



A
Guide for
Departmental Record Officers

THIRD EDITION
1971

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

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I. INTRODUCTORY

1. This Guide sets out for the information of Government Departments and other organisations subject to the provisions of the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967, the lines on which arrangements should be made for carrying out their responsibilities for the treatment of their records. A Provisional Guide was brought out in 1958 and a definitive manual in 1962. The text has now been further revised to take account generally of the experience gained since 1962, and in particular of changes arising from the introduction of the 30-year access rule.

THE GRIGG COMMITTEE

2. The procedures and arrangements described in this Guide follow broadly the proposals made by the Committee on Departmental Records (the Grigg Committee) in its Report published in July 1954 [Cmd. 9163]. The Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir James Grigg, was set up in 1952 after figures provided by Departments of the bulk of their non-current records and estimates of the quantity which would be preserved had shown that existing arrangements both for reviewing and storage of records were inadequate. The recommendations of the Committee were subsequently accepted by the Government; and certain of the proposals were put in hand forthwith by administrative action. An Act (the Public Records Act, 1958) to effect the necessary legal changes became operative on 1 January, 1959.

II. THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

UNDER THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE ACTS, 1838-1898

- 3. The Public Record Office (PRO) was established in 1838, under the headship of the Master of the Rolls, to provide for the preservation of the Public Records 'in one place and a better custody' and to allow their free use, 'so far as stands with their safety and integrity, and with the public policy of the realm'. Its scope, originally limited to records of specified record offices, legal offices and courts, was extended in 1852 by an Order in Council made under the Act to 'all records belonging to Her Majesty deposited in any office, court, place or custody' other than those mentioned in the Act.
- 4. In order to prevent the Office from being encumbered with worthless documents an Act of 1877 authorised the Master of the Rolls to make Rules for the disposal of such documents, schedules of which were, after approvably the Master of the Rolls and the head of the Department concerned, to be laid before Parliament. It was amended by a short Act of 1898.

UNDER THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACTS, 1958 and 1967

- 5. The enactments referred to in the preceding paragraphs were repealed by the Public Records Act 1958. This Act (s.1) places the PRO under the Lord Chancellor, and gives him a general responsibility for supervising the care and preservation of all public records (not only those in the PRO). A Keeper of Public Records is appointed to administer the Office under him (s.2). Other main provisions of the Act deal with the selection and transfer by Departments, under the guidance of the Keeper, of records for permanent preservation (s.3), the disposal by destruction or other means of those not required for preservation (s.3), the appointment of places of deposit other than the PRO (s.4), and access by the public to the records (s.5). A definition of what are 'public records' for the purposes of the Act is included (s.10 and 1st schedule).
- 6. An Act of 1967 reduced from 50 to 30 years the period for which records must have been in existence before they can normally be made available for public inspection.

FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE

- 7. The primary function of the PRO as a place of deposit for public records is to receive from Government Departments, Courts, Tribunals and other bodies subject to the Public Records Acts those of their records that must be permanently kept, and to hold them for official use. It thus fills in relation to other Departments the role of a 'common service' Department. Its further function is to hold and make available these records for research by members of the public.
- 8. These functions involve the maintenance of—
 - (1) arrangements for ensuring the safety of records transferred:—repositories (at Chancery Lane and Portugal Street, WC2, and Ashridge, Herts) where they can be housed as securely as possible; a conservation service to restore decayed or damaged documents to a usable condition; (2) arrangements for ensuring the availability of the records:—logical and orderly classification; adequate lists and indexes; production of documents

to government departments on requisition for official use, or to the public using the various Search Rooms; issue of certified copies of documents for legal purposes; the sale of microfilms, Xerox prints and other photographic copies; production of information from the records in response to official and other inquiries; issue of publications based on the records; a museum.

They are carried out by the Records Services and Publications Division, of which the Deputy Keeper of Public Records is in charge.

- 9. The functions of supervising and co-ordinating arrangements for disposal, selection and transfer of records as well as other aspects of records administration referred to in this Guide are the responsibility of the Records Administration Division, under the Records Administration Officer. The duties of this Division include those of providing the following services:—
 - (i) guidance by Inspecting Officers, each in liaison with a number of Departments;
 - (2) an intermediate repository at Hayes, Middlesex, where accommodation can be allocated to Departments for the safe-keeping and sorting of their non-current records.
- Mo. A short account of the origin and history of the PRO and a description of its holdings are given in Guide to the Contents of the Public Record Office. This is published in three volumes, and comprises, Vol. I Legal Records (1963), Vol. II State Papers and Departmental Records (1963) and Vol. III Documents Transferred 1960-66 (1968). Much information about the PRO and its activities, including tables of departmental transfers and statistics showing the use of the records by members of the public, will be found in the published Annual Report of the Keeper of Public Records. Departmental Record Officers can order these publications through their Clerks of Stationery.

III. SELECTION AND DISPOSAL ARRANGEMENTS: ORGANISATION

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STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 11. The fundamental principle laid down by the Grigg Committee for the disposal of departmental records is that the responsibility for the selection and transfer to the PRO of records worth preserving rests on Departments themselves, but the PRO is responsible for co-ordinating the arrangements and for supervising, on behalf of the Government as a whole, the way in which they are carried out by Departments. The 1958 Act accordingly imposes a duty on 'every person responsible for public records' to 'make arrangements for the selection of those records which ought to be permanently preserved and for their safe-keeping'; and requires that these duties shall be performed 'under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records and the said Keeper shall be responsible for co-ordinating and supervising all action taken'. A letter dated 10 December 1958 from the Lord Chancellor's Office to Establishment Officers (see Appendix C) explained the main statutory responsibilities of Departments for their records.
- 12. The chief features of the reviewing procedures dealt with in detail in the following section of this *Guide*, are as follows:—
 - (1) All papers and other records of which the useful life can be predetermined should be given fixed retention periods; and instructions for their disposal should be included in *Disposal Lists*. (See paras, 17-20).
 - (2) Registered files (other than those in series which can be included in a Disposal List) and some kinds of unregistered files which need individual consideration should be subjected to a *First Review* five years after the date of the last paper on any file. Those not considered of any value for the Department's own purposes will be destroyed immediately. The responsibility for decisions at this stage rests with the Department, but the PRO is concerned in seeing that the Review is properly carried out. (See paras. 29-33).
 - (3) Records retained at the First Review will come up for a Second Review 25 years after their creation. The decision whether they are worth preserving permanently is a joint one, made by the Department and the PRO together, and on historical as well as on administrative grounds. (See paras. 34-41).
 - (4) For purpose of review the unit is the file and not the individual paper; and the date of Second Review is governed by the earliest paper on the file.
 - (5) 'Particular instance' papers—i.e. groups of documents dealing with the same subject, but consisting of papers or files each relating to a different person, body or place—are subject to special arrangements. (See below para. 62).

DEPARTMENTAL RECORD OFFICERS

13. In each Department a Departmental Record Officer (DRO) is responsible for the care of the Department's records from the time when they are created or received until they are disposed of, either by destruction or by transfer to the PRO. It is important that he should control all papers—not only those which are registered—in the headquarters of the Department, in regional and local offices, and in other out-stations. His control should extend also to photographs, cinematograph films, sound recordings and machine-readable records. He has the responsibility for deciding, in consultation with the user staff concerned.

which records can be included in a Disposal List for automatic destruction after predetermined periods and which records it is necessary for the Department to retain for its own purposes after the First Review. Jointly with an Inspecting Officer from the PRO he has responsibility for conducting the Second Review.

- 14. It will depend on the circumstances of the individual department how the DRO may best be fitted into its organisation. His work impinges closely on that of the Chief Registrar. Some Departments combine the two posts in one officer, suitably underpinned, while others prefer to have separate officers. In a Treasury letter to Establishment Officers dated 17 May 1956 which gave Departments authority to appoint DROs it was recommended that the status of the DRO should be at least equal to that of the Chief Registrar.
- 15. Departments are required to inform the PRO of an impending change of their DRO. At least once a year the PRO prepares a new directory of DROs; copies may be obtained on request.

PRO RECORDS ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

16. The Records Administration Officer, assisted by two Principal Assistant Reepers, directs the work of this Division of the PRO. Five Inspecting Officers (IOs) are each responsible for maintaining liaison with DROs in a group of Departments, and a sixth has special responsibilities for scientific and technological records. These IOs are supported by Executive and Clerical staft, who advise records staff in departments on listing and arrangements for the transfer of records.

IV. SELECTION AND DISPOSAL ARRANGEMENTS: REVIEWING PROCEDURES

- DISPOSAL LIST 17. A Disposal List (formerly termed a 'Classified List') should include details of unregistered papers (such as accounting records, attendance books, forms etc) as well as registered papers of a standard type which do not vary from year to year, and all other kinds of records which can be destroyed without further scrutiny after agreed retention periods.
- 18. The Disposal List need not be confined to records which are to be destroyed after fixed periods. Departments should consider the value of a Disposal List which sets out a complete programme for dealing with all its records, giving directions for disposal of each kind or series not only by automatic destruction but by normal review and other procedures. For example, disposal instructions can be: 'Destroy after 3 years'; 'Consider at First Review'; 'After 2 years mov to Hayes, destroy after 5 years'; 'Destroy after 5 years, subject to sample'; 'Preserve permanently', etc.
- 19. A DRO should reach agreement with the IO on all items in a Disposal List; and they should scrutinise the List each year to ensure that it is brought up to date by the addition of new material and that disposal instructions are revised as necessary.
- 20. In compiling and revising Disposal Lists it is necessary to consider the value for research purposes of taking suitable samples of case files and other particular instance papers which have no long-term administrative value.

REGISTERED PAPERS

- 21. The quality of a Department's records selected for preservation is directly linked to the effectiveness of its Registry system. Much depends, therefore, on close liaison between the Chief Registrar and the DRO, whose interests are complementary. The Chief Registrar's concern is to provide departmental officers with speedy access to papers, which requires that these are kept in a good physical state and stored in an orderly manner so that they can readily be traced. The DRO's concern is to see that Reviews are systematically carried out, so as to reduce the bulk of records in his custody, while ensuring that no papers likely to be required for permanent preservation are destroyed.
- 22. From the standpoint of subsequent reviewing of the records, there are three fundamental requirements of registry practice:
 - (1) that all papers created in, or received into, the Department that require registration are brought within the registry system;
 - (2) that file titles are accurate, each fully reflecting the contents of the file;
 - (3) that the span of a file is limited to a maximum of five years.*
- 23. The cover of every file should state (1) the year in which it was opened and (2) the date at which it was closed. The latter governs the date of First Review and, if the file is later selected for permanent preservation, the date of public access; the former date determines when the Second Review will take place.

- 24. To assist reviewing it is the practice in some Departments to require action officers to indicate at PA stage the likely future of the papers the file contains, recommending either a short or a long term retention. Some Departments have incorporated on their file covers a disposal grid for this purpose. Such a system has the advantage that the views of the Branch need not be sought five years later, by which time the officer originally responsible may not be in post. Such markings on the file cover at PA stage are intended to give guidance to reviewing staff at First Review stage; and may give useful indications of long-term value for consideration at Second Review.
- 25. A recent development is for Registries to earmark papers of ephemeral value when the file itself is created. It is recommended that such papers are placed in separate thin covers under the registered system and retained only for a limited period, often no more than one year after the conclusion of the business (see Treasury DEO letter 2 OM 709/02 of 1 May 1968). These series of ephemeral files should be included in the Disposal List.
- 26. Once a file has been closed and given a First Review no further papers may be placed on it. These should be placed in a new file, with adequate crossreferences.
- 27. Old files must under no circumstances be re-registered under a later date. Registries have sometimes been requested by officers in Branches to do this, in order to secure that old papers still required shall remain available. The DRO should see that any officers making such requests are referred to him, so that he can concert with them any necessary precautions to ensure that none of the papers is destroyed in the course of review.
- 28. Once a new file is opened it should not have older material placed on it. A cross-reference to the earlier file, or exceptionally, a photocopy should suffice.

FIRST REVIEW

- 29. The object of the First Review is to enable all files not considered of further value for a Department's own purposes to be destroyed, while ensuring that no papers likely to be required for permanent preservation are destroyed. Since the First Review takes place, in general, not later than 5 years after the date of the latest paper on a file, it is most convenient to store files in the date order in which they have been put away. Other methods, such as storing files in date order of registration with subsequent identification of those due for First Review by a periodic check of numerical slips, or even the files themselves, may sometimes be necessary but are more time-consuming. If a numerical sequence has to be followed the use of coloured markers to indicate the year of First Review can save time. Discussion with the IO on these points will prove helpful.
- 30. Though the date recommended for First Review is 5 years after the files have passed out of active use, strict uniformity is not essential. A DRO wishing to vary the normal date of First Review should discuss his proposal with the IO.
- 31. At this stage the reviewer is deciding whether the record is likely to be required any longer for the department's use. He must constantly bear in mind that 'departmental purposes' include the possibility of the file being required as a precedent or as a guide to action if similar circumstances arise in the future, and he must guard against destroying papers simply because those activities of the department which they record have ceased. In some departments the reviewer will have the guidance of disposal recommendations made by action officers at PA stage (see above para 24).

^{*}Detailed advice is given in the manual Registry Services, issued by the Management Services Division of the Civil Service Department.

- 32. The IO will satisfy himself that the right balance is being struck at First Review by inspecting samples of the material being discarded as well as by making test checks of the records retained. A DRO should find helpful the comparisons which the IO can make between retention standards in different departments. To retain too much unreasonably increases the costs of storage and the problems of Second Review. If, on the other hand, files have been wrongfully discarded, the DRO's attention will be drawn to this when papers subsequently needed for administrative or other purposes are not forthcoming.
- 33. The disposal of records rejected at review is discussed below (paras. 45-49).

SECOND REVIEW

- 34. All files retained at First Review for further departmental use will be considered by the DRO and IO who will jointly participate in a Second Review at which it will be decided which of the files are worth preserving permanently on historical as well as administrative grounds.
- 35. This Second Review will normally take place 25 years from the date when the files were opened. By then comparatively few files will still be needed for administrative use, and it will be possible, while first-hand knowledge of the business recorded by the files is still available, to look at them in perspective. It may be practicable to undertake a Second Review of certain series earlier than 25 years, and in some cases there are advantages in dealing with blocks of years together. To delay Second Review much beyond 25 years leaves too small a margin of time for subsequent listing and processing of records which will be open to inspection when they are 30 years old.
- 36. A DRO will need to discuss with his IO the most appropriate methods for their joint review. In some cases both officers can work side by side on an accumulation. In others the departmental reviewers, duly briefed, will begin making the selection and the IO will return to examine both the series of files earmarked for preservation and those recommended for destruction and also to help reach a decision on doubtful cases. Under no circumstances should discarded material be sent for destruction without the agreement of the IO.
- 37. Appendix A to this Guide suggests some guidelines for use in deciding appraisal criteria which can be applied to the selection of records for permanent preservation. In large Departments where the DRO may not himself participate in the detailed examination of files at Second Review, he should draw up a set of instructions as specific as possible, based on the principles set out in Appendix A, for the use of his staff of reviewers. Such instructions, kept up-to-date, should be comprehensive and should make clear the special administrative requirements of the Department and the special historical significance of its records. Different sets of instructions may be needed for records of particular branches or for particular classes of records. The extent to which a detailed examination of every file is possible will depend on circumstances.
- 38. For its part the PRO needs to ensure that no records of historical importance escape the net, and that records not worthy of permanent preservation are not retained at Second Review. The Records Administration Officer or one of his Principal Assistant Keepers visits Departments from time to time to appraise the standards of reviewing with the aim of achieving the right balance.
- 39. All records created before the year 1660 must, under s.3(3) of the 1958 Act, be selected for preservation. This will concern only those DROs who have occasion to review material such as collections of old muniments of title. In the case of records relating to Scotland or Northern Ireland (see paras. 81 and 82)

- there is a statutory ban in the applicable legislation on the disposal of documents of earlier date than the year 1800.
- 40. Although there may be a routine arrangement for eliminating the most obviously ephemeral material from files at PA stage, many files contain at Second Review stage various papers, such as letters making engagements or identical copies of a memorandum, which could well be eliminated. The IO will discuss with a DRO the feasibility of stripping these papers from files before they are transferred to the PRO. Such an operation is generally unprofitable unless it can be restricted to the removal of easily identified types of paper.
- 41. After Second Review the files selected for permanent preservation will be listed, processed and transferred to the PRO (see Section VI below), though provision is made for those records which a Department needs to retain for administrative purposes (paras. 43-44). The disposal of records rejected at review is discussed below (paras. 45-49).

REVIEWS FOR SENSITIVITY

42. With the introduction of the 30-year rule in 1968 some Departments have found that various series of records, selected for permanent preservation, to which access might be allowed after 50 years, could not automatically be made available to the public at 30 years without further scrutiny. Much time in these cases can be subsequently saved if during the Second Review those items for which it might be necessary for the Department to seek approval for extended closure are noted, so that any problem of access can be settled at an early stage. (See para. 86).

RETENTION OF SELECTED RECORDS DUE FOR TRANSFER

- 43. Records selected for preservation should be transferred to the PRO, or appointed place of deposit, as soon after Second Review stage as possible (see para. 66 below) and in ample time for making them available to the public when 30 years old. If, however, there are records which Departments need to retain for administrative purposes or other special reasons they may apply to the Lord Chancellor, through the Records Administration Officer, for his approval of their retention under the proviso in s.3(4) of the 1958 Act.
- 44. DROs should note that powers of retention are not to be sought in cases where temporary requisition of records from the PRO would suffice (para. 67). Before granting his approval the Lord Chancellor generally requires departments to send to the PRO a list of the records to be retained, and approval when given will be subject to periodic review and such conditions as the Lord Chancellor considers appropriate. One condition may be that suitable arrangements are made for public access to the records retained.

DISPOSAL OF REJECTED RECORDS

- 45. Rejection of records at a Review does not mean that they must be destroyed if a continuing need to keep them for departmental purposes has been established; but any records not required for permanent preservation which are not immediately destroyed should be assigned a definite destruction date and not put aside for indefinite retention. The destruction date will usually be expressed in terms of a calendar date or the lapse of a definite period of time, but it will sometimes be necessary to relate destruction to the occurrence of a future event which will make further retention of the records unnecessary.
- 46. The 1958 Act provides (s.3(6)) that subject to the Lord Chancellor's approval rejected records may be disposed of in some way other than destruction.

The general rule is that if documents are worth keeping they will be preserved in the PRO or some other place appointed by the Lord Chancellor (see paras. 77–80 below), and that the remainder will be destroyed. Occasionally, however, it is appropriate to present records not selected for preservation to particular institutions which have expressed a desire to have them. The Lord Chancellor's approval is required in any such case, and should be sought through the Records Administration Officer.

- 47. The reviewing arrangements should include provision for keeping a check on the quantity of paper sent for destruction. The quantity can be recorded in terms of either the linear foot-run of shelving cleared or the tonnage of waste released. The former method is likely to be the more accurate, but it may be found useful to maintain some record of the weight if only by way of a test check. It has been found by experiment that records of normal type occupying 70-80 feet of shelving weigh about I ton. Each January DROs are asked to send returns of the quantity of unwanted papers sent for destruction in the previous year.
- 48. The Annual Report of the Keeper of Public Records includes particulars of the quantity and nature of records transferred to the PRO and also of the quantity of papers destroyed in Departments.
- 49. Since disposal of waste paper (and other material used for records) is one of the 'common services' performed for all Government Departments by HM Stationery Office, documents should be sent for destruction through that channel. In the London area the Stationery Office itself normally arranges for destruction, and also in those provincial areas served by its branches; elsewhere it delegates this function to the local Head Postmaster, but the collection of 'restricted' waste is in all cases carried out by the Department of the Environment in official vehicles. The Stationery Office does not assume responsibility. however, for the disposal of waste released by offices and authorities which. though under the Crown, are not part of the departmental organisation of the Central Government, e.g., local Courts and National Health Service Hospitals. They are free to make such arrangements as are convenient to them, as are also those nationalised industries and other non-Government organisations whose papers have been declared by the Act to be 'public records'. 'Secret waste' must be shredded in accordance with security instructions. When a Department can safely classify records as below 'restricted' level and their bulk makes it financially worth while, it should dispose of them as 'open' waste (which is sold for disposal without any safeguards, and could be exported).

SPECIMENS OF MATERIAL DESTROYED

50. In some cases DROs will be required to send to the PRO a few specimens of categories of records which are to be destroyed. Such specimens are intended to illustrate both the form of the records and the manner in which they were used. These specimens are not to be confused with the taking of representative selections or statistical or other samples of Particular Instance Papers or of other kinds of records.

V. SELECTION AND DISPOSAL ARRANGEMENTS: RECORDS IN SPECIAL CATEGORIES

51. In some Departments there are classes of papers which, because of their importance, their confidentiality or the use to which they are put, may from time to time require special arrangements to be made for their review. Where there is a Secret Registry, where Private Office papers are separately registered or where papers relating to contracts, legal business or legislation have a special importance attached to them, it may not be possible to review them in accordance with the system adopted for ordinary papers, and the DRO will have to devise special arrangements for them. The important point is that they should not escape the control of the DRO, who must make it his business to seek them out and arrange with the officials responsible that either the departmental records staff will review them in an appropriate way or the officials themselves will mubject them to regular review on lines agreed with the DRO and his IO. Some of the examples mentioned above can be dealt with under the normal reviewing plan, particularly if they are registered. It is not the actual nature of a group of papers that distinguishes it as a 'special category', but the fact that the Department has a need for official purposes to treat it differently from the rest of its records.

PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS

52. Particular attention is to be paid to papers accumulating in the Private Offices of Ministers, to ensure that those which are public records are subjected to the approved procedures. In most Departments Private Office papers are duly registered, but a DRO must maintain close liaison with his Minister's private secretaries, to ensure the segregation of private correspondence from official papers so that when a Minister relinquishes office the disposal of his papers is in accordance with the recommendations of the Grigg Committee. A DRO should make a point of discussing arrangements whenever ministerial changes are imminent. A DRO should maintain similar liaison with the private secretary to the permanent head of his Department to make arrangements for the proper disposal of the Permanent Secretary's Private Office papers.

CABINET PAPERS

53. It should be noted that when a General Election results in a straight party change (as in 1951, 1964 and 1970), Cabinet Papers of the outgoing Government are by a long-established rule immediately returned to the Cabinet Office. This does not, however, apply to those copies of individual Cabinet Papers which have been allowed to be placed on departmental files.

SECURITY-CLASSIFIED RECORDS

54. Security-classified records should be subject to the normal reviewing procedures. Each Departmental Security Officer is required to maintain liaison with his DRO for making arrangements for the declassification and downgrading of security-classified records, in accordance with the relevant chapter of the manual Security in Government Departments and subsequent amendments to it by DSO letters.

PAPERS OF TEMPORARY COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

55. The Instructions for the Guidance of Secretaries of Temporary Commissions

and Committees issued by the Civil Service Department requires each Secretary to report the existence of his Commission or Committee to the PRO so that arrangements can be made as early as possible for the disposal of the records. Since most of these bodies are linked with a particular Department, a DRO is advised to keep abreast of developments and to discuss problems which may arise with his IO.

PRINTED AND CIRCULATED PAPERS

- 56. Where papers have originated within a Government Department, the set maintained, for example, by the Secretary of a departmental committee or by the branch responsible for issuing the papers, should be regarded as the 'original' for retention purposes. With this in mind Establishment Officers should require the Secretary of every departmental committee to report its existence to the DRO. Other copies, whether in the Department of origin or another Department, will not need to be kept for longer than they are required for administrative use. Organisations with an extensive network of local branches, which distribute duplicated papers widely, can effect economies in storage in local offices by designating points at which a set of such papers will be maintained for reference, purposes within a given area, enabling the other sets to be discarded at at carlier date.
- 57. A DRO should give careful thought to the disposal of printed and circulated papers of International Organisations. A distinction should be drawn between (1) papers from such bodies sent to the Department 'for information' (e.g. the many papers issued by the International Labour Office, Geneva, which are sent to the Department of Employment and Productivity), and (2) papers which accrue in a Department as a result of departmental representation on the international body concerned (e.g. United Nations material held by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office). There is a strong presumption that those in (2) will be selected for permanent preservation. With regard to those in (1) the IO will be able to advise the DRO whether or not they may be destroyed once the Department's interest in them has evaporated.
- 58. A DRO should ensure that a standard set is maintained of any printed or duplicated compilations (such as codes of procedure and organisation charts) issued by his Department, together with subsequent amendments. These should be treated as a record set and ear-marked for transfer to the PRO. Published matter should be treated on its own merits: record copies of books and technical pamphlets sold through HMSO are not required by the PRO, since they will be available in copyright libraries; but it is desirable that sets of annual reports and copies of the Reports of Royal Commissions should be in the PRO with the records to which they relate.

DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES

59. There is no question of regarding the normal contents of a Departmental Library as coming within the scope of the Public Records Acts. A DRO should, however, ensure that original manuscript or typescript material, often bound in volumes, relating to particular activities of the Department, does not get placed in the Library for reference purposes unless it duplicates material already reviewed. n de la companya del companya de la companya del companya de la companya del la companya de la c

MAPS, PLANS AND DRAWINGS

60. Maps, plans and drawings, which accumulate in great quantity in some Departments, may require special treatment. They may, though stored apart because of their size and physical make-up, be in fact annexes to particular files.

9 19

In that case reviewing presents no special problem: they come up individually for review with the related file. Otherwise, an ad hoc arrangement will have to be made to suit the special circumstances of each case. It may not be practicable for individual items to be brought up for review on reaching a certain age; in which case recourse might be had to a general review of the whole series at regular intervals. Again, some Departments which create great quantities of maps, plans or drawings have been authorised to adopt a policy of filming, either in microfilm or microfiche, in order to save office space and facilitate the multiplication of copies. Here (if the series includes material worthy of preservation) it may be best to dispense with individual review, keep the whole set of microphotographs and destroy the original documents, provided the microfilm is of accepted 'archival quality'. A DRO should bear in mind that either the film's future should be determined when it is made, so that it is properly processed, or the original maps and plans must be re-filmed and processed to archival standards before the originals are destroyed. If the former course is adopted and the film is much used, a negative should be created at once and used for making copies for the Department's use; the master negative could then be transferred to the PRO.

PERSONAL RECORDS OF STAFF

61. Consultation between the Treasury, the PRO and Departments on uniform retention periods for personal files, resulted in the issue of Treasury Establishment Circular No. 2/61. This categorises the normal types of personal records and distinguishes (1) those of 'ephemeral' interest from (2) those of 'lasting' interest. For (1)—minor records usually relating to a specific event or period. retention for not more than five years after the events to which they relate is advised; in the case of temporary employees at peak periods, it need not be for more than one year. Files in (2) have a long administrative life geared to the life and career of the individual officer concerned. For established staff they should be kept for 85 years from the officer's date of birth, or for five years after his death, whichever is later. The personal files of noteworthy officers will be singled out for permanent preservation; this is a matter for decision between the DRO and the IO.

PARTICULAR INSTANCE PAPERS

62. These are groups of papers with a common subject matter, though each relates to a different person, body or place, such as series of returns, applications, case papers and registers of particulars. These papers are excluded from First Review, at which only a record's administrative value is considered, for the reason that while each individual paper may be of little importance by itself, taken together, or by way of a sample, they may provide broad information about historical, social and economic trends. Following a recommendation of the Grigg Report, a number of accumulations of Particular Instance Papers were considered by a Committee under the chairmanship of the Records Administration Officer, made up of IOs and other members of the PRO, a member of the Central Statistical Office and the DRO and other appropriate representatives of the Department concerned. The work of the Particular Instance Paper Committee is continued by way of other, less formal methods of consultation, which take into account the need to consider a wider range of studies and different techniques of research which may involve increased interest in records of this kind. The PRO will therefore, whenever it appears necessary and practicable, consult informally with appropriate historians, economists, social scientists and other specialists before deciding how to deal with any series of Particular Instance Papers.

63. A DRO should draw his IO's attention to any class of records which appears to fall within the category of Particular Instance Papers. In drawing up Disposal Lists he should especially be on the look-out for new series of case files and new types of forms and returns engendered by fresh legislation (including subordinate legislation) within his own Department, and also for the existence of material of this kind in machine-readable form.

PAPERS RELATING TO TRANSFERRED OR OBSOLETE FUNCTIONS

64. A DRO should make a particular point of notifying his IO as soon as it is known that a function or functions of the Department will be transferred to another Department or organisation, or that an activity carried on by the Department or an activity of some other body connected with its work is to be wound up. It is at such times that records are likely to be destroyed or irretrievably scattered, and special arrangements will usually be needed to ensure that they are properly treated.

NEW BODIES

65. The status of the records of every new non-departmental organisation should be decided at the time when it is being established. If it is being set up by statute, the matter can be put beyond further doubt by including in the legislation a specific statement to the effect that the records will be Public Records (as in the Post Office Act, 1969, Clause 73); or alternatively that they will not be subject to the Public Records Acts. When a non-departmental organisation whose records are not to have the status of Public Records takes over functions previously assigned to a Government Department, it is usual for the new organisation to be lent current files relevant to those functions. A DRO should ensure the return of such papers to his custody.

VI TRANSFER*

DATE OF TRANSFER

66. Since records are in general open to public inspection when 30 years old. transfers to the PRO should take place as soon after Second Review as possible, or, if not subjected to normal review procedures, at least two or three years before they become thirty years old. DROs are asked to co-operate in maintaining, so far as possible, a regular flow of records to the PRO.

AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENTS AT THE PRO

- 67. Records held by the PRO (or other place of deposit appointed by the Lord Chancellor) are, under s.4(6) of the 1958 Act, temporarily returnable at the request of the Department which deposited them, or its successor. They are not Available to any other Departments, except by special arrangements with the depositing Department. The PRO can produce such records speedily, providing the requisition arrangements, detailed in Appendix B, are followed.
- 68. Records recalled on requisition must not be altered in any way and no papers may be removed from or added to files. A DRO remains responsible for records on requisition and these should not be passed from one section of a Department to another without his approval. DROs are asked to return requisitioned records as soon as departmental needs have been met.

TAKING RECORDS ON CHARGE AT THE PRO-

- 69. A scheme should be agreed with the PRO for the arrangement into 'classes' of the various series of papers which it has been decided to preserve, whether or not immediate transfers are contemplated in every case. This will secure consistency of arrangement, titling and description when transfer actually takes place (para. 73).
- 70. All projected transfers should be discussed at an early stage with the IO; and when a joint decision has been reached, the DRO should make formal application to the PRO to receive the records. This application, incorporating a statement of full particulars, should be made on a specially printed form (known as "The Blue Form"), obtainable from the PRO. After ensuring that the records are in a reasonable state of repair, and that they have been arranged, packed, labelled and listed in the approved manner, the IO will arrange for their removal.
- 71. A DRO should supply particulars about the contents of every new class of records and about changes in the contents of accruing classes, prior to the transfer of the records, to enable descriptions to be added, and amendments made, to the Guide to the Contents of the PRO.
- 72. Provision should also be made at the same time for transmitting to the PRO any departmental registers and indexes which would provide the public using the PRO search rooms with useful means of reference to the records, or which may themselves contain information of significant value.

^{*}A separate pamphlet, The Preparation of Records for Transfer, gives detailed advice for records staff engaged in listing, packing and labelling.

ARRANGEMENT OF RECORDS AT THE PRO

- 73. Records transferred to the PRO are arranged in 'classes' each of which is identified by a code consisting of one or more letters followed by a number (e.g. F6; F0371; ED73). Class codes with the same alphabetical element may be used for record classes with some common factor (e.g. those which have originated in, or have been transferred from, the same Department, its predecessor or its successor); but frequent changes in the organisation of government, the transfer of functions and the consequent movement of records from one Department to another, make it necessary to adopt arbitrary coding in many cases. Within a class each unit (e.g. a volume, file, or other assembly of documents, which can be produced to the department or to the public separately) has a 'piece number' (e.g. F6/75; F0371/3937; ED73/2). When a Department wishes to requisition one of its transferred records the appropriate references (obtainable from a copy of the PRO list held by the Department) should always be quoted.
- 74. The coding and title of any new class will be decided by the PRO. Where a series of papers already has a distinctive departmental name, this will be used, if possible, as its PRO class-title. Difficulties about classification can largely be avoided by early consultation between DRO and IO.

LISTING

75. When records are transferred the PRO must be provided with a list of them. Lists are required so that it is at once clear which records have been transmitted to PRO custody; that departmental requisitions, under precise references, can be easily met; and that once the records are open to inspection members of the public in the search rooms have in their hands accurate finding-aids. Many of these lists are reproduced for sale to libraries all over the world. The value of a standard form of list cannot be overstressed, for the PRO has to cater for vast numbers of records from many different sources. Conformity to the standard does not make the task of listing any more difficult, but it does require close consultation with PRO staff. When lists are in preparation, therefore, there should be close liaison. The IO will arrange for guidance in this work and should always be shown specimen pages of the draft list. Detailed advice is given in The Preparation of Records for Transfer.

PACKING AND LABELLING

76. The most satisfactory and economical method of packing records for transfer is to put them in container-board boxes, in which they can be kept free from dust and damage from handling. The PRO should always be consulted about packing and labelling, and will supply labels for the class codes and piece numbers, as well as the 'Closed Until...' labels. The latter provide the means of ensuring that closed records are not made available in the search rooms; and Departments are urged to state clearly and accurately on this label the year in which any record will be opened to public inspection. Boxes must be ordered from HMSO in conformity with PRO specifications. Detailed advice is given in The Preparation of Records for Transfer.

PRESERVATION IN PLACES OTHER THAN THE PRO

77. The 1958 Act provides (s.4(1)) that, if it appears to the Lord Chancellor that a place outside the PRO affords suitable facilities for the safe-keeping and preservation of records and their inspection by the public, he may, with the agreement of the authority who will be responsible for records deposited in that place, appoint it as a place of deposit as respects any class of public records

selected for permanent preservation. But, before exercising this power of appointment, he has to consult the Minister or other person, if any, who appears to him to be primarily concerned, (s.4(4)). He may also direct that public records shall be transferred from the PRO to a place of deposit so appointed or from such a place of deposit to the PRO or another place of deposit (s.4(3)).

- 78. Before appointing a place of deposit the Lord Chancellor requires to be assured that 'suitable facilities' can be provided there for the safe-keeping and the public inspection of documents. A PRO officer appointed to maintain liaison with places of deposit for public records inspects the premises and reports on the facilities available. So far as storage accommodation is concerned, he has to be satisfied that it is reasonably secure against loss or damage through depredation, damp or fire. As to consultation of records by the public, the Act (s.5(5)) enjoins the Lord Chancellor to require arrangements to be made comparable to those made in the PRO. He therefore expects the place of deposit to be able to provide accommodation in which the records can be inspected, to supervise searchers working there, and to produce readily any record which the public are entitled to see. Adequate catalogues and means of reference should also be available to the public in respect of all material which is open to inspection. Copies of all such catalogues or means of reference should be supplied to the PRO.
- 79. Appointments of places of deposit have been confined to cases where the records concerned are (1) records of certain courts or certain semi-independent local bodies which are primarily of local interest; or (2) records of certain government departments, agencies or similar bodies which provide facilities for public access to their records and have established a case, normally on grounds of research need, to continue to hold their records beyond thirty years; or (3) records demanding certain technical facilities for which the Lord Chancellor considers a place of deposit other than the Public Record Office can best serve the public interest.
- 80. The first of the categories described in the above paragraph includes various classes of departmental records which, when selected for preservation, may be more suitably kept in a local authority record office than in the PRO. An example is the records of hospitals which were taken over by the Minister of Health under the National Health Service scheme, and are now the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Social Services. The Public Records Act 1958 provides machinery for the local deposit such records, but local custodians who consider they have records suitable for depositing locally must always involve the DRO at an early stage, since the Department's approval is necessary; and the PRO must also be informed, so that the merits of each case can be considered before a recommendation is made to the Lord Chancellor.

SCOTTISH RECORDS

81. Under the Public Records (Scotland) Act, 1937, records relating 'exclusively or mainly to Scotland' may be transmitted by Government Departments to the Scottish Record Office at Edinburgh; and the Public Records Act, 1958, is kept in harmony with that enactment by s.3(8), which provides that it shall not be unlawful for the person responsible for any 'public record' to transmit it to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland or the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. (It should be pointed out here that records of any Government Department or body which is wholly or mainly in Scotland, are by the 1st schedule, paragraph 2(2)(a), of the Act of 1958 excluded from the definition of public records within the meaning of that Act). If the operations of his Department cover Scotland, a DRO should consider the desirability of transferring

records of its offices there to the Scottish Record Office and consult the memorandum given in Appendix C.

NORTHERN IRISH RECORDS

82. The position as regards public records relating to Northern Ireland is similar. There is provision under a Northern Ireland enactment—the Public Records Act, 1923—for the deposit in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland at Belfast of not only 'Northern Ireland records' (that is to say, records of organisations with respect to which the Parliament of Northern Ireland has power to make laws), but also 'Imperial records'—by which is meant records appertaining to Northern Ireland. The Public Records Act, 1958, is kept in line with that enactment both by s.3(8), noticed in the last paragraph, and by s.12(1), which declares it to be lawful for any Government Department or other body or person having the custody of public records relating to Northern Ireland to transmit them to the PRO of Northern Ireland. If therefore a Department's activities extend to Northern Ireland, the transfer of records of its branches there to the PRO at Belfast should be considered and similar action taken to that advised mutatis mutandis for Scottish records, given in Appendix C.

VII. PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE RECORDS

'THIRTY-YEAR RULE'

83. Before 1959 the availability of records in the PRO to members of the public was a matter for the discretion of the Department which transferred them, and the access rules laid down by individual Departments varied considerably, though the PRO was able to achieve some measure of uniformity. The Grigg Committee, however, recommended a general rule by which all Departmental records should be opened to public inspection after 50 years and this was implemented by section 5(1) of the 1958 Act. By the Public Records Act 1967, 30 years replaced 50 years with effect from 1 January 1968. As a result records, other than those to which the public had access before their transfer to the PRO, are not available to public inspection until they have been in existence for 30 years, but the Lord Chancellor is empowered to prescribe a longer or shorter period than 30 years with the approval or at the request of the Minister or other person primarily concerned.

84. The effect of this is that there is no restriction, after transfer, on the inspection of records previously available to the public; by which is meant material generally available that could have been seen in, say, the search room of the Companies Registration Office, or that, like the Sessional Papers of Colonial legislatures, is known to have been available in published form; but this does not apply to documents which at some time some particular members of the public have been given special permission to see. Records in the PRO which had not been made generally available to the public before their transfer are opened to inspection 30 years after their creation, unless the Lord Chancellor has prescribed a different period. The period, be it 30 years or more or less, must, where a file or other 'assembly' of papers of different dates is concerned, run (pursuant to s.10(2) of the 1958 Act) from the date of the latest paper. For example, a file opened in 1930 and not closed until 1940 would not become open to inspection until January 1971. Hence the importance of Chief Registrars and DROs ensuring that the span of a file is limited at the most to 5 years.

VARIATIONS TO THE RULE

- 85. Cases where a shorter period than 30 years is appropriate usually occur when the Department wishes for some reason to make records available to the public immediately after transfer to the PRO. In such cases the Lord Chancellor has prescribed a period of years, or even months, so short as to have the effect of permitting immediate access. For example, unpublished evidence submitted to Royal Commissions is generally made available to the public in the PRO on the day on which the Commission's Report is published.
- 86. In introducing the Public Records Bill in 1967 the Lord Chancellor mentioned categories of records for which it had been necessary to prescribe periods of closure longer than 50 years. In the light of experience of the operation of the 30-year rule the Lord Chancellor in 1970 approved the following definitions of the categories of records for which he has approved extended closure:
 - (1) Exceptionally sensitive papers, the disclosure of which would be contrary to the public interest whether on security or other grounds (including the need to safeguard the Revenue).
 - (2) Documents containing information supplied in confidence, the disclosure of which would or might constitute a breach of good faith.

- (3) Documents containing information about individuals, the disclosure of which would cause distress or embarrassment to living persons or their immediate descendants.
- 87. Applications to the Lord Chancellor for variation of the normal access rule should be made through the Records Administration Officer, who may wish to examine the records concerned in order to provide information required by the Advisory Council on Public Records to which the Lord Chancellor refers, whenever this is practicable, all questions of public access to records. The application, together with any comments made by the Advisory Council, is subsequently forwarded to the Lord Chancellor; and, if he approves, he issues an Instrument under s.5(1) of the 1958 Act, as amended by s.1 of the 1967 Act. These Instruments are not published, but are available for inter-departmental use.
- 88. Departments should bear in mind that the basic policy with regard to disclosure is that all records which it is practicable to open to the public are made available when 30 years old. A Department can easily acquire a reputation among historians for restricting access through unnecessary caution and this may lead to Parliamentary Questions or adverse comment in the Press. DROs should always explore the possibilities of seeking a notional closure of material and permitting access to those who sign an undertaking at the PRO not to make public any 'sensitive' information about individual persons.
- 89. Under the 1958 Act records which could not be opened at 50 years were generally closed until 100 years. Since the 1967 Act introduced the 30-year rule, periods of either 50 or 75 years have been prescribed in most cases, according to the degree and nature of their sensitivity.
- 90. Departmental files may often contain copies of minutes and correspondence sent for information by other departments. It is unnecessary for the departmental reviewers normally to bother the originating department about problems of sensitivity in such papers. If papers for a particular area of policy, or even an individual paper, are candidates for closure on grounds of political or commercial sensitivity, the originating department should inform other Departments likely to have related material. Any doubtful points should be referred to the Records Administration Officer. When it appears necessary the PRO will arrange meetings of DROs from departments with related interests to discuss problems of sensitivity, and the procedures for dealing with security-classified documents (see para. 54 above).
- 91. Records in the PRO which have not yet reached the age at which general access to them will be permitted may nevertheless, under s.5(4) of the Act, be produced for inspection by a person who has obtained special authority in that behalf given by an official accepted by the Lord Chancellor as qualified to give it. A letter from the Establishment Officer or an officer delegated by him for this purpose is regarded as sufficient authority to the PRO to give such special access. Some DROs may find it more convenient to requisition the records concerned and allow an individual special access in their Departments.
- 92. Access to records in places of deposit, comparable with that for records in the PRO, is afforded by virtue of s.5(5) of the 1958 Act.

ACCESS TO RECORDS IN DEPARTMENTS

93. Some Departments are under pressure by individual members of the public to permit them to inspect, for research or other purposes, records on some particular subject of a date too recent for them to be due for transfer to the PRO or even for them to have been reviewed. There is generally a disposition

to treat such requests as sympathetically as possible, and in some cases the nature of the Department's work enables it to follow the liberal policy which the Fulton Report recommends in paras. 277–280. Other Departments, for reasons of security or confidentiality, cannot entertain them. If such a request is referred to him, a DRO will be well advised to bear in mind that allowing one person to see records will often lead to others making similar requests which are difficult to refuse; and that the granting of a request by one Department may embarrass other Departments by establishing a claim to refer to allied records of the same date. Moreover, the checking of files for anything of a secret or confidential nature is often a troublesome business and the physical separation of such material can be difficult.

94. Departments may always safeguard themselves by requiring privileged searchers to submit a typescript of any material they wish to publish. DROs should warn such searchers that certain of the records may be destroyed subsequently and that new references will be given to the records later transferred to the PRO.

VIII. PHOTOGRAPHS, CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS, SOUND RECORDINGS AND MACHINE-READABLE RECORDS

STATUS UNDER THE ACT

95. The position under the Public Records Act of photographs, cinematograph films, sound recordings and machine-readable records held by Departments is covered by the interpretation clause: s.10(1) declares that in the Act 'records' includes not only written records but records conveying information by any other means whatsoever.

PHOTOGRAPHS

96. Still photographs will be dealt with under the same arrangements as written records; that is to say, the decision which are to be preserved will be taken by the Department concerned in consultation with the appropriate IO, and those selected for preservation will be transmitted to the PRO.

CINEMATOGRAPH FILMS

- 97. The Grigg Report recommended that records in the form of cinematograph film that are within the sphere of interest of the Imperial War Museum should continue to be sent there. Other Government films which are to be preserved permanently would be handed over to the National Film Archive, as agent of the PRO.
- 98. Instructions for the reporting, review and transfer of departmental film holdings were issued by the Treasury in a letter to Establishment Officers of 11 August 1958. Those selected for preservation go to the Imperial War Museum, if they illustrate any aspect of the two World Wars, other operations in which Commonwealth forces have been engaged since August 1914, and other subjects primarily of military interest. Otherwise they go to the National Film Archive under an arrangement agreed by the Keeper of Public Records with the British Film Institute under s.2(4)(f) of the Act, which authorises him to make arrangements for the separate housing of films and other records which have to be kept under special conditions.
- 99. The procedure for reporting, review and transfer is as follows. Departments should send to the PRO in duplicate particulars of all films, as and when they are made, so that an early assessment can be made of their value and instructions issued for the disposal of those which are obviously of only short-term usefulness. A printed form (supplies of which can be obtained from the IO) should be used for this purpose, unless a different mode of furnishing the particulars has been specially arranged. If it is considered undesirable that any information at all should be disclosed of a 'security-classified' film, steps should nevertheless be taken to keep particulars of it on record within the Department. These arrangements are designed to ensure that films will, as soon as they are no longer required for departmental use, either be destroyed or, if selected for preservation, sent forthwith to the Imperial War Museum or the National Film Archive, DROs should bear in mind the possibility that departmental requirements may be met by retaining for use one or more projection copies, while transferring at the earliest moment to the Museum or the Archive a master copy of a film selected for preservation, i.e. either the original negative, a positive duping print or a duplicate negative. If it is essential for Departments to retain master material

in addition to projection copies, it is important to ensure that the film is stored in the best possible conditions of temperature and humidity. Advice on the technical aspects of film storage should be sought through the PRO.

- 100. The selection arrangements agreed with the Imperial War Museum are as follows. Films will be reported by Departments to the PRO graded in three categories, viz, 'A' (worthy of preservation), 'B' (possibly worthy of preservation—depending on the amount of similar material already kept), and 'C' (not worth preserving). The PRO will forward one copy of the form to the Imperial War Museum for appraisal. The Museum will inform the PRO of its verdict on each film; this will then be passed on as a recommendation to the Department, after the PRO has done any cross-checking necessary to eliminate duplication, establish ownership of master material, etc.
- 101. A different procedure has been agreed with the National Film Archive. No initial departmental grading is asked for, but Departments should indicate on report forms all relevant information which will assist in evaluation. The PRO will forward one copy to the Archive. Consultations will then take place between the Department, the PRO and the Archive with a view to grading the ilms and making joint recommendations to the appropriate National Film Archive Selection Committee (normally the History or the Science Selection Committee). The PRO, and if necessary the Department, will be represented at the meeting when the Committee makes its decision.

SOUND RECORDINGS

102. These will be dealt with under the same arrangements as written records. But the possibility of their extended use in the future led the Grigg Committee to advise that developments in this field should be watched. At present they are only exceptionally used by Departments for other than ephemeral purposes; and it will be possible in most cases to dispose of them summarily at an early date by their inclusion on a Disposal List. Special care is however necessary to prevent the physical deterioration of any sound recordings which may have long-term value; and, in particular, the longevity of those in the form of magnetic tape is uncertain. If, therefore, any sound recordings are held which are thought to be candidates for preservation, their existence should be reported without delay, so that advice can be obtained about their safe keeping.

MACHINE-READABLE RECORDS

103. The increasing use of the computer has led to the problem of selection and preservation of public records in the form of magnetic tapes and other machine-readable media. The technical problems of preserving information of this kind and ensuring its continuing readability in the long term are being studied by the PRO and the Civil Service Department. Meanwhile it is necessary for DROs to discuss with IOs the permanent value of data recorded on magnetic tape, and to take steps to ensure that selected material is kept under the best possible conditions.

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION OF RECORDS FOR PERMANENT PRESERVATION

In considering which records should be preserved permanently it is necessary to establish appraisal criteria which are applicable to a particular Department or to particular kinds of records (see para. 37). These criteria should take into account not only the value of records for the long-term purposes of government or of the Department but also their value for much wider research needs. The following general descriptions of the main kinds of papers which should be kept permanently are intended as guidelines for use in deciding detailed appraisal standards.

- 1. Papers relating to the origins of the Department; its organisation and staffing; its functions: its dissolution, (Office notices, organisation charts, and standard set of all HQ guides and instructions to out-stations and regional offices, or bodies with which the Department is in regular contact, may be as important as files which relate to these matters).
- 2. Copies of annual and other reports.
- 3. Principal policy papers. These will include papers relating to the preparation of legislation and statutory instruments, submissions to a Minister or senior official and papers to the Cabinet or to a Cabinet Committee, together with all earlier drafts.
- 4. Selective papers relating to the implementation of policy and to changes of policy.
- 5. Sets of minutes and papers of all Departmental Committees and working parties. In the case of inter-departmental committees, the set of the Department which provided the Secretary will be the record set for permanent preservation.
- 6. Data about what the Department accomplished.
- 7. Papers relating to obsolete activities or investigations, or to abortive schemes of the Department.
- 8. Papers cited in, or noted as consulted in connexion with, official histories.
- 9. Evidences of rights or obligations of or against the Crown—title to property, claims for compensation not subject to a time limit, formal instruments such as awards, schemes, orders and sanctions.
- 10. Papers relating to a well-known public or international event or cause célèbre, or to other events which gave rise to interest or controversy on the national plane.
- 11. Papers which relate directly or indirectly to trends or developments in political, social, economic or other fields, particularly if they contain unpublished statistical or financial data covering a long period or a wide area.

- 12. Papers relating to the more important aspects of scientific or technical research and development.
- 13. Papers containing matters of significant regional or local interest on which it is unreasonable to expect that evidence will be available locally, or comprising synopses of such information covering the whole country or a wide area.

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC RECORDS ACT, 1958, s.4(6): REQUISITIONING RECORDS FROM THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

- 1. Departments will furnish the PRO with the names (and specimen signatures) of those officers who are authorised to sign requisitions for records. It is requested that the panel of authorised signatories be kept to a limited number, and that any changes in it be notified immediately to the PRO.
- 2. Records cannot be requisitioned by a Department other than the one by whom they were transferred to the PRO, or its successor, without a written authority from that 'parent' Department. This may be in the form of a standing authority for a certain group of records.
- 3. A requisition is to be completed and sent to the PRO for each record-required. It should be addressed to:— 'Departmental Requisitions, Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London, WC2'. Requisitions must be made out on the tickets provided by the PRO for this purpose. The PRO reference for the document should be entered on the ticket; no further reference is needed.
- 4. When records are despatched, they will be accompanied by receipt tickets. These are to be signed and returned immediately.
- 5. Records requisitioned are normally despatched by the Interdepartmental Despatch Service ('IDS'), but alternative arrangements can be made if the Department's Office is not included in this service.
- 6. If any record is required urgently, a telephoned demand before 4 p.m. to Chancery Lane (to 01-405 0741, extension 48) or for records stored at Ashridge (to 044-284 2441) can be accepted, provided that a requisition ticket is despatched as soon as possible afterwards to confirm it.
- 7. When records are returned to the PRO, they are to be accompanied by return vouchers, books of which are provided by the PRO for this purpose. After checking at the PRO, the individual receipts (see para. 4 above), will be sent back to the Department as an acknowledgment of the safe return of the records.
- 8. Further supplies of requisition tickets and return books may be obtained from 'Departmental Requisitions' at the PRO.
- 9. No record held on requisition from the PRO should be altered, added to or amalgamated with any other records. If, exceptionally, an alteration is considered necessary, the PRO should be consulted before it is made.
- 10. The PRO annually sends to Departments lists of the records which they have had out on requisition for a considerable time, asking that, if it is not desired to retain them in the Department for a further period, they should be returned to the PRO. A DRO should satisfy himself that the records retained are still physically in his department, and that there is a continuing need for them.

APPENDIX C

Reference: E.47/22.

Lord Chancellor's Office, House of Lords, London, S.W.1. 10 December 1958

Dear Establishment Officer.

PUBLIC RECORDS ACT, 1958

The Public Records Act, 1958, which is largely based on recommendations of the Grigg Committee on Departmental Records (Cmd. 9163), will come into force on the 1st January, 1959.

- 2. The Act transfers from the Master of the Rolls to the Lord Chancellor the responsibility for the direction of the Public Record Office, and gives him a general responsibility for carrying out the provisions of the Act and for supervising the measures to be taken under it for the safe keeping of public records and the preservation of those which are to be kept permanently (s.1(1)).
- 3. Under the Lord Chancellor's direction the Keeper of Public Records will have charge of the Public Record Office (s.2(1)). Application for the Lord Chancellor's direction or approval, where required by the provisions of the Act, should be made through the Keeper of Public Records. The Lord Chancellor has announced his intention of appointing Sir David Evans, O.B.E., D.LITT, to this post.

Selection and Disposal of Public Records

- 4. The Act places the responsibility on Government Departments and other organisations within the scope of the Act for making arrangements for selecting those of their records which ought to be permanently preserved and for keeping them in proper conditions (s.3(1)). It further requires these arrangements to be carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records, who is responsible for co-ordinating and supervising the work of selection (s.3(2)).
- 5. A statutory duty to provide for the elimination of records no longer worth keeping is substituted for the discretionary destruction schedule procedure permitted by the Public Record Office Acts, 1838 to 1898, which are repealed by the Act of 1958.
- 6. In discharging his duties under s.3(2) (see para. 4 above), the Keeper of Public Records will follow the procedure recommended by the Grigg Committee, the principal feature of which is that papers receive First and Second Reviews. It will be recalled that this procedure is calculated to secure greater speed and economy in the work of selection as well as to improve the quality of the material preserved and to ensure that the Public Record Office receives it in a regular and orderly fashion.
- 7. The exercise of every Department's responsibility under the Act is to be in the hands of a Departmental Record Officer, responsible to the Establishment Officer for controlling the disposal and knowing the whereabouts of all its records. These Officers should, as requested by the Treasury's letter of the 17th

May, 1956, already be in post, and engaged in the preparatory work of planning the introduction of the new procedure and clearing off arrears of weeding. The Records Administration Officer and Inspecting Officers at the Public Record Office are responsible for overseeing these operations on behalf of the Keeper of Public Records. The programme for this preparatory work should be agreed in each case with the Inspecting Officer assigned to the Department. As each Department is ready to introduce the new reviewing procedure, the Inspecting Officer will join with the Departmental Record Officer in taking the final decision as to what documents should be permanently preserved, and will help him to superintend the general arrangements. This procedure is described in detail in the Guide for Departmental Record Officers, which has been circulated to Departments in a provisional form and will be followed in due course by a definitive text.

- 8. Some Departments have made substantial progress in planning their programmes in consultation with the Inspecting Officers; in a few cases, indeed, the backlog of weeding has been cleared and the new reviewing procedure is working. The five-year transitional period allowed by the Grigg Report will have expired at the end of 1961 and those Departments which have not ye made much progress should now press on.
- 9. The Act lays down that documents selected for preservation shall be sent to the Public Record Office not later than 30 years after their creation; but that their transfer may, for administrative or other special reasons, be postponed with the Lord Chancellor's approval (s.3(4)). A proposal by a Department to retain documents under this proviso should in the first instance be discussed with the appropriate Inspecting Officer. It is obvious that some Departments, which are still working over their papers, will have records which are eventually to be transferred to the Public Record Office, but which, though 30 years old, have not yet been reviewed. In such cases the Lord Chancellor's approval for deferment of transfer need not be sought before the end of the transitional period.
- 10. The Act provides that the documents in a file are to be treated for the purposes of the Act as bearing the date of the latest document (s.10(2)). This is intended as a safeguard against the premature transfer and subsequent opening to public inspection of papers filed with documents of earlier date. But, if applied to files covering too wide a span of years, it could delay unduly public access to papers more than 50 years old and also obstruct the working of the new reviewing procedure. The Public Record Office will advise Departments to provide for the regular closing of files when they reach a certain age.
- 11. Records which are not suitable for preservation should be sent for destruction as soon as they cease to be required for administrative purposes. The disposal of Government waste of this kind is the concern of H.M. Stationery Office which should be consulted about destroying documents otherwise than under the normal arrangements provided by them. Any mode of disposal other than destruction—for example, presentation to an academic institution or an overseas Government—requires the approval of the Lord Chancellor (s.3(6)).
- 12. Records of a Department or body which is wholly or mainly concerned with Scottish affairs or which carries on its activities wholly or mainly in Scotland are excluded from the definition of public records (para. 2(2)(a) of the First Schedule), and the 1958 Act does not apply to them. However, public records, as defined in the Act, which relate exclusively or mainly to Scotland or to

Northern Ireland may lawfully be transferred to the Scottish Record Office or the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, as the case may be (s.3(8) and s.12(1)). Nevertheless the Lord Chancellor will, in future, have a statutory responsibility for all public records and, to ensure that transfers of public records to Scotland and Northern Ireland are governed by agreed and consistent principles, he wishes Departments to seek the concurrence of the Public Record Office, whose officers are in close touch with the Record Offices in Edinburgh and Belfast, before transferring records to either place.

The Deposit of Public Records Locally

13. The Lord Chancellor can authorise the transfer of public records to places other than the Public Record Office, if it is thought that, for some reason such as their technical nature or their special local interest, they would be more suitably preserved there (s.4(1)). The Public Record Office should be consulted about proposals to make such transfers, since the Lord Chancellor's consent will depend on his being satisfied that the proposed place of deposit is suitable and that the authority responsible for it agrees. In general, the Lord Chancellor will be prepared to consider favourably applications for the deposit locally of bublic records of local organisations.

Requisitioning of Public Records

14. Public records transferred to the Public Record Office or other appointed place of deposit will be temporarily returned if the Department by whom they were transferred requires them again (s,4(6)).

Access to Public Records

- 15. The Act provides that records transferred shall be open to inspection by the public when 50 years old unless the transferring Department and the Lord Chancellor agree that access shall be given at an earlier or later age (s.5(1)). This does not apply to documents which have been open to inspection before transfer; they will continue to be open after transfer regardless of their age.
- 16. Access can be withheld or made subject to special conditions to be agreed with the Lord Chancellor, if the transferring Department considers that for reasons of confidentiality this is desirable (s.5(2)).
- 17. If Departments about to transmit records wish that the normal arrangements for public access to documents 50 years old should not apply to those records, they should consult with the Public Record Office, so that the Lord Chancellor's approval may be obtained for the special arrangement desired. In the case of records already in the Public Record Office the Departments severally concerned have been asked by the Secretary of the Public Record Office, in a letter of the 13th November, to notify the Public Record Office if they cannot agree to the public being given access to any of them.
- 18. This letter is addressed to all Departments (other than the Scottish Departments) and to certain of the organisations listed in Part II of the Table in the First Schedule to the Act. It is not being sent to the bodies and establishments listed in Part I of that Table; the responsible Departments are, therefore, requested to communicate with them.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) HUME BOGGIS-ROLFE

The Establishment Officer.

OPERATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958, s.3(8): TRANSFER TO SCOTTISH RECORD OFFICE

A SER SERVICE ESS.

This memorandum, first issued by the PRO, 7 October 1960 (Ref. 212/2), relates to documents which are public records within the definition laid down by the Public Records Act 1958, but which, as records relating exclusively or mainly to Scotland, could under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937, s.5(1), and the Public Records Act 1958, s.3(8), be transmitted to the Scotlish Record Office. It is to be noted that records of a Government Department or body which is wholly or mainly concerned with Scotlish affairs, or which carries on its activities wholly or mainly in Scotland, are by virtue of paragraph 2(2)(a) of the First Schedule to the Public Records Act not public records for the purposes of this Act.

- 1. Departments will in general be recommended by the PRO to transmit to the Scottish Record Office public records selected for permanent preservation in offices having the status of a Scottish headquarters*, and special groups of public records entirely or mainly concerned with Scotland, such as papers of royal commissions on Scottish subjects, or classes of returns relating only to Scotland.
- 2. Departments not willing to follow such a recommendation will be asked to state their reasons.
- 3. Any decisions in this connection will be notified to the Scottish Record Office as soon as possible.
- 4. Where a Department wishes to retain in its custody a class of records selected for permanent preservation and where that class contains some which might reasonably be expected to come to the Scottish Record Office, the Scottish Record Office will be fully consulted and given an opportunity to make representations before any final decision is made.
- 5. The rules to be prescribed for the review of public records which it has been decided, if worthy of preservation, to transmit to the Scottish Record Office, including the disposal list authorising block disposal of papers in specified classes on reaching a stated age, will be submitted in draft to the Scottish Record Office for observations.
- 6. Public records which it has been decided, if worthy of preservation, to transmit to the Scottish Record Office will on coming up for second review be submitted for inspection by officers of the Scottish Record Office.

- 8. The Scottish Record Office will withhold public records transmitted there from public inspection until they have been in existence 30 years or such other period longer or shorter as the Lord Chancellor has prescribed for records of the same class. To facilitate this the Scottish Record Office will be supplied with copies of instruments made by the Lord Chancellor regarding access to public records.
- 9. Departments depositing public records in the Scottish Record Office will have the same facilities for requisitioning their records as they have in the PRO. (The Public Records (Scotland) Act, s.5(3), gives depositing bodies the right to requisition records transmitted by them to the Scottish Record Office).
- 10. The Scottish Record Office will in all cases deal with a DRO as being the officer responsible for the Department's records, and will not initially approach the Scottish officers of the Department direct on matters concerning the review and disposal of its records. The staff of the Scottish Record Office will maintain the closest liaison with the Inspecting Officers of the PRO.
- 11. Where public records are transmitted to the Scottish Record Office, copies of lists or indexes prepared in connection with the transfer will be supplied to the PRO.
- 12. The PRO will so far as practicable supply to the Scottish Record Office copies of any list or index of records containing material relating to Scotland which have been transmitted to the PRO.

^{*}But where it is evident that the Scottish establishment of a Department is simply part of a U.K. network a decision by the Department to transmit its records to the PRO will be accepted, provided no inconsistency of practice is involved. The possibility of transfer to the Scottish Record Office will however be brought to the notice of such Departments and its suitability considered in all cases.

- 1. The Intermediate Repository at Hayes is for the storage (usually at lower cost than that incurred by storage in other buildings) of non-current records awaiting review or destruction. A DRO requiring accommodation for records there should discuss his requirements in the first place with the IO responsible for his department. If allocation of space is agreed, the DRO should make direct arrangements for the transfer with the Officer in Charge, Public Record Office, Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex (Tel. 01-573 3831).
- 2. Arrangements will have to be made for any production to a Department of records stored at Hayes. Major user-departments maintain their own staff of paperkeepers for this purpose; for others the PRO is able to undertake this service.
- 3. To save unnecessary movement of records, a number of Departments arrange for Second Review to be conducted at Hayes. DROs should, however, bear in mind that office accommodation on the site is limited.
- 4. Since Hayes is an enclosed site, departmental staff will be required to show passes issued by the PRO to gain access. All staff are subject to the general rules made for the site and must be thoroughly conversant with the fire regulations. A Canteen is available.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

In theory there would be no limit to the amount of background reading which it would be desirable for a DRO to undertake to fit himself for the tasks of reviewing records. New books on modern and contemporary history, biographies and memoirs of prominent figures, detailed studies of particular events and broad surveys of key problems come thick and fast from the press. In practice no one can do more than read a select number of them and be aware of certain others for reference purpose. Each DRO will find the relevant volumes in the 'New Whitehall' series of departmental histories (Allen and Unwin) and in the civil and military series of 'The Official History of the Second World War' HMSO) invaluable.

The dozen recent books and articles listed below form the basis of a useful reference shelf for a DRO. Other relevant titles can be found by consulting Section C of John Roach, A Bibliography of Modern History (Cambridge University Press, 1968). It is often possible to obtain from within a Department back volumes of such annuals as The Statesmen's Year Book, The Annual Register and Whitaker's Almanack.

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