Certain basic tenets of archival faith are being developed in the meetings and publications of this Society through the years. I believe the legitimate interest of the archivist in records administration should become one of them. And in exercising that interest I believe the archivist can perform a useful function of government in war-time.

Current records administration is to the archivist of today what the study of diplomatics was to the archivist of earlier times—and more. Authorities on the qualifications of archivists say that archivists, in order to apply the principle of provenance, should know the methods by which records in their custody are produced.[10] The complexities of modern administrative documentation have so multiplied the technical facets of filing that many persons regard it as a mysterious cult to be either feared or blandly ignored. Neither attitude is consistent with the principle that the whole life history of records is an integrated continuous entity. No period in that history can be ignored. It is inevitable that the iniquity of omitting care for records as they accumulate shall be visited upon the third and fourth generations of later administrators, archivists, research students, and society as a whole.

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THE CONTROL OF RECORDS

THE control of correspondence and other records occupies a prominent position in the field of management, for if they are not controlled, human effort, valuable space, and materials are wasted. You have often heard of "people keeping records." In these times it might be changed to "records keeping people"—keeping them, in many instances, from efforts essential to the successful prosecution of the war.

The office space occupied by records is important. It has been estimated that there is enough space occupied by government records in Washington to satisfy the requirements of the Navy and War departments under present conditions. It would be most enlightening to know the relationship of space occupied by records to that occupied

[10] Ernst Posner, "European Experiences in Training Archivists," IV (January, 1941), 37.

by office personnel on a national basis. Perhaps such a comparison would bring home to us the importance of records from a space standpoint. It is most interesting to learn that foreign countries many years ago established definite methods of records control throughout governmental agencies. The British, for example, have established retention and disposal schedules for every record throughout their entire navy. Perhaps the fact that space is much more at a premium there than in our country explains why they are ahead of us in this work.

Records consume vital materials in the form of paper and filing and storage equipment. From this point alone the elimination of the nonessential is most urgent.

There has grown up in commerce and government a misconception of the purpose of records. We often hear such awe-inspiring terms as "official records" and "formal orders." Perhaps these official records are nothing more than storeroom requisitions or routine letters that might have served their purpose a month after being written. The respect we have for all records has caused us to accumulate huge quantities of material in government and industry that have no historical or economic value.

Any phase of the control of records is interesting and profitable work. The entire subject might be divided into three separate parts for the purpose of discussion. The first phase is the effort expended to prevent unnecessary records from coming into being. This part of the subject we will discuss later somewhat in detail.

The second phase is designing the form that records are to take. While it is not my purpose to discuss at length the design of records, this part of a control program has such a bearing on filing that I would like to mention a few features. In my opinion the greatest weakness of form and system designers is their lack of understanding of filing problems and how the forms they devise affect filing. In selecting sizes of forms, for instance, the element of correct filing is often overlooked completely. Forms that are one-half inch too large to fit in standard equipment have to be filed in cabinets several inches oversize. An interesting point with respect to correct filing size is the fact that the sizes that are correct from a filing standpoint provide for the most economical consumption of paper when cutting from mill sheets and for the most efficient use of printing presses.

The weight of paper in relation to its size is important in filing. A 16-pound bond in letter size is satisfactory for filing, but if the form

is increased to 9½ by 12 inches or 11 by 14 inches, it becomes awkward to handle and reduces filing productivity. The weight of paper used has a direct bearing on filing space. A 16-pound sheet is about three-thousandths of an inch thick, whereas a 20-pound sheet is close to four-thousandths. In translating this to the filing and storage of records it means the difference between 300 sheets and 250 per filing inch. Filing space is often overlooked by form designers when deciding on paper specifications.

The arrangement of the form is important to filing. Having the repeating references such as order numbers, alphabetical names, and other key filing factors in easy filing positions is essential. Color of paper as compared to the color of typed or reproduced impression is important from a filing standpoint.

This second phase of records control, namely, the design stage and its relationship to filing, could well be the basis of an interesting meeting between people of your profession and those engaged in industrial and accounting engineering.

The third phase of controlling records and correspondence is the determination of what material is to be filed, how long it is to be retained, and how it is to be classified and indexed.

My purpose today is to deal briefly with means of preventing unnecessary material from being created and also to suggest ways of eliminating nonessential paper work once it gets into the work flow.

One cause for the abundance of unnecessary records is the lack of control that usually exists over buying or producing new material. Almost anyone in industry or government can start a new form, circular letter, or similar material. Centralized control, divided by operations, functions, or geographic locations into units of workable size, should be a part of any well-managed organization. All requests for the introduction of new forms should clear through this control unit for careful investigation. A complete survey of the need for a new record can be made by getting true answers to six questions: (1) Why is the item needed? (2) Who needs it? (3) What will it contain or consist of? (4) When will it be required? How often? (5) Where will it be prepared or distributed? (6) How will it be prepared or produced? Proper consideration of these questions will determine quite satisfactorily whether or not the item recommended is necessary.

An interesting lesson in preventing the accumulation of records is the practice that certain mail-order houses have of returning the original order to the customer at the time of shipment. This is shocking to most business men. The mail-order houses, however, have found it more practical and economical to take the customer's word for anything that goes wrong than to maintain an elaborate order-filing system.

It is often difficult to comprehend what the introduction of a new item will require in clerical effort or space. Not only is it important to control the introduction of new items, therefore, but to prevent the expansion of present items is also of consequence. For instance, the increase of a multiple form from two to three copies may increase filing labor and space required by 50 per cent. Changing the size of a form from 8½ by 11 inches to 8½ by 14 inches increases paper consumption and space required by about 18 per cent. The Navy processes several thousand purchase orders a day. Imagine the seriousness of adding another copy to a purchase order set or increasing the size of the form.

Keeping useless forms from getting started can be very definitely controlled by having a clearing house for the approval of forms. Preventing unnecessary correspondence from being written, however, is more difficult. In business a few years ago one often heard the slogan "Put it in writing." Today Donald Nelson suggests that we transact as much business as possible via conversation, reducing to writing only the most important transactions. The telephone might be used more in replacing interdepartmental notes and memoranda. A few suggestions to reduce correspondence and circular letters might be helpful: (1) In routine matters type the reply on the letter being answered, thereby saving materials and filing space. (2) Use both sides of the paper for mimeograph, multilith, and similar duplicating work. This is an important method of saving filing space. (3) Check all mail lists to make sure they do not contain inactive names. (4) A very interesting pamphlet entitled "Correspondence and Its Management" has been prepared by the Division of Training, United States Civil Service Commission. It has some excellent suggestions for dealing with the repetitive features of routine correspondence. A copy of this pamphlet can be obtained by addressing the Civil Service Commission at Washington.

Once records are accumulated, it is difficult to cull the nonessential from the essential. Many of the larger government agencies and some industrial concerns have staffs whose prime purpose is to survey one operation after another in the search for unnecessary records and work resulting therefrom. Many plans to eliminate the unnecessary have been used. I once heard an industrial executive say: "Let's discontinue *all* records and clerical work, then gradually add back only that which can be proven to be absolutely essential and profitable." That might be very drastic but in some cases might prove to be very wise.

In the Navy the program to eliminate unnecessary paper work has already produced results. About sixty days ago we launched a plan properly sponsored by the highest authorities in the Navy Department. It is very simple. Each bureau, division, branch, section, unit, or other subdivision of the entire naval establishment, except the fleet, was furnished with two questionnaires: On one they were to list those records and reports they received that were not needed; on the other, those records and reports they prepared the value of which was questionable. These questionnaires were sent to one central point for investigation and clearance.

By the use of these two forms, we have eliminated a thousand different forms and reports and have under investigation five thousand that have been questioned either by the sending or receiving end. The point to this program is that everyone is interested in eliminating waste and results can be obtained by provoking some thought on the part of people using the material. Some examples of the type of work that has been discontinued indicate how a program of this kind can save clerical effort. By the reduction of certain reports associated with property accounting for the fleet, a saving of about ten thousand man-hours each quarter was made. A certain progress report that was prepared by all navy yards was eliminated, saving a thousand man-days per month. One of the contributing factors to the success of the Navy's campaign against unnecessary paper work is the plan adopted by the department to give cash awards for beneficial suggestions for the elimination of such work.

All of us are accustomed to the paper that we see every day without thinking about why it is necessary or who uses it. There are many men and women in industry and government today who spend much of their effort in preventing unnecessary records from enter-

ing into the work flow. Perhaps in your field of responsibility you are limited as to what you can do in eliminating records before they are started. There is, however, much you can do toward keeping useless papers from getting into the files and toward controlling the length of time records are retained. This in a sense, is the same kind of effort that is required to prevent unnecessary records from being made in the first place.

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SCHEDULING THE DISPOSITION OF RECORDS

NO PROBLEMS of records administration highlighted by the present expanded activities of the federal government deserve consideration more than those relating to the disposition of records. Whoever was acquainted with the rate of records accumulation prior to the war was rightfully concerned lest the flood of records overwhelm everything and everybody in its path. Today this apprehension has become outright fear. A few examples will serve to illustrate what has happened as a result of the war.

We know, for instance, that on February 1 of this year the Navy Department had something like 16,500 four-drawer filing cabinets in use; since February 1 over 5,000 five-drawer cabinets have been issued for use in the filing of records—almost a third of the number in use eight months ago. The Bureau of Supplies and Accounts has reported also that the quantity of forms issued has almost tripled in the last year and that there will be an even greater increase next year. Certain forms show much larger increases than others: an inspection report, for instance, had a normal annual issue of 1,700,000 before the war; this year 15,472,000 copies of this form were used.

What is happening in the Navy Department is not unique; every emergency agency and most of the old line departments are suffering the same growing pains. One need only observe the number of new government buildings, temporary and permanent, erected in Washington during the past two years; the Navy Department alone has half a dozen. These buildings are all rapidly filling up with records; and something ought to be done now to plan for their future—some-