

The Identification and Description of the Record Series¹

By KENNETH MUNDEN

*Historical Records Section,
Departmental Records Branch, AGO,
Department of the Army*

AS every archivist knows, the records in the custody of an archival depository are divided into groups, each with its component series — sometimes one, frequently several, and occasionally many separate series. Each series, in turn, has its component items. May we agree at the outset that the application of the word “series” is only infrequently arbitrary?² Surely no term in an archivist’s working vocabulary is more adjusted to the well-established principle of provenance, which, in requiring that the archivist respect or restore the original arrangement given a file at the time of its origin,³ precluded the possibility of “arbitrary scheming” on his part.⁴ For this principle, which requires that every document find its way to that *fonds* and to that place within the *fonds* that it occupied at the time the *fonds* was the registry of an actively functioning office,⁵ went much further than, and appeared to be a great improvement on, the principle of *respect pour les fonds*, which provided for the preservation of records by organic

¹ Adaptation of a practical demonstration presented by the writer at a seminar in the Departmental Records Branch, Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, on December 3, 1949; issued previously as Departmental Records Branch *Technical Paper* No. 50-1.

² Cf. the definition of “series” in Departmental Records Branch, AGO, *Reference Service Guide for Departmental Records Branch* ([Washington], 1948), Appendix 15-2: “A term arbitrarily applied to a part (or segment) of an organized body of records which part is distinguishable from the whole body of records by virtue of variations in arrangement or subject content, significant volume (as in the case of 201 [military personnel] files), or peculiar physical form of the papers themselves (as in the case of maps, drawings, or oversize files).” Substantially the same definition appears in the more recent Veterans Administration *Manual M3-8, Records Management: Disposition of Non-current Records* (Washington, 1949), 2.

³ Ryszard Przelaskowski, “Schedule of Internal Work in Modern Archives,” trans. by Wanda Fernand and Olga V. Paul, National Archives *Staff Information Circular* No. 10 (September 1940), 4.

⁴ Johannes Schultze, “Thoughts Concerning the Principle of Provenance,” trans. by Historical Records Survey from *Archivstudien* (1931), 3. MS copy in National Archives library.

⁵ Przelaskowski, *op. cit.*, 8-9.

units or *fonds* but permitted the archivist to rearrange documents within the *fonds*, to meet current research needs, according to their contents.⁶

The doctrine according to which the archivist must respect the original organization of the records in his charge has been under rather continuing attack, significantly on the grounds that an archival depository should never exist for its own sake but rather for the purpose of affording the researcher as much help as possible, and, therefore, should divide given *fonds* (or shall we say record groups?) into subject classes. Such a rearrangement, it is claimed, would reduce the requirement for the production of finding aids,⁷ and in accomplishing it "the archivist would be doing work that is not merely restorative but actually creative in character."⁸ The National Archives, as no less the Department of the Army, has taken the middle-of-the-road position of considering "a number of factors, among which both provenance and convenience are especially important,"⁹ in determining what records constitute a record group, although it does not go so far as to suggest an outright disruption of series. The Army's archivists could not hope to meet the reference demands upon them were they not permitted to create original arrangements for a considerable part of the records in their custody; and in their creations of new series of personnel records, procurement contract files, disbursement accounts files, and other records drawn from the files of thousands of organic units the Army archivists have faced and solved their reference problem in a wholly practical way.¹⁰ No one knows better than the Army archivist wherein lies the proof of the pudding, and he would be the last to urge a rigid application of his principles to his own downfall. On the contrary, he recognizes that the consoli-

⁶ Cf. Theodore R. Schellenberg, "European Archival Practices in Arranging Records," National Archives Staff Information Circular No. 5 (July 1939), 14. See also Ernst Posner, "Some Aspects of Archival Development Since the French Revolution," *American Archivist*, III: 3 (July 1940), 159-172.

⁷ Georg Winter, "Principles of Archival Arrangement," trans. by Historical Records Survey from *Korrespondenzblatt des Gesamtvereins der Deutschen Geschichts und Altertumsvereine*, 78 Jahrg., No. 4-6 (1930), 3. Winter's article responds to the attack of the Swedish archivist Carl Gustaf Weibull on the principle of provenance. MS copy in National Archives library.

⁸ Weibull, cited in Schellenberg, *op. cit.*, 16.

⁹ *Guide to the Records in the National Archives* (National Archives Publication No. 49-13; Washington, 1948), xii. "A record group is a body of records that constitutes a convenient unit for 'records control' and other purposes of the National Archives."

¹⁰ For an example solution see Organization Records Branch, Records Administration Center, Adjutant General's Office, *History of 201 Processing Operation* ([St. Louis, 1948]).

dation of such great masses of records into well-arranged alphabetical or numerical series serves to underline the obligation to recompose in their original arrangement the residual series not so consolidated, for these attain a profounder significance through the removal of overbalancing appendages, as indeed they grow in value through the weeding of impermanent papers. For the advantage of retaining, within the record group, and within the series deemed worthy of preservation as such, the original arrangement of its components, is obvious to the archivist who takes into account the value of finding media created contemporaneously with the records they serve to make accessible. The "preservation of the original arrangement together with these means of reference is a serious task of an archival establishment . . . it is not a mere pastime, but a sincere effort on the part of the archivist to restore the historical setting in which the records were compiled and utilized."¹¹

Only, in fact, by basing his activities on such a solid foundation as the series structure provides is the contemporary archivist able to make any headway at all as he moves gingerly through the mass of records in his charge. What is the record group, if not an ensemble of series? The archivist may be somewhat arbitrary in dividing his records into groups, in dividing his groups into functional subgroups, and even in dividing his subgroups into main series, which stem from basic actions and compare with the dominant theme of a symphony, and subsidiary series, which proceed from actions that are not basic and compare with a symphony's minor themes; he may and possibly should do all these, and he will lose little through an error or two of judgment, so long as the series themselves remain inviolate.

It now follows that in his work of arrangement (using this word in its broadest sense) the archivist must either determine to which series a given component belongs and give this component a place within the series, or he must give a disorganized series its intended or original arrangement.¹² Let us demonstrate the archivist's work by examining the following list of folder titles, grouped presumably by office of origin, which was received as a part of a shipping list at Allied Force Microfilming and Records Depot¹³ in Rome:

¹¹ Winter, *op. cit.*, 9.

¹² Cf. Przelaskowski, *op. cit.*

¹³ The Depot operated until March 1948 under Allied Force Records Administration, which controlled the disposition of the records of the combined British-American agencies of the Mediterranean Theater.

PORTION OF THE "LIST OF CONTENTS" OF A SHIPMENT
OF THE RECORDS OF MILITARY LIAISON HEADQUARTERS
(ALBANIA)

Comm REC BRANCH

332/X	Albania T & T Services
333	Submarine Cable
SX/394	Press
712 Q	Communication Sigs
4481 S & R	Signal

PUBLIC RELATIONS BRANCH

Comd 21	Public Relations
Comd 24	Press Cuttings
4541 S & R	Broadcasting & PWE

RECORDS BRANCH

Comd 27	Activity Reports and Memo on Policy
---------	-------------------------------------

FINANCE BRANCH

4091 L	Finance Albanian Currency
14417 SR	Financing and Accounting
Comd 5/1	Finance
170 G	Finance Policy
711 Q	Currency and Finance

SHIPPING AND PROCUREMENT BRANCH

4430 S & R	Call Forwards Civil Relief Supplies
4431	Call Forward May June
4432 S & R	Call Forward Civil Supplies June July
4461 S & R	Procurement Policy Part I
4461 S R	Procurement Policy Part II
4463 S R	Procurement New Demands Awaiting Confirmation
4491 S R	Shipping Policy & General
4522 S R	Procurement Soap
4524 S R	Agriculture Requirements & Procurement Part I
4524	Agriculture Requirements & Procurement Part II
4525 S R	Newsprint Procurement
4527 S/R	Sundry Chemicals
4552 S/R	Kosovo Procurement
A/SR/7005	Call Forward

Without actual recourse to these records, the archivist, in reviewing this list, suspects that the order of folders within series has been disturbed. He notes, under "Public Relations Branch," item 4541 S & R, which, he sees, is more properly placed below, under "Shipping and Procurement Branch"; and he concludes that

this item, which pertains to broadcasting, has been grouped with two other items pertaining to other public relations matters, not by its creator but by the agency responsible for the present arrangement. Going on, he studies the item designations and titles listed under "Finance Branch," and he guesses that the five items listed have been drawn from five different series. He soon informs himself that the Historical Section of Central Mediterranean Forces has made this particular arrangement, and he at once recognizes that it is based on the suppositious necessity to reconstruct all of the records of this agency, which is Military Liaison Headquarters for Albania, by subject or according to contents. He discovers also, when he provides himself with an organizational picture of this agency, that a number of the branches named on this and the other pages of this list never existed in fact, of which "Records Branch" is one example and "Public Relations Branch" another. It is then clear to him that he must recompose all of these series, and he begins his work by bringing together all folders bearing a "Comd" file designation, which, he soon learns, is an abbreviation identifying the series kept by the Commander Branch. He selects for his experiment — at this stage his conclusions are hardly final — the two items marked "Comd" under "Public Relations Branch," the one under "Records Branch," the one under "Finance Branch," and all other similarly marked items he finds under other branches of the complete list (not reproduced above); brings these items physically together; and arranges them numerically. The results of his labors are shown by the following list of Commander Branch file folders in the order in which he now arranges them:

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RECORDS OF THE COMMANDER BRANCH, MILITARY LIAISON HEADQUARTERS
(ALBANIA)

<i>File Number</i>	<i>File title</i>	<i>Branch with which identified by shipper (non-existent branches are bracketed)</i>
Comd 2	Supply and Relief	Supply and Relief
Comd 3	Shipping Agent	[Shipping and Procurement]
Comd 4	Intelligence Reports	Commander
Comd 5	Liaison Visits and Reports	Liaison
Comd 5/1	Finance	Finance
Comd 6	New Planning	"G"
Comd 8	Observers' Reports—Correspondence	[Distribution]

Comd 8/1	Observers' Reports — Tirana	[Distribution]
Comd 8/2	Observers' Reports — Scutari	[Distribution]
Comd 8/3	Observers' Reports — Kukes	[Distribution]
Comd 8/4	Observers' Reports — Durazzo	[Distribution]
Comd 8/5	Observers' Reports — Peshkopije	[Distribution]
Comd 8/6	Observers' Reports — Elbasan	[Distribution]
Comd 8/7	Observers' Reports — Berat	[Distribution]
Comd 8/8	Observers' Reports — Korcha	[Distribution]
Comd 8/9	Observers' Reports — Valona	[Distribution]
Comd 8/10	Observers' Reports — Gjinokaster	[Distribution]
Comd 11	Transport Board	[Motor Transport (Civil)]
Comd 12	Relief Commission	Supply and Relief
Comd 14	Detailed Planning	"G"
Comd 15	Sitreps from Command and Weekly Progress Reports	General Staff Intel- ligence
Comd 15/1	Sitreps from ML to AFHQ	General Staff Intel- ligence
Comd 16	UNRRA	Supply and Relief
Comd 17	Notes on Meetings and Interviews	General Staff Intel- ligence
Comd 18	Correspondence with Albanian Military Authorities	"A"
Comd 18-C	Correspondence with Albanian Mili- tary Authorities; Clearances with Albanian Military Authorities	Commander
Comd 19	Destitutes in Albania	Relief
Comd 20	Evacuation of Italians	Relief
Comd 21	Public Relations	[Public Relations]
Comd 23	Termination of ML Period in Albania	"A"
Comd 24	Press Cuttings	[Public Relations]
Comd 25	Tirana — Conferences for an Agreement	Liaison
Comd 26	Directives: Policy: UNRRA	Supply and Relief
Comd 27	Activity Reports and Memo on Policy	[Records]
Comd 28	Joint Plan with LFA	"G"
Comd 29	Rescinded Correspondence	Supply and Relief
Comd 30	Military Report on Albania	General Staff Intel- ligence

As we see, Comd 21, Comd 24, and Comd 27 now find their places in the series of which they are a part. In reconstructing this series, the archivist has drawn its components (in this instance file folders) from a number of positions, which are indicated in the right-hand column of the final list. He sees at once that he has failed

to uncover all of the original components of this series. "Comd 1" is conspicuously missing. He has, however, achieved an intelligible order and fixed the relation of each component to all other components of the series. File "Comd 5/1 Finance," for example, when fixed in this series, becomes properly a record of financial business conducted by the Commander Branch in connection with its liaison work.

This demonstrates what we may call the recomposition of series, and by series we mean a quantity of volumes or books, of letters or envelopes, of papers or files or bundles, or of any other records — a quantity, in short, of archival elements — all of which are qualified in purpose by their unity in a given arrangement;¹⁴ qualified in content by their direct bearing on, or relation to, the same functional subject matter;¹⁵ qualified in their physical properties by their homogeneity of form;¹⁶ and qualified in authorship by the circumstance of their being placed in the series by the direction of officials of one agency or of one or more heirs of the functions of that agency.¹⁷ The series is thus "something more than and different from the arithmetical sum of the single components."¹⁸ Since a document, from the moment it is filed, is part of a series, there does not exist a problem of method of arrangement, either of series in relation to each other, of the position in a series of a component, or of congruity of components.¹⁹ The arrangement imposed

¹⁴ Cf. Raffaele Zitarosa, *Ordinamento dell'Amministrazione Finanziaria e degli Archivi* (Naples, 1937), 37.

¹⁵ Cf. Philip M. Hamer, *The Manual of the Survey of Federal Archives* (Washington: Works Progress Administration, February 1936), 23. "By serial is meant a group of records possessing common qualities as regards contents (that is, relating to the same activity or subject), qualities which permit them to be grouped together in filing and described as a whole in a few words. The organization of groups of records for filing is important in determining what is, or is not, a serial."

¹⁶ But not format, for, as has been observed by William J. Van Schreeven, "Archives consist of . . . papers in a myriad of sizes. . . . All too often an established series may consist of an intermingling of both loose papers and bound volumes." "Stack and Shelf Arrangement of the Archives Division, Virginia State Library," *American Archivist*, XI: 1 (January 1948), 45.

¹⁷ With this definition compare that of Solon J. Buck, who in March 1940 proposed to the Committee on Finding Mediums of the National Archives that a series of records might be defined as "any body of archival material of uniform character systematically organized or filed as a unit and intended to be kept together in a definite arrangement."

¹⁸ Giorgio Cencetti, "Il Fondamento Teorico della Dottrina Archivistica" (abs. by Lester K. Born), *American Archivist*, III: 4 (October 1940), 279-280.

¹⁹ Thus, one cannot fail to understand the motive of a folder labelled "Emily Dickinson" when one sees it as a component of the "ships files" kept by the Ports and Warehouse Division, Transportation and Shipping Subcommittee, Allied Commission for Italy.

by the original relationship the archivist seems bound to observe;²⁰ it is, moreover, his responsibility to combine into series all loose documents which from internal or external indications appear to have formed previously part of a series. Other loose documents, isolated pieces, may be found never to have been given classifications or organized into series: each such piece must be subjected to the archivist's analysis, which will result in a determination of the series with which it should be related or to which it should be annexed. In this process, the archivist is free to follow any method that seems sensible to him, and he may decide to combine the isolated pieces belonging to the record group either according to subject matter or according to the form of the document.²¹

Applying the principles, let me demonstrate now the whole process of identifying, by series, three drawers of records the present order of which corresponds to the following list, which shows the exact titles of all folders and envelopes:²²

Drawer No. 1

Active Duty Report on Res. Off.	18 General Orders
1 Anglo-American Glossary	20 Gov't Printing Office, Corresp.
2 Blank Forms—Language Section	21 Ink
3 Bonds, War	22 Insurance, Nat. Life
4 Canadian G.S.—Co-operation	24 Legal Question—Payments to Phrase Book Translators
5 Cigarette Phrase Book	25 Memoranda, Office
6 Com'ng Gen. 2 SC SOS	27 Miscellaneous
7 Commendations	28 Navy
9 Covers—Colors	29 New Words
10 Criticisms	30 OBJ. I—Bibliography Thru W. D.
11 Directives, General	31 OBJ. I—French Dict.
11A Inter-Changes with Chief, Edu- cation Branch, SSD, ASF	32 OBJ. I—German Dict.
12 Directives, Phrase Books	33 OBJ. I—Italian Dict.
13 Distribution—Dictionaries	34 OBJ. I—Portuguese Dict.
14 Funds Authorizations	35 OBJ. I—Russian Dict.
15 Funds—Confidential Vouchers	36 OBJ. I—Spanish Dict.
16 Funds—Expense Acc'ts of Trips to Washington	38 OBJ. III—Defenition [<i>sic</i>] Dict.
17 G-2 Finance	39 OBJ. V—Abbreviations
19 German-English Military Mis- cellany	40 Objectives and Priorities

²⁰ Cencetti, *op. cit.*

²¹ S. Muller, J. A. Feith, and R. Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, trans. by Arthur H. Leavitt (New York, 1940), 79, 89.

²² These records were in place on the speaker's table when this demonstration was presented. The explanation was accompanied by the indicated manipulation.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 41 Paper—Waterproofing | 61 Special Orders |
| 42 Personnel, Officers | 62 Station List—Confidential |
| 44 Personnel—Rosters | 64 Translator's Marks |
| 45 Phrase Books, Key to Priority List | 65 Translator Exam. Standards |
| 46 Policies | 66 Volunteers, Oaths & Affs. |
| 47 Post Office Regulations | 67 WPA Laws |
| 48 Premises | 68 WPA M. D. P. Historical [2 folders] |
| 49 Production Rates | 69 WPA M. D. P. Sponsor's Contributions |
| 50 Progress Reports | 70 WPA Project Proposals |
| 51 Publications, Army | 89 English Mss. Phrase Book |
| 52 Publications for Exploit | 91 Monthly Safeguarding Reports, Executive Officer |
| 53 Publicity | 93 German Mil. Abbrevs. |
| 54 Publicity, Policies on | 96 Personnel, Enlisted Men—General [personal name folders] |
| 55 Safeguarding | |
| 58 Selective Service | |
| 59 Senior Editor, Reports | |
| 60 "Set-up" Lang. Sec. | |

Drawer No. 2

- | | |
|---|--|
| 201 Intelligence Officer—General File | 107 Monthly Injury Summary Report of L.S. MIS to USA |
| 97 Military Personnel [personal and agency name folders] | 108 Senior Editor |
| 56 Scales | 109 Forms |
| 99 Credit and Debit Vouchers | 180 Alphabeticals A to Z [subdivided alphabetically] |
| 106 Receipts, P. O., for Registered Mail, Lang. Sec., MIS | |

Drawer No. 3

- | | |
|---|--|
| Dictionary Project—Col. Vollmer's [sic] File [envelope] | 203 Intelligence Officer—Reports |
| 406 Director—Col. Vollmer's File | 300 General (Adjutant) |
| 26 Mil. Dic. Proj. to Lang. Sec. | 414 Personnel, Applicants |
| 37 OBJ. II—Proposals | 415 Personnel, Jewish Personnel, General |
| 181 Addressee Files [personal and institutional name folders] | Glodkowsky Translation 2d Sheets, Col. Vollmer's files, WD Dict. Proj. |
| 185 Personnel Officers [personal name folders] | [Printer's proof of] TM 30, German-English Military Miscellany |
| 186 Personnel, Military, Former [personal name folders] | Tng Br. Admin Records (Dictionary Project) [envelope] |
| 187 Personnel, Prospective [personal name folders] | Dictionary Project [envelope] |
| 200 Blank Forms, Intelligence Officer | W.D. Dict. Proj. for Col. Vollmer's outfit [envelope] |
| 202 Intelligence Officer—Individuals | |

I am told by the transfer agreement covering these records that they belong to the "MIS Language Office," commonly known as the "War Department Dictionary Project," and that they consist of "correspondence, memoranda, and requisitions" pertaining to the "functions, personnel, supplies, and equipment" of that office for the period 1941-1943. The transfer agreement describes the arrangement of these records to be "partly topical" and "partly unarranged," and informs me that this file is referred to as Colonel Vollmer's file; it also identifies Colonel Vollmer as the director of the project.

Taking first a general view of the records before me, I find them organized in accordance with a subject-numeric file scheme, consisting of numbered folders beginning with 1 and ending with 203, together with a folder of loose papers, another folder containing the printer's proof of *German-English Military Miscellany* and three envelopes of material which I do not examine for the moment. There are, in addition, an envelope in the front of the 3d drawer marked "Dictionary Project — Col. Volmer's [*sic*] File" and another folder, also marked "Col. Vollmer's File" but labelled "Director" and in physical appearance not forming a part of the main series of subject-numeric files; this preliminary opinion is given some weight by the fact that it bears the number "406," which clearly lies outside a file scheme embracing numbers 1 to 203; it also differs from the folders of what appears to be the main series in that it is a short rather than a long folder. I note also files 300, 414, and 415, toward the end of the third drawer: these too appear to fall outside the main series.

Returning now to the first drawer, which contains a portion of what I have determined to be the main series, I thumb through it quickly to note that files 8, 23, 26, 37, 43, 56, 57, 63, 71 to 88, 90, 92, 94, and 95 are missing in the first drawer. In passing, I reverse the order of 19 and 18. Going on to the second drawer, I note the absence of files 98 and 100 to 105. Files 110 to 179, inclusive, are missing also from this drawer, which ends with file 180, subdivided alphabetically. In proceeding through this drawer I find file 56, one of those noted as missing in my examination of the 1st drawer, and since my knowledge of these records has now advanced to the point where I feel justified in moving its components about I place this folder in its proper position after 55. I similarly dispose of file 201, by placing it properly in the third drawer, and to their proper positions in the first drawer I move files 26 and 37 from

the third drawer, in which I note the absence of files 182, 183, 184, and 188 to 199.

I return now to the second drawer to examine file 97, entitled "Military Personnel," which begins with an independent folder containing papers on that subject. Following this folder are other folders bearing names of people or agencies, the first one being entitled "Chief of Finance," the second "Brooks, Norman E," the third "Civil Service, United States," the fourth "Coast and Geodetic Survey, United States" and so on, but none bearing a numerical designation. I am struck immediately by the fact that at least one of these folders — that entitled "Mencken, H. L." — does not belong in a "Military Personnel" subseries, and I pull up the file bearing his name for some clue leading to the proper arrangement of his and the other folders under discussion. In passing I am interested in noting the influence of Mr. Mencken's *The American Language* on the "dictionary project" with which these records are concerned. In fact, Colonel Vollmer writes Mr. Mencken, "We exploited all the words from your book," and it was the initial contribution on slang words to Colonel Vollmer's manuscript; but apart from this bit of information, which throws an additional ray of light on the nature of the records before me, I find nothing to help me reduce this subseries to its original composition. I look next at a folder entitled "Adjutant General, The" and run into luck, for here I find the file designation "181 Adjutant General" written on the first letter filed in this folder. Looking in the third drawer, which I have not so far examined in detail, I discover that file 181, entitled "Addressee Files," is subdivided also into components, among which I note "Internal Security Division, Director," the first file item of which bears a similar file mark, *i.e.*, "181, — Director Internal Security Division." I now thumb quickly through the folders filed under 97 "Military Personnel," and identify all those bearing the file designation 181, at the same time identifying other folders belonging under 96, "Personnel, Enlisted Men — General" and 180, "Alphabeticals A to Z." I have now a mandate to sort all the folders composing these various subseries into separate subseries for "Military Personnel" (97), "Alphabeticals A to Z" (180), and "Addressee Files" (181); and at the same time to arrange appropriately similarly constructed subseries of folders under "Personnel Officers" (185), "Personnel, Military, Former" (186), and "Personnel, Prospective" (187). Even in the absence of file marks it will be a simple matter to decide which folders belong under "Military Personnel," "Personnel, Officers,"

"Personnel, Military, Former," and "Personnel, Prospective," respectively, as the lines of demarkation among these subseries are fairly clear, although admittedly the subseries are not mutually exclusive; but I do not perceive immediately the difference between "Addressee Files" and "Alphabeticals A to Z." The "alphabeticals" I find on further examination to contain correspondence with individuals and government agencies, arranged alphabetically in one subseries by personal or agency name. Each item of the "Addressee Files," so far as I can determine at the moment, is filed by the name of the addressee appearing on the document, while the names under which the papers in the "alphabeticals" subseries are filed are often the subjects of letters or memoranda. My final decision is to arrange not only all items bearing the number 180 under that number but all other items not bearing the file mark 181.

I begin again at the first drawer and proceed with a more intensive examination of the records to bring out the essential information about their functional content, and I note for the first time that the folders are alphabetically as well as numerically arranged from nos. 1 to 70. This convinces me that the whole series is broken into blocks, and that numbers apparently missing were in all probability never used. File 26, I find, contains a 1942 report on the work of the Military Dictionary Project, and from this report I make a note of the project's three main objectives, *viz.*, (1) the preparation of military dictionaries covering equivalents in six foreign languages for use by the Army of the United States, to cover terms and phrases in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, German, Italian, and French; (2) translation of foreign military books, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, etc., as directed by the MID, G-2; and (3) production of a wholly English dictionary of military terms for the use of the Army of the United States. Throwing additional light on these objectives are separate files on the German (32), the Italian (33), the Portuguese (34), the Russian (35), and the Spanish (36) dictionaries, all of which fall within the first objective; a file entitled "OBJ. II — Proposals" (37) pertaining to translations of specific foreign technical publications; and the file entitled "OBJ. III — Defenition [*sic*] Dict." (38), which derived military terminology from War Department publications. The documents in files 25 ("Office Memoranda") and 27 ("Miscellaneous") appear to be of some philological importance; Office Memorandum 23, for example, discusses the translation of foreign verbs into English and the treatment of adjectives and plural nouns; and a memorandum in file 27 discusses the spe-

cial difficulties in translating Spanish legal terms. In the category of administrative or housekeeping records fall folders of personnel rosters, Post Office regulations, and funds and accounting correspondence. File 68, "WPA M.D.P. Historical," in two parts, I find to contain an abundance of information on the history of the project and, equally important, a "Manual of Procedures." Files of an informational character would appear to include 93, pertaining to German military abbreviations, and 65 on examination standards for translator. All of these files add materially to my understanding of the men who composed the Language Section, the manner and quality of their work, and the kind of organization they had.²³

Looking now at the discrete items, noted in my initial examination of these records, I note, first, three envelopes of loose material apparently sent by the Training Branch of the Military Intelligence Division to that Division's Administrative Records Branch, the covering note of which proves that these envelopes were stored without cross-referencing to or incorporation in the files of the Administrative Records Branch. That the contents of these three envelopes do not belong with the records of the Language Section is apparent from the fact that they include original letters sent by the Director of the Language Section to the chiefs of the Geographic and Training branches, as well as material received from other sources by, or created in, those branches. I therefore lay aside these envelopes (together with an envelope of similar material found at the beginning of the third drawer) in anticipation of restoring them to the series of which they were originally parts. Other discrete items are 406, 414, and 415 (the last with its companion "Personnel, General" folder), which clearly lie outside the scheme of my main series. I soon determine these to be files kept by the administrative assistant to the director of the Language Section. These too are laid aside in the hope of ascertaining the whereabouts of the series of which they are a part. Still another discrete item, a file numbered 300 and entitled "General," appears to have been a file kept by the adjutant to the Director of the Language Section, and it, together with the first folder in the first drawer ("Active Duty Report. . ."), which appears to be a file kept by the Adjutant, is laid aside. The "Glodkowsky Translation" and the printer's proof I annex to my main series.

²³ "At the Language Section headquarters a hundred scholars, poets, assorted literary folk and clerks keep busy." *New York Times*, August 25, 1942. The Section's file 70, "Publicity," shows that its work was well publicized throughout its existence.

It will have been recalled, as I have put aside the discrete items, that the components of our series must be qualified in a number of respects. These qualifications bear repeating here, as I reexamine the discarded material: The components of a series are *qualified* —

<i>How</i>	<i>By what</i>
1) in purpose	unity in a given arrangement
2) in content	direct bearing on, or relation to, the same subject matter
3) in physical properties	homogeneity of form
4) in authorship	the circumstance of their being placed in the series by the direction of officials of one agency or of one or more heirs of the functions of that agency

Since *all* of the components of what I have established as my main series must meet *all* of these qualifications, the discarded records are ineligible. They have, of course, in content, a direct bearing on the functional subject matter of this series, and their form is homogeneous with its components; but they are clearly not united with those components in their arrangement; and, moreover, their authorship is at variance with the authorship of the series, although the adjutant's records and those of the administrative assistant belong to the same record group.

To the archivist who has succeeded in identifying his series, the composition of its description is of little moment. A typical accession, however, sometimes reduces the best of archivists to a state of befuddlement. In the style of imaginary archivists X and Y, let me describe the series I have succeeded in identifying. X would say:

General files of correspondence, memoranda, requisitions, work orders, minutes, briefs, synopses, publications, reports, commendations, and forms, together with miscellaneous directives, studies, manuals, and appreciations, pertaining to policies, procedures, organization, and program in connection with the compilation of military dictionaries of foreign languages.

Y would have it thus:

Personnel files; correspondence with H. L. Mencken and other noted individuals; nonrecord copies of War Department publications; papers concerning the compilation of French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish dictionaries; and miscellaneous other records.

X is overly concerned about the form these records happen to take; Y, on the other hand, has described adequately some of the func-

tional content, but has failed to account for the motive holding these components together as a series.

The requirements of a description of series suggest themselves. To describe a series it is but necessary to —

<i>What</i>	<i>How</i>
1) attribute it	to the office of origin
2) name it	comprehensively
3) qualify it	functionally
4) match it	against a given arrangement
5) limit it	by date
6) measure it	quantitatively

To attribute this series to its office of origin, I identify it as created by the Language Section, Military Intelligence Service. To name it, I call it the "Director's Subject File," and add, to qualify it functionally, "of the policy and operational direction of the WPA-sponsored project for the production of English-foreign-language and U. S. military terminology dictionaries and phrase-books, for the use of U. S. military personnel in World War II, and for the translation of foreign technical publications for intelligence purposes." To match it against a given arrangement (in this case subject-numeric), to limit it by date, and to measure it quantitatively are requirements easily met.

I have attempted to argue the protection of the series. But a practical yardstick against which the series may be measured, and a statement of the requirements of a series description — both essayed in this paper — although constituting some argument, do not carry the full burden of the proof. This the archivist, confronting whatever records that come his way — as he asks and answers the question, is this less than a series? more than a series? or equal to a series? — must propound to himself.