

Records Essential to Continuity of State and Local Government

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THIS paper is concerned with the draft of a manual — “Preservation of Records Essential to Continuity of State and Local Government.” The draft has not yet been approved for publication but ought, if possible, to be perfected and issued.

It should be noted that this is not a manual for the wartime protection of archives, as distinguished from records in current use. We have, however, qualified our position with respect to archives in chapter 15, which discusses some of the considerations involved in the protection of cultural resources, in the form of archives, in the interest of the continuity of government after disaster. The first sentence of this chapter reads: “It should be apparent to the user of this manual that many of the types of records identified as essential to emergency operations or essential to re-establishment of normal government have archival as well as current administrative or reference values.”

Farther down, in the next paragraph, 15.1.2, we find this statement:

One recognizes, therefore, the difficulty of differentiating between a program to protect archives for the cultural values they possess and a program to protect records essential to continuity of government. In general, the holdings of archival institutions constitute the treasured records of government upon which historical research is dependent and in which the traditions and actions of government are revealed. However, many State and local archival institutions have accessioned materials (particularly those of comparatively recent origin) that not only possess archival values but would become indispensable to government's operations in an emergency. The records currently accumulat-

¹ This article is an adaptation of a paper read before the Society of American Archivists at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, on August 16, 1958, as a part of a workshop presented jointly by the Society's State Records Committee and Microfilm Committee under the chairmanships of Robert Brown and Dorothy Taylor, respectively. Mr. Munden's paper was preceded by a discussion of “Continuity of Government Objectives,” led by Robert Y. Phillips, Director, Continuity of Government, Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. It was followed by general discussion and exchange of ideas. The draft manual with which the paper is concerned was made available during the session; and participants were requested to send their comments on it to OCDM by October 1, 1958.

ing in government will acquire, in time and to a degree, the status of archives; and in this perspective is seen the virtual impossibility of divorcing a program for the protection of the one from a program of protecting the other.

I want to review briefly the position of the former Federal Civil Defense Administration on the matter with which we are concerned and to give some idea of the methods we have followed in accumulating our data.

"One thing has become very clear to me," the public record analyst of one State has written me in a personal letter. "Because of the interrelationship between State and local government in . . . [my State] and probably in other States, local governments cannot without costly duplication move into this protection program until the State government decides what it will protect." That many State governments are similarly uncertain, lacking knowledge of the plans of the Federal Government or of their neighboring States, is an important reason for compiling a list of State and local records that need protection. On the other hand the Federal Government must base its plans, in large measure, on those of the States — the proverbial vicious circle.

Last winter the National Archives and Records Service lent my time to the former Federal Civil Defense Administration to prepare the manual now under discussion. But the product is so much a result of the thinking of members of the Society of American Archivists that it all but meets the requirements of a former president of our Society, who suggested last March the possibility of having the proposed list of essential records drawn up in committee. "The committee could propose a nationwide plan," he wrote, "whereas if it is left to the individual states and localities we shall never come to any agreement as to program."

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

We are concerned with a problem that, because of recent international developments, is increasingly urgent. It is a problem about some aspects of which we know so little that we hesitate to deal with it at all. Most of us are so saturated with theoretical "know-how" in our work with archives — their creation, selective evaluation, and preservation — that we find it difficult to make an entirely new approach to records. Our attitude is reflected in the abortive efforts to build on data already available. One of our State archivists is speaking for most of us, I think, when he overemphasizes — and quite consciously — the importance for civil defense purposes

of work previously done in the course of comprehensive record management surveys. He writes:

We realize that in deciding upon records as being permanent, this does not necessarily make them vital records in the sense your agency uses the term. But vital records are to be found in the category of permanent retention records. . . . As a summary statement, we would say that an important beginning has been made, and from this the classification could be made as to which records are vital to the continuation of our economy.

I introduce this statement as an extreme example of our common tendency to apply the ready-to-hand criteria of record administration to the solution of a problem wholly unrelated to the normal objectives of record managers.

PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO "STANDARDIZE" SELECTION CRITERIA

The tangible existence of this manual is evidence that we who are concerned with the fate of our State and local records recognize the indispensability of some of them for government and feel that we cannot afford to wait longer before drawing up a standard against which all concerned may measure their requirements. Most of you will recall that some years ago the Federal Civil Defense Administration announced that consideration would be given to project applications requesting matching funds for microfilming essential city, State, and municipal records. So confident was FCDA of its ability to evaluate specific proposals for duplicating records that, despite its avowal that no criteria or standards had been established, it foresaw the possibility of considering each request for funds on its own merits. As most of you know, and as many of you could have predicted, FCDA discovered that it had erred. The lack of standards resulted inevitably in the presentation of irreconcilable proposals, and FCDA withdrew its promise to match State and local funds for the purpose of securing essential records.

But it by no means abandoned its belief that government could not and would not survive the total loss of its records. On the contrary, FCDA (influenced by the special committee appointed by this Society to work with it) had come to the conclusion that no program for the securing of essential government records would be successful unless the responsible officials of the United States as a whole could agree on the *kinds* of records that warrant the *kinds* of protection we have in mind. This conclusion has led the former FCDA and its successor, the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, to take upon itself the task of drafting the manual here under consideration.

COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THE MANUAL

Although this draft manual in recent weeks has had official distribution to civil defense officers in our States and Territories, and from them to many of you, it has not so far been openly discussed. The work that has gone on in OCDM in the last several months, as a preliminary to the production of the manual, has been essentially factfinding. The method employed was to have the responsible civil defense official in each State or Territory send to the national headquarters of OCDM all the materials pertaining to essential record preservation that he had accumulated in the course of his other activities. At the national headquarters we were acutely aware that at State and local levels the responsibility for record survival had devolved variously on the civil defense director, the State Archivist or comparable official, or a committee created especially for the purpose. In order that no possible source of information might be overlooked, each State civil defense director was required to consult with the State Archivist or comparable official before making his report.

The responses we have had, and our findings in the course of our field trips, indicate that the responsibility for assuring the preservation of records for civil defense purposes can be primarily assigned to the head of the State's audit, budget, or finance department; to the secretary of state; or to the State historian — if not to the State Archivist or the civil defense director. Needless to say, not all States had considered the matter important enough to fix the responsibility. As pointed out in the preface to our manual, however, many have given it serious attention since last February, when our own project was initiated. This has been an incidental result of our current activities.

Other States, which had given a great deal of attention to the problem a few years ago, have resurrected their long-buried findings; and these have proved useful to us. For example, the conclusions we have reached with respect to selecting essential municipal records are predicated in large measure on a 1952 survey of all of the records of a major American city that would be needed to assure the continuity of that city's government. The data compiled in that survey, which had been most painstakingly planned and carried out, had never been codified or analyzed. In another city, on the other coast of the country, the conclusions reached during World War II, at a time when there appeared to be some danger of attack, proved to be most valuable to our findings despite the fact that that city has no current program for the protection of its

records against nuclear attack. One State government disclaimed any knowledge of our objective or interest in it until the discussion revealed that an executive order issued in 1955 had required each department of its government to prepare a list of the records considered vital to continued successful operation in the event of disaster. The reports received under this order were so obviously to the point for our investigation that we left no stone unturned to get possession of them. Several hours were consumed in the necessary detective work. This resulted in uncovering the reports among records of the State's survival project team, which had put them to no use and had no plans for codifying and analyzing them.

ACHIEVING A BALANCE BETWEEN STATE AND LOCAL PLANS

As for the States and Territories that appear to have given due attention to the problem of preserving their records against disaster, only a few have given equal consideration to county and municipal records. This is perhaps the result of attempting to categorize the records that could be deemed essential as (a) those required to protect the rights and interests of individuals, (b) those required for effective emergency operations, and (c) those required to protect the rights and interests of government. These categories, since they are not mutually exclusive, have made it more difficult to relate the records of State governments to those of county or municipal government, function by function. The categories that OCDM has adopted are illustrated in our grouping of fiscal records or, as we identify them in the title of chapter 9, "Auditor, Comptroller, Budget, Finance, and Treasurer Records." In paragraph 9.2 we have listed, as essential to emergency operations of government, (a) the types of records created at State level, (b) the types created at county or comparable level, and (c) the types created at municipal or comparable level:

9.2 *Essential to Emergency Operations of Government*

(a) *At State level:*

- Budget and accounting classification.
- Records of capital and operating budgets.
- Records of allotments of appropriations.
- Bond lists; other important records concerning State bonds.
- State audit reports.
- Work papers of current audit.
- Treasurer's current receipts and expenditures records.
- Treasurer's records of funds on deposit; of securities or investments; of general and revenue funds; and of other funds, to include trust and retirement.

(b) *At county or comparable level:*

Records of capital and operating budgets.
 Records of allotment of appropriations.
 Work papers of current audit.
 Treasurer's current receipts and expenditures records.
 Records of deposited county funds.
 Files on current and unmatured bond issues.

(c) *At municipal or comparable level:*

Records of capital and operating budgets.
 Records of allotment of appropriations.
 Work papers of current audit.
 Treasurer's current receipts and expenditures records.
 Records of deposited municipal funds.
 Files on current and unmatured bond issues.

The next main category lists, in paragraph 9.3, again at each of these three levels of government, the records essential to reestablishment of normal government; and the next, in paragraph 9.4, lists the records that are valuable, although not indispensable, to the reestablishment of normal government, again for each of the three governmental levels:

9.3 *Essential to Re-establishment of Normal Government*(a) *At State level:*

Finance department's records of accounts receivable and payable.
 Minutes of State budget boards or commissions.
 Records of audit.
 Treasurer's disbursing and receiving warrants, payrolls, and invoices.
 Minutes of State boards of accountancy or the equivalent.
 Records of long-term State obligations.
 Tax records as follows: records of current delinquencies and taxes due with respect to bank and corporation franchise taxes, personal income taxes, personal property taxes, inheritance taxes, and business taxes.
 Minutes of proceedings of State tax commissions.

(b) *At county or comparable level:*

Minutes of boards of auditors.
 Auditor's current accounts receivable; current memo accounts; current appropriation ledgers; and current general, fund, expense, and improvement ledgers.
 Records of audit.
 Records of long-term county obligations.
 Treasurer's check registers.

Current balances on taxes: delinquencies and taxes due.
Minutes of proceedings of county tax boards.

(c) *At municipal or comparable level:*

Auditor's permit registers containing records of deposits.
Minutes of boards of auditors.
Records of audit.
Auditor's fund and other ledgers, such as tax levy, corporate stock, contract, and assessable improvements.
Records of long-term municipal obligations.
Current balances on taxes; delinquencies and taxes due.

9.4 *Valuable, Although Not Indispensable, to Re-establishment of Normal Government*

(a) *At State level:*

Current records of taxes appealed or pending litigation.

(b) *At county or comparable level:*

Current original tax rolls; warrant copies of such rolls.
Assessor's block map tracings, land valuation maps, government survey plats, and other valuation records.
Current records of taxes appealed or pending litigation.
Tax sale and abstract books.
Certificates of purchase for property sold as taxes; and certificates of redemption.
Published notices of tax sales.
Assessor's current records of exempt properties, including but not restricted to charitable, religious, public, and veteran.

(c) *At municipal or comparable level:*

As applicable, same as (b), above.

Obviously, when the level of government creating a record is immaterial to the establishment of criteria, no effort is made to subdivide a principal category in that manner. For example, real estate title records are all kept locally, although usually in accordance with methods of recording prescribed by State legislatures; and these are listed, without subdividing by level of government, in chapter 29.

RELATING THE CATEGORIES TO PRIORITY IN PRESERVATION

A further advantage of our method of categorizing is seen in its relation to the order of priority for protecting the records of particular functions. This is illustrated by chapter 11, concerned with birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, or what we usually call vital records. In the introductory paragraphs of this chapter

we explain current procedures for the creation, maintenance, and disposition of vital records; and we list in paragraph 11.2 those essential to emergency operations of government. We suggest that the first priority in protecting vital records be given to the near-current records, which we regard as essential to emergency operations of government. The second priority could be given to those we find essential to the reestablishment of normal government; and the lowest priority could be given to the records listed, under paragraph 11.4, as "valuable although not indispensable." These criteria are as follows:

11.2 *Essential to Emergency Operations of Government*

(a) *At State level:*

Current (ca. 1880-date) centralized records of:

Births
Deaths
Fetal deaths
Marriage
Divorce

(b) *At county or comparable level:*

Current (ca. 1880-date) records of births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriage, and divorce, *to the extent that they have not been centralized at State level.*

(c) *At municipal or comparable level:*

If applicable, same as (a), above.

11.3 *Essential to Re-establishment of Normal Government*

(a) *At State level:*

All centralized records, whether current or noncurrent, of:

Births
Deaths
Fetal deaths
Marriage
Divorce

(b) *At county or comparable level:*

If duplicates only are centralized at State level, *all* original records, whether current or noncurrent, of births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriage, and divorce.

(c) *At municipal or comparable level:*

If applicable, same as (b), above.

11.4 *Valuable, Although Not Indispensable, to Re-establishment of Normal Government*

Registers, indices, and other aids to the finding or use of vital records, if not protected in priorities indicated in paragraphs 11.2 or 11.3.

Statistical data, other than those compiled by the National Office of Vital Statistics, derived from birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, when such data are extremely valuable and could not be re-compiled except at great expense.

SOURCES OF DATA

These examples illustrate the method followed in grouping specific kinds of records within their substantive or functional classes. The raw data that we have used, in determining the major classes to be considered and in deciding on the relative priorities to be suggested for particular kinds of records within each class, have been derived from the following sources:

1. The types of records suggested by those who have published papers on the subject in this country during World War II and in the postwar period.
2. Special studies previously undertaken in civil defense offices.
3. Schedules or instructions issued by State and other governments, usually in the form of lists prepared by State archivists or comparable officials.
4. Special reports prepared for FCDA in response to its request for materials.
5. The original applications for matching funds for record preservation submitted to FCDA by certain State and local governments.
6. The experience of the governments of foreign countries, provinces, and cities, particularly in Europe, that suffered severe losses of essential records during World War II.
7. A physical survey of the records of many departments in a limited number of State, county, and municipal governments.

As an example of a survey undertaken since the beginning of the FCDA project and inspired by it, one State has filed a full report on the essential records of counties, cities, towns, villages, school districts, and special districts (outside the principal city of the State). Illustrating the rapidity with which such a survey can be accomplished, the selection and evaluation of records for the purpose of that report were based upon (1) personal knowledge of employees of the Division of Archives and History who work full-time with local record officials; (2) prior studies of records in local offices made by the division; (3) recommendations on records to be preserved made previously by the division; (4) an on-the-spot evaluation made by division personnel of key records in approximately 40 local offices; (5) recommendations from a selected group of local record custodians; and (6) recommendations from officials in other State departments and agencies who are familiar with the records in local offices.

SCOPE OF THE DRAFT MANUAL

So much for the manner of presentation, our sources of information, and the methods followed in our research. But lest we fail to see the forest for the trees, we should remind ourselves to look at this program in the perspective of its probable cost. The manual, then, has an eye on those keepers of records who just cannot think of getting along without everything in sight. An effective, automatic stop in such cases, when the persuasive powers of archivists are unavailing, is the normal limitation of public funds.

Since this manual, when published, is likely to be used by administrators at all levels of government, I think we should ask ourselves whether they actually can make effective use of it.

Part I includes almost 20 pages of text on basic considerations. These are presented in 3 chapters. Chapter 1 argues the case for giving attention to the protection of records against disaster, chapter 2 outlines the preservation methods that may be adopted, and chapter 3 deals with the mechanics of protection. Part II, comprising chapters 4-6, sets forth standards for selecting the general records of government, and Part III, chapters 7-30, deals with the records of specific governmental functions. The chapters of this last part are arranged alphabetically for ready reference, and we plan to include an index in the published version. The chapters of Part III are as follows:

7. Aeronautics Administration Records
8. Agriculture Administration Records
9. Auditor, Comptroller, Budget, Finance and Treasurer Records
10. Bank-, Insurance-, and Corporation-Regulating Records
11. Birth, Death, Marriage, and Divorce Records (Vital Statistics)
12. Civil Defense Records
13. Commerce, Industry, and Labor Administration Records
14. Correctional Activities Records
15. Cultural Resources in Form of Archives
16. Education Administration Records
17. Employment Security Records
18. Fire Services Records
19. Health and Sanitation Services Records
20. Housing Administration Records
21. Military and Veterans' Affairs Records
22. Natural Resources Conservation and Administration Records
23. Occupational Licensing Records
24. Personnel Certification, Classification, Employment, and Retirement Records
25. Port, Harbor, or Marine Authority Records

26. Public Safety Records
27. Public Utility- and Railroad-Regulating Records
28. Public Works Administration Records
29. Real Estate Title Records
30. Welfare and Recreational Services Records

USE OF THE MANUAL ILLUSTRATED

Let us assume that our administrator has responsibilities for deciding which records within the general class of Public Works Administration must be preserved. Before he determines the particular method he will follow in securing his records, he needs to know the considered opinion of their value in relation to civil defense objectives. He finds this by turning to chapter 28. If he has special responsibility for water supply, he will note that the pertinent records of high priority as essential to emergency operations of government are listed as follows:

Master water-planning maps and record cards.

Distribution system maps; maps of water system showing location and sizes of water mains.

Complete drawings and records of all dams, reservoirs, aqueducts, and related source-of-supply facilities.

Complete drawings and records of all plants — filtration, pumping, and similar structures.

Plans, locations, and complete data on all wells in use or available, pumps, and pump houses.

Survey notes and water utility survey maps.

Section maps of water system showing pumping stations, storage reservoirs, mains, gate valves, and hydrants.

Pipe line maps or profiles.

Shut-off maps.

Water system maps showing bacteriological sampling points, and related records.

Records specifying disinfection procedures.

Pollution-control records.

Water drainage, storage, irrigation, and conservation plans.

Contract and record drawings pertaining to water facilities construction.

Detail record drawings used in operation of water distribution system.

Records of water consumption used in compiling statistics in water assessments.

Our administrator can thus easily develop a working list of records within his purview that must be preserved at all costs. He next considers the particular method that he will employ for the purpose. He finds in chapter 2 a discussion of the advantages and disad-

vantages of the principal methods: *vaulting*, in paragraph 2.2; *dispersion*, in paragraph 2.3; and *security copying*, in paragraph 2.4.

He probably will find that he must use a combination of these methods to protect all of the records he deems important. Undoubtedly he will want to evacuate — that is, disperse — some records in their original form, especially the essential records that are not often consulted. If he decides on security copying, he has a choice of preparing typewritten or photographic copies of reports and the like. If extensive copying is involved, he probably will decide on microfilming as the best solution. This last possibility may lead him to a full consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of microfilming, and he may at this point need to look into the normal uses of microfilming to see how they relate to his immediate purpose. Against this possibility our manual has provided, in Appendix G, an example of a city ordinance effectively relating security microfilming to current record management. In addition, Appendix I shows a good example of State legislation that defines the legal effectiveness of microfilm and other photoreproductions; and in Appendix H is an up-to-date list of commercial microfilm organizations.

BROAD RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RECORD PRESERVATION

To those who will have more general responsibility for the planning and execution of a program to preserve records essential for continuity of government, the manual suggests the importance of prompt and coordinated activities. Factfinding is a prerequisite. We offer examples, in several appendixes, of factfinding methods actually employed in some of our States. Finally, "procedural" materials can become very valuable in a situation that requires a comparatively inexperienced staff to set administration going. As has been pointed out to me by more than one State official, the records that will tell us *how to get things done* and what our *standing operating procedures* should be, will, in some emergency operations, be much more important than the records of cases and transactions. We are so accustomed to depending on machines to think for us — in bookkeeping and accounting, for example — that many of us have lost the understanding of administrative processes that we must know if we have to do without the machines. Many have taken the extreme position that, should all other records be lost, government could be continued, resumed, or reestablished, so far as its documentation needs are concerned, if only the "procedural" materials survive.

CONCLUSION

The standards we have evolved reflect the judgments of all responsible officials in the Nation so far as we have been able to uncover them. The responsible agencies of all States have been given an opportunity to present their ideas. Their responses have varied from the frank admission that nothing has been done to the furnishing of precise and detailed lists of records deserving some kind of protection. Despite its shortcomings — and they are many — the manual at present constitutes the only codification that pretends to general applicability throughout the Nation. The extent to which it can be improved for final publication depends on the criticism and suggestions that are offered. Such criticism and suggestions should be sent in, through official channels, to the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. The urgency of our topic is manifest. Unless we preserve certain records there can be no continuity of government after a nuclear attack. If we select wisely the records we would save, government can probably continue without serious interruption.