Archives and Administrative Change —

Some Methods and Approaches (Part 4)

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Australian Archives

This part deals with the effects of administrative change on one of our cardinal archival concepts, the "record group", and outlines methods of archival treatment for the phenomenon of series that change their provenance. The effects of administrative change are all pervasive throughout archives administration, and the record group should be seen in perspective as only one aspect — though an important one — of these effects.[1]

Treatment of Multiple-Provenance Series — the "Record Group" in Question

It may justly be said that, dependent on one's viewpoint, the "record group" is either the chief beneficiary or the chief casualty of administrative change. On the one hand, a record group may be expanded in its scope to include a successor agency; on the other hand, it may be completely abandoned as the basis for the *physical* arrangement of archives.

In the best of all possible worlds, record series would be commenced and closed within the lifespan of their creating agency. However, we also have the "necessary ingredient"[2] of administrative change, and as a result "everything is for the best": agencies are abolished while their series are often continued by a successor, the phenomenon we have described in Part 2[3]. Such "multiple-provenance" series, as we term them, are not necessarily "embarrassingly long-lived"[4]; some short-lived series attain a state of multiple-provenance by living through a quick succession of administrative changes, the criterion being that they are longer-lived than the creating agency that commenced them. For the reality is that government functions continue, and record-keeping systems with their component series survive, amidst the turmoil of administrative change. Indeed, even with changes to functions, record-

keeping systems show remarkable adaptability by simply continuing, shedding old functions and absorbing new ones often with surprising flexibility.

In a previous article in 1974[5], P. J. Scott gave statistics of the frequency of occurrence of multiple-provenance series (27%) in a count of some 2000 series. A more recent statistical analysis[6], based on 6500 series, has shown the frequency of occurrence to have risen to 35%, a figure which is now reflecting the increasing tempo of change since 1972. From a count of 1100 agencies for which we have inventories, some 60% are affected with multiple-provenance series forming part of their archives[7] (The previous count of 373 inventories in 1974 gave the frequency of affected agencies as 61%)[8].

Thus the neat classification categories no longer work: a considerable proportion of record series can no longer be fitted into a single "fonds", nor can a single "fonds" any longer be self-contained if it is to remain comprehensive and include all the series produced by the agency. One may even go so far as to say that the record group concept was based on a false assumption — that of administrative stability[9] — and that the necessary ingredient of change was left out of the original formulation by Natalis de Wailly in 1841[10], thereby leaving the concept with an inherent weakness. That is, the "fonds" is well-suited to a stable past environment, to a static or closed group of records, to a single deposit in archival custody; however, it copes less well with the dynamics of the present and the future, with a changing or open group of records, with continuing deposits into archival custody[11]. Although the new conception of 1841 applied to archival arrangement for the very first time what we would now call *structuralist* ideas, and as such marked a basic turning-point away from the previously universal subject classification schemes for archives, we can in retrospect see that it lacked the necessary dimension of structural diachrony. This is *not* in any sense to deny the fundamental, indeed crucial, importance to archives and the archival profession of the principle of respect for provenance and original context, despite their increasing instability. This cardinal principle for our work — clearly indicated as such by Mr. I. Maclean in our Staff Information Paper No. 1 (November 1953)[12] — has already been re-stated at the beginning of this series of articles[13], and we have no hesitation in endorsing Duchein's recent theoretical justification of the principle and its practical benefits[14]. The essential question is, rather, one of determining how best to treat multiple-provenance series while fully respecting the principle of provenance.

The Australian Archives and its predecessors have explored a number of methods of accommodating multiple-provenance series to the record group concept. We faced the problem openly at the very inception of our programme of archives administration in 1953, acknowledging that administrative change had "blurred" the definition and outline of record

groups; in Maclean's words —

> The history of Commonwealth administration is very fluid because the functions of the Commonwealth Government have been extremely varied and complex under the influence of 20th Century conditions. The natural tendency, since there was little traditional departmental structure, was to experiment with new patterns of organization and to move functions freely from one department to the other, particularly during national emergencies. *The effect has been to complicate beyond measure the problem of identifying the true outlines of the various Archive Groups [our italics];* and, as a corollary, the definition of any given Archive Group and Sub-Group requires extensive research and experimental classification.[15]

We struggled for more than eleven years to maintain in existence the record group concept, before finally seeing no other solution but the "series system". In our journey we have explored the various methods suggested by those overseas authorities who had faced the reality of administrative change and prescribed a number of remedies designed to cope with the "malady" of multiple-provenance series and its practical consequences for archives administration:

(1) *Attribution of multiple-provenance series to the last record group*

> Where Archives compiled originally in one Administrative connexion become later involved in a fresh administrative action they naturally become Archives of this second Administration . . . An Archive belongs to the last Administration in which it played an active part.
> — Jenkinson (1922, rev. 1937)[16]

In his text Jenkinson makes it clear that he is speaking of a single record item or archive rather than a whole series. However, his idea of placing records with the last "Administration" was extended and elevated in the U.S. to a rule by M. C. Norton (1940), thus —

> The second rule with respect to the classification by department is that records shall be considered as being a part of the archive of the last department which exercised the function. In other words, a discontinued series relating to the administration of insurance would be classified as a record of the present-day Insurance Department, even though no addition has been made to the series since the auditor was superintendent of insurance.[17]

Wright (1940) states the principle thus —

> When a classifier finds that a particular series was the working tool of two agencies successively, he should allocate it not to the first but to the second and later agency. If the scope of the series spans more than two agencies, this rule should be applied: Allocate it to the last agency which performed the essential business reflected in the subject matter of the series.[18]

In the accessioning system introduced by Mr. I. Maclean in the Commonwealth National Library Archives Division in 1953, the entry for "creating department" on the series identification sheet (form CA 17) for such records was to be applied thus: "the creating department is the department which *last* added a significant quantity of records to the

original series''[19]. The form also included "history prior to transfer" under which could be recorded information about transmission of the series from the original creating office to successor offices[20]. Copies of the series identification sheets were also filed by provenance (last creating department) in what Maclean describes as a "central classified 'catalogue' where, when combined with other (series) identification sheets from the same department or office, it becomes part of a kind of expanding preliminary inventory"[21].

The practice of attributing a multiple-provenance series to the last creating agency has three disadvantages: it deprives the earlier "fonds" of important records; it make the later fonds rather grotesque, with records created prior to the establishment of the agency; and it means moving the series to an even further agency, if there is a subsequent administrative change. The approach also has serious implications for the nature and quality of finding aids and the ability to use the records so artificially attributed. Alternatives, such as allocation to the first, or to an intervening record group, are arbitrary even if based on convenience; as G. Fisher has expressed it, "two or three series, say, in a particular group are given licence to go on growing out of physical and chronological proportion to the remainder of the group in which they are located. The result of this, to use a contemporary analogy, is a mutant group — grotesquely distended in some of its members"[22]. Norton has also spoken against "embalming" records under the department under which they are classified when they first come into the archives[23].

(2) *Composite or functional record group:*

> . . . One body *replaces* the other and immediately upon its creation takes over the archival [fonds] of the other. The archives of these two bodies do not stand apart from each other as two independent units, but the one continues the other. The separation of two *such* archival [fonds], although it is called for by strict logic, would of course in practice have very undesirable consequences.
> — Muller, Feith and Fruin (1898).[24]

This example envisages only one abolished predecessor and one created successor, and changes are usually far more complex.[25] Normally the danger of composite or functional groups is that, apart from often unwieldy titles, they can undergo further changes and become increasingly incomplete and nebulous, providing a less than meaningful context for records.[26]

The Commonwealth National Library Archives Division explored such composite record groups in 1957, with a published inventory for *Records of the Department of Works and Railways (including records transferred from the Department of Home Affairs), 1901-1932*[27], and in 1959 with an experimental record group by transferring department (Department of the Interior)[28]. While the continuity of some multiple-provenance series was thereby preserved, the administrative context

provided for the records generally by such groups was in some cases highly irrelevant (the Interior Group included records originally from the Prime Minister's Office, 1901[29]), the groups were incomplete (e.g. a number of Home Affairs' records had been inherited by departments other than Works and Railways) and original series remained split between groups (parts of the Interior filing system had been inherited by the Departments of Immigration and Territories).

(3) *Breaking-up the series:*

> . . . What should be done with series which begin under one Administration and end under another? . . . It seems quite clear that the Archivist's only plan in such a case if he wishes to avoid confusion is to class the Archives separately under the Administrations which actually created them, even though this means breaking up a single series between two Archive Groups. A proper system of cross-referencing will leave no doubt as to what has occurred; and if this were not done a much worse situation might arise in which the Archives of a single Administration were partly classed under its own name and partly under that of another.
> — Jenkinson (1922, rev. 1937).[30]

While one could not quarrel with the "much worse situation", we cannot in any sense condone what amounts to "archival vandalism"[31] in breaking up original organic series; and yet the idea has received endorsement in some quarters, for example in Wright (U.S. National Archives), who however limits it to closed files[32]. The idea of breaking up records has been taken to its logical conclusion by K. A. Polden (Reserve Bank of Australia) in providing for the eventual breaking-up of individual files between the archive groups of the old and new administrations[33]. G. Fischer has suggested photocopying of affected items as a palliative in lieu of breaking-up,[34] but this is surely an added expense and is a confession of the failure of the concept.

In the Commonwealth Archives, already in 1958 there was a tacit breaking-up of series in forming the record group of the Federal Executive Council and Office of the Governor-General[35], as some series were continued after 1928 by the Prime Minister's Department. The records of the Administration of British New Guinea and Papua were broken up into "protectorate", "colony" and "territory" groups, despite continuing series throughout[36], which were in some cases also allocated to the last — or even the first — creating agency. A more conscious breaking-up of multiple provenance series was attempted by Dr K. Penny in 1962-1963[37] and was carried through for a number of record groups (E.A. (1), H. & T., H.A. (2) etc.)[38]. Not only was this shown impossible to do effectively — the change from E.A. (1) to H. & T. occurred on 14 November 1916, so how does one slice the file register for 1916? — but we were forced to recognize the disruption such breaking-up had caused to the original record-keeping systems, thus infringing our other cardinal principle of respect for original order.

(4) *Multiple listing in inventories for all relevant fonds:*

> It is useful to observe at this point that it sometimes happens that new administrators of an archival [fonds] continue to enter in the registers already used by the preceding administrative body the official documents that result from the functions transferred from that body to its successor; . . . In such a case, the register should be mentioned, if necessary by a cross-reference, in the description of the archives of both administrative bodies.
> — Muller, Feith and Fruin (1898)[39].

The Manual is unclear as to where the register should be placed *physically,* but the notion of multiple listing has everything to commend it. Jenkinson also endorses the idea of cross-referencing, as will have been noted in the extract quoted under (3) above.

In the accessioning system introduced in the Commonwealth National Library Archives Division in 1953, Mr I. Maclean had already envisaged a system of cross-referencing in the inventory of the preceding office for series transferred and added to by a succeeding office[40]. Preparation of summary inventories, based on copies of series identification sheets (form CA 17) classified by creating agency, was commenced by P. J. Scott in 1963 under the supervision of Mr H. J. Gibbney, who had previously made some experimental listings in the late 1950's[41]. A feature of our inventories (which listed series by creating agency, giving series title, date range and accession numbers) was that multiple-provenance series were listed under *all* their creating agencies, the inventories showing transmission to/from successor/predecessor, as appropriate. Physically, the records retained their accession or group numbers and no shelf re-arrangement was attempted. These multiple listings had two results: firstly, they showed up how incomplete our supposed record groups were, and would continue to be, without full cross-referencing of multiple-provenance series; more importantly, they gave us a solution to the *description* of such series, if not to their arrangement.

At this point, we felt that we had finally explored the various methods suggested by overseas authorities and were now beginning to reach *terra incognita* of archival arrangement. However, as we shall see, the Dutch archivists in their manual of 1898 had yet one other precept to guide us. First we embarked on a fundamental re-examination and re-definition of archival principles, and concluded that in essence the two cardinal principles were here in conflict: respect for provenance required that all series, including portions of multiple-provenance series, be assigned to their correct creating agency, even by breaking-up series; respect for original order required equally that original record-keeping systems be preserved intact and not dismembered. With the preservation of the records themselves our greatest concern, we came inevitably to the conclusion that the latter principle should prevail: one should *not* do violence to the natural original structure of records and should *not* force them into a record group system into which not all series will fit and

which for some would result in an alien framework being superimposed[42]. We felt instinctively that we should have a natural control system reflecting the real nature and structure of the records themselves. In this structural approach, we echoed Jenkinson's views given in his 1947 lecture: archives have "a structure, an articulation and a natural relationship between parts, which are essential to their significance . . . Archive quality only survives unimpaired so long as their natural form and relationship are maintained"[43].

It was clear, too, that, as a direct result of administrative change, the administrative structure (provenance) did not match and was out of phase with the record-keeping structure (original order). We saw that the increasing disharmony of the two structures, caused through diachronic structural shifts of varying intensity and scale, had, over time, produced the multiple-provenance effect. But how to find a satisfactory solution to this structural dissonance for the *arrangement* of records? Two further approaches were tried:

(5) *Separate system for multiple-provenance series:*

In 1963, we introduced a "VP" register for what we then termed "variable-provenance" series, to cover the 27% of series which were then created by more than one agency. Each "VP" series was attributed in the register to *all* of the creating agencies and listed in the inventories for all of those agencies. This, however, was a very short-lived approach, for we quickly realized that we had not accommodated the possibility of future administrative change. That is, a current single-provenance series could at some future time be transferred to and be continued by a successor agency, thereby becoming multiple-provenance — we would be faced with the consequential need to renumber series from record groups to "VP".

(6) *Record Series System — the Record Group abandoned for physical arrangement and storage*

> The storing of an archival [fonds] is entirely independent of its arrangement and inventorying.
> — Muller, Feith and Fruin (1895)[44].

> The only solution . . . appears to be to regard the description of archive groups as separate from the physical arrangement of the archives. If this were done the archive group, as illustrated by the inventory, would be formed on an historical basis — that is to say it would show the archival resources of a particular department at a particular point of time; and it would show what had happened to the records subsequently and where the main bodies of records now rested.
> — Commonwealth Archives Committee, 5th Annual Report (1955/56)[45].

The possible divorce between inventory description on the one hand and physical storage arrangement on the other had become apparent

already in (4) above, with multiple-listing in inventories of records which retained their accession arrangement. Again in (5) we saw that multiple-provenance series could be registered and arranged separately provided they were systematically listed in the appropriate inventory. From applying such measures to existing multiple-provenance series, it was then but a short step to extend the approach to *all* series, both to those that were single provenance, to those that were already multiple-provenance and to these that were *potentially* multiple-provenance (i.e. those series still being created which could undergo administrative change and be transmitted to a successor creating agency or successor agencies).

We were also mindful of the shelf location system, which had been in use in the Archives Office of New South Wales (and its predecessor, the Archives Department of the Mitchell Library) since the 1930's[46]. Under the system, each record item or container is given a discrete shelf location number, with items being grouped together into their correct series on series description sheets (and not necessarily by physical arrangement) and with series (or parts of series) in their turn being listed in the inventory for their appropriate record group. While a shelf location system could have its own inherent rigidities and we would not necessarily follow the abandonment of physical arrangement of items into series, we could see that the Archives Office of N.S.W. had been notably successful in divorcing physical arrangement from descriptive media[47].

We felt that we could not be so radical and that we should at least attempt to restore items to their original order and arrangement. We saw the principle of respect for original order as having practical benefits for arrangement and description, and for Archives lending and reference work; we saw it as a key to preservation of records as part of a functioning record-keeping system. Our daily adverse experience with our accessioning system, which could have the one series fragmented into many overlapping accessions from a variety of transferring agencies, convinced us that the restoration of original order through the amalgamation of accessions and the consolidation of the permanent core of a series was not only desirable in theory but essential for efficient records and archives management.[48]

And so in 1964, Dr K. Penny and P. J. Scott, with the approval of Mr I. Maclean (then Chief Archivist) took the radical step[49] of extending the series registration procedure to *all* series, thereby (a) abandoning the record group as a physical entity, (b) basing physical arrangement at the level of record series, and (c) *continuing to respect the principle of provenance through clearly recording all the creating agencies for each series in the Register of Record Series and through listing of each series on the inventory for each of its creating agencies.* As an example of multiple listing, figures 1 and 2 give extracts from the inventories for the

AGENCY/PERSON
                DEPARTMENT OF HOME AND TERRITORIES,
                CENTRAL OFFICE

                                                            CA/CEX 15
                                      (14 Nov.)1916 - 1928(Dec.10)

NAS 28 (revised)

Entry No.	Series Title	Date Range	Series No.
	Inventory of Series - 3 -		

PART B: DEPARTMENT PROPER - <u>Correspondence Systems and Associated Control Records</u>

FROM CA 7, DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [I], 1916:

1.1	General 'Files of papers', annual single number series	1903 - 1938 (c.1856 - c.1939)	A1

     [184.92m.]
[TO CA 24, DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS [II], 1928]
(ex CP 103/10, 103/11, 120/1, 120/2, 120/5,
120/6, 120/7, 146/4, 146/7, 159/4, 235/1,
287/1, 287/2, 295/1, 298/58, 316/5, 316/13,
316/15, 319/1, 327/1, 339/2, 431/1, 464/7,
509/1, 600/1, 709/1, 712/1, 758/1, 758/3,
758/4, 778/1, 813/4, 859/1, 880/1, 993/1,
MP 56/6, 56/12)

 [This series is the general filing system
 of the agencies concerned. For Home and
 Territories, it covers all functions
 (including census and statistics,
 elections, immigration, lands and surveys
 (to 1925), meteorology, naturalization
 and aliens, Papua, Seat of Government,
 territories (Northern Territory from 1925
 - previously in CRS A3), passports (from
 1918),war museum, oil investigation, New
 Guinea (from 1924 - previously in CRS A5)
 and forestry), with the exception of
 staffing matters (CRS A220). Some pre-
 1916 papers from Home Affairs [II] (CA 8)
 have been incorporated into the series.
 Some files relating to external terr-
 itories, split from the series in 1928,
 have been top-numbered into CRS A518.]

1.2	Control records - Number register for general files of papers, annual single number series [29 vols.]	1911 - 1938	A69

[TO CA 24, 1928]
(ex CP 238/13, 903/2)

 [Each folio of the early volumes is divided
 into the following columns: Number;
 [Subsequent Number]; Leading Card; Referred,
 To Whom, When. Until the mid to late 1920's,
 each letter received is registered; there-
 after only important letters or letters
 initiating new business, until the numer-
 ation becomes one of file registration
 rather than letter registration.]

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Figure 1: Extract from inventory of series

AGENCY/PERSON:

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [I], MELBOURNE

CA/KR 7

(1 Jan.)1901-1916(Nov.14)

NAS 28 (revised)

Inventory of Series

- 4 -

Entry No.	Series Title	Date Range	Series No.
28.	General 'Files of papers', annual single number series [184.92m.] [TO CA 15, HOME AND TERRITORIES, 1916] (ex CP 103/10, 103/11, 120/1, 120/2, 120/5, 120/6, 120/7, 146/4, 146/7, 159/4, 235/1, 287/1, 287/2, 295/1, 298/58, 316/5, 316/13, 316/15, 319/1, 327/1, 339/2, 431/1, 464/7, 509/1, 600/1, 709/1, 712/1, 758/1, 758/3, 758/4, 778/1, 813/4, 859/1, 880/1, 993/1, MP 56/5, 56/12)	1903-1938 (c.1856-c.1939)	A1
	[This series is the general filing system of the agencies concerned. For External Affairs, it covers all functions (including Prime Minister's Office (to 1904), consuls, immigration and emigration, naturalization of aliens, Royal Commissions, territories and passports). For 1910 only it is limited to Immigration and Papua, with other matters in the 'A' series (CRS A63). From 1912, Northern Territory matters are in a separate series (CRS A3). Early papers relating to Norfolk Island and the Northern Territory (ex South Australia, CRS 1640) have been incorporated into the series. Some files relating to external affairs, split from the series in 1916 and transferred to the Prime Minister's Department (CA 11), have been bound into CRS A1108.]		
29.	'Record Books' for general files of papers, annual single number series [1.01m.] (ex CP 238/9)	(3 Jan.)1903-1910(Dec.31)	A30
	[Each folio is divided into the following columns: Previous Papers, Progressive Number; Subsequent Papers; Other Dept. Number; Date of Letter; Registration; From Whom; Subject; Referred to Whom; Remarks. The volume for 1910 is limited to correspondence relating to Papua and Immigration restriction and other matters are in the 'A' series (CRS A64). Top-numberings to the Prime Minister's Office series (CRS A48, from 1904) and the separate Northern Territory series (CRS A81, from 1912) are shown.]		

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Figure 2: Extract from inventory of series

Department of External Affairs [I] (CA 7) and its principal successor, the
Department of Home and Territories (CA 15). The main correspondence
file series (CRS A1), being a multiple-provenance series, is listed on both
inventories, with transmission to/from successor/predecessor being
shown. The inventory at figure 2 also shows a single-provenance series
(CRS A30) which was created solely by the Department of External
Affairs [I] (CA 7). All series have an "entry" number in the inventory
(e.g. CA 7/28) as well as being identified by their series number (CRS
A1)[50].

By this approach, we feel we are able to reconcile the conflict between
the two cardinal principles alluded to above[51], respecting original order
in physical arrangement as strictly as possible and respecting provenance
in descriptive media *even more closely than the record group could even
permit one to do*[52], particularly for that 60% of agencies whose archives
are incomplete without multiple listing of multiple-provenance series.
That is —

> — record items are kept in, or restored to, their original series by physical
> arrangement, thus preserving the integrity of the record series at the physical
> level;
> — record series are attributed to their single or multiple provenance and original
> context through simple classification on series registration sheets and inventories
> of series for each relevant creating agency, thereby preserving the integrity of the
> "fonds" at the intellectual level.

To take up the question of classification systems, as analysed by
Maclean[53], the record group ("provenance-classified") produces its
classification of record series into their "fonds" by both arrangement
and description; the "single number" series system achieves its
classification of series to creating agencies by the descriptive measures
outlined above. The difference between the two archives systems is akin
to the difference in classification methods between the subject-classified
(two- or three-number) filing system — which classifies record items to
subjects by both physical arrangement and descriptive measures — and
the (annual) single number filing system — which classifies record items
to subjects solely by descriptive measures (indexes). Just as it is
impossible to subject-classify all files without additional indexing, so it is
impossible to provenance-classify all series without additional listing;
just as by 1957 we (and the Commonwealth Public Service Board) were
recommending to departments an annual single number registry system
with multiple indexing as a more efficient system, so too in 1964 with the
single number "series system" with multiple listing in inventories.

After abandoning the record group concept for arrangement (but still
respecting the principle of provenance for description), we found in our
structural analysis that the traditional record group structure with its
four levels of record group, series, item, and document[54] had split into
two structures — context, or provenance, with elements of organisation,

agency, family, person — and record-keeping, with record series, item, document[55]. This development enabled us to see more clearly the inherent structure of each element, with its synchronic and diachronic links,[56] and to perceive the overall hierarchy of structures[57]. The two structures of context and record-keeping could, and obviously, did change at differing rates, the diachronic structural shifts alluded to earlier.

Although the solution of the series system, as published in 1966[58], has seemed too radical, even heretical, to most archivists, the foregoing remarks will have shown that it is firmly based on the cardinal principles of archives as enumerated by French, Prussian, Dutch and British archivists and is in the main line of development of archives theory and practice. R. C. Sharman has generously said that "it may well will be indeed that this particular idea is Australia's first original contribution to archival theory"[59]. Reaction within Australia to the series system has produced favourable responses from K. A. Green[60] and L. McGregor[61] and critical comment from K. A. Polden[62] and G. Fischer[63], the latter being answered by P. J. Scott in a paper entitled "Facing the Reality of Administrative Change"[64]. Regardless of physical arrangement, it is to be hoped that the Dutch-derived concept of multiple listing of multiple-provenance series will be increasingly adopted. The growing consensus on finding aids between Australian archives institutions, including the use of record series description sheets, is apparent from a recent survey[65].

Overseas, at the very least, the series system has fostered a serious re-examination of the respective concepts of "record group", "archive group" or "fonds", a re-examination which was already partly in progress by 1966. In the U.S.A., Mario D. Fenyo of the National Archives published his critique of the record group concept in April 1966[66], pointing in particular to its arbitrariness and a need for clarification. Following publication of P. J. Scott's paper in October 1966, Meyer H. Fishbein wrote in defence of the concept in 1967[67], to which Scott responded[68], emphasizing the frequent occurrence of "multiple-provenance" series and describing the record group as "often a temporary, unstable grouping of series that may be altered tomorrow by a change in administrative arrangements". As far as may be judged from the Society of American Archivists' *Basic Manual — Archives and Manuscripts: Arrangement and Description* (1977)[69] there has been a reformulation of the definition of record group —

> a body of organizationally related records established on the basis of provenance with particular regard for the administrative history, the complexity and the volume of the records and archives of the institution or organization involved.

However, despite a brief mention of Norton's dictum of "records follow functions", the *Manual* is largely silent on the problems of administrative change, merely envisaging a type of transferring group —

akin to method (2) above — with predecessor units as sub-groups (which then may on the basis of complexity or volume be established, after due study, as separate groups). Developments have proceeded elsewhere, for example, at the Florida Bureau of Archives and Records Management, with functional classification of series as well as classification by creating agency[70].

From the Antipodean periphery and the New World to the European homeland of the "fonds". In France, the comprehensive *Manuel d'archivistique* (1970) refers mistakenly to the "régime atomisé" of the series system as doing away with all classification and arrangement of archives, while recognizing the fluidity of administrative structures and proposing the solution of classification or arrangement by function[71]. In 1977, M. Duchein published a substantial paper on "Respect des fonds in Archives Administration: Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems"[72], of which mention has already been made in connection with the level of definition of agency. In his paper, Duchein gives an analysis of changes in functions of creating agencies and their effect on records. In order to preserve the concept of "fonds" he proposes a number of solutions to the problem of records transferred from one agency to another, including one rule which produces a composite group[73] (i.e. method (2) above) and one which leaves records of continuing agency A transferred to agency B in the fonds for B (i.e. method (1) above) — he suggests that the difficulties of so doing can be partially overcome in the finding aids[74] (i.e. method (4) above). However, he appears not to appreciate fully the continuity of multiple-provenance series[75] with his recommendations on the closing-off of fonds[76] (i.e. akin to method (3) above). This may be due in part to his view that the creating agency's original order should be followed only if certain conditions are met (including one that "it should not be incompatible with the principle of respect for provenance")[77] and in part to the apparent lack of equivalents to registries in countries with a 'Latin' administrative tradition[78] — he mentions his apparently negative experience with filing systems in French administrative bodies, "the results of which from an archival viewpoint are negligable in six cases out of ten and catastrophic in three out of ten"[79]. But even in Australian experience, where the tradition of departmental correspondence registries is still strong, a vast quantity of records are created outside of the registries in non-registry filing systems. In a random count of the records of some ten Commonwealth agencies in N.S.W., as given in the National Archives Task Force Technical Support Group survey of 1976, out of a total of 4085 shelf metres of records only 34% were in correspondence registries, some 66% being in non-registry filing systems.[80] Yet we have found in our experience that these non-registry records obey the same patterns of administrative change and hence also suffer the multiple-provenance effect; they can nonetheless be treated

under the series system. In 1979 in France, debate was still continuing on methods for the treatment of post-1940 archives, with a growing acceptance that intellectual classification can no longer be reflected in physical arrangement.[81]

In the United Kingdom, the problems of the multiple-provenance series and the record group were dealt with in 1972 by M. Roper, in his paper "Modern Departmental records and the Record Office"[82], where he described a more concentrated emphasis on the "class" (the Public Record Office's equivalent of "series"). A continuing multiple-provenance series would be allowed to continue to have the same group and class reference regardless of its source thereby applying a less rigid concept of the record group, akin to method (2) above. A revised *Guide,* with listings both by creating departments and by record groups is envisaged (method (4)). M. Cook in his new manual on *Archives Administration* (1977)[83] largely endorsed the series system in his chapter relating to "Acquisition and Arrangement of Archives", stating that "if it is not taken too far, there is much sense in the method of taking the record series as the basic control group"[84].

In Canada, C. Vincent in 1975 undertook a major review of the record group, in his paper "A case study — The Record Group: A Concept in Evolution"[85]. In this he frankly acknowledges that, while at least half of the 118 record groups (a relatively "maximalist" stance) in the Public Archives of Canada are largely self-contained, the Public Archives' policy regarding the effect of administrative change on the remainder has been inconsistent[86]. With multiple-provenance series, "the selection of an archives group is often made on a perfectly *ad hoc* basis, according to the archivists' judgement as to which record group is the most logically appropriate. The very real risk is of either robbing the records of a proper and meaningful administrative content [*sic*] or destroying the original arrangement of the series. It is difficult to see how it is possible to avoid one or both of these situations, at least to some degree"[87]. After describing groups with which the Public Archives "desecrates even further the shrine of the record group concept"[88], Vincent opts for a further evolutionary process with the record group (in preference to the "revolution" of the series system), though questioning "whether reliance on either the traditionary record group or the new series system is necessary"[89]. He describes a relaxation of the principle of original order, whereby later accessions of a series are not integrated physically with previous holdings of the series[90] but are integrated in the finding aids — a "paper arrangement"[91]. After alluding to the development of a system of continuous numbering of boxes and volumes with a record group — regardless of series, which nonetheless continue to be fully described in the inventory — he foresees futher evolution towards "continuous numbering for Public Records as a whole" (a system which appears remarkably similar to that which has operated in New South

Wales since the 1930's) and towards a "major breakthrough", with "the allocation of series to record groups [being] purely a descriptive activity". In this case, he asks, "is there any reason why a multi-provenance series should not appear in the inventories for each of the record groups in which it might possibly be placed?"[92] (Again, method which can be equated with no. (4) above, "multiple listing").

If one may discern any common ground in the foregoing summary of national and international reaction, it would appear to be in a decreased reliance on physical arrangement by groups as a means of treating multiple-provenance series and an increased acceptance of the need for multiple listing in such cases. Even Duchein, while defending the record group, nevertheless prescribes "the archives finding aid as the remedy for the difficulties of respect des fonds' "[93]. So, at the very least then, we known that we must go and inventory our multiple-provenance series . . .

Sections of this article relating to the treatment of re-arranged records and split series and to the recording of changes to record series will appear as a fifth and concluding part. In 1979 the Fraser Government made only two changes to departments of state, the average rate of change for the period 1976-1979 falling to 6.25 p.a. However, what will election year 1980 bring?

Acknowledgements

FOOTNOTES

1. For Part 1, see *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 7 No. 3 (Aug. 1978), pp. 115-127; for Part 2, Vol. 7 No. 4 (April 1979), pp. 151-165; and for Part 3, Vol. 7 No. 6 (May 1980), pp. 41-54. Hereafter, Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3 respectively.
2. We are indebted to Dr Pangloss for these observations.
3. Part 2, pp. 156-9.
4. G. Fischer, 'Letting the archival dust settle: some remarks on the record group concept" in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (Oct 1973), p. 640.
5. P. J. Scott, "Facing the reality of administrative change — some further remarks on the record group concept" in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Oct. 1974).
6. Prepared by G. Finlay.
7. Statistics prepared by P. J. Scott.
8. P. J. Scott, *loc. cit.*, (1974), p. 94, 97.
9. P. J. Scott, *loc. cit.*, (1974), pp. 99-100.
10. For a recent summary of the historical circumstances in which "respect des fonds" was developed, see M. Duchein in *La Gazette des archives* no. 97 (1977), pp. 71-74.

11. See P. J. Scott, "The Record Group Concept" in the Editor's Forum, *The American Archivist,* Vol. 30, No. 3 (July 1967) p. 542. For differing comments on the dynamic aspects of the record group, see T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives* (1956), pp. 181-2, and M. Duchein, *loc. cit.,* p. 86 ("traitement dynamique").

12. Commonwealth National Library, Archives Division, Staff Information Paper No. 1 "Principles and Practice of Archives Management as applies to Accessioning Procedure" (1953), pp. 1-3. Maclean states on p. 3: "The new procedure is designed to solve these problems *while observing the principle of provenance as strictly as possible"* [*our italics*].

13. Part I, p. 115.

14. M. Duchein, *loc. cit.,* (1977), pp. 74-76. For an earlier justification, see also T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives,* New York (1965), pp. 90-100.

15. Commonwealth National Library, Archives Division, Staff Information Paper No. 1 (1953) p. 2.

16. Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (1937), s. 6 (q), pp. 103-4, See also pp. 33-34.

17. M. C. Norton (ed. T. W. Mitchell), *Norton on Archives* (1975), p. 111 Article first published in 1940.

18. A. R. Wright, "Archival Classification" in *The American Archivist,* Vol. 3 No. 3 (July 1940), p. 176.

19. Commonwealth National Library, Archives Division, Administrative Instruction no. 34, Interim Instruction on Procedure for Accessioning Records, 1 September 1953, Part V, 1 (ii).

20. Commonwealth National Library, Archives Division, Staff Information Paper No. 1 (1953): Principles and Practice of Archives Management, pp. 8-9.

21. I. Maclean, "Jenkinson's *Manual* in Australian Experience" in A. J. Hollaender (ed.), *Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson.* (1962) p. 139.

22. G. Fischer, *loc. cit.,* p. 641.

23. M. C. Norton (ed. T. W. Mitchell), *op. cit.,* p.113.

24. Muller, Feith and Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (trans. Leavith) (1940), s. 53, p. 134. See also p. 130, and compare s.5, pp. 22-25.

25. See Part 2, pp. 154-156.

26. See P. J. Scott, "The Record Group Concept: A Case for Abandonment" in *The American Architect,* Vol. 29 No. 4 (Oct 1966) p. 495, section 2 (b). See also the example quoted on p. 404 of his article by M. Roper, "Modern Departmental Records and the Record Office" in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists,* Vol. 4, No. 5 (Apr 1972).

27. Inventory No. 2, prepared by Mr H. J. Gibbney.

28. See I. Maclean, *loc. cit.* (1962) p. 144.

29. See P. J. Scott, *loc. cit.* (1966) p. 494.

30. Jenkinson, *op. cit.,* s.6 (q) p. 103.

31. G. Fischer, *loc. cit.,* p. 643.

32. A. R. Wright, *loc. cit.,* (1940), p. 180-181. This is in consequence of his classification of a bureau to *each* department of which it was at any time a part.

33. K. A. Polden, "Preserving the Principle of Provenance: Archives Practices at Reserve Bank of Australia" in *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 4, No. 4 (May 1971), pp. 13-14.

34. G. Fischer, *loc. cit.,* p. 643.

35. Inventory No. 4 (1958), prepared by Mr A. I. Diamond.

36. Inventories No. 5, Protectorate of British New Guinea (1959); No. 6, Colony [*recte* "Possession"] of British New Guinea (1960); and No. 7, Territory of Papua, all preapred by Mr H. J. Gibbney.

37. See I. Maclean, *loc. cit.,* (1962) pp. 146-7.

38. Mnemonics for the first Department of External Affairs (CA 7), the Department of Home and Territories (CA 15) and the second Department of Home Affairs (CA 24)

respectively.

39. Muller, Feith and Fruin, *op. cit.,* s.5, p. 25.
40. Commonwealth National Library, Archives Division, Staff Information Paper No. 1 (1953), p. 9.
41. See Archives Division Circular on Arrangement and Description of Archives 25 June 1959, Attachment B, p. 4.
42. Note that Muller, Feith and Fruin, *op. cit.,* p. 54, remark on forcing archives into an "alien mold".
43. Sir Hilary Jenkinson, *The English Archivists: A New Profession* (an inaugural lecture for a new course in archive administration delivered at University College, London, 14 Oct 1947; London 1948), p. 4, quoted in T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (1965), p. 92.
44. Muller, Feith and Fruin, *op. cit.,* s. 67, pp. 156-158. Multiple listing is again mentioned on p. 157.
45. Commonwealth Archives Committee, *Fifth Annual Report* (1955/56), Appendix C, pp. 2-3. Quoted in Archives Division Circular on arrangement and description of Archives, 25 June 1959, Attachment B, p. 3.
46. Information from Mr D. J. Cross, Chief Archivist, Archives Office of New South Wales. The "stroke" prefixes, 1/ . . ., 2/ . . . and 4/ . . . are believed to relate to floors in the stacks of the Dixson Wing of the State Library of N.S.W.
47. A similar fixed location system on the N.S.W. pattern was adopted in 1974 by the Queensland State Archives. See L. McGregor, "Arrangement and Description of Records at Queensland State Archives" in *Archives and Manuscripts,* vol. 6 no. 5 (Nov. 1975), pp. 147-154. In the Queensland system, when a series moves from one agency to another, there are "two series sheets, each filed according to provenance and linked by the references to previous and subsequent series given on the sheets' (p. 150).
48. See I. Maclean, *loc. cit.,* (1962), pp. 139, 146. However, even we must face the reality of *growth* — the practical problem of very large series, with regular additions — and so some large annual single number correspondence systems are broken up physically into annual "sets" (or "tranches chronologiques" to use Duchein's term, *loc. Cit.,* p. 92). That is, the files for one year may be placed at a separate location from those for the previous year; however, all the files for each year are kept together in correct order within each set. The series has one control number (CRS) but may have several shelf locations. A paper on the use of set numbers additional to the main series number (e.g. CRS A431/1, A431/2 etc.), to control the separately located *permanent* portions of a series, has recently been prepared by our Victorian Office (Mr M. J. Tinsley). *Temporary* portions of a series have always been treated separately; since 1967 they have been grouped into sets by year of destruction, the main series number being followed by temporary set numbers (e.g. CRS A431/T1, A431/T2 etc.).
49. So described in M. Roper, *loc. cit.,* p. 403.
50. Our earlier accession control numbers (e.g. CP 103/10) are also shown to facilitate checking of earlier means of reference. As to the use of inventory entry numbers and series numbers, cf. Muller, Feith and Fruin, *op. cit.,* p. 157.
51. See paragraph preceding approach (5).
52. See P. J. Scott, *loc. cit.,* (1966) p. 502.
53. I. Maclean, "A Comparison of Classification Approaches adopted in Certain Documentation Systems of Concern to the Archivist", unpublished paper for inaugural conference of Australian Society of Archivists, 1975. An earlier version of the paper, "A Comparison between Main Features, of Certain Documentation Systems", also unpublished, was given at the 12th Biennial Conference of the Library Association of Australia, Hobart, 1963.
54. O. W. Holmes adds a fifth, the "depository level" in his article 'Archival Arrangement — Five Different Operations at Five Different Levels" (1964), see note 26 above. Categories for repository storage of series were indicated by P. J. Scott, *loc.*

cit., (1966), p. 500, and a further more detailed paper was prepared in 1971 for internal discussion.

55. See the structural diagram in P. J. Scott, *loc. cit.,* (1966), p. 498. "Information is in another dimension.

56. See the statement of links in P. J. Scott, *loc. cit.,* (1966), pp. 503-4. The structural terminology used has been derived from structural linguistics.

57. P. J. Scott, Notes for Archives Training Programme, March 1969, Section 1 (d).

58. P. J. Scott, "The Record Group Concept: A Case for Abandonment" in *The American Archivist* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Oct 1966) pp. 493-504.

59. R. C. Sharman, "Modest Practitioners: Australian Archival Achievements since 1944", in *The Australian Library Journal,* Vol. 23, No. 6, July 1974, p. 206.

60. K. A. Green, "The Series — A Specialized 'Record Group'?" in *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 3, No. 5 (Nov 1967), pp. 13-15.

61. L. McGregor, "Arrangement and Description of Records at Queensland State Archives" in *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 6 No. 5 (Nov 1975), pp. 147-154. See also note 94.

62. K. A. Polden, "The Record Group — A Matter of Principle" in *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 3 No. 6 (May 1968) pp. 3-7.

63. G. Fischer, "Letting the archival dust settle: some remarks on the record group concept" in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists,* Vol. 4 No. 8 (Oct 1973), pp. 640-645.

64. P. J. Scott, "Facing the reality of administrative change — some further remarks on the record group concept" in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists,* Vol. 5 No. 2 (Oct 1974), pp. 94-100.

65. P. J. Scott, "Archives Finding Aids — Towards an Australian Consensus" in Australian Society of Archivists, *Archives Conference 1979 — Supplementary Volume,* pp. 20-32.

66. M. D. Fenyo, "The Record Group Concept: A Critique" in *The American Archivist,* Vol. 29, No. 2 (April 1966), pp. 229-239.

67. M. D. Fishbein, "The Record Group Concept" in Editor's Forum, *The American Archivist,* Vol. 30 No. 1 (Jan 1967), pp. 239-240.

68. P. J. Scott, "The Record Group Concept" in Editor's Forum, *The American Archivist,* Vol. 30, No. 3 (July 1967) pp. 541-2.

69. Society of American Archivists, *Basic Manual Series — Archives and Manuscripts: Arrangement and Description* by D. B. Gracy II, (Chicago, 1977), pp. 5-7. Schellenberg's book, the *Management of Archives* (New York and London 1965) was also silent on the problem of administrative change — see pp. 164-166.

70. See Public Record Office, *Proceedings of an International Seminar on Automatic Data Processing in Archives,* 1974 (H.M.S.O. 1975) p. 118.

71. Direction des Archives de France, *Manuel d'archivistique* (Paris, 1970), pp. 191-193.

72. M. Duchein, "Le Respect des fonds en archivistique — principes théoriques et problèmes pratiques" in *La Gazette des Archives.* No. 97 (1977), pp. 71-96, in particular pp. 80-83. It is to be hoped that this important paper will be translated into English.

73. *ibid.* pp. 83, 85-6.

74. *ibid.* pp. 82, 95-6.

75. *ibid.* See footnote on p. 81, commenting on Dr. Papritz's example of a series of registers commenced by one administration and continued by another, which Duchein emphasizes belongs to two different fonds.

76. *ibid.* pp. 82, 84-6.

77. *ibid.* p. 91.

78. *ibid.* p. 89.

79. *ibid.* p. 91 (footnote).

80. A similar survey was conducted in 1978 by the Victorian Government Records Management Task Force, see L. R. Brown, "Records Management Developments

within the Victorian Public Service and the Relationship between Records Management and Archives", in Australian Society of Archives, *Archives Conference 1979,* p. 139. In speaking to his paper Mr Brown quoted figures of 14% registry records, 86% non-registry, which shows a further moving away from registries than in the Commonwealth.

81.   See Christian Gut, "La loi du 3 janvier 1979 et le traitement des documents postérieurs à 1940" in *La Gazette des archives, . . .* no. 107 (1979), pp. 275-282, particularly p. 281.

82.   M. Roper, "Modern departmental records and the Record Office" in *Journal of the Society of Archivists,* Vol. 4, no. 5 (Apr 1972) pp. 400-412, particularly pp. 402-404, 409.

83.   M. Cook, *Archives administration — a Manual for Intermediate and Smaller Organizations and for Local Government* (Dawson, 1977), pp. 108-112 (chapter 6).

84.   ibid. p. 111. For a contrary viewpoint, see the review of Cook's *Manual* by Russell, City of Toronto Archives in *Archivaria* no. 8 (Summer 1979), pp. 202-3.

85.   C. Vincent, "A Case study — The Record Group: A Concept in Evolution" in *Archivaria,* No. 3 (Winter 1976/7), pp. 3-16. The article is "an elaboration of a paper presented during a panel discussion of 'Perspectives on the Record Group Concept' at the converence of the Society of American Archivists in Philadelphia, 3 October 1975".

86.   *ibid.* p. 4.

87.   *ibid.* p. 5.

88.   *ibid.* p. 6.

89.   *ibid.* p. 9.

90.   *ibid.* p. 11.

91.   *ibid.* pp. 11-12.

92.   *ibid.* pp. 14-15.

93.   M. Duchein, *loc. cit.,* pp. 95-96.