TRENDS IN ORGANISING MODERN PUBLIC RECORDS,

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CLASSIFICATION METHODS.

This article is written in a manner which focusses attention on the task of the 'records officer' in organising current records. I make no apology for writing in this context in a journal which is primarily intended for 'archivists' because the records officer is concerned to deal with the same problems of records administration, inherited from the past, as the archivist is, or soon will be, facing when he deals with the records themselves. In any case, it has been the drive for improved current records management in the Commonwealth Government which has directed attention towards those questions of classification which I, at any rate, believe are of the utmost importance to the archivist concerned with the records of the 20th century.

I do, however, apologise for my own limitations not only of style, but of adequate experience to deal fully with all aspects of the subject. I have to confine my attention to public records, and to Commonwealth records at that. Even then much of what I have to say is hypothetical on the one hand and not always fully developed on the other. Despite this I trust that my contribution will do what I intend it should: that is- to open up, for general examination and development, in the Australian setting, an important phase of records administration.

Since these matters were first discussed at the Seminars on Archives and Records Management held during Dr. Schellenberg's visit to Canberra in 1954, I have discussed them often both with colleagues in the Archives Division and with officers in several Commonwealth departments. I acknowledge their contributions and assistance gratefully and it is with more than mere conventional politeness that I certify that most of what is good is theirs and all of what is wrong is my own.

I acknowledge, too, the inspiration and assistance which I have obtained from reading Berwich Sayers' "Manual of Classification", the early chapters of which are an excellent guide to the theory of classification, and Dr. T.R. Schellenberg's recent and most welcome book "Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques".

I should also explain that, while to me, the terms "archives" and "records", when used in the general sense, are synonymous, I have used, where necessary, the distinction currently accepted in the Commonwealth between 'current records', 'intermediate records' and 'archives', in so doing I imply

that they are all public records of the same status but at different stages of treatment.

The Change in Attitude to the Organisation of Public Records

> "Classification, as applied to public records, means the arrangement of them according to a plan designed to make them available for current use."

As late as the beginning of the twentieth century, records were kept in a relatively simple arrangement which more or less reflected the natural order of their creation or receipt or issue. It was generally accepted that they were kept as evidence of the fact of creation, receipt or issue and as evidence of the views and information passed. Nowadays, however, it is generally accepted, as Dr. Schellenberg's statement implies, that the arrangement of records is planned, with the purpose of making them available for use. In other words, there has been a change in emphasis from "evidential status" to "use" as the raison d'etre for records, and from "natural order" to "planned arrangement" as the basis for keeping - in fact, a change from "record keeping" to "records management".

It is of course right to attribute differences between modern archives and early archives to increased volume and complexity of business and the introduction of duplicating machines; but this should not be permitted to divert attention from the changing attitude towards the organisation of records and their relationship to business method. The increasing application of "organisation and method" in the work of public offices has, among other things, involved the conscious manipulation of record products as an integral part of procedural work. Other changes, all deriving from variations in administrative method, will be noted later; it is sufficient for the present to note that the organisation of records has become positive and rationalistic, so much so that, having in mind developments in the United States and possible developments in Australia, we can think in terms of the departmental records manager, or, as we shall call him, the "records officer".

An examination, in general terms of the task of the records officer will not only be useful in itself but will, I think, throw further light on methods of organising modern records and the part which classification plays.

The task of the modern "Records Officer".

The kinds of record material to be dealt with by the records officer differ little in type from those of 50 years ago but they are, of course, more numerous, more specialised and more diverse in their coverage. They can be described in general terms as follows:

A - Forms for which we can discern several different administrative purposes as follows-
(1) those designed to channel or control repetitive administrative actions.(e.g. requisitions and other types of application forms);

(ii) those designed to ensure that information is supplied or obtained in a comprehensive and consistent fashion, (e.g. census, taxation, and application forms);

(iii) those(usually numbered previously or at time of use) which are "accountable" from the financial viewpoint (e.g. warrants, cheques, etc.)

(iv) those which are legally significant (e.g. licences, certificates, etc.)

(v) those, usually cards, which are used for the continuous entering of summarised information,(e.g. personal history cards etc.)

B - Standard Documents of which there are two main kinds -

(i) textual - those documents prepared according to a conventional or prescribed method of presentation and submitted or circulated periodically according to an established procedure e.g. agenda papers and minutes of meetings, periodical reports and returns, etc.

(ii) Visual - documents prepared according to standard methods of pictorial or graphic presentation - e.g. maps, plans charts, photographs. etc.

C - Books of Account - such as ledgers, journals, (either in book or machine card form).

D - Inwards Correspondence - any document which conveys (or transmits by way of attachment) information to the department from an outside source (usually letters or memoranda but some forms incorporate what would otherwise be a covering letter).

E - Copies of Outgoing Correspondence - the copy or copies of any document which conveys (or transmits by way of attachment) information from the department to an outside source.

F - Internal Memoranda, Minutes etc. - any document which conveys (or transmits by way of attachment) information from one officer or section of the department to another or which records information for future departmental use.

These materials may be placed either with series of similar documents or on files. Some of these files may themselves be classed into series on the basis of their similarity insofar as they all relate to the same class of administrative actions (e.g. old age pension files) or the same class of administrative 'objects' (e.g. persons, organisations, towns, etc.) The remaining files can be classed by subjects dealt with. In fact we can distinguish between the following kinds of record series.

(1) Form type series - the physical form of each item is the same and the subject dealt with is the same (details of the particular instance or action alone are different).

(2) Standard document series - the format of each document approximately the same but the subject contents may vary considerably.

(3) Books of Account series - series of volumes or cards as required.

(4) Particular Instance File Series - in which each file is the product of the same specific class of administrative action, and differs from the others only insofar as it deals with a particular instance applying a general policy or procedure (e.g. old age pension files).

(5) Case File Series - in which each file deals with a specific case within the purview of the department and in relation to a particular class of administrative 'objects' (usually persons) but the subject of each case can vary considerably (e.g. client files of Legal Service Bureau, personal case files of Public Service Board.)

(6) Dossier File Series - in which each file relates to

one of a specific type of administrative 'objects' (usually persons or organisations) but the papers may deal with any number of subjects or transactions which concern the person, organisation etc.(e.g. staff files).

(7) Subject File Series - in which files on any subject are placed which cannot be (or have not been) classed with other like files into separate particular instance, case, or dossier series.

(8) Series of registers and indexes.

In planning the arrangement pattern for his records, the records officer must, at one time or another, ask and resolve the following questions -

(i) Which documents should be placed in series of like documents and which in files for subsequent control and reference purposes?

(ii) Which documents should be duplicated to permit them to be included in one or more files and/or series?

(iii) Which files should be placed together in what series for subsequent control and reference purposes?

(iv) What series (usually of files but occasionally of forms or standard documents) need to be supported by registration of the individual items for control purposes and/or for the purpose of assigning reference numbers?

(v) What series should be placed in the central registry; in de-centralised registries; or with the officers who use or add to them?

(vi) Do the subject files in any particular series need to be classified to assist subsequent control and reference?

(vii) If classification of subject files is desirable, what pattern of classification is necessary?

viii) Is classification of the subject files best done as part of the registration process or as part of the indexing process?

I do not propose to deal with each of these questions in detail but it will be obvious that each of them involves a

decision on classification as defined in Dr. Schellenberg's quotation. We will examine the main classification methods in the next section but before doing so I want to note briefly some of the factors which influence the records officer's decisions.

As between departments the quantity and nature of records assignable to finite series, such as 1 - 6 above, as compared with those to be placed in subject file series, depends very much on the nature of the functions carried out. Departments concerned with coordination, with inter-governmental relations, and with functions of the advisory and developmental type, such as Prime Minister's, External Affairs, Defence and so on, have a preponderance of subject files, while departments administering relatively set and finite functions such as Social Services and Customs and Excise have a preponderance of case files, forms etc. The reason for this is fairly obvious. Departmental functions which can be clearly delineated and divided into specific activities lend themselves to the use of standard procedures and forms. Hence the records can be kept in specialised series, and because more delegation can be made to the action sections, the trend is to decentralise such records as much possible. On the other hand in departments whose functions and ranges of interests are necessarily flexible to meet changing social, political and economic conditions there is a counter trend towards centralising more and more records in the central registry, and, in such cases, to establish an increasingly complex subject control over them. The complexity of the resulting systems and of the contents of the files themselves reflect the complexity of administration.

The records officer therefore has to take into account the following major conditioning factors -

(a) the nature and existing arrangement pattern of the records he inherits (since radical changes would affect the flow of departmental work);
(b) the effects of changes in administrative methods on the records produced; and
(c) the variations in the recording and reference needs of the department as its functions are modified to meet changing external and internal pressures.

Classification methods

We can distinguish three main methods. In fact the Records Officer must use them in combination and even in describing them it is difficult to maintain the distinction: but it is important to an understanding of the essentials of classification that we try.

The first method is differentiation, the second is file-making and the third is subject classification.

Differentiation

By differentiation (a term rather freely adapted from Sir Hilary Jenkinson's Manual) is meant the establishing of one or more series, separate from the larger mass or miscellany, each consisting of documents or files which all bear the same easily identifiable characteristic. It is done of course only where the said characteristic is significant for subsequent reference purposes.

The earliest form of differentiation was into three classes - documents received, documents issued and internal proceedings. When the Commonwealth Government began to accumulate records, this basic differentiation had changed little and there was still a primary division into three classes:-

(1) one or more series of incoming correspondence (registered and maintained, with a minor exception to be noted later, in registration order);

(ii) one or more series of copies of outgoing correspondence (bound or fastened in chronological order);

(iii) and various series of forms or standard documents.

As we know this pattern has changed in the last 50 years and there are now only two main divisions - "file type" records and "form type" records - each of which is subject to further differentiation into more or less specific series.

The differentiation of forms and standard documents is a more or less natural process and has been made a great deal easier by the possibility of making and obtaining duplicates. In fact the main danger now is that over-duplication will take place with wasteful results.

The differentiation of files is reasonably straightforward but by no means as consistently practised as for forms and standard documents. Mainly because the mere physical maintenance and control of files involves quite a deal of overhead, and partly because of inertia, the separation of particular instance, case or dossier files from the main registry series is done only when absolutely necessary.

However it is a legitimate tool of the records officer and one which might be used more often if for no other reason than to reduce the size and complexity of the subject control media in the registry.

The only other comment I wish to make is that differentiation remains a relatively natural classification process. By this I mean that the characteristics on which classification is based are those which derive from the administrative origins and form of the units and series concerned. Until the 20th century, differentiation, supported by a certain amount of specific subject indexing was a sufficient basis for organising records.

File Making

In one sense, the file is a new documentary form: in another sense it is a miniature series. Its development has changed the whole character of modern records and has had many effects, some good and some bad on the relative efficiency of records organisation. It is true to say that, in British public administration, its development was inevitable. With larger, busier and more sectionalised offices it became necessary to move records from officer to officer rather than have the officers either hold the current papers until the business was complete or have them go to the records themselves in search of earlier papers. Duplication of correspondence and correspondence series was not the answer as it appears to have been in the United States, mainly because the idea of ministerial responsibility and central policy control militated against the necessary delegation and decentralisation of responsibility.

To understand the nature of the file as used in present day Commonwealth Departments, it is, I think, necessary to examine the stages in its evolution since 1901. I shall therefore give a general account which, although oversimplified and not necessarily paralleled in any given department, will I hope accurately describe the trend. In so doing I shall emphasize the change in the basis of file-making, which, because it has never been fully recognised, has given rise to considerable confusion in current record practice.

In the first decade, the unit of registration was the piece of incoming correspondence; and the file, for which the identification number was the registered numberof the latest piece of correspondence received, was essentially a natural association of directly connected papers produced in the course of a particular transaction or piece of business.

Subject control, which was entirely secondary to the primary purpose of recording the course of the transaction, was confined

to indexing important papers in the appropriate yearly index volume under the particular letter of the alphabet (or under the few broad special subject headings, e.g. Immigration, Papua, etc. which were separate from the miscellaneous entries under the letters I and P respectively). As the scope and complexity of business called for better and swifter subject reference services, the number of special subject headings increased until finally the card index was introduced to draw together all entries from all years under appropriate headings, arranged in alphabetical order. At the same time registration of correspondence was reduced to little more than numbering, details of the papers being entered on the cards instead. Quite naturally each card was used to record the papers on a single file so that the file title and the main card entry included the same information though the words might be in different order. Let us use an example.

Prior to card indexing, a file title would have been based on the subject matter of the first letter, e.g. "Request by J. Smith for a copy of the Year Book." and this would have been indexed probably under Y for Year Book and S. for Smith. In the early card index all such entries would be grouped under Year Book and the card would read "Year book - Request by J. Smith for". New files would also be so titled. Now "efficiency" considerations presented themselves. The cards were large, many transactions were quite small while thinking was increasingly in terms of file units each with a jacket to be economically filled. The card and file titles "Year Book - Request by J. Smith for" were easily adapted to accommodate the next request by altering it to "Year Book(s) - Requests for". Efficiency was well served: but the basis of the file was no longer the same. If this new device of the "composite transaction" file had been used carefully, no harm would have been done; but the next stage, under pressure for broader and broader subject grouping, (which classification was later to provide), was likely to be to "Publications - Year Books." The development from then on is another part of our theme, but my point at last reached, is that under these conditions the file came to be thought of as a receptacle for any number of transactional and other papers which dealt with or appeared to deal with a subject however broad. A "reductio ad absurdum" was in fact reached not so many years ago in one department when one file entitled "Grass Seeds - Importation of", had reached a total of some 140 separate parts through which the papers of thousands of transactions were inter-filed.

Modern business unquestionably demands files capable of housing papers on broad topics or matters requiring almost continuous attention or adjustment over a long period. There is,

too, common sense in enclosing numbers of miniature transactions in a single file jacket under a broader title. The central registry will always remain, to some extent, a miscellany of undifferentiated and undifferentiable files in which transaction merges with subject; but I do suggest that the records officer can improve the quality of file making by ensuring that every possible distinction is made between files which should be transactional and those which should be "subject." In fact he must because unless file making is properly done, no fully efficient subject classification is possible.

Subject Classification

The problem of subject classification of records needs and soon must have, special study of its own. Here we can do little more than indicate its nature and importance as an aid to the records officer and something of its relationship to other classification methods.

The purpose of classifying file records by subject is to assist in the finding of individual and related files from among those which do not naturally classify themselves into series by reason of their similar physical or administrative characteristics (i.e. particular instance, case and dossier series).

The main problems of the records officer are -

(1) to decide what files should be included in or excluded from the classification scheme.

(ii) what should be the basis of subject classification;

(iii) what should be the extent of classing; and

(iv) whether classification should be done by physical arrangement or in the index.

Let us consider these questions briefly.

1. What files should be included in or excluded from the classification scheme?

As we have indicated earlier, not all files suited to differentiation are in fact removed from the central filing system. The reasons are numerous - sometimes inertia or failure to recognise the existence of such files(which we assume will no longer be reasons when the records officer takes over), sometimes lack of numbers to warrant a separate series which must be large enough to "stand on its own" and justify special treatment. The most important reason, perhaps, is that the records concerned may need to remain for administrative reasons in the central registry. For example they may be used by

several sections; they may have to be kept available for subsequent general reference purposes; many of them may involve reference to the minister and so on. If they do remain in the registry there is a strong tendency to include them in the main control (i.e. rotation or numbering) system. The significant point to be noted here is that it is possible, merely for administrative purposes, to include or exclude files, suitable for differentiation, in a "subject" file series and as part of a subject classification scheme. In fact any series of files or documents wherever held in the department can if necessary be included in a central subject classification scheme. Within the classification scheme the files of separable type can be maintained as a single sequence under a particular heading or can be broken up into several subject classes. Hence the appositeness of Dr. Schellenberg's statement that "decentralisation is a major act of classification."

2. What should be the basis of subject classification?

The definition of subject in this connection can be taken from the Proceedings of the Records Management Seminar held in Canberra in 1954 (p.12) which reads as follows -

"... that subject, in filing practice, includes any or all of the following elements - function, field of interest, activity, and object (or topic) the latter being usually related to persons, institutions, places, events, etc."

From this and our previous discussions on the nature of files, it can be seen that the average piece of departmental business, which produces a file, consists of:-

Action (either channeled by procedure or file developing) within an allocated functional area in respect of finite things or persons or classes of these objects (e.g. persons, organisations, commodities, products and events) and/or non-finite matters or classes of matters (e.g. matters of research or investigation or coordination or liaison etc.). The department is organised in sections to carry out the various pieces of business so that there are four possible bases or components of classification, "activities", "organisational pattern", "the finite (or material) things which are objects of action" and "non-finite matters of interest", all with their own potential structure of classes and all, by themselves or inter-acting with other components, providing subjects for classification.

The creation of a suitable pattern of classification to allow for the various components, all with more or less competing

class-structures, is obviously a most difficult task. Certainly an entirely systematic and logical structure is out of the question. Attempts have been made to use a functional administrative basis or an organisational basis but except in a few more or less special cases they have failed for what now appear to be obvious reasons.

The classification pattern must combine the various components as usefully as possible and, in addition, be reasonably flexible. The best that can be hoped for is that the final result will be as consistent within itself and with the reference needs of the department as possible; that all necessary combinations will be included or provided for by cross reference; that explanatory instructions will be given where necessary to explain to registry classifiers the contents of each class; that conventions once adopted will be strictly adhered to until variations must be made; and that any variations should be considered carefully and the changes adequately recorded.

Two further points are worth noting.

As we have indicated, most classifications are pragmatic. In fact the pattern of headings for any given system is for the most part a modified and/or expanded version of the previous system and so on. The first classifications appear to have been obtained by experimenting with the various combinations of specific headings from the earlier indexes. Thus the pattern has always been essentially one which works from the specific towards the general, and, as we shall see later, not very far along the way. Unless care is taken, past mistakes can be perpetuated.

For the second point, we return to the theme of the previous section. As we have seen, the old equation - "one file, one transaction" is no longer universal. With some types of files, in fact, subject classification can be considered to have started within the file cover. Many subject and dossier files are in fact composite transaction files insofar as the contents consist of several, usually minute, but sometimes quite large, transactions. Take our own earlier example "Grass Seeds - Importation of". The file title often consists of what, in another case, might be the primary and secondary headings as follows:-

Grass seeds	- importation	- transaction 1
		transaction 2
	or	
Imports	- grass seeds	- transaction 1
	etc.	transaction 2

The interaction of file making and subject classification

in subject control is again apparent. The danger in perpetuating the currently used maxim "one subject - one file" is also apparent.

3. What should be the extent of classing?

The assumption in most systems of classification (e.g. library classifications)is that the primary classes will be relatively few in number (to permit memorising the initial areas of search) and of equal status while sub-division of each class goes on until the subject is adequately dealt with.

This is by no means the case with current systems of classifying records. Instead the great majority are confined to a "procrustean bed" of three subdivisions involving large numbers of primary headings each with secondary headings and file title entries. The extent and balance of classification and sub-division is therefore more or less arbitrary being determined "from the bottom up". The aim from the registry point of view has been that the number of files entered under the lowest class should be so many as to warrant the class but not so many as to prevent easy and quick scanning. If, when the secondary classes and the primary class have been established, there is patent need for a third stage this is achieved by grouping several primary headings, e.g. Arbitration - legislation, Arbitration - courts, and so on. This rigidity has meant of course that there are numerous primary numbers (far too many to be retained in the memory). An alphabetical order is usually required, some effects of which we have already noted. I would not suggest that classing up to the point at which the primary classes can be memorised is desirable or even possible but there are cases where three (or at most four) classes are simply not enough to do justice to the subject concerned. The reason for maintaining this rigidity is because subject classification has been, until fairly recently, entirely applied to registration control systems and there were believed to be convincing administrative reasons for maintaining the existence of what has in fact, come to be known as the "three number system". My own view, admittedly a theoretical one, is that in addition to better file-making, two pre-requisites for improved subject control are -

(i) the extension of classing as far as the subject requires; and
(ii) the provision for entries under the higher class headings to cover files dealing with more general subjects.

(This at present can be done at one class level only by including the word "general" but beyond that uncertain

reliance is placed on primary headings of general but doubtful validity such as "Administration", "Organisation" which are totally divorced from the other classes to which they should naturally be related.)

4. Whether classification should be done by physical arrangement (with related file numbering) or in the index?

This question has been the subject of many an argument in Commonwealth Government circles. While I am prepared to admit that under ideal conditions and for a certain period of time both methods work reasonably well, I am strongly in favour of classifying in the index. Any substantial change in the subject relationships involves the classed registration method in a good deal of overhead in changing file numbers which, apart from all else invalidates early reference numbers. Complete reorganisation of classed registration systems are usually needed every few years (although the greater care now taken in compiling subject outlines may reduce this incidence). This either involves hard-to-come-by resources in marking up early registers and great confusion follows if marking is not done thoroughly. I believe that classing by index entry, provided the prescribed list of indexable headings is used, is or can be, more flexible both as to cross-referencing, and for post-indexing and, though it is not yet adopted, for extending the number of sub-classes to reasonable limits.

One great drawback with classed registration is that only one place for entry can be chosen and that at the commencement of a transaction which may eventually touch on other and more important subjects. To correct this means re-registration which is likely to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Another danger is that the searcher may miss records of concern on a broader question because they are classed under more specific and unrelated headings.

If and when a second classification scheme were introduced for secondary reference purposes there would probably be some advantage in classing the records physically. By this time only completed files would be involved.

Classification beyond the current records stage.

It will be noted that I have not mentioned classification for disposal purposes. This is so vast a question that I shall not do so beyond noting that the classing of records for disposal purposes goes more or less parallel with the differentiation processes and that the going only gets

really difficult when the remaining subject files are to be dealt with.

For the purposes of the remainder of our discussion we will assume that disposal has been carried out and that records are starting to flow into the intermediate and/or archives repository.

Classification at the "Intermediate" stage

The intermediate stage of treatment in the Archives Division of the National Library, where the records concerned are referred to as intermediate records, is concerned with the holding and servicing of parts or fragments of series until such time as the whole or the significant part of series are transferred and the series can be analysed, re-constructed and given final "archival" treatment.

For intermediate record work the classification method is in some respects similar to the single number system with classed index used by departments for file control. Each accession, within which the separate series or fragments of series are divided off, is given the next available accession number and this is the reference number until such time as the contents or part thereof are removed for subsequent treatment. The accessions are indexed under the transferring (i.e. "owning") department and section of the department. There are some mechanical difficulties (e.g. when departments are reorganised within, or abolished or merged with another etc.) but there are no theoretical difficulties and I will spend no further time on this question.

Classification at the "Archival" stage

It is, of course, widely accepted that, at the archival stage, the main unit of classification for modern archives is the series and beyond that the office and beyond that the department and so on. On this score I will say no more than that this kind of classification or arrangement is of a very different sort from that for current records. While the ultimate purpose is still to assist search, the method is more akin to "scientific" or "philosophical" classification in which the immediate purpose is to obtain an understanding of the objects classified and of the correlations between them.

My main concern here is to examine briefly the effect on archival treatment of the trends towards subject files and subject classification in the organisation of current records.

The first and perhaps most important effect is that, compared with the relatively clean-cut series of inwards and outward correspondence of earlier periods, the "backbone" series of most record groups are now difficult to identify and define. One subject series merges with another because file units are relatively easily lifted out and re-registered. For that reason, too, it is difficult to establish, without exhaustive checking in other series and even in other groups, whether the holdings are in any way complete. It might be assumed that better subject reference facilities would be automatically available. In some cases this is so; but if the limited and unsystematic subject classification used was sometimes inadequate for departmental reference purposes when memory and familiarity with the records were valuable aids, it will be readily understood that it is more than inadequate for research purposes on broader subjects. Nor can the tremendous quantity of material now available be given comprehensive file by file evaluation by students particularly since the files are not divided by years in classed registration systems. For all these reasons I believe that the modern archivist will be forced to consider the possibility of re-classifying files within series. If he does, I venture to predict that this classification will be the reverse of that used for current files. Whereas the latter works from specific to general, the archival classification will I think, need to be devised on a relatively systematic fashion working downwards and not too far downwards from the main classes of subject concern to the department; but this is well in the future and will need a thorough study of classification principles as a preliminary.

Conclusion.

Like many records administration terms 'classification' is difficult to use precisely. I believe therefore that our first useful conclusion from what we have discussed is that, in respect of organising current records, 'classification' means -

"the comprehensive and balanced arrangement of all the records of a department or office, having due regard to the administrative origins of the records and their reference uses, by means of the following main classification methods -

(i) differentiation - the separation of like documents or files into series;

(ii) file-making - the associating of documents on files according to their transactional and/or subject relationships; and

(iii) subject classification - the classing of files according to their most appropriate subject relationships.

Our second conclusion might reasonably be that the study of the principles of classification as defined above, and of the techniques used to effect efficient classification at all levels, is the foundation of the study of modern records administration, at all stages of treatment - 'current', 'intermediate' and 'archival'.

Finally, if the second conclusion is acceptable, the third follows inevitably. There is urgent need for a number of definite studies on all aspects of what we have discussed, ranging from historical accounts of the origins of modern methods, through analysis of current methods, to proposals for future development. For example, we need studies on the methods of controlling correspondence in the 19th century; the development of subject indexing and subject classification in particular departments; an analysis of the composition of existing classification outlines (both registration and indexing types); and so on. Similar studies should be made in the various branches of non-public archives, and of course, for State Governments as well as for the Commonwealth Government. Only when these are forthcoming will it be possible to provide really adequate training for newcomers to any branch of work with modern records.

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PRIVATE RECORDS IN VICTORIA

As a university teacher of Australian history and a resident of a State whose Public Library is comparatively weak in its holdings of private records, I am naturally very conscious of the urgent need to locate and preserve historical source-material. Our losses have been dreadful. Even twenty years ago a thorough compaign to save records would have produced a great collection in Victoria; I have been told of scores of collections of family papers which were contributed to wartime salvage - paper appeals or were destroyed in very recent years. It is doubly urgent now in all States to save what remains, or many of the present gaps in our knowledge of Australian history may never be filled.

The major task is to persuade people to donate or