

# The Overseas Record Program of the Department of State

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TO THE student interested in the foreign policy of the United States and its effect on international affairs, there is probably no more valuable source than the records of the Department of State and the Foreign Service. The Department's Historical Division (formerly the Division of Historical Policy Research) has published many important documents relating to the history of our foreign policy since 1861 in the series entitled *Foreign Relations of the United States*. Other publications have been issued from time to time on specific aspects or events of importance in our foreign affairs, such as our relations with China and Japan and our participation in certain international conferences. But a much greater wealth of source material remains unpublished among the archives of the Department in Washington. The Department's central file through the year 1939 and post files through the year 1935, with certain exceptions, are now in the National Archives, where those through 1929 may be freely consulted by qualified researchers.

In order to ensure adequate documentation of its activities and maximum usefulness of its records, the Department of State inaugurated a methodical and continuing record management program in the fall of 1949. Previously the Division of Communications and Records and the Division of Historical Policy Research had divided the responsibility for handling record problems, dealing with each separate problem as it arose. A record retirement unit had been established in 1944 to handle inactive Departmental files until they became eligible for transfer to the National Archives. But a committee on records and archives of the Department's Reorganization Task Force, appointed in 1948 to study and report on the Hoover Commission's recommendations concerning the Department, recognized the need to provide more systematically for the increasing quantities of records that had accumulated in the war and postwar

<sup>1</sup> Revised version of a paper read at a meeting of the Interagency Records Administration Conference at the National Archives, February 17, 1956. The writer is a member of the Records Management Staff, Division of Records Management, Department of State.

years. On the basis of the committee's recommendation, approved by the task force, the Department appointed its first record management officer in November 1949 with full authority to manage the records of the Department and the Foreign Service.

Although the purpose of this article is to discuss the Department's program for post records, a brief preliminary description of the overall program is desirable. The record management officer was assigned the following responsibilities on November 25, 1949: the development of standards for the adequate documentation of the activities of the Department and Foreign Service; the establishment of policies and procedures regarding the creation, organization, and maintenance of records throughout the Department and Foreign Service; the selection, preservation and custody of those records having administrative, legal, research or other value; the development of orderly and systematic plans for the disposition of those records having no further administrative or other value; and the establishment, in conjunction with the Division of Central Services, of standards for types and quantities of records equipment and supplies.

In order to carry out these functions, a record management staff was recruited. The maintenance of the so-called central file of the Department continued as a line operation under the general direction of the record management officer. In the summer of 1950 the Department obtained permission from the General Services Administration to establish its own depository for the storage of inactive records; and this depository, known as the Records Service Center, also came under the supervision of the record management officer. In March 1955 the record management program achieved division status within the Department. There are now three separate units within the division: a Records Management Staff, responsible for the staff functions and technical guidance of the program; a Current Records Branch, responsible for maintaining the Central File of the Department; and the Records Service Center, responsible for storing and servicing the less active records of the Department and Foreign Service.

The development of an effective management program for post records has been one of the jobs of the Records Management Staff. Considering the quantity and complexity of the field records in 1949, much progress has been made; but a great deal of work still remains to be done. At present there are some 236 Foreign Service posts, excluding consular agencies and special missions, throughout the world. They range in size from our large embassies in London and Paris with complements of several hundred persons each, to small posts in such places as Antofagasta, in Chile, and Isfahan, in Iran,

having no more than two or three American employees. Some of the European missions have existed since the establishment of the Federal Government; other posts have been opened or closed during the intervening years according to the interests and needs of the Government.

During more than a century and a half these posts created and accumulated a large volume of records. Before 1950 the Division of Communications and Records and the Division of Historical Policy Research worked with the staff of the National Archives to obtain authorization for the disposal of certain types of administrative and consular records of only temporary value and to retire most of the post records predating 1936 direct to the National Archives. Before 1949, however, no attempt had been made to prescribe uniform filing procedures, except for a file-classification scheme, or to establish a systematic plan for the retirement or disposal of post records. No figures were available on the volume of post records, the amount of equipment and space they occupied, or the number of persons employed to deal with records at each post. No information was available either concerning the degree to which records were centralized or decentralized within the larger posts.

At the outset of the program the Division of Central Services supplied some valuable statistical information from its 1950 property inventory. This revealed that there were in the field about 25,000 file cabinets occupying about 300,000 square feet of space. These cabinets, if they were filled, represented a volume of some 200,000 cubic feet of records. There was, moreover, a large volume of records stored on shelves or packed in crates. The first annual statistical report to the General Services Administration (GSA), therefore, estimated post record holdings on July 1, 1950, at 235,000 cubic feet. An inventory of files taken in 1952 revealed that this figure was about 10% too high. The report to GSA as of June 30, 1956, showed that record holdings had been reduced to 140,759 cubic feet, 40% less than 6 years before.

In addition to the statistics on post records available in 1950, there was need to acquire more information on post record operations and problems than could be gleaned from the meager correspondence on the subject. In June 1951 the first inventory of Foreign Service records was taken at the Paris Embassy as a direct result of the Embassy's repeated requests for on-the-spot technical assistance. A record management survey team was sent to Paris, but, before its departure, the Embassy was instructed to take an inventory of files, both to indicate the scope of the record problem and

to serve as a basis for the team's work. The results on the whole were so worthwhile that it was decided to have the embassies in London and Rome take similar inventories in the same year.

On the basis of the information derived from these three inventories a circular instruction was issued in May 1952 to all posts, except those in Iron Curtain countries, requesting each to take a file inventory. By the end of 1952 virtually all posts had complied with this instruction, and for the first time the Department had some basic and up-to-date information about post records to use in developing an effective record management program. In addition to providing more accurate statistics for the annual report to GSA, the inventories have proved useful in many ways not contemplated at the time. They have served as a basis for preparing record disposition instructions to posts that have been closed since 1952, as a valuable training aid for record and other administrative personnel being assigned to specific posts, and as a basis for the major record retirement project undertaken in 1955-56. Although the regional bureaus were unwilling in 1952 to make the file inventory an annual reporting requirement, it is hoped that a biennial or at least a triennial inventory will be agreed upon.

In order to carry out an effective post record management program and to provide the necessary technical guidance to post record personnel, it was the hope of the record management officer that area and regional record officers might be appointed. Because of budgetary restrictions, however, it has never been possible to set up such a regional record organization and the record management program continues to be directed entirely from Washington. To gain more familiarity with post record problems and to provide on-the-spot technical assistance, as in Paris, several members of the Washington staff have made field trips. In the past year the Chief of the Records Management Staff made a 9-week trip to 26 posts in Europe and the Near East and participated in a consular conference held in Mexico City to study and revise visa-issuing operations. Close liaison is maintained with other administrative units of the Department that do have regional staffs, as well as with the Foreign Service Inspection Corps, members of which visit each post every 2 years and report on communication and record problems besides other matters. These inspectors are briefed on the record management program and specific field problems each January before they start their rounds; so their detailed reports are particularly valuable. Additional information is obtained through interviews with record personnel coming through the Department for

consultation before home leave and reassignment. Thus it is possible to maintain relatively close relations with the field despite the lack of a regional record organization.

The responsibility for record management within a Foreign Service post is delegated by the principal officer or chief of mission to the administrative officer in all posts large enough to have such an officer. Depending on the size of the post and its personnel, the administrative officer may further delegate this responsibility to a general service officer or to a communication and record supervisor. The person, however, in immediate charge of the central file, which every post is required to maintain, is usually known as the record supervisor. Again, depending on the size of the post, there may be one or more mail and record clerks assigned to the central file operation and responsible to the record supervisor.

The security officer at a Foreign Service post also plays a part in the record management program. He is concerned with keeping classified records segregated from unclassified material, ensuring the proper physical protection of classified material, and keeping the volume of classified records as small as possible through the prompt destruction of material eligible for disposal, the retirement of noncurrent records to Washington, and the downgrading or declassification of documents whenever possible. Periodic survey reports by regional security officers are made available to the Division of Records Management for its information.

As mentioned above, each post is required to maintain a central file, consisting of official incoming and outgoing communications, staff memoranda, reports, and other types of post records, arranged according to a decimal classification scheme. The classification system in current use was issued in November 1948. A revision of the earlier and more complex system in use since 1924, it was prepared by a Departmental committee consisting of representatives of the Division of Communications and Records and the Office of the Foreign Service. Although it bears some resemblance to the decimal classification system of the Department's central file, it is much less complex because no individual post has records with the breadth of subject matter found in the Department's central file. At present the Foreign Service Records Classification Handbook needs revision and expansion and, in view of the current personnel integration program being carried out under the Wriston Committee recommendations, some consideration is being given to correlating the two filing systems to the extent desirable for the posts. The following advantages might be derived from such a coordinated system:

Departmental and Foreign Service personnel henceforth would have to familiarize themselves with only a single classification system;

Preclassification of communications sent out by the Department would be possible, thus reducing a post's filing workload and assuring the same classification of identical communications by all posts;

The classification system could be kept up to date much more easily by the classification staff of the Department's central file;

The evaluation and retirement of post records would be simplified because duplication in the Department's central file would be much easier to check.

Under such an integrated system each post would use only those available breakdowns of subject matter within the classification scheme that it actually needed.

Whereas before World War II the majority of posts maintained their records centrally, the expansion of Foreign Service activities and staff during and after the war has resulted in a trend towards the decentralization of certain types of files. Some of the larger posts had personnel in two or more buildings so that it became impossible for the central files to render efficient service. Lack of trained record personnel also made it difficult for the central files of many posts to provide good reference service; this resulted inevitably in staff members' retention of official records in their own offices. It was found, moreover, that certain kinds of records (such as personnel folders; visa, passport, and citizenship case files; budget and fiscal records; and commercial correspondence and reports of an ephemeral nature) could be kept more efficiently on a decentralized basis by the operating offices concerned.

Since the war there has been an increasing trend towards decentralization of files because of the critical need for security. If, however, the principal officer and the record supervisor, with the concurrence of the security officer, agree that certain circumstances justify the decentralization of specific series of files, the Department sanctions such decentralization provided that centralized control over them is constantly maintained. In other words, the record supervisor should always be informed of the existence of decentralized files, should provide necessary technical guidance for their maintenance, and should maintain active liaison with the office concerned in order to promote centralized reference service for the staff, ensure proper disposition of the files, and fulfill the record reporting requirements to the Department.

Before 1950 the Department was not adequately staffed to furnish much technical guidance to record supervisors, and the idea of record management was almost totally lacking in the field. The



record management officer early recognized the need for making policies on all aspects of Foreign Service record management and for developing standard procedures. In September 1952, accordingly, the Department issued a Foreign Service Records Management Handbook.

Part 1 of the handbook explains the purpose of a record management program, cites pertinent laws and regulations, and outlines standard procedures for routine file room operations. It also contains basic instructions for the retirement, transfer, and disposal of post records. Because it was realized that many posts, lacking guidance from the Department, had devised their own systems and procedures, which were probably working satisfactorily, and that the differences in the size and location of Foreign Service posts would necessitate adaptation of any recommended uniform procedures to meet local needs, the provisions of part 1 of the handbook were not made mandatory. Most posts, however, recognizing the advantages of uniform procedures, have followed these provisions with only such slight variations as are required by local needs.

Part 2 of the handbook, a consolidated listing of all existing disposal authorizations available to Foreign Service posts, has always been considered mandatory. Before 1949 about a dozen Foreign Service circulars had been issued containing disposal authorizations for some types of administrative and consular records, but their coverage was comparatively limited and the form in which they were issued made their application difficult. In the handbook they have been rearranged on a functional basis with more than a hundred new authorizations to form a single record disposition schedule. Additional authorizations and revisions of existing authorizations have been issued from time to time since 1952 as supplements to the handbook.

It is now estimated that about 90% of all post administrative records are covered by the schedule. About 80% of all consular records have been scheduled, including visa and shipping and seamen files. It is hoped that similar schedules covering passport and citizenship case files, welfare and whereabouts files, and other consular records pertaining to notaries and deaths and estates of Americans residing abroad can be prepared in the near future. The commercial reporting records and trade opportunity correspondence now scheduled for disposal probably amount to 25% of all economic records.

Much work remains to be done in scheduling the records of long-term value created and accumulated in connection with a post's

economic and political reporting functions. This job will require an extremely careful analysis and evaluation not only of post records but also of related records kept by the Department. Though a large percentage of the post records having long-term value are undoubtedly duplicated in the Department's central file, the complexity of the Department's central classification system and the differences between it and the post systems have made the checking for duplication difficult. Experience, moreover, has proved that the greater concentration of political and economic documents relating to a particular country or area in a post's central file often makes them more useful for research than copies of the same documents distributed through the Department's extensive central file. A post's file also often contains valuable related records acquired from a foreign government or local source that are not duplicated in the Department's files. For these reasons the scheduling of economic and political reporting records will proceed slowly.

In the scheduling done so far, an effort has been made to adopt the most practical approach possible. Insofar as possible each item on a schedule has been described so as to correspond with the way in which the records are filed. This method of scheduling ensures easy identification of the records described and facilitates their disposal after the prescribed retention period. In the 4 years since the consolidated schedule was issued an ever-increasing volume of records has been reported destroyed by the posts. The annual reports for 1955, submitted by 222 posts, showed a total destruction of 22,719 cubic feet of records — about 10,000 feet more than were reported for each of the 2 preceding years. As the coverage of the schedule is extended, the volume of records eligible for destruction in the field will far exceed that of records of enduring value that will be retired to the Department's Records Service Center in Washington.

Part 3 of the handbook has been designed to provide uniform procedures for the organization and maintenance of specialized types of files not included in a post's central file. At present part 3 covers only contract files, which have presented a special problem at certain posts. Plans are under way, however, to include sections on visa, passport and citizenship, and other types of decentralized files that will tie in directly with the disposition instructions provided for these types of files in the record disposition schedule. In this way the Records Management Handbook will eventually provide instructions not only for the current maintenance of specific series of post files but also for their retirement and ultimate disposition when they become inactive.



The retirement of inactive post records not eligible for disposal is an important phase of the disposition program. There are two stages in a post's record retirement program: the removal of inactive records from filing equipment and space in the operating offices to a storage area within the post to make room for current files, and the transfer to the Department's Records Service Center of those series that are considered of long-term value. Although Foreign Service officers are no more anxious to retire inactive files than are departmental officials, the record supervisor or administrative officer can enforce compliance to some extent through control over the issuance of filing equipment. Many posts do not have enough satisfactory space for the storage of inactive records, but part 1 of the handbook recommends their retirement and provides specifications for shelving and cardboard containers to store them. Meanwhile, the Records Management Staff is working with the Foreign Buildings Operations staff to see that proper space for the storage of inactive records is provided in all new buildings.

As for the retirement of inactive post records to Washington, the majority of posts by 1948 had complied with the Department's instruction to ship all files predating 1936, except records eligible for disposal, direct to the National Archives. Because of lack of time and of trained record personnel and the condition of many of the old records, a good deal of disposable material did find its way into the National Archives and had to be listed for disposal by the National Archives. To prevent a recurrence of such needless handling of post records, the Department stopped the direct transfer of records from posts to the National Archives soon after the establishment of the Records Service Center in 1950. No records may now be shipped to Washington without the approval of the Department. An exception to this rule is made in the case of posts in critical areas or Iron Curtain countries, which have standing authorization to retire all records not required for current operations and yet not eligible for disposal. During the period 1950-55, a large number of posts were authorized to retire inactive records, and some 11,000 cubic feet of post records were thus accessioned by the Records Service Center.

Although the need for establishing a systematic plan for the retirement of post records had been recognized in the early days of the record management program, it was not until the spring of 1955 that steps were taken to put such a plan into effect. Instructions had been issued in July 1950 requiring that henceforth the central file of every post should be kept in 3-year blocks, instead of being main-

tained on an annual basis. For this reason it was decided to authorize the transfer to the Records Service Center of all classified and unclassified post records of enduring value through the year 1949.

This plan was unanimously approved by the regional bureaus of the Department. A preprinted instruction form was devised; and, on the basis of a careful review of each post's file inventory submitted in 1952 and a check to see what records, if any, had been retired since 1952, each post was authorized to ship specific series of files. By the end of December 1955 instructions had been sent to all posts that had records eligible for retirement. In compliance with these instructions, approximately 2,700 cubic feet of post records were received in the Records Service Center during 1956. From the records processed by the Records Service Center so far, it appears that the majority of posts followed instructions very well and that the volume of disposable material included in the shipments was negligible. A few posts were unable to ship their records during 1956; so the retirement project is still not completed.

The retirement of post files through the year 1949 is just the first step in establishing a systematic retirement plan for the future. After this major project is completed, each post will be placed in one of three classes, depending on various considerations, such as security, the location of the post, the volume of its record holdings, and available storage space. The posts in class 1 will be authorized to retire their first 3-year block of records, covering the period 1950-52, in 1957; those in class 2, in 1958; and those in class 3, in 1959. The following year posts in class 1 will be authorized to retire their second 3-year block, and so the retirement plan will proceed according to a 3-year cycle. It will mean that a post, depending on the class in which it is placed, will never have in its custody more than a 5 to 7 years' accumulation of files, which should be more than enough for operational needs. More important, however, for the first time posts will be able to plan in advance for the retirement of files, the regional bureaus will be able to budget for the expense involved, and the workload will be staggered both for the Records Management Staff and the Records Service Center. To insure compliance with the plan, its provisions are being incorporated in the Foreign Service regulations pertaining to record management and will be outlined in more detail in the Records Management Handbook.

The post record management program described above cannot be carried out without capable and trained record personnel in the field. The importance of training has been recognized from the start of

the program; but lack of staff, budgetary restrictions, and other considerations have prevented a full-scale record training program. Under the auspices of the Foreign Service Institute, classes for Foreign Service clerical and record personnel were begun in 1948. With the assistance of different Foreign Service record supervisors assigned to the Department for a year at a time, lectures and some laboratory training were given to these classes of new recruits. This program, however, had to be discontinued in the summer of 1953 because of reductions-in-force and was not begun again until July 1955. The classes consist largely of secretarial and clerical employees, who now receive about 4 hours of record training as a part of their general orientation course.

In order to provide more specialized record training for mail and record clerks and record supervisors than had been possible since 1953, two new positions were added to the Records Management Staff in the fall of 1956, to be filled by qualified Foreign Service record supervisors on a 1-year or 2-year Washington assignment. Their primary responsibility is to give to new record personnel as much training as time permits. The majority of new record people will spend at least a week with the Records Management Staff before going to the field. Carefully supervised training and practice in file classification and in the analysis and arrangement of post records retired to the Records Service Center can now be provided by experienced supervisors. At the same time, while serving in the Department, these supervisors will themselves receive advanced training from members of the Records Management Staff and have a chance to acquire more professional background and competence through their working relations with others in the archival and record management fields and through special courses under the sponsorship of the American University and the National Archives.

In addition to the advanced training given the record supervisors selected to fill the two positions on the Records Management Staff, arrangements have been made from time to time to allow other supervisors to spend 1 or 2 weeks in the Department at the end of their home leave. This kind of training has usually proved more effective and worthwhile than that for new recruits because the supervisor who receives it has had actual file room experience and usually wants help on specific problems. The periods of training are mutually advantageous because the Records Management Staff can learn a great deal about record procedures and problems at various posts in the process of providing training.

In addition to the training for record personnel, classes are now

also being conducted for new Foreign Service officers, many of whom will probably serve as administrative or general service assistants and should have an understanding of the importance and standards of effective record management. From time to time special courses are given at the Foreign Service Institute for Foreign Service personnel of exceptional administrative ability, and these courses include 1 or 2 days' intensive record training and staff discussion of record management principles, procedures, and problems. The Records Management Staff also briefs members of the Foreign Service Inspection Corps, communication and record supervisors, administrative and general service officers, and security officers as the need arises. So far it has not been possible to provide any on-the-job training in the field except what has been done in the few field trips made by members of the Records Management Staff.

Another important aspect of the Department's post record management program is its close working relation with other Federal agencies that have responsibilities for overseas operations. At many posts the military, naval, and air attachés occupy space in the embassies, but their records remain under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense. The records created or accumulated by representatives of the Agriculture and Treasury Departments are, for the most part, maintained separately from the post's files and their disposition is usually determined by the Department working with the agency concerned. The labor and commercial attachés, however, serve as Foreign Service employees subject only to the general technical direction of the Labor and Commerce Departments, respectively; and their files are accordingly considered post records although they are often kept separate from the central file.

The relation of the Department of State with the United States Information Agency and the International Cooperation Administration is close. Until August 1953, when the United States Information Agency was established, the overseas information program operated under the Department. Since that time there has been little change in the method of maintaining USIS<sup>2</sup> records at most Foreign Service posts. At many of the larger posts USIS files were decentralized even before 1953, with the possible exception of a relatively small volume of classified records kept in the post's central file. In small posts, however, the USIS records still usually constitute an integral part of the post's central file. The disposal authorizations covering USIS records obtained by the State Depart-

<sup>2</sup> The term USIS (U. S. Information Service) has continued to be used by USIA in referring to its field missions and programs.

ment and issued as a part of the Records Disposition Schedule in 1952 are still being applied. Recognizing the need, however, for a more detailed breakdown of subject matter covering an expanded information program than exists in the Foreign Service Records Classification Handbook and for a uniform filing system, USIA decided to issue its own Records Management Handbook. This handbook, embodying an alpha-numeric classification system, was issued in December 1955 for use by the USIS missions maintaining decentralized files. The USIS missions using a post's central file will continue to do so and their records will continue to be filed under the Foreign Service decimal classification system. Under present administrative support arrangements, inactive USIS files not eligible for disposal will be retired to the Department's Records Service Center for storage and servicing. USIA has instituted training classes for secretarial personnel maintaining decentralized USIS files. It is still too soon to evaluate this new USIA field record program or to say what record problems may arise within the missions.

Although the International Cooperation Administration was created as a part of the State Department in July 1955, there has been no integration of its record management program developed under the predecessor Economic Cooperation Administration and Foreign Operations Administration. Its overseas record program is an active one and, for the most part, quite separate from the post program, in that ICA mission (USOM<sup>3</sup>) files are usually maintained apart from the post's central file, arranged according to an entirely different classification scheme, and maintained largely by local personnel. ICA has issued its own record handbooks and disposition schedules for use in the field and has been able to provide more on-the-spot technical assistance and guidance by members of its Washington record management staff than has the State Department. The overlap between post records and those of ICA and its predecessor agencies occurs oftenest where the economic officer of an embassy serves also as mission director. As certain European missions were closed out in 1956, some administrative records required for liquidating purposes and program records needed by an embassy's economic section for current operations were transferred to the embassy concerned, with the Department's approval. Instructions for the disposition of the remaining USOM records were issued by ICA to the terminated missions, and the records not yet eligible for disposal are being retired to Washington for storage in

<sup>3</sup> The term USOM (U. S. Operations Mission) is ordinarily used in referring to ICA overseas missions and files.

the Federal Records Center operated by the General Services Administration.

While there is evidence that the post record management program has made much progress in improving the maintenance of current files, systematizing the disposition of records, and training record personnel, little has been accomplished in the way of publicizing the research value and accessibility of post records retired to Washington. The chief reasons for lack of progress in this direction have been lack of time and personnel, the need to rearrange and inventory some of the records, and the necessary limitations placed on granting access to the records for purposes of private research. One of the foremost objectives of the Department's record management program, however, has always been to ensure that the records worthy of long-term preservation shall be maintained in such a way that they will be readily accessible for research use by authorized persons.

The National Archives has compiled and published several checklists or inventories of State Department and Foreign Service records in its custody.<sup>4</sup> Certain series of post records, particularly despatches on economic and political matters submitted by posts to the Department, have been microfilmed as part of the National Archives' microfilm publication program,<sup>5</sup> and additional records will be filmed from time to time. The Department itself has not published any lists or inventories of records in the Records Service Center although there are several types of control records and finding aids available to the Reference Section of the Center for use in servicing its holdings.

The Department's policy with respect to the use of its records for nonofficial research is set forth in Section 185.41 of the *Manual of Regulations and Procedures* as follows: "It is the policy of the Department of State to make its records available to private individuals and to Government officials engaged in private research as liberally as possible, consistent with the security of the nation, the maintenance of friendly relations with other nations and the efficient operation of the Department." For purposes of nonofficial access the regulations divide the Department's records into three chronological groups: an "open" group, antedating January 1, 1930; a "limited-access" group, from January 1, 1930, to January 1, 1942; and a "closed" group, from January 1, 1942, to date.

<sup>4</sup> *Preliminary Inventory No. 60; Records of Selected Foreign Service Posts* (Washington, 1953); and *Special List No. 9; List of Foreign Service Post Records in the National Archives* (Washington, 1952).

<sup>5</sup> See the *List of National Archives Microfilm Publications* (Washington, 1953).



The pre-1930 records are in the National Archives and are open for use subject to certain restrictions on the use of specific types or series of records, as outlined in Section 185.43g of the Department's regulations and pertinent regulations issued by the National Archives. The use of records in the "limited-access" group (most of which are now in the National Archives) is limited to qualified researchers and other persons demonstrating a legitimate need for information contained in the records. As for records in the "closed" group, they will not be made available to nonofficial researchers except in rare instances when a proposed study appears to be in the national interest or when the specific information sought involves only records of a nonsensitive and generally unclassified nature. Although this policy of the Department may seem too restrictive to scholars interested in studying United States foreign policy since the outbreak of World War II, it is a much more liberal policy than that adopted by the British or the French governments, neither of which has yet opened its archives for the World War I period.

Some of the special restrictions placed by the Department on access to certain types of records apply to their use by official Government personnel as well as by private researchers. For example, records relating to the citizenship of individuals, the issuance or refusal of visas to enter the United States, unsettled claims, Foreign Service inspection reports, personnel records, and security investigative files generally may not be used. The use of classified records or information from them is subject to the Department's security regulations, and classified documents originating with Federal agencies other than the Department of State may not be communicated to a third agency or person except in accordance with the applicable security regulations and consent of the originating agency. In addition to these restrictions, records in current use in the Department will usually not be available to inquirers; and certain classes of documents may be withheld if their publication would be contrary to the public interest. Among the classes so restricted are "1) materials which might tend to embarrass the United States Government in its conduct of foreign relations; 2) materials embodying opinions or comments which might give needless offense to other nationalities or to individuals at home or abroad; and 3) materials which would violate the confidence reposed in the Department or in the Foreign Service."<sup>6</sup>

The volume of records to which these special restrictions apply is comparatively small. Anyone interested in using pre-1930 records

<sup>6</sup> Department of State, *Manual of Regulations and Procedures*, Section 185.43f.

should apply for access directly to the National Archives. For the post-1930 period the Department's Historical Division will determine the right of access by private researchers, on written application showing the nature and scope of the proposed study, the classes of records required, and the applicant's citizenship, academic background, and research experience. As a general rule, researchers who have been granted access to the Department's records are required to submit their notes or manuscripts to the Historical Division for clearance and are encouraged to deposit copies of their completed manuscripts or published works with the Department.

About 75 persons use the reference facilities of the Records Service Center each month. Although many of these researchers are staff members of the Historical Division engaged in preparing additional volumes of the *Foreign Relations* series and other Departmental publications, an ever-increasing number of professors, graduate students, and other private persons are using these valuable source materials. Within the limits of the policy described above, it is hoped that more use will be made of the Department's archives in the years to come. As staff and time permit, the Records Management Staff will continue its efforts to improve the organization and maintenance of current files both in Washington and at Foreign Service posts and to develop systematic retirement plans for inactive files and a much-needed finding aid program.