project title. For example, case files relating to individual NGOs can be identified by the exact name of the organisation. Each NGO may be issued a number in sequence and an alphabetical index of NGOs, linking them to their numbers, will be held as a finding aid to the files.

5.7 Assigning Files Titles

Choose a clear and precise title for each file. The title should be as descriptive as possible to provide adequate details of the file's actual and likely contents. It should trigger in the user's minds what the file contains. At the same time it ought to be specific enough so that the Records Office staff does not use the file to cover different aspects of the same business or new developments that really should be the subject of several files. As well as describing the contents, a file title should also limit the scope of the material to be placed on the file.

When adding new papers to a file, take care that the file title continues to reflect the contents accurately. At the same time, do not change the title of a file unless it is absolutely necessary. Users become familiar with titles, and changing them, leads to the files containing earlier related papers.

If there is any doubt about the title of a file, consult the appropriate action officer. Users' views on file titles should always be taken into account.

Where it does seem justified to change the title of a file, obtain permission from the Head of the Records Office before any change is made. In exceptional circumstances, a file whose title no longer reflects its contents should be closed and a new file with the correct title opened.

5.8 Identifying the File Series

The first step in assigning a file number is to determine the appropriate file series. In general, there is a file series for each ministry's, department's or agency's clearly identifiable principal functions. If the agency has been organised into self-contained units that clearly supports these functions, there will be a file series for each unit.

If one of the units handles several distinct functions this will best be supported by several series. Alternatively, if two units served by the same Records Office routinely work together on a common function, one file series should be established to cover work in this area. Where units share some files but in general have different files for their own particular functions, two separate file series will be required.

It will sometimes be difficult to relate the functions of an agency to the organisational units. In such cases, work out the content and scope of the file series with the action officers who use the files.

5.9 Assigning File Reference Numbers

The reference number for a file should be constructed in accordance with the file classification system in use in the Records Office. The classification scheme provides a logical framework for organising files in relation to one another. The coding system is a representation of the classification scheme, in letters and/or numbers, and in accordance with the pre-established rules. Whichever system is used, each file must have a unique identifier comprising a multi-part alphabetical and/or numeric

reference code. (*Options for Classification and coding schemes will be discussed in a separate Classification Manual*)

5.10 Assigning Sequential Numbers

The last element in the file reference will be a sequential number distinguishing it from other files relating to the same or a closely connected subject. This is normally written as '01', '02', etc. , for example:

AC/10/17/01

The growth of sequential numbers must be carefully monitored. When the number of files exceeds 20, this will be an indication that the classification of these files may need to be subdivided into narrower themes. Alternatively, a large sequence of files with the same classification may indicate that they are 'case' files which can more conveniently be classified as a series.

5. 11 Cross-Referencing Documents

Sometimes a document will deal with more than one subject. In such cases, the document should be cross-referenced to all appropriate General Subject Files. This entails preparing a photocopy of the document to be cross-referenced. The reference number of the file on which the original document is to be placed in addition to the reference numbers of all the files to which the document is to be cross-referenced should be written in red ink in the upper right-hand corner of the original document (e.g. 2-15, x-ref 1-19) if the document is incoming or, if it is outgoing, in the space provided for the reference number. The photocopies should bear the number of the file on which they are to be placed and the reference code assigned to the original document (e.g. 1-19, x-ref 2-15).

Staff members are asked to advise the Records Office whenever they think copies of incoming documents should be placed on more than one file.

5.12 Opening New File Parts

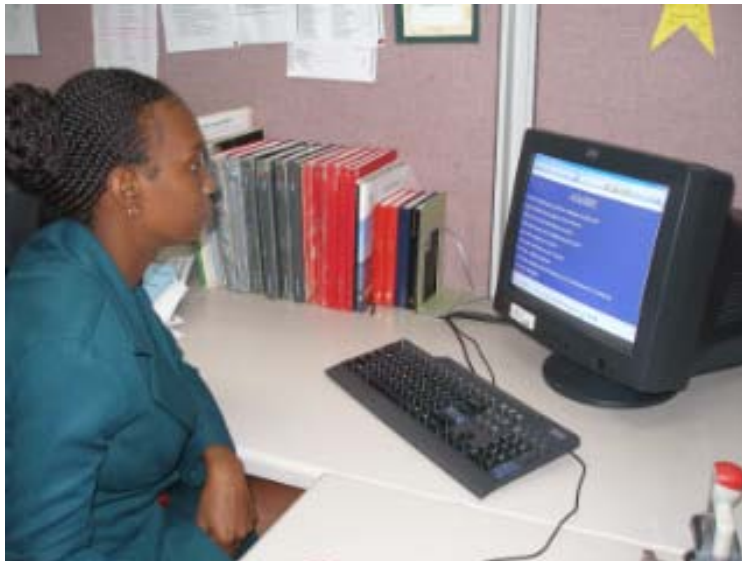
Files when initially opened do not need to be given a specific 'volume number'. Open a new part or volume of an existing file when the current part has become full or if it contains papers which span more than an agreed number of years (usually three to five, representing the active file cycle.) Indicate this by the use of sequential letters of the alphabet, thus, for example:

AC/10/17/01 (first part)

AC/10/17/01A (second part)

AC/10/17/01B (third part).

Note that the second part is numbered 'A'. Many documents already filed on the first file part, as well as the Records Office's file control forms, will already bear the file reference number AC/10/17/01. These cannot be changed. Write the reference number of any previous and subsequent file parts in the relevant boxes of the file cover and the file transit sheet.



Electronic File Management

Section Six

Recording the Existence of a New File

6. Recording the Existence of a New File

6.1 Establishing Control over New Files

When a new file has been created, its existence must be comprehensively recorded so that it can be managed, tracked and produced whenever it is required.

There are three basic control mechanisms that are required to document each file. If any one of these is omitted, then the Records Office will not be able to keep track of files and this will prevent action officers from carrying out their work efficiently. The control mechanisms are the file diary, the file transit sheet and the file index.

6.2 File Dairy

When a new file is opened it must be recorded in the file diary. The following details should be included:

- A sequential number (the next number available in a single sequence)
- The file reference number (generated by consulting the file classification scheme to determine the series/sub-series in which the file should be placed, and the code numbers)
- The date of opening of the file
- The full file title
- Any previous file number.

(See Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 7)

6.3 File Index

Next, the file must be indexed. The index is the key to rapid retrieval of files and the efficiency of the Records Office. Great care must be taken in preparing and using the index. It is the basic tool of the Records Office, but it can also be consulted by action officers under the close supervision of the Records Office. The index must be stored securely by the records staff at the end of the day.

The 'subject' terms used to index files must be taken from the keyword list or controlled vocabulary, otherwise files on the same topic may be indexed under different terms and it will no longer serve as reliable retrieval tool. Rules for indexing names or 'proper nouns' must always be followed.

To index a file, the two most important subjects of the file must be identified and the appropriate words selected from the controlled vocabulary. If an appropriate term does not exist, a new one may need to be created. A decision to create a new term is taken by the Head of the Records Office. Occasionally, it may be necessary to index a file number three or even four times.

6.4 File Plan or File List

A detailed listing of all the individual files within the classification scheme enhances efficiency in the Records Office.



Labelling is Important

Section Seven

Controlling File Movement

7. Controlling File Movement

7.1 Recording File Movements

Files are issued to action officers in at least three circumstances.

- A document arrives in the Records Office, is recorded and filed, and the file is passed to the officer.
- A file is to be 'brought up' to the officer (*See - Section 8*).
- The officer requests the file in person or by telephone.

Records Office staff must be able to determine the location of every file for which they are responsible. Each time a file moves, this fact must be recorded in the Records Office. File movements are monitored in a number of ways: on file transit sheets that are filed in a file transit book, on transit ladders that appear on file covers, on file movement slips and through regular file censuses. (These are all discussed in this section).

7.2 File Transit Sheet

The file transit sheets show the location, at all times, of all the files opened by the Records Office. File movement must be recorded promptly to enable the Records Office to provide an efficient and reliable file retrieval service. The following must be included:

- Security grading (if relevant)
- File reference number
- File title
- Indexing headings (taken from the File Index)

- Any previous or subsequent file numbers
- The file's location (to whom sent and on what date).

Each file should have its own sheet. The sheets must be arranged in series and file number order. They may be kept in a docket book or ring binder. All file movements must be recorded on the sheets.

If a new part of an existing file is opened, this too must be fully recorded in a new file transit sheet, as well as in the file diary and file index, in exactly the same way as for a new file. The previous file number will be written on the new sheet in the appropriate box. Similarly, the file number of the new file will be written on the old sheet in the box headed 'Subsequent File Number'.

When a file is closed this must be indicated on the transit sheet. When the file is destroyed or transferred to the Records Centre this must also be noted on the sheet, and the sheet should then be transferred to a separate transit book, or a tagged file, containing sheets for files that are no longer held in the Records Office. The transit sheets for closed files should be arranged alphanumerically. In due course, when this book of files is full, the sheets are removed, tied up and transferred to the Records Centre. The sheets are kept permanently as they provide a record of the disposition of files.

Each time a file is issued to a user, for whatever reason and for however short a period, this fact must be noted by records staff in the 'Sent To' and 'Date' boxes on the relevant Transit Sheet. The date when the file is returned to the Records Office must also be recorded.

(See Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 8)

7.3 File Movement Slip

Files are frequently passed backwards and forwards between officers for short periods as a part of everyday business. Short-term file movements, for example, when an action officer passes a file to another officer to read

a document on the file, need not be recorded in the Records Office. However, as a general rule, when an officer completes an action on a file and passes the file to another officer, even if only temporarily, the action officer should inform the Records Office.

An officer wishing to pass a file directly to another officer must complete a file movement slip and send it immediately to the Records Office.

The Head of the Records Office should ensure that action officers, always have an adequate supply of file movement slips.

As soon as Records Office staff receives the file movement slip, the information must be recorded on the transit sheet.

Completed file movement slips should be kept on file for six months and then destroy.

(See Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 9)

7.4 File Transit Ladder

Each file movement must be recorded on the transit ladder on the front of the file cover. This records the same information that appears on the file transit sheet. Transit ladders provide a record of all officers who have handled any particular file. When a ladder is full, it must be replaced with a new blank ladder.

7.5 File Census

It must be accepted that sometimes an officer will pass a file to another officer when he/she has finished using it, without the file's transfer being recorded in the Records Office. In order to confirm the location of files which are not in the Records Office's custody, records staff should carry

out a regular census of every file outside the Records Office. If no discrepancies are found the frequency of file censuses can be reduced.

Records Office staff must visit every action officer at regular intervals (once a week is recommended) to list on a file census form all the files held by that officer. The person carrying out the census must sign the bottom of each census form used, and the form is also initialled by the relevant action officer. Then check information on the file census form against that in the transit book to ensure that the up-to-date location of each file is correctly recorded. If there is any discrepancy, the file transit sheet must be amended and the discrepancy reported to the Head of the Records Office.

(See - Chapter 12: File Forms-10)

7.6 Recording the Return of Files to Records Office Custody

The return of files to the Records Office custody is a 'file movement' and must be fully recorded always on the file's transit ladder and on the transit sheet.

7.7 Requests for Files

All requests for files from the Records Office should be directed to the Head of the Records Office who is responsible for ensuring that file movements are fully recorded before files are issued. In the case of a request for a file which is in use elsewhere, Records Office staff should locate the file and ask the person requiring the file for instructions.

7.8 Tracing Missing Files

If a file is missing, the Records Office must proceed as follows.

- The Head of the Records Office must contact the action officer to whom the file was last recorded in the file's transit sheet and ask him or her to trace it.

- If this fails or is impracticable, the Head of the Records Office must circulate a note to all officers in the department/ministry asking them to check whether they have the file.
- If the file still cannot be found, a special search must be initiated by an officer with specific authority to ensure that the search is effective. The search must be repeated several times if necessary.
- As soon as the Records Office staff learn that a file is missing and may be lost, they must write the words 'missing file' on the relevant transit sheet. A list of missing files should be maintained by the Head of the Records Office, periodic searches carried out and a record kept of the areas searched.

7.9 Temporary Files

If action on a topic covered by a missing file continues, open a temporary file. This should only be done if absolutely necessary. A temporary file is opened in the same way as a normal file. It is given the same number as the missing file and its existence is recorded normally. If available, temporary file covers should be used. If temporary file covers are unavailable, standard file covers should be used but must be boldly marked with the word 'TEMPORARY'. All relevant records sheets should be similarly marked. (*See - Section Six for instructions on recording the existence of a new file.*) No temporary file should be opened without the authority of the Head of the Records Office.

When the original file is found, all papers on the temporary file must be transferred to the original file (in proper date sequence) and must be renumbered in folio order. Mark the front cover of the temporary file with the date the original was found. The printed area and transit ladder of the temporary file cover should then be cut away and placed on the original file. The temporary file's transit sheet and all index sheets must similarly be marked with the date that the original was found and then struck through, but retained in the same place in the respective books.

Also amend the transit sheet for the original file and update the list of missing files to show that the file has been found.

7.10 Working Files

Administrative staff may wish to maintain their own personal set of working files in their offices or close to their work area. Such files may be organized according to any method that the staff member may find useful; for example, alphabetical, chronological, numerical, etc.)

Working files should never contain any original documents or official file copies which fall within the definition of a Government record.





Filing Tracking

Section Eight

Files Returned to RC

8. Files Returned to the Records Office

8.1 Returning Files to the Records Office

Action officers should return files to the Records Office as soon as they have finished with them. The records staff must check to see whether any returned file contains mail to be dispatched. If so, the file copy must be filed immediately, any loose papers having first been firmly attached. The letters for dispatch are then removed, recorded and dealt **with** (*See - Section 3: Out Going Correspondence*). The fact that the file has been returned to the Records Office must be noted on the file's transit ladder and transit sheet.

Next, check the file for any instructions to the Records Officer. For example, if 'bring-up' (BU) action is required, this must be recorded in the bring-up dairy (*See below*). If the file is to be passed to another officer, department or ministry, this must be noted on transit sheet and the file dispatched.

If there are no outstanding instructions for action, the file must be put away immediately. No file other than those due for 'bring up' the next day (*See below*) will be left out in the Records Office at the end of the day.

8.2 'Bring-Up' System

The 'bring-up' system enables an action officer to request the Records Office to re-issue a file on the day that he or she needs it. File users should be encouraged to take advantage of this service when action needs to be temporarily suspended. The 'bring-up' system eliminates the need for action officers to hold on to files for long periods if they are not working on them and also helps to keep offices uncluttered. The system must be reliable if users are to trust it.

The 'bring-up system' is one of the prime indicators of the efficiency of a Records Office and of the trust and reliance placed on it by action officers.

Its successful and efficient use prevents many of the problems encountered by Records Office staff, such as prolonged retention of files by users and the consequent difficulties in locating files or the need of spend excessive amounts of time carrying out censuses and searches.

The most effective method of maintaining 'bring-up' records is to use a desk dairy with a space for each day. File users will indicate the need for, and details of any 'bring-up' ('BU') in writing on the minute sheet. Records Office staff should record this request in the 'bring-up' dairy under the appropriate date.

Each afternoon the member of the records staff responsible must look in the 'bring-up' diary for the next day's entries, take out each file due for bring-up and mark up the transit ladder and the transit sheet for the file's dispatch to the relevant officer the next day.

If a file due for BU is not in the Records Office, then the staff must locate it, using the transit sheet. If the file is already being used by the officer who requested it, or by another officer, it is the responsibility of the Head of the Records Office to notify the officer or officers and co-ordinate action between them.



Researching a Client's Inquiry

Section Nine

Closing Files and Using the Records Centre

9. Closing Files and Using the Records Centre

9.1 Closing Files

Records Officers are required to close files at regular intervals. They retain the closed files for periods laid down in disposition schedules (*See below*). At the end of this period some files are destroyed, but the majority are transferred to the Records Centre. This section of the procedures manual deals with all aspects of closing files and their subsequent treatment.

The Records Office staff should ensure that files are closed as soon as they become either three centimetres thick or five years old, whichever is the sooner. This is necessary because

- Files that are thicker than three centimetres are hard to manage and this may result in damage to the contents
- Papers more than five years old are rarely required for reference and should not be regarded as current records.

No further papers should be added to files which are closed.

The method of closing a file is to write the word 'CLOSED' diagonally in bold letters across the front cover together with the date the file was closed. The file transit sheet must be marked to show that the file has been closed. The date when this was done is also recorded.

If it is necessary for action to be continued on a topic covered in a file that has been closed, a new file part should be opened (*See Section 5*). The existence of the new part must be noted on the transit sheet for the closed part in the 'subsequent file number' box. All the usual control records must be completed for the new part. The new file part should also carry a note explaining that the previous part has been closed and giving its reference. If or when the closed part is transferred to the Records Centre this should also be noted on the transfer sheet and on the new file part.

9.2 Custody of Closed Files

Although no new action may be taken on a closed file, and no new papers added, closed files should be kept available in the Records Office (or in a nearby file store) for a period of time so that users may easily refer to them. If action officers request closed files, the file movement should be recorded on the transit sheet for the closed file. If the Records Office holds the current part of a closed file, the current file should be passed to the action officer with the closed part once the transit records have been completed.

Usually, closed files are retained in Records Offices for a period of three or five years. The retention period is specified in the disposal schedule (*See below*). At the end of this specified period, closed files are transferred to the Records Centre, the Archives or destroyed. Records Officers are responsible for seeing that these actions are carried out.

9.3 Disposal Schedules

Government records must be kept for as long as they are needed but should be destroyed as soon as they cease to have legal, administrative or informational value. Only a small percentage of all Government records created are permanently preserved because of their enduring value; these are transferred to the Archives Repository.

If records are not required, or are unlikely to be required for the conduct of current business but they still have a continuing value, they should be transferred to the Records Centre.

Decisions about the transfer or destruction of closed files are the responsibility of the Head of the records and archives institution in consultant with the relevant officials. Disposal schedules are the means by which these instructions are communicated by the Records and Archives Institution.

There are two classes of Retention/Disposal Schedules. These are General Schedules, covering records relating to common functions such as finance, personnel, contracts; and Specific Schedules relating exclusively to the records of individual agencies/units. Records Offices will be issued with the Specific Schedule relating to their own agency as well as with copies of relevant General Schedules. The Records Centre should hold copies of all General and Specific disposition schedules.

In most cases the Schedules will indicate that closed files should be transferred to the Records Centre after a predetermined period of time has elapsed. Following the transfer of records to the Records Centre, staff of the centre are responsible for carrying out all subsequent procedures laid down for records, including retrieval for use, reviewing (where required), destruction or transfer to the Archives Repository.

The Records Centre staff will notify the transferring agency when a review is required. If there are any queries about how the schedules are applied, the Records Centre staff should advise. The Head of the Records Office will notify the Records Centre if there are specific reasons why records should be retained for periods other than those laid down in the schedule. The Records Centre will not normally accept records which are not included in a disposal schedule. The Head of the records and archives institution may give permission to do so.

9.4 Destruction of Records Held by Records Offices

Records which are scheduled for destruction in five years or less should not be transferred to the Records Centre unless there is no storage available in the creating agency or unit. Any such transfers should be authorised by the Head of the Records and Archives Institution.

Every six months the Records Office should complete two copies of a **Proposal to Destroy Scheduled Records Form**, listing the records series scheduled for destruction. The Records Centre will return the top copy of the form authorising destruction or, if there is any query, will inspect the records. The Records Office should preserve the returned forms on a file aintained for this purpose. (*See - Chapter 12: Form- Fig 11*)

Arrangement for the collection of records to be destroyed should be made by the records centre. Destruction may be by shredding for recycling or by incineration. The Records Office staff should indicate on the relevant transit sheets that the files are being destroyed.

(For more information about the destruction of records held by the Records Centre, See below)

9.5 Transferring Files to the Records Centre

The Records Office will request from the Records Centre, an appropriate number of boxes for files to be transferred, a Records Centre Transfer Notification Form and a supply of Records Centre Transfer List Forms, which are to be completed by the Records Office. The Transfer Notification Form is used as the consignment form; it describes in summary all the records that are being sent, gives the overall dates covered and the records' format.

9.6 Procedures for transferring files.

- Arrange the files to be transferred in the order in which they were originally created. This will involve sorting them into series or groups of similar records which were created and maintained as units. Within each series the records should be arranged in the order of the original reference numbers.
- Mark the relevant file transit sheets to indicate that the files are being transferred to the records centre.
- When preparing the documents for packing, take care to remove from the files any loose ephemeral material such as greeting cards, advertisement and extra copies of documents. The files should be dusted and metal pins and clips removed if this will not cause papers to become detached from the file. If a file is broken, it should be tied together with archival string.

- The records should be placed in boxes flat, one on top of the other. The boxes should not be overloaded. If possible, the boxes should contain files closed at around the same time. If any of the records do not fit into the boxes, they should be tied into bundles no deeper than 30 centimetres (10-12 inches). No information should be written on the boxes, as the contents must remain confidential.
- Bulky lever-arch files are ring binders which will not fit comfortably into the boxes should have their contents removed and the contents placed in envelopes or made up into bundles by being tied up with twine, and carefully labelled ready for transfer.
- The files in each box (or the contents of bundles) should be listed on a Records Centre Transfer List Form, leaving blank the columns for the action date; the Records Centre location number and the action category. Each box must be listed on a separate form (with continuation sheets as necessary). Four copies of the form should be made (three copies are for use in the Records Centre. The Centre will not accept records which are inadequately described. The form copies should be placed on top of the files in the box to which they refer and the boxes sent to the Records Centre.
- When the consignment has been received by the Records Centre, the staff will check the Transfer Lists. If there are any queries the Records Office will be contacted. Otherwise, the Records Centre will return to the Records Office a marked-up copy of the Transfer List with the action dates, Records Centre location numbers and action category added, together with a written acknowledgement.
- The Records Office must maintain a Records Centre Transfer file. Completed Transfer Lists should be added to the file in box number order. The Transfer file provides a simple method of ordering files from the Records Centre in the future.

(See Chapter 12: Forms-Fig. 12)

9.7 Retrieving Files from the Records Centre

Files that have been closed and transferred to the Records Centre may be retrieved only by authorised staff. The Records Centre will not accept requests for files from anyone except the Head of the Records Office in the agency concerned, or an agency that is a successor to it. All requests for files should therefore be directed through the Head of the Records Office.

When a user requests a file which is held in the Records Centre, the Records Officer should consult the Records Centre Transfer file to determine the exact title, reference number, box number and location numbers. Then complete three copies of the Records Centre Request Form. The three copies of the form should be sent or taken to the Records Centre and the file collected. One copy of this form will be sent with the file requested to the Records Office. The two other copies will be retained by the Records Centre. *(See - Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 13)*

Records issued by the Records Centre must be returned within one month unless an extension to that period has been granted. If files are retained for more than one month, the Records Centre will send a Follow-up Form asking for the file to be returned or for the Records Office to contact the Records Centre to arrange for an extension. If no response is received from the Records Office, a reminder form will be sent.

Records Offices may withdraw records permanently from the Records Centre if it is judged essential for a file to be held for an indefinite period by the agency or the successive agency which originally transferred it. A Records Centre Request Form should be used and a note should also be written on it indicating that the file is to be withdrawn permanently from the Records Centre. On receipt of the request, the Records Centre will send a memorandum confirming the permanent withdrawal and asking the Records Office to amend its copy of the relevant transfer list.

9.8 Consulting Records in the Records Centre

Authorised personnel may choose to consult records in the Records Centre rather than ask for them to be issued on loan.

Records may be seen only by persons specifically authorised by the originating or transferring agency. Records Centre staff will ask to see this authorisation and also proof of identity before producing records.

Records that are still subject to security classification may be seen by those only who have the appropriate security clearance.

9.9 Supplying Information or Copies from the Records Centre

The general policy of the Records Centre is that only specified original records will be issued on request by authorised users through the head of the Records Office. However, there are circumstances in which users, instead of requesting records to be issued on loan, have the option of asking for one of the following alternatives.

- They may ask for information contained in the records to be supplied, instead of the original documents.
- They may ask for copies of specified documents instead of the originals.

Information, other than original records, may only be supplied when specifically authorised by the Head of the Records Centre.

The Head of the Records Centre may allow the supply of information from the records where:

In his or her opinion the information can be obtained quickly and easily and without ambiguity

The alternatives would be much more cumbersome and time-consuming.

The Records Centre may supply copies of original records in place of originals whenever it appears more economical or efficient to do so. In particular, copies should be produced in the following circumstances:

- Whenever this is requested by the enquiring office
- Whenever the Head of the Records Centre decides that this should be done
- In case where it is clear that supplying copies will be more economical than supplying the whole original file and the enquiring office has agreed to it.

9.10 Action Date and Review Procedures

All records transferred to the Records Centre must be transferred out of it at the appropriate date, which is termed the 'action date'. The Records Centre staff is responsible for ensuring that these procedures are activated and carried through at the appropriate time.

The records are in the following categories:

- Those for review
- Those for transfer to the Archives Repository
- Those for destruction

Records subject to review are brought up after a period set by the relevant disposition schedule, and then appraised by appropriate officers in the originating agency in consultation with senior records staff.

It is the responsibility of the Records Centre to notify the transferring agency that it must carry out a review. The Records Centre will do this by sending a Records Centre Disposal Form, to which a duplicate copy of the relevant transfer list or lists have been attached.

The Disposal Form lists three options on a Reply Slip at the foot of the form. The options give alternatives for dealing with the records specified in the transfer lists attached. These are:-

1. The records should be destroyed
2. The records should be retained for a further period of x years as the records are still required for official business
3. The records should be considered for transfer to the archival facility for permanent preservation.

A course of action will be indicated by the Records Centre.

The Head of the Records Office should complete the Disposal Form and return it to the Records Centre. When the Disposal Form is returned duly completed and signed, the Records Centre is authorised to carry out action specified.

If the Disposal Form is returned with a recommendation for further retention, the new action date is recorded by the Records Centre. If the Head of the Records Centre considers that further retention would not be reasonable, the transferring agency will be contacted.

If the originating agency does not return the Reply Slip on the Disposal Form to the Records Centre within three months, with an appropriate authorisation on it, the Records Centre will proceed with the specified action.

See - Chapter 12: Forms: Fig.14)

9.11 Destruction of Records held by the Records Centre

Records are destroyed by the Records Centre when:-

- They are specified in the disposition schedule as being for routine destruction and the appropriate action date has come, or
- The Disposal Form is received with a signature authorising destruction
- When every box listed on a Records Centre Transfer List has been destroyed the Records Centre will send a copy of the list, stamped "Boxes Destroyed" to the Records Office which transferred the files. On receipt of the stamped list, the Records Office must ensure that its own copies of the same list are removed from the Records Office Transfer List file and destroyed.



Devising a Filing System

Section Ten

Storing Files

10. Storing Files

10.1 File Storage Methods

There are three basic ways of storing files: lateral, vertical and stacking. Lateral filing is done in four-drawer filing cabinets, with the files held upright on their long narrow edge, often within a 'hanging folder'. Vertical filing, where files are held upright on their short narrow edge with their 'spines' facing outwards, is done in cupboards (which may or may not be enclosed) or on racking or shelves. The stacking method stores files flats, one on top of the other, with the spines of the files facing out.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all three methods. Lateral filing in cabinets, using hanging folders, is the least economical but provides easy access. Storage on open shelves is economical, but is unsuitable for confidential materials. The stacking method can be the cheapest and most convenient, but may cause difficulties of retrieval unless the stacks are small. Files stored vertically on open shelves may slip down unless the shelves have movable dividers that can support the files and keep them upright. However, vertical storage is suitable for records with rigid covers or binders, such as files held in ring binders. If open racking is used, shelves and files must be dusted regularly, particularly during the dry season.

10.2 Storing Current Files

Records Offices should be located conveniently for the action officers they serve. They should be separate from other administrative functions such as typing and should be of sufficient size to house the records staff who work in them and the records for which they are responsible. The accommodation must be secured and well maintained (*See Section 11*) and must be of strong enough construction to bear the weight of the files.

Sufficient and appropriate equipment should be provided for the safe handling and secure storage of records within the Records Office. Where appropriate, supports should be provided to prevent files from slipping

down. Shelves and cabinet drawers which hold current records should be clearly labelled to indicate the file number ranges. Adequate space should be left on shelves or in drawers to allow for easy withdrawal and replacement of files. As more new files are opened, the contents of shelves and drawers may need to be arranged to allow for the expansion. When this is done, labels will need to be changed.

An adequate stock of file covers, forms, registers for control documentation and other stationery should be maintained.

10.3 Storing Closed Files

Files which have recently been closed may continue to be stored in the Records Office for an appropriate period so that they are readily available when required. However, closed files should always be stored separately, preferably in different cupboards or cabinets or on separate shelves, to avoid confusion of closed with current files. Again, shelves and cabinet drawers should be clearly labelled and labelling must be kept up-to-date.

(Arrangements for transferring files to the Records Centre are described in Section 9).



Electronic Listing of Files

Section Eleven

Maintaining the System

11. Maintaining the System

11.1 Security of Records

Normally, persons who do not work in the Records Office Section, with the exception of Archives and Records Management Programme staff, are not permitted access in the Records Office area. The files maintained by Records Office or by an office with delegated authority for maintaining Records Office files are for use by the Records Office, Governor, Ministers, Deputy Governor, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments/Divisions and senior staff only. Access to and use of these files by staff who do not work in the department is not permitted, unless authorised in writing by the Head of Department. However, staff outside of the Central Administration in exceptional circumstances may borrow files if written authorisation has been obtained from one of the officials named above.

New staff members of Government departments who will be requesting files from the Records Office should be introduced to Records Office staff by the individual's immediate supervisor in order to ensure that the individual's name is added to the list of staff permitted access to the Records Services files and that the individuals receive proper instruction in the use of those files.

11.2 Confidential/Classified Files

Some files contain documents, which are sensitive and may be seen only by certain members of staff. Such files are often referred to as 'classified' and may be marked, for example, as Secret or Confidential. Personnel files relating to individual members of staff are also treated as confidential because of the personal information they contain and access to them will need to be strictly limited.

Procedures relating to the management, handling and storage of classified files and documents will vary between ministries. While all registered files should be stored securely and their movements and disposition

systemically recorded, confidential files will need to be even more carefully managed. For example, access to confidential files may need to be approved solely by the Chief Executive Officer. Storage arrangements for confidential files will also need to be strictly regulated. The very existence of particularly sensitive files should be known only to those members of staff who need to use them, and to whom appropriate security clearance have been given. The same file cover design is suitable for both regular and classified files. **CONFIDENTIAL** or classified files must be clearly marked with the appropriate classification. All ministries should maintain handling instructions for classified files.

11. 3 Electronic Records

The use of computers makes the management of records more complex. Some computerised records never appear on paper. Rules for the creation, maintenance and disposition of computerised records must be developed and records management practices modified to avoid the problems of unauthorised disposal of electronic records.

These practices must be designed to ensure that:-

- The integrity of records is maintained
- Records are retrievable
- Authorised records disposal occurs according to established rules only
- Records having long term value can be easily transferred to the Archival Institution.

11. 4 Security Precautions

The following security precautions must be in place at all times:

- Ensure that the entrance to the Records Office (or any other place where files are stored) is strictly controlled. Cabinets containing confidential records must be kept locked. The outer door of the Records Office must always be locked when no member of the

Records Office staff is present, and ground floor windows should have security grilles or bars. There should be a secure place where keys can be stored so that members of staff do not take them home.

- Measures should be taken to prevent and control outbreaks of fire. Do not allow smoking in any file storage areas. Adequate numbers of fire extinguishers must be provided and maintained. Electrical appliances should be switched off at the end of the day. Regular fire drills should be held.
- An emergency plan should be in place and tested regularly.

11.5 Good Housekeeping

Eating and drinking in the Records Office should not be allowed. Spilt drinks and food can cause serious damage to records.

The Records Office should be cleaned regularly and waste paper baskets emptied daily.

11.6 Replacing Covers

When a file transit ladder is full a new transit ladder should be pasted on to the front of the file cover. When a file cover has been badly damaged, it may be necessary to provide a new cover. If this is done, the front page of the old file cover must not be destroyed but kept on the file immediately before the first folio.

11.7 Monitoring Records Office Performance

Heads of Records Offices will initiate regular surveys of users' responses to the services provided and take immediate action to make improvements when problems are reported.

The Head will submit quarterly reports regarding the performance of the Records Office to the records and archives institution and to the line manager responsible for the Records Office. These reports should include details of:

- The number of files opened
- The number of letters received
- The service provided to action officers in terms of the best and the worst times it took for them to receive files, from when the letter was received
- The number of boxes transferred to the records centre
- The length of time it takes to clear circulation folders
- The number of records destroyed
- Any problems encountered in running the Records Office

From time to time, the records and archives institution will carry out inspections of Records Offices to measure performance and complete a monitoring exercise. The outcome of these inspections will be communicated to the line manager of the Records Office and the Head of the Records Office. It is the responsibility of the Head of the Records Office to ensure that any improvements or changes recommended in monitoring reports are implemented.

11.8 Symptoms of Difficulties in the Records Office

The Records Office and its procedures need attention when:-

- Mail folders take too long to circulate
- Papers are put on the wrong files
- There is lack of user trust because papers are not readily available
- Action officers keep files and documents in their own rooms, thus making information unavailable
- Action officers send files to the Records Office only when they need space in their rooms
- Files become so thick that covers and contents are damaged
- The Records Office staff are discouraged and frustrated
- There is a backlog of inactive papers in the Records Office that should have been transferred to the records centre
- The Records Office becomes untidy.

11.9 Overhauling Records Office Procedures

There are several reasons why the Records Office or its procedures may need overhauling:-

- Activities have increased and expansion is therefore required.
- New functions have been assigned to the agency.
- Functions have been withdrawn from the agency.

- There is a re-organisation of the area served by the Records Office.
- The present system is ineffective through neglect or faulty design.

Where the Head of a Records Office or the line management feels that a Records Office is in need of attention it should be drawn to attention of the Head of the Records and Archives Institution.



Reorganizing the filing system at the Water and Sewerage Department.



Property Rights Records at the Land Registry Department

Section Twelve

FORMS

12. FORMS

12.1 General : The creation of Forms

Generally, forms should be created only as needed to streamline the operations of the Government. Their design should meet standard guidelines for the preparation of forms, and their printing and distribution should be efficiently managed.

The design, printing and distribution of new forms are currently done in t Ministries and Departments. The Chief Records Manager Officer can provide advice and assistance with the design of new forms.

The following factors should be taken into consideration in determining the form and when creating and designing new forms:

- **Control of the creation of forms.** Ensure that the form is necessary and that the information is not being already gathered by another form.
- **Elimination of obsolete forms.** Obsolete forms are frequently retained and used after they have been replaced. Ensure that users of the form are notified of the new form and advised to destroy the previous form.
- **Standardize form design.** The order in which name, address, phone number and other personal identifiers are requested should be the same on each form. The Government's visual identifiers should be present on each form.
- **Standardise and streamline distribution.** The number of copies of each form and their destination must be justified. Departments and individuals should not receive the same information from two or more forms.

In addition, a standardized form number should be assigned to all new or revised forms indicating the version, number and date of introduction of

the form. These numbers can be obtained from the Chief Records Management Officer. One copy of all finalized new or revised forms should be submitted to the Chief Records Management Officer for enclosure on a 'form' case file. This procedure does not have to be followed for new forms within the use of a single organizational unit.

12. 12 SAMPLE FORMS

Sample forms in this Manual are shown in figure number order as follows:-

1. Inward Correspondence Register
2. Valuables Book or Remittance Register
3. Outward Correspondence register
4. Messenger's Dispatch Book
5. Sample File Cover
6. Minute Sheet
7. File Diary
8. File Transit Sheet
9. File Movement Slip
10. File Census Form
11. Proposal to Destroy Scheduled Records
12. Records Centre Transfer List
13. Records Centre Request Form
14. Records Centre Disposal Form

National Archives and Records Management Unit

Inward Correspondence Register							
Serial Number	Date of Letter	Date Received	From whom Received	Agency Reference	Subject	Officer to whom file was passed and date filed	File Number

Fig.1

National Archives and Records Management Service

Valuables or Remittance Register

Sheet No _____

Serial number	Date Received	Remitter's Name	Amount	Cheques Only		Name and signature of Officer Opening Remittance
				Bank Sort Code	Cheque Number	

Fig. 2

National Archives and Records Management Service

Outward Correspondence Register						
Serial Number	Date Received for Dispatch	Date Dispatched	Subject	Reference Number	Addressee	Mode of Dispatch

Fig. 3

National Archives and Records Management Service

Messenger's Dispatch Book				
Date Dispatch	Reference Number	Messenger's Name	Name of Agency	Name and Signature of Receiving Officer and Date

Fig 4

National Archives and Records Management Service

Sample File Cover

Office of the Head of the Civil Service

NUMBER	Number pages serially at top outer corner in blue pencil.						FILE NO.		
	Number minutes serially beginning a new series for each page.						PB_		
	Write minutes on the last page of the last enclosure, if there is space, or on the last page, if the paper is suitable, otherwise insert a minute sheet in the file.						Vol.		
	NAME								
	To	Page	Date	To	Page	Date	To	Page	Date
							<i>Authority to send file to Records Room</i>		
						<i>Signature of Authorising Officer</i>		Date	

Fig. 5

National Archives and Records Management Service

Minute Sheet

Date	Minute	File Reference

Fig. 6

National Archives and Records Management Service

<p style="text-align: center;">File Movement Slip</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use for long-term movements</p> <p>(Please complete this form and send it to the Records Office when you pass a file to another officer. This will enable the Records Office to keep track and ensure that its records are accurate.)</p> <p>File number: File title:</p> <p>Passed to..... Location..... Date..... Signature</p>

Fig. 9

National Archives and Records Management Service

Proposal to Destroy Scheduled Records

From: Records Office

To: Head of Records Centre

Agency/Unit _____

Records Office Code _____

Date: _____

Please may we have your authority to destroy the records listed below,
which are now scheduled as due for destruction?

Schedule Number	Title of Series	Covering Dates	Number of files/items

Destruction is hereby authorised.

Signed _____

Head of Records Centre

Date _____

Fig. 11

National Archives and Records Management Service

Records Centre Request Form

Box Number _____ Location _____

Records Office code number _____

Agency/Unit _____

File Number _____

File title or description of record required

Date loaned _____

Signature of issuing officer

Signature of receiving officer

Reminder form sent

Second reminder form sent

Reported to Records Centre Manager

Date returned

Fig. 13

Records Centre Disposal Form

Records Office Code Number: _____

Consignment Number: _____

The records listed in the enclosed transfer list (s) are now due for action as indicated in the 'action category'.

Please complete and return the reply slip below.

If we receive no response from you within three months of the date of the report form we will assume that you agree to the action as indicated on the transfer list (s).

Signed: _____

Head of Records Centre

Reply Slip

Records Office: Code Number: _____

Consignment Number: _____

I have considered the records listed on the transfer list (s) and authorise the following action (s):

1. The records specified should be destroyed*
2. The records specified should be retained for further period of _____ years as the records are still required for official business*
3. I recommend that the records be considered for transfer to the archival institution for permanent retention*

*Cross out which are not appropriate

Signed: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

(Illus)

Fig.14

Section Twelve

FORMS

12. FORMS

12.1 General : The creation of Forms

Generally, forms should be created only as needed to streamline the operations of the Government. Their design should meet standard guidelines for the preparation of forms, and their printing and distribution should be efficiently managed.

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- **Standardise and streamline distribution.** The number of copies of each form and their destination must be justified. Departments and individuals should not receive the same information from two or more forms.

In addition, a standardized form number should be assigned to all new or revised forms indicating the version, number and date of introduction of

the form. These numbers can be obtained from the Chief Records Management Officer. One copy of all finalized new or revised forms should be submitted to the Chief Records Management Officer for enclosure on a 'form' case file. This procedure does not have to be followed for new forms within the use of a single organizational unit.

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National Archives and Records Management Unit

Inward Correspondence Register							
Serial Number	Date of Letter	Date Received	From whom Received	Agency Reference	Subject	Officer to whom file was passed and date filed	File Number

Fig.1

National Archives and Records Management Service

Valuables or Remittance Register

Sheet No _____

Serial number	Date Received	Remitter's Name	Amount	Cheques Only		Name and signature of Officer Opening Remittance
				Bank Sort Code	Cheque Number	

Fig. 2

National Archives and Records Management Service

Outward Correspondence Register						
Serial Number	Date Received for Dispatch	Date Dispatched	Subject	Reference Number	Addressee	Mode of Dispatch

Fig. 3

National Archives and Records Management Service

Messenger's Dispatch Book				
Date Dispatch	Reference Number	Messenger's Name	Name of Agency	Name and Signature of Receiving Officer and Date

Fig 4

National Archives and Records Management Service

Sample File Cover

Office of the Head of the Civil Service

NUMBER	Number pages serially at top outer corner in blue pencil.						FILE NO.		
	Number minutes serially beginning a new series for each page.						PB_		
	Write minutes on the last page of the last enclosure, if there is space, or on the last page, if the paper is suitable, otherwise insert a minute sheet in the file.						Vol.		
	NAME								
	To	Page	Date	To	Page	Date	To	Page	Date
							<i>Authority to send file to Records Room</i>		
							<i>Signature of Authorising Officer</i>		Date

Fig. 5

National Archives and Records Management Service

Minute Sheet

Date	Minute <hr/> File Reference

Fig. 6

National Archives and Records Management Service

<p style="text-align: center;">File Movement Slip</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use for long-term movements</p> <p>(Please complete this form and send it to the Records Office when you pass a file to another officer. This will enable the Records Office to keep track and ensure that its records are accurate.)</p> <p>File number: File title:</p> <p>Passed to..... Location..... Date..... Signature</p>

Fig. 9

National Archives and Records Management Service

Records Centre Request Form

Box Number _____ Location _____

Records Office code number _____

Agency/Unit _____

File Number _____

File title or description of record required

Date loaned _____

Signature of issuing officer

Signature of receiving officer

Reminder form sent

Second reminder form sent

Reported to Records Centre Manager

Date returned

Fig. 13

Records Centre Disposal Form

Records Office Code Number: _____

Consignment Number: _____

The records listed in the enclosed transfer list (s) are now due for action as indicated in the 'action category'.

Please complete and return the reply slip below.

If we receive no response from you within three months of the date of the report form we will assume that you agree to the action as indicated on the transfer list (s).

Signed: _____

Head of Records Centre

Reply Slip

Records Office: Code Number: _____

Consignment Number: _____

I have considered the records listed on the transfer list (s) and authorise the following action (s):

1. The records specified should be destroyed*
2. The records specified should be retained for further period of _____ years as the records are still required for official business*
3. I recommend that the records be considered for transfer to the archival institution for permanent retention*

*Cross out which are not appropriate

Signed: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

(Illus)

Fig.14