

# Computerised Record Location Control in the Archives Office of Tasmania

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*Continuing the discussion on computers, the following illustrates another application of computers to a basic archival problem.*

In a recent article by Baiba Irving and Michael Middleton<sup>1</sup> the authors referred to a small computer programme used in the Archives Office of Tasmania for record locations control.

This programme was introduced in 1976, and has, with some minor modifications, proved very successful. In order to maintain maximum flexibility in the shelving of records there is no relationship between code numbers allocated to series or items and their physical location. The production of any record therefore always involves at least a two stage process of ascertaining its series code and then its location. The computer programme was introduced in order to have an accurate, multiple-copy listing of the physical location of all records held in the Archives Office's various repositories and replaced a variety of earlier location controls.

As on-line access was not available, output is in the form of multiple-copy print-out, arranged alphabetically by series code, containing six fields which are described in some detail below. Figure 1 shows a sample output page. The number of characters in each field has been strictly limited to conform with the computer's line print-out capacity and although this initially caused a large number of rejected entries as staff were unused to the rigid demands for input, these have since all but disappeared. The rejection rate is now an acceptably low .05%.

**Field 1** — "Item Reference" contains the series and item code allocated to the record (box, volume, folder, map, photograph etc.). This may appear as a range of series codes if the records are shelved consecutively according to this code. Our series codes are formed from an alphabetical prefix of either two or three characters followed by a possible one to four numerals, a slash, another possible one to four numerals, a slash, a further possible one to four numerals. e.g. PWD 124/406, MCC 16/21/15, AA 12/46. The final number always refers to a shelvable item (box, volume etc.).

The first number refers either to a number allocated to that series within a particular record group (indicated by the alphabetical prefix) or to a specific subset of a conglomerate record group e.g. MCC indicates Municipal and City Councils with the first number referring to a particular municipality, (e.g. Hobart City Council MCC 16). In these cases the second set of numbers refers to the series within the subset (e.g. MCC 16/29 — Hobart City Council minutes, and so MCC 16/29/10 is a particular minute book — say 1870-72). A range of such items shelved consecutively appears in this field, separated by a dash as MCC 16/29/10-15. If a number of series is shelved consecutively the alphabetical prefix is repeated after the dash e.g. MCC 16/29/16-MCC 17/4/17 i.e. all records numbered between MCC 16/29/16 and MCC 17/4/17 are shelved consecutively.

These codes are fairly cumbersome and the Archives Office has since changed over to a modified version of the Commonwealth Record Series system. However, to avoid wholesale renumbering (except where absolutely necessary) allowance has been made for the old numbers.

Field 1, therefore contains either a code for an individual shelveable item or a range of such items. As new transfers of records are allocated a single sequential number when they are first received and before they are processed, there is also provision for this number to be entered in this field prior to series codes being allocated to the records. On the printout these appear at the end of the alphabetical sequence and so provide a record of those records still awaiting final processing.

**Field 2** — “Location” contains a shelf number or a range of shelf numbers and consists of an alphabetic character which is used to designate a shelving block in our main building or other storage buildings, or a non-shelf storage medium, e.g. microfilm cabinets, map cabinets. This is followed by a number indicating a specific bay of shelving, a slash, and a number indicating the shelf in that particular bay. Records on that shelf are in strict numeric or alphabetic/numeric order according to the series code. A range of shelving on which records are stored consecutively is indicated by the first shelf number, a dash, and the last shelf number (omitting the alphabetical prefix) e.g. A105/2 — 106/5.

**Field 3** — “Boxed with”. The Archives Office has, as a standard preservation practice, placed in one standard box records which have their own series codes which are small or fragile or both. This box is allocated the number of the first such series, the others being noted on the outside of the box in a standard format. These other records are entered in the ‘Item Reference’ filmed with the ‘Boxed with’ field indicating in which box they are actually stored.

**Field 4** — “Contained In”. This field is included to cover those records in which there are two or more series (which have different series codes

allocated to them in the list of series titles) physically in one volume. The volume is shelved according to the first series code and all other series in that volume are referred to it *via* this field.

**Field 5** — “Microfilm Reference”. This is used to indicate the series code assigned to microforms of records, the originals of which are also held in the Archives. As there is often more than one original record on one reel of microfilm or one microfiche, for series code allocation, a microform is treated in the same way as a multi-series volume — i.e. the series code of the first original record on the microform is used as its identifying code, others being cross-referred to this. Records which are held in microform format only are treated in exactly the same way as paper records and entered in Field 1.

**Field 6** — “Microfilm Location”. This functions in the same way as Field 2 and locates the microform copies of original records only.

Input for the computer is written onto forms and then coded onto magnetic tape for processing at the State Computer Centre. Figure 2 shows a sample input page. Processing is usually done every three months or so to limit costs but can be done more frequently should there be an abnormally large input.

There are two main stages in the programme, the first of which edits the new input and produces a list of rejected entries with an indication of the cause of rejection. Any errors are usually corrected and re-entered before stage two is run. This second stage stores new input into the master file and produces a list of range overlaps in Field 1. i.e. a range of AA10/4 - AA20/6 may be in the master file and for one reason or another AA12/2 is moved and re-entered at its new location without consequent adjustments made to the range. This will result in two sequential entries “AA10/14-AA20/6” and “AA12/2”, which are potentially misleading. These entries can be corrected and re-entered if necessary before a printout is produced or otherwise corrected in the next batch. Two print-out runs are then produced, one in series code order and one in shelf order (required only once every year).

Deletion of entries from the master file is done using the same form as for the input. The only data which is required to delete an entry is the relevant entry in the “Item Reference” field prior to the dash (if there is one), i.e. there is no need to include the entire range, location etc.

Generally the project has proved very successful as apart from its accuracy and rapid sorting capacity there are additional spin-offs such as prevention of double numbering, the indication of the stage of processing already mentioned, and a few other internal administrative benefits. Perhaps the most important thing, however, is that it has established the use of computers in control systems in the Archives Office and opened the

way for their extension into other aspects of archival control.

**FOOTNOTE**

1. B. Irving and M. Middleton, "Archives and Computers: Description and Retrieval", *Archives and Manuscripts Vol. 9, No.1, 1981, p. 53-65.*

Figure 1

ARCHIVES OFFICE OF ZAMBIA - ARCHIVES LOCATION GUIDE

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ITEM REFERENCE	LOCATION	ROOM NO.	CONTAINED IN	MICROFORM REFERENCE	MICROFORM LOG
CON56/2	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/4	CON56/3	56/2
CON56/3	A245/13	CON66/2		CON56/3	56/2
CON56/4	A246/1	CON66/2		CON56/3	56/2
CON57/1-2	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/1	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/2	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/3	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/4	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/5	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/6	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/7	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/8	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/9	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/10	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/11	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/12	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/13	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/14	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/15	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/16	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/17	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/18	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/19	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/20	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/21	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/22	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/23	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/24	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/25	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/26	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/27	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/28	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/29	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/30	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/31	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/32	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/33	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/34	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/35	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/36	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/37	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/38	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/39	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/40	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/41	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/42	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/43	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/44	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/45	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/46	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/47	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/48	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/49	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/50	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/51	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/52	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/53	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/54	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/55	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/56	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/57	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/58	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/59	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/60	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/61	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/62	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/63	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/64	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/65	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/66	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/67	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/68	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/69	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/70	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/71	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/72	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/73	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/74	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/75	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/76	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/77	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/78	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/79	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/80	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/81	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/82	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/83	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/84	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/85	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/86	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/87	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/88	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/89	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/90	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/91	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/92	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/93	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/94	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/95	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/96	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/97	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/98	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/99	A246/1	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2
CON58/100	A245/13	CON66/2	CON56/1	CON56/3	56/2

Figure 2

ARCHIVES LOCATION GUIDE	UP-DATE SHEET				
ITEM REFERENCE	LOCATION	BOXED WITH	CONTAINED IN	MICROFILM REFERENCE	MICROFILM LOCATION
NS 827/68 - 82	H100/1 - 2				
NS 827/83	H100/2	NS 827/82			
NS 827/84 - 93	H 99/1 - 3				
NS 827/94 - 98	H 99/3	NS 827/93			
S.W.D 15/1	A 85/4	S.W.D 69/1			
NS 855/1 - NS 858/1	A 328/6				
S.W.D 34/1	A 85/2		S.W.D 10/1		
S.W.D 9/1	A 331/1		LC 87/1		
PSC 5/450 - 471	H 29/2 - 6				
NS 572/15	A 322/4			NS 751/25	E17
McC 16/2/100 - 105	C 57/5 - 6				
ED 195/1/1 - ED 195/4/1	C 78/6				