THE MANAGEMENT OF OFFICIAL RECORDS
IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN
SRI LANKA 1802-1990

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the management patterns of public records in Sri Lanka and their impact on administration during the period 1802 to 1990. This covers the period of British colonial administration and four decades of the post independence era.

The study shows that during British colonial administration the administrators did not have an adequate understanding of the necessity of developing a proper record-keeping system to support the efficiency of the administration. The failure of repeated attempts at improving the management of current records testifies to the shortfalls entrenched in the system such as the inadequacy of suitable training for the subordinate staff and the lack of attention to the semi-current phase of records. These were not properly detected by the authorities even up to the date of independence. A significant drawback of the system was that its scope was not extended to cover the entire life cycle of the records. It was assumed that semi-current and non-current records would not be useful to the administration. This situation led to the accumulation of records in the creating agencies which in turn caused long term problems in terms of retrieval and dissemination of information.

The necessity of an archives was recognised in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, once established the aim of the Archives was to retain records of the Dutch administration for current administrative
requirements. Therefore, the records of the British colonial administration were not transferred to the Archives until the last decade of the colonial rule. Even after independence the Archives staff were primarily concerned with the appraisal, accessioning and disposal of non-current records; insufficient attention was paid to semi-current records. The lack of trained professionals, inadequate funding and narrowly defined work programmes hindered the development of a comprehensive archives.

Since independence, changes in the country's major political, constitutional, social and administrative systems have not been paralleled by the development of systems to manage public records. An examination of the record-keeping practices in the public administration has revealed the fact that the bureaucrats have not yet grasped the necessity of proper management of records and their immediate contribution to the efficiency of the administration. They have still not considered the consequence of the lack of an integrated policy for the management of records.

The study concludes by stressing the necessity for new legislation, the creation of a separate record service, reorganisation of the Archives and training for public administration personnel. It is suggested that records managers be recruited to the public administration in order to bridge the prevailing gap between the archivists and the administrators. They should be trained and placed at the public institutions as officers responsible for managing
records at the current and semi-current phases. On the whole, it is argued that improvement in all phases of the life cycle of records is vital for the efficiency of the public administration and for the advancement of the country.
CONTENTS

Abstract................................................3

Contents................................................6
List of Figures........................................10
List of Maps...........................................11
Acknowledgements.......................................12
Definitions............................................13

Introduction...........................................16

1 ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY: 1802-1990..................21

1.1 BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION: 1802-1948....21

1.1.1 Administration of the Colony 1802-1948........21
1.1.2 The Role of the Colonial Office in the Administration of Ceylon..................32
1.1.3 Growth of the Legislature....................34
1.1.4 Development of the Judiciary...............37
1.1.5 The Judicial Administration...............39

1.2 THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD: 1948-1990......41

1.2.1 Parliamentary System of Government........41
1.2.2 Administrative Structure................43
1.2.3 Heads of Ministries and Departments.......44
1.2.4 Kachcheri Administration................45
1.2.5 The Judiciary..........................48
1.2.6 The Judicial Administration...............49

2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCHIVES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF NON-CURRENT RECORDS: 1802-1948........51

2.1 OVERVIEW........................................51
2.2 RECORDS OF THE DUTCH ADMINISTRATION........51
2.3 MANAGEMENT OF BRITISH RECORDS.................56

2.3.1 Custody of British Records...............56
2.3.2 The Destruction of Valueless Records in Government Offices........57
2.3.3 Regulations for the Destruction of Court Records...............61
2.4 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1</td>
<td>The Objectives of the Commission</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2</td>
<td>Accommodation for the Commission</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3</td>
<td>Publication of Valuable Records</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4</td>
<td>Activities of the Commission</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5</td>
<td>The Commission's Record Survey Programme</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.6</td>
<td>Facilities for Research in the Archives</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.7</td>
<td>Colonial Office Instructions on Record-Keeping</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 THE MANAGEMENT OF CURRENT AND SEMI-CURRENT RECORDS: 1802-1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>OVERVIEW</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>THE COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>Administrative Structure</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Record-keeping Practices</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3</td>
<td>Committee to Inquire into the Colonial Secretary's Office</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4</td>
<td>Colonial Secretary's Instructions to the Heads of Departments on Handling Correspondence</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>KACHCHERIS OR PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRES</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1</td>
<td>Administrative Structure</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2</td>
<td>Procedure for Handling Correspondence</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3</td>
<td>Head Clerk's Proposal for Efficient Handling of Correspondence: January 1888</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.4</td>
<td>Assistant Auditor General's Proposals for Record-Keeping:</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 1888</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>TURNER'S STUDIES IN HANDLING CURRENT RECORDS</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>Turner's Study on Office Systems in Kachcheris</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2</td>
<td>A Case Study of Record Systems in the Colonial Secretary's Office in Turner's Period</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3</td>
<td>Evaluation of Turner's Findings</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 OVERVIEW...........................................106
4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCHIVES........................106
   4.2.1 Establishment of the Government
       Archives...........................................106
   4.2.2 The Archives' Move to Colombo..................110
   4.2.3 Kandy Branch................................111
   4.2.4 Access to the National Archives
       Holdings............................................112
   4.2.5 The Enactment of the National
       Archives Law........................................114
   4.2.6 Archives Advisory Council......................115
   4.2.7 The Presidential Archives......................116
4.3 PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ARCHIVISTS.....................119
   4.3.1 The Archives Work Programme.....................119
   4.3.2 The Staffing Structure of the
       Archives..........................................121
   4.3.3 Training........................................126
5 MANAGEMENT OF SEMI-CURRENT AND NON-CURRENT
   RECORDS: 1948-1990................................129
5.1 OVERVIEW............................................129
5.2 LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE DISPOSAL
   OF RECORDS...........................................130
   5.2.1 Overview........................................130
   5.2.2 Regulations and Laws..........................131
5.3 THE APPLICATION OF DISPOSAL LAWS AND
   REGULATIONS..........................................143
   5.3.1 Overview........................................143
   5.3.2 Conditions of the Record Rooms.................144
   5.3.3 Disposal of Records...........................154
5.4 THE INTRODUCTION OF RETENTION SCHEDULES..............167
   5.4.1 Overview........................................167
   5.4.2 Schedules for House Keeping Records...........168
   5.4.3 Scheduling of Records in the
       Ministries and Departments......................170
   5.4.4 Scheduling of Kachcheri Records..............172
   5.4.5 Scheduling of Court Records...................174
   5.4.6 Evaluation of Kachcheri and Court
       Schedules..........................................176
5.5 PROBLEMS OF ACCESSIONING NON-CURRENT RECORDS .............................. 178
5.5.1 Overview ........................................ 178
5.5.2 Ministries and Departments ......................... 178
5.5.3 The Kachcheris .................................. 184
5.5.4 The Courts ..................................... 185

6 THE MANAGEMENT OF CURRENT RECORDS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING AND THE GENERAL TREASURY: 1948-1990 ........................................ 187
6.1 OVERVIEW ........................................ 187
6.2 RECORD-KEEPING PRACTICES IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE .................. 187
6.2.1 Impact of Post-Independence Administrative Reforms ................................ 187
6.2.2 C S Chinniah's Approach to Record-keeping Problems .................................. 191
6.2.3 Role of the Organisation and Methods Division of the Treasury ....................... 194
6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING AND THE GENERAL TREASURY ........................................ 194
6.3.1 Overview ........................................ 194
6.3.2 Administrative Background ......................... 195
6.3.3 Functions and Staff Structures ...................... 196
6.4 RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEMS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING AND THE GENERAL TREASURY ........................................ 203
6.4.1 Overview ........................................ 203
6.4.2 Mail Handling in the Ministry and the Treasury .................................. 204
6.4.3 File Management in the Ministry and the Treasury .................................. 207
6.5 THE NEED FOR A RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ................................ 218

7 CONCLUSION ........................................ 223
BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................ 235
APPENDICES ........................................ 246
FIGURES ........................................ 299
MAPS ............................................... 302
LIST OF FIGURES

1 Administrative Chart of the Department of National Archives

2 Administrative Chart of the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the General Treasury

3 Proposed National Records Administration and Its Relation to Record Creating Agencies
LIST OF MAPS

Map I  Showing Maritime Areas of Ceylon Under British Administration: 1796-1815; and Kandyan Provinces up to 1815

Map II  Showing Provinces of Ceylon: 1832

Map III  Showing Provinces and Districts of Ceylon: 1950

Map IV  Showing Districts with their Main Towns: 1969
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DEFINITIONS

In Sri Lanka the word 'public' is used to denote either 'state' or 'government' depending on the context which it is used. In this study the term "public" is used in relation to other words as in the following expressions, for instance 'public service' 'public administration' 'public servant' and 'public record'.

The term 'public service' as used here "refers to all organisations and activities financed out of public revenue and the services which are financed by private individuals and private funds do not come within this category. The use of public funds remains the main criterion."\(^1\) This criterion is appropriate for the post independence period of the study. Although it is not possible to use it for the period of British colonial administration with quite the same meaning, the same term has been used throughout the study.

The term 'public servant' has been used as defined in the 1947 constitution of Sri Lanka. It defines a public servant as one who is holding office under the Crown in respect of the Government of the Island. This definition is not appropriate to the period after 1972 since British sovereignty was relinquished with the introduction of the Democratic Socialist Republican Constitution. For this period 'public servant' means an officer who holds an office in the public service.

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\(^1\) Warnapala, Wiswa, Civil Service Administration in Ceylon: A Study in Bureaucratic Adoption, Colombo, Department of Cultural Affairs, 1974, p vii
The term 'public record' is used as defined in the National Archives Law, thus:

'public record' or 'record' means any original or copy of any manuscript, paper, letter, register, report, book, magazine, map, chart, plan, drawing, picture, photograph or any other record or part thereof either handwritten, drawn, printed or produced in any other way on paper or any other material except granite and officially received or produced or prepared in any public office in the course of its official functions....or received in any public office.²

The term 'public records' can be used to cover the records of the central government, statutory bodies and local government institutions.

The words 'administration' and 'management' are used to convey different meanings. The word 'administration' is used to mean 'looking after things' or 'taking charge of' and one simple definition would be "getting things done....directing and coordinating things on behalf of other people or authorities."³ In this study it is mainly connected with the public administration. The word 'management' is used in the sense of a practical process of getting things done efficiently.

The phrase 'staff officer' means an officer who holds a responsible position in a public institution. According to the most recently issued Establishment Code (1985) "'Staff Officer' means an officer the initial of whose annual salary is Rs.27000/= p.a. [per annum] or above and

² National Archives Law No 48 of 1973, Section 24, Colombo, Govt. print, 1973, p 11
whose annual increment is Rs. 600/= and above."
INTRODUCTION

Scope of the Thesis

This study examines the management patterns of official records in Sri Lanka and their impact on public administration. It explores the management of records in all phases of their lifecycle during the period of British Colonial administration from 1802 to 1948 and the first four decades of the independence era from 1948 to 1990. The two hundred year period provides an opportunity to analyse the causes of recurring problems from an historical perspective and the reasons for the failure to develop solutions.

The foundations of the present administrative and constitutional structures of the country as well as of Sri Lanka's record-keeping systems were laid by the British colonial administration. Since independence little attention has been given to the management of official records in the administrative reforms which have been carried out in the country, nor has this area been analysed in studies on office management or in previous academic studies.

The thesis is based on research carried out in the Sri Lanka National Archives, using original records and printed sources; on work experience as an archivist in the Archives during the last sixteen years and on record surveys; and field work in public institutions in Sri Lanka. A wider range of published sources on records management and archive administration was also consulted.
Methodology

Detailed archival research was supplemented by information gathered in Sri Lanka through interviews, formal and informal discussions, attendance at meetings with staff members and direct observation of record-keeping systems. A list of officers interviewed is provided in Appendix XIV. Discussions on the field work findings were held with the Director of the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) and with the consultant on office management in the same institute.

During the study period it has been possible to develop contacts with and to consult a wide range of professionals from other countries. My participation in workshops and seminars organised by the Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers held in the Gambia in April 1990 and January 1991, in Sierra Leone in April 1991, in London in September 1991, and in Malaysia in August 1992, has helped to clarify the complex issues involved in managing modern records. It has been a privilege for an Asian archivist to have numerous opportunities, in Africa and in England, to meet administrators and archivists, lecturers and students of records studies from developing Commonwealth countries especially at the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies at University College London and at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the University of London. While working and discussing professional issues with these experts it became clear that the problems which
they faced in managing public records were not dissimilar to those in Sri Lanka. Exposure to the situation in Africa gave me confidence in analysing local issues within a wider perspective.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One concentrates on the administrative history of the island during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The aim is to observe the development of the country's administration both constitutionally and legally as a basis for analysing the development of its record systems.

Chapter Two traces the establishment of the Archives and the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The need to establish an Archives for the safe custody of valuable records was not recognised until the beginning of the twentieth century. The original purpose of establishing the Archives was to preserve Dutch administrative records for use by current administrators. Therefore, until the 1940s the Archives did not receive records from the British colonial administration.

Chapter Three examines practices for keeping current records during the period of British colonial administration and reviews administrators' attempts to improve the prevailing systems. It reviews the repeated attempts to improve the management of records for the efficiency of the administration and notes that these efforts were restricted to the current phase of records and
were directed to administrators' immediate needs rather than to the longer term aim of establishing management systems.

Chapters Four and Five concentrate on record-keeping problems resulting from administrators' and archivists' failure to manage semi-current and non-current records. The administrators assumed that these records were of little use to the administration, while the archivists made little headway due to their inadequate understanding of the lifecycle of records. This led to the accumulation of large quantities of non-current records within creating agencies.

Chapter Four evaluates the development of the National Archives of Sri Lanka as a separate department after independence. It looks at the National Archives Law No 48 of 1973 and the Archives' ability to implement it in terms of the staffing and organisational structure.

Chapter Five covers the management of semi-current and non-current records in relation to the laws and regulations on the disposal of records and the Archives' attempts to apply them. This chapter considers the results of the lack of systems to manage records in their semi-current phase.

Chapters Six reviews the management of current records in public institutions. Mail handling, file management, file tracking and the custody of files are reviewed. Field investigations for Chapter Six were carried out in the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the General Treasury.

The conclusion focuses on the systems and strategies required to manage official records in Sri Lanka. Neither
the administrators nor the archivists have fully understood the link between well-kept records and efficient administration. The need for training programmes for archivists, record staff and administrators is reviewed. This chapter also highlights the need for the creation of a National Records Administration to play a greater role in records management by becoming involved in the management of records from the time they are created through the semi-current phase until the time they are destroyed or reach the Archives. This should eventually lead to more efficient retrieval of current records, the release of valuable space now occupied by semi-current records and the ability to identify and preserve records of long term value to the nation.
1 ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY: 1802-1990

1.1 BRITISH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION: 1802-1948

1.1.1 Administration of the Colony

The maritime provinces of Ceylon were under European domination from 1505 to 1948. The British conquered the maritime regions of the island in 1796 and terminated 140 years of Dutch rule. Under the terms of Clause Four of the Treaty of Surrender¹, the Dutch handed over their records to the British.

The British conquest was planned and executed by the troops of the British East India Company. A dual system of administration involving the Company and the Crown was established with the captured territories between 1798 and 1801. The administration was headed by a governor who was appointed by the Crown and subject to the authority of the Governor General in Council in India and of the British East India Company. The British East India Company appointed officials to control revenue collection and other matters pertaining to the economy. This system of administration ended in 1801, when the East India Company's involvement with the Ceylonese administration was discontinued.²

¹ Sri Lanka National Archives (hereafter SLNA) 7/2343 See Map of Ceylon (Map I) showing the maritime areas under British administration up to 1815. De Silva, K M, University of Ceylon History of Ceylon, Vol 3, Map II, Colombo, Apothecaries Co., 1973

² De Silva, Colvin R, Ceylon Under the British Occupation, 1795-1833, Vol 1, Colombo, Apothecaries Co., 1941, p 233
On January 1st 1802 the maritime provinces of Ceylon became a full Crown colony, with a governor appointed as the sole administrator and the agent of the Crown for a period of five years. He was responsible to the British Parliament for the maintenance of law and order and satisfactory government within the colony. The major theme of British policy from 1801 to 1815 was to develop a strategy for the annexation of the Kandyan Provinces, a goal which the Portuguese and the Dutch had failed to achieve for almost three hundred years. With the cession of the Kandyan Provinces, under the declaration of the Kandyan Convention on the 2nd March 1815, British rule was extended throughout the island.

The Kandyan Provinces had been ruled by native kings up to 1815. For this reason, the provinces were administered separately from the maritime provinces. The newly acquired Kandyan provinces were placed under a Board of Commissioners in October 1816. For the purpose of administration these provinces were divided into five administrative divisions known as agencies. Each agency was headed by an agent. In 1818 a rebellion broke out against

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3 Frederic North, was appointed as governor in 1802 and served until 1805. He had been functioning governor in Ceylon under the British East India Company from 1798

4 SLNA 6/12345

5 See Map I showing the Kandyan Provinces

6 The Kandyan Board of Commissioners was appointed under the chairmanship of John D'Oyly, who was the chief architect of the annexation of the Kandyan Provinces
British rule, and after the suppression of the rebellion, administrative changes were introduced.\textsuperscript{7} As a result, the separate administrative organisation for the Kandyan provinces remained in force until 1833.\textsuperscript{8} Then the two administrative systems in the maritime and the Kandyan provinces were brought together under the governor, who exercised legislative, executive and judicial powers. He formulated policy with the aid of an executive council composed of civil and military officials who advised him on important policy matters.

Other important administrative institutions set up in this period were the Board of Revenue and Commerce (1801-1808) and the Office of the Revenue Commissioner (1808-1833). In 1801, Governor North established the Board of Revenue with the chief secretary as president and five other senior officers as members to supervise the work of revenue collection. He abolished the position of revenue collectors\textsuperscript{9} and appointed agents of revenue and commerce to eight districts in the maritime areas which were under British authority. One or two assistants were placed in each district to help the agent.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{7} Ceylon Government Gazette No 897, 28.11.1818, Colombo, Govt. print., pp 1-3
\textsuperscript{9} Collectors were appointed for revenue collection during the period of British East India Company administration (1796 to 1802)
The Provincial Administration and the Cinnamon and Pearl Fishery Departments were the main revenue departments. They were directly under the control of the Revenue Board. This was replaced by the Office of the Revenue Commissioner in 1808. As a result the agents were replaced by collectors under the control of the commissioner of revenue. In 1833, the commissioner of revenue was replaced by the auditor and accountant general and controller of revenue. The office of controller of revenue was revived in 1907 and continued up to 1948.

The governor guided the administrative machinery of the colony through the office of the colonial secretary, the highest ranking civil servant and the central coordinating officer of the entire administration. He was responsible for implementing the policy decisions of the governor and his executive council. He was the focal point of the internal administration\(^\text{11}\) and operated from Colombo, the seat of governmental authority. According to Governor Maitland\(^\text{12}\) "...the Chief Secretary is in truth the organ of government on all occasions."\(^\text{13}\) The first person to hold this position was Hugh Cleghorn, who was also keeper of

\(^{11}\) This post was designated as the colonial secretary by the Colebrooke Commission reforms in 1833 and once again was designated as chief secretary after the Donoughmore Commission reforms in 1931

\(^{12}\) Maitland was appointed as Governor of Ceylon in 1805 and served until 1812

\(^{13}\) Maitland's Instructions to Heads of Departments, Maitland to Castelreagh, 17.8.1808, C O 54/28
Government policies were executed by the civil servants. Governor North proposed the establishment of a civil service to suit the local requirements in Ceylon. This was accepted by the secretary of state for the colonies and a civil service was established in 1802. At this initial stage, recruitment to the civil service was under the direct control of the secretary of state for the colonies.

Civil servants had special training to prepare them to hold powerful and influential positions in government, both in the central administration at Colombo and in the administration of the provinces. Thus, they became the ruling class of the country. According to Raby,

"In the colonial bureaucracy, power was the privilege of a class of men whose authority was derived from the rules and regulations of the colonial civil service."

Recurrent financial deficits in the colony led the Imperial Treasury to press the Colonial Office to take action.

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precautions to avoid over-spending. As a result, the Commission of Eastern Inquiry, or the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, was appointed to enquire into the colony's financial problems. The commission carried out its inquiries in Ceylon during the period 1827 to 1831. Its recommendations led to the establishment of a laissez-faire state or the government's abstention from interference with individual action especially in commerce. The commissioners, like the colonial policy makers, believed that this would lead to a proper solution to the financial problems in the country.

The commission's recommendations on administration resulted in the abolition of some offices while creating new ones with a view to minimising government expenditure of the colony's budget. Further, the commission proposed reducing the salaries of government officials including the governor. The commission was of the view that it was necessary to have high salaries to attract efficient civil servants to Ceylon. To compensate for the reduction of salaries, civil servants were allowed to take part in private enterprises in addition to their official duties.

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18 The senior member William George Colebrooke, arrived in Ceylon on 11.4.1829 and undertook the investigation of the administration of the colony. Charles Hay Cameron arrived in the island on 30.4.1830 and examined the judiciary. They made three main reports to Parliament covering administration, revenue and judicial establishments and procedures in Ceylon.

19 De Silva, Colvin R, Ceylon Under the British Occupation, 1795-1833, Vol 1, Colombo, Apothecaries Co., 1941, Schedule no 1, p 597

20 Ibid, Schedule no 8, p 603
This led to criticisms of the activities of civil servants in subsequent years.

Another important proposal of the commission was to relax the exclusive nature of the civil service and open it by competition to qualified local people. After 1856 the Civil Service Commission conducted open competitive examinations for all administrative posts in Britain, in the Indian Civil Service and in the Eastern Cadet Service serving Ceylon, Malaya and Hong Kong. This enabled qualified local people to get into the civil service.

The acceptance of the Colebrooke Commission's recommendations on provincial administration, especially the recommendation that the separate existence of the Kandyan provinces be terminated and that they be amalgamated with the maritime provinces, led to a single unified administrative structure for the whole island. Five provinces, known as government agencies or administrative divisions, were established under government agents. These agents, appointed instead of collectors, had a wide range of powers and were the key figures in the administration of the provinces. The five agencies were each divided into several assistant agencies, depending on the size, population and nature of the work involved in


23 See Map II showing provinces of Ceylon: 1833
the respective districts.

In 1845, North Western Province was created as the sixth province. Between 1873 and 1889, another three Kandyan provinces were created by Governor Gregory, bringing the total to nine. The administrative divisions then remained unchanged until the end of British colonial administration. This system of provincial administration marked the first systematic and successful attempt to break away from the Dutch pattern of colonial administration which had been mainly concerned with revenue collection. Thereafter, there was a move towards a more organised form of government with civil and revenue administration. Thus, the collector's office, which continued to be known locally as the kachcheri, was converted into the office of the government agent, becoming the focal point of the provincial administration.

The government agents performed the functions of departments such as Police and Education in the provinces. The major drawback of this administrative arrangement was that it did not give enough flexibility to the heads of departments to carry out their professional work independently of the kachcheri administration.

24 Gregory was appointed as governor of Ceylon in 1872 and served until 1879

25 See Map III showing provinces: 1946

26 This is a Hindustani word initially used for the Revenue Collector's Office

27 Wijeweera, B S, Colonial Administration System in Transition, Dehiwala (Colombo), Tisara Prakasakayo, 1984, p 7
Another feature of the restructured administration was the creation of a general clerical service to assist the civil, judicial, technical and professional services. Some departments, namely Posts, Railways and Customs had their own clerical services and trained their clerical officers according to the specific requirements of the department. The clerical service was predominantly manned by Ceylonese staff. Instead of property qualifications, which had been the pattern in the past, educational attainments and a good knowledge of English were considered essential for the performance of clerical duties. The clerical officers attended to the routine work of the government offices.\textsuperscript{28} They were the custodians of files on a day to day basis although there is no evidence to indicate that they received training in this area.

The first significant change in the structure of the British colonial provincial administration occurred in the first three decades of the twentieth century when departments such as Police and Education appointed provincial representatives to take over certain functions from the government agents. This was an attempt to meet the public requirements in a much more organised and responsible way. The government agent's role as the general administrator of the entire district had not allowed him to go into depth on specific issues. Under the new

arrangement, administrators could pay more attention to the issues which arose in the individual departments.

The recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission\(^29\) of 1931 led to further changes in the colonial administrative structure. Three principal officers of state, namely the chief secretary, legal secretary and financial secretary were responsible for the respective areas of their activities. The members of the State Council were divided into seven committees, each of which selected its own chairman. These chairmen took over the work formerly carried out by the Colonial Secretariat and in effect functioned as ministers\(^30\) for Home Affairs; Agriculture and Lands; Local Administration; Health; Labour, Industry and Commerce; Education; and Communication and Works. The subjects and functions of the seven executive committees and the departments under them were defined in 1931.\(^31\) (The State Council is discussed in Section 1.1.4.) The government agents were placed under the general control of the Executive Committee of Home Affairs. This ended their

\(^{29}\) The commission was appointed on 6 August 1927 under the chairmanship of Earl of Donoughmore with Sir Matthew Nathan, Sir Jeoffrey Butler and Dr Drummond Shiels as members. Its aim was to inquire into the difficulties which had arisen in the colony's administration and to submit proposals to revise the constitution

\(^{30}\) Public Service Regulations published in Government Gazette No 7865 of 30.6.1931, Colombo, Govt. print., 1931, pp 15-24

\(^{31}\) A statement of the administrative procedures prescribed for the transaction of business with which executive committees were concerned was published in the Ceylon Government Gazette, No 7858, 5.6.1931, Colombo, Govt. print., 1931, pp 11-14
direct dealings with the colonial secretary which had been in practice for nearly a hundred years.

The public service was reorganised in line with the Donoughmore Commission reforms. In compliance with the above reforms new regulations were gazetted on the administration of the Public Service. The Soulbury commissioners recommended changes in the Public Service Commission, which was appointed in compliance with Article 86 of the Ceylon (State Council) Order in Council, 1931. The chairman and members of the commission were to be appointed by the governor general as a means of maintaining its impartiality. The commissioner was to be a retired public servant or, if he was a public servant, the membership of the commission would be his last appointment in the Public Service of Ceylon.

The new ministries were empowered to restructure the administrative units they controlled. This led to a rapid

32 The Administration of the Public Service, The Ceylon Government Gazette, No 7865, 30.6.1931, Colombo, Govt. print, 1931

33 Lord Soulbury was the chairman of the Special Commission on Constitutional Reforms of Ceylon. The appointment of the commission was announced on 20 September 1944. The commission consisted of Lord Soulbury (Chairman), J F Rees and F J Burrows. They were in Ceylon from 22.12.1944 until 7.4.1945 and their report was issued on 11.7.1945

34 The Soulbury Commission's recommendations on the functions of the Public Service Commission were in section 392 of its report

growth in the number of departments. There were only forty departments in 1931, and that number had increased to ninety-two by 1948 when Ceylon became independent.

This growth reflected the expansion of state activity and locally elected ministers' active involvement in the affairs of their respective ministries. Each minister aimed to enlarge the ambit of his ministry by adding more departments. They exercised a high degree of supervision, intervention and patronage. The departments now became highly centralised and operated through their respective head offices instead of through the kachcheries in the districts.

1.1.2 The Role of the Colonial Office in the Administration of Ceylon

The Colonial Office monitored Ceylon's administration through the governor. It established an Eastern Department to deal with the Asian colonies in 1880. In 1920, the Eastern Department was divided into the Far Eastern Department and the Ceylon and Mauritius Department. During the period between the two world wars, the Colonial Office began to pay more attention to the Eastern colonies.

In reality, the governor exercised considerable authority in his own right and sometimes disregarded

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36 The administrative procedure for the transition of business pertaining to state officers was prescribed in the Government Gazette No 7859 of 5.6.1931. Those administrative procedures came into operation upon the first meeting of the State Council

instructions from the Colonial Office. For example, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, Governor of Ceylon from 1883 to 1890, who had served in other parts of the colonial empire ignored Colonial Office advice on appointments and on conferring honours on distinguished local people who had served as chiefs in local and provincial administration. At the same time, the Colonial Office sometimes neglected the governor's advice.38

The secretary of state for the colonies communicated with the governor through despatches. Between 1802 and 1830 despatches were received from London via the Cape of Good Hope. The time taken for a despatch to reach Ceylon varied. In 1802 a despatch took about five months to arrive via the Cape of Good Hope. By the 1830s the time was reduced to four months. After 1835 the 'overland route' also was used. Despatches were sent by steamer to Alexandria, from there across the desert to Port Suez and then by steamer to their destinations in the East. Initially, a despatch sent by this route took eight to twelve weeks to reach Ceylon. This period was shortened after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

The governor replied directly to the secretary of state for the colonies, and his original despatches are available in class CO 54, at the Public Record Office in

38 Colonial Office minute on Gordon's despatch no 287 of 27 July 1886, C O 54/565. For example, the Colonial Office ignored the strong remarks of Governor Sir Arthur Havelock (governor from 1890-1895) on Ponnambalam Ramanathan's request for judicial appointment and appointed him to the post of Solicitor General; Havelock to Rippon, 17 November 1892, No 437, C O 54/604
London, for the period 1798 to 1948. The drafts of despatches sent are available in Record Group 5 in the National Archives of Sri Lanka, which includes detailed reports sent by the governors, requests for advice and instructions and other reports on special subjects annexed to the despatches. The Colonial Office copies of the despatches sent to the governor by the secretary of state for the colonies containing either instructions or information to the governor as well as the minutes providing background information to these despatches are also available in the same class at the Public Record Office, London. The originals of these despatches are in Record Group 4 of the National Archives of Sri Lanka.

1.1.3 Growth of the Legislature

The recommendations of the Colebrooke Commission were implemented by an Order in Council of 28 September 1833. A major change in the existing structure was the establishment of an Executive Council composed mainly of officials. Moreover, a new Legislative Council was formed over which the governor now presided. The Legislative Council included the official members and a non-official minority. This development was far ahead of anything which existed at the time in India or other non-white colonies. Ceylon became the first non-white colony to have the privilege of having a government with a legislature.

The legislature functioned with virtually no change in
its constitution from 1833 to 1910, except for the addition of two more unofficial members in 1889. Following the 1910 reforms the elective principle was introduced to the legislature but the franchise was exercised on a very limited basis. There were various qualifications for the candidate as well as for the voter. Further concessions were made from time to time in respect of local demands for representative government, but no major steps towards legislative reforms were taken by the Colonial Office until 1931. The Order in Council of 1920 and the Ceylon (Legislative Council) Order in Council 1923 did make provisions for broadening the membership of the Legislative Council. But the Colonial Office realised that this did not go far enough towards meeting local demands and, as noted in section 1.1.1, a special commission was appointed under the chairmanship of the Earl of Donoughmore in 1927 to consider a revision of the prevailing system.

The commission recommended that the Executive Council be abolished and the Legislative Council be converted into a representative legislature to be called the State Council. On 10 September 1929, the secretary of state for the colonies announced that with certain changes, the British Government had decided to implement these

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40 The recommendations were brought into operation by Order in Council 1931, Government Gazette, No 7843, 4.15.1931, Colombo, Govt. print., 1931
recommendations.\textsuperscript{41}

The new State Council comprised twelve official and thirty seven unofficial members. Of the thirty seven, thirty four were elected and the rest were nominated by the governor from members of the public who did not hold public office. As stated in Section 1.1.1 they were divided into seven executive committees and the chairmen of these committees functioned as ministers. However, these ten 'ministers' did not work as a team with collective responsibility as in a parliamentary cabinet form of government.\textsuperscript{42} This system was a significant step for the Ceylonese in exercising semi-responsible government.

As a result of these recommendations, a general election was held in 1931 and Ceylon became the first Asian colony to enjoy the benefits of universal adult suffrage. This was twenty years before the first general election in India and only two years after Britain itself held its first election on the same basis.\textsuperscript{43}

The last significant constitutional reforms under colonial rule were introduced following the Soulbury Commission's recommendation of a Parliamentary democratic form of government for Ceylon in 1948. Orders in Council

\begin{enumerate}
  \item De Silva, K M, Sri Lanka Survey, London, Hurst, 1977, p 377
\end{enumerate}
issued in 1946 and 1947 concerning Ceylon's independence and constitution provided for the attainment of full responsible status within the British Commonwealth.**

1.1.4 Development of the Judiciary

The development of the judiciary received attention from the inception of the colonial administration. The Royal Charter of 18 April 1801 made provision for the creation of the post of chief justice and for the establishment of a supreme court of judicature in place of the supreme court which had handled criminal jurisdiction.

Governor Maitland and Chief Justice Alexander Johnston were the pioneers of the establishment of the judicial system in Ceylon. Johnston had collected valuable data on local laws and customs during 1809. Maitland, in consultation with Johnston, prepared a scheme of reforms. They included the extension of the jurisdiction of the supreme court, the introduction of the jury system and measures to reduce the authority of mudaliyars or native chiefs of districts and chief headmen in the interest of the judicial administration of the colony.**

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** (i) The Ceylon Constitution Order in Council 1946 (Principal Order)
(ii) The Ceylon Constitution (Amendment No 2) Order in Council, 1947
(iii) The Ceylon Constitution Order in Council, (No 3) 1947
(iv) The Ceylon Independence Order in Council, 1947 SLNA 4/752


46 Amarasinghe, N, History of the Supreme Court, Colombo, Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, 1986, p 67
In 1809, Maitland established minor courts of appeal, each consisting of two or more civil servants to hear appeals from the provincial and other inferior courts, such as the courts of the sitting magistrates in civil cases. Revenue cases were excepted where the value of the case involved less than £30 or 300 rix dollars\textsuperscript{47}.

The whole judicial system was restructured by the Charter of Justice of 1833, based on C H Cameron's report. This marked the beginning of the modern judicial system in Ceylon. For the first time, a single supreme court for graver crimes was established in the whole colony. This consisted of the chief justice and two puisne justices who sat in Colombo or on circuit. Under these provisions, for the first time, the Kandyan provinces also came within the jurisdiction of the supreme court.

A court of appeal was also established consisting of a judge of the supreme court sitting with two assessors. The objective was to exercise an appellate jurisdiction over the court of original jurisdiction. The district courts were set up as courts of original jurisdiction with exclusive authority over civil and criminal cases that arose within their territorial limits.

In addition, Ordinance No 10 of 1843 made provision for the establishment of courts of requests presided over by commissioners for the arbitration of minor civil matters. Police courts were established by Ordinance No 11

\textsuperscript{47} One rix-dollar was approximately equal to Rs. 1.60 and the British rate of exchange was 9 and 3/8th rix-dollars to the £ sterling, \textit{The Sri Lanka Archives}, Vol 3, 1986, p 177
of 1843 to handle minor criminal offenses. This arrangement relieved the district courts which were overburdened by a plethora of petty civil and criminal disputes. The number of district courts was reduced from 27 to 17 in 1845.48

In 1938, a court of criminal appeal was established, and Ordinance No 20 of 1938 changed the designation of police courts to magistrate courts. Procedures with regard to the juvenile courts and the jurisdiction of the village tribunals, committees and councils were defined by Ordinance No 48 of 1939. Finally, rural courts were established in terms of Ordinances Nos 12 and 13 of 1945, which superseded the arrangements made under the Ordinance No 48 of 1939.49

1.1.5 Judicial Administration

The Queen's advocate was the officer responsible for judicial administration and acted as the legal adviser to the government. In 1840, the Queen's advocate was appointed to the legislative council instead of the chief justice. This brought Ceylon in line with general colonial practice, by separating the judiciary from the administration and helping to preserve the independence of the judiciary.

The Queen's advocate played a significant role in legislative and judicial affairs. His designation was


49 Ibid, p 326
changed to attorney-general in 1884. Under the provisions of the Ceylon (Legislative Council) Order in Council 1923, judicial administration came under the chief justice and the attorney-general. They were directly responsible to the governor and his executive council.

The Donoughmore constitution of 1931 established a separate post of legal secretary, and the judiciary now came under him. This post was abolished in 1947 with the promulgation of the Soulbury Constitution. In place of this post, the constitution made provision for the appointment of a minister of justice responsible for all matters connected with the administration of justice.

The Soulbury Commission made provision for the appointment of a Judicial Service Commission consisting of the chief justice as chairman and two other members, either from the present supreme court or from among the retired supreme court judges to be appointed by the governor general. This commission advised the governor general on appointments, transfers, promotions, dismissals and disciplinary control of all judges except the chief justice and supreme court judges who were appointed at the discretion of the governor general.

50 Ceylon Civil List for the year 1884, Colombo, Govt. press., 1884, p 172
52 Ibid, Section 396, p 106
53 Ibid, Summary of Recommendations, Nos 54-57, p 118
1.2 THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD: 1948-1990

1.2.1 Parliamentary System of Government

Following the recommendations of the Soulbury Commission, a parliamentary democratic system of government was established in Ceylon. Accordingly, two chambers of Parliament were created. The House of Representatives consisted of 101 members, of which ninety-five were elected and six were nominated by the governor general.\(^4\) The senate comprised thirty members, of whom fifteen were selected by the members of the house of representatives and the rest by the governor general.\(^5\) The election procedure was based on the British electoral system which operated mainly through single member constituencies with a single ballot and a majority vote. The administrative structure of the country was also modelled partly on British administrative machinery. The governor was replaced by a governor-general, who was a figurehead appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of Ceylon. The Royal Titles Act No 22 of 1953 and the Royal Executive Powers and Seals Act No 43 of 1954 provided statutory recognition of Ceylon within the Commonwealth.

With the promulgation of the Republican Constitution on 22 May 1972, Ceylon became an independent republic within the Commonwealth and its name was changed to Sri Lanka. The chief aim of the constitution was to preserve the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. The Republican

\(^4\) Ibid, Summary of Recommendations, No 20, p 114

\(^5\) Ibid, Nos 10 and 11, p 113
Constitution, like its predecessor, set out guidelines on state policy based on the fundamental rights of citizens. The sovereignty of the people was exercised through the National State Assembly of elected representatives of the people, and the executive, legislative and judicial powers of the people were vested in this institution. The principles of cabinet government were retained, but provisions were made to loosen the constitutional links with the United Kingdom. The governor-general was replaced by a president, once again a nominal executive but no longer the representative of the Queen of the United Kingdom.

Moving another step forward, the Democratic Socialist Republican Constitution of 1978 provided for the introduction of a presidential form of government with an executive president directly elected by the people as the head of the state for a period of six years.\(^5^6\) This arrangement continues to the present day. The president is not a member of parliament, but he selects his cabinet from the majority party and presides over the cabinet.\(^5^7\) The mode of election was replaced by a system of proportional representation, but universal adult suffrage was retained as the basis of electing a responsible government.

The president, head of the cabinet together with the other cabinet members were collectively responsible and

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\(^5^7\) Ibid, Section 43 (2) p 30
answerable to the Parliament. The significant change was that the president would continue in office notwithstanding the dissolution of the cabinet of ministers.

1.2.2 Administrative Structure

After independence all the functions of public administration were handled by ministries. Ministers had full responsibility for the functions of the ministries, departments and parastatals under them. The administrative machinery can be explained as a network of clusters with the Cabinet as the policy making body at the apex of the system. Each ministry, with the departments and parastatal bodies which fell within its purview, constituted a cluster. When the first cabinet was formed in 1947, there were thirteen ministries. The number and the scope of activities of the ministries continuously varied. Today there are twenty seven ministries.

The changes of government since independence, in 1948, 1956, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1977 and 1988, have each made an impact on the machinery of administration. It has been common in this period for ministries, departments and statutory bodies to be dissolved or amalgamated to meet the requirements of the day. At the same time the expansion of state activity in conformity with the aims and objectives of a welfare state has led to the mushrooming of ministries, departments and statutory bodies.

The functions assigned to the ministries changed with each of the many cabinet changes and reshuffles. This
situation undoubtedly undermined the development of consistent policies and impeded the introduction of efficient work programmes for the ministries and departments. To cite an example, the National Archives was under the Ministry of Education from 1947 to 1958 and was transferred to the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in 1959. In 1965 it was brought under the Ministry of State and it was moved again to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1970 where it has remained. However, in 1988, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was merged with Education and Information to form one ministry. Once again in 1990, Education was separated creating the Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs.

The Public Service Commission was abolished with the enactment of the 1972 constitution. At this time the Cabinet of ministers was vested with the authority to appoint, transfer, dismiss and discipline public servants. The State Services Advisory Board and the State Services Disciplinary Board were set up to assist the Cabinet over these functions. However, under the 1978 constitution, these institutions were abolished and the Public Service Commission was re-established.

1.2.3 Heads of Ministries and Departments

Section 83 of the Constitution of Ceylon of 1946 provided for the appointment of permanent secretaries as
administrative heads of ministries. The permanent secretary advised the minister on policy and on implementing the policy decisions of the government and he acted as the accounting officer for the ministry. He supervised departments of the ministry under the minister's direction and control. The designation 'permanent secretary' was changed to 'secretary' in May 1972 with the promulgation of the Republican Constitution. Under him, the departments were headed by directors-general, directors, commissioners-general or commissioners.

The Ceylon Civil Service which had existed for over one and half centuries, was replaced by the Ceylon Administrative Service in 1963. Subsequently it was known as the Sri Lanka Administrative Service.

1.2.4 Kachcheri Administration

The British colonial pattern of provincial administration in nine provinces was replaced by a system based on twenty two districts in 1955. By 1990 this number had increased to twenty five. The district administrative centre, the kachcheri, was placed under a government agent.

The government agent is the representative of the government in the district and assists with the co-

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58 A List of Permanent Secretaries Appointed by the Governor, The Ceylon Government Gazette, No 9789, 17.10.1947, Colombo, Govt. print., 1947, pp 2213-2214

59 Warnapala, Wiswa, Civil Service Administration in Ceylon: A Study in Bureaucratic Adoption, Colombo, Department of Cultural Affairs, 1974, p 336
ordination of the work of most of the departments at district level. For administrative purposes the districts were divided further into divisions, each of which was headed by an assistant government agent.

Out of a total of eighty institutions with a role in district administration in Sri Lanka, twenty departments function under the direct supervision of the government agents. Another twenty departments function through their own regional or district offices and forty other statutory bodies and public corporations operate independently either through their head offices in Colombo or through regional offices.  

Moreover, the government agents work as the co-ordinating officers on particular occasions. For instance, at general elections they co-ordinate all election functions within the district as returning officers. The role of the government agent has been described by Leiten,

> His position is thus complex in the extreme. By tradition and implication, if not in legal fact, he is still the general representative of the government - and this fact has assisted him in the fulfilment of his new role.  

Today, the kachcheri administration has been placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs and the government agent is directly responsible to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The government agent acts as an

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61 Leitan, G R Tressie, Local Government and Decentralised Administration, Colombo, Apothecaries Co., 1984, p 166
agent for the ministries relating to such functions as they may assign to him in consultation with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The functions of the government agents are stated in the Establishment Code.\(^2\)

The thirteenth amendment to the constitution in 1987\(^3\) provided for the establishment of provincial councils. The aim was the devolution of powers to the provinces, where problems specific to the provinces could be solved locally with the assistance and guidance of the central government.

Under the provincial council administration, each province is headed by a governor who is appointed by the President of Sri Lanka.\(^4\) The provincial council is an elected body with a chief minister and a cabinet. A chief secretary acts as the chief administrative officer of the province under the guidance of the chief minister and his cabinet.

At the time of the field study carried out for this thesis, the assistant government agents who headed the

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\(^4\) Ibid, Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Section 154B (1), Colombo, Govt. print., p 5
divisions performed dual functions. They functioned as district secretaries to the chief secretary of the Provincial Council and as additional government agents to the government agents. The introduction of the provincial council administration in January 1990 has changed the face of kachcheri administration which had remained virtually unaltered since the first half of the nineteenth century.

1.2.5 The Judiciary

Under the constitution of 1972, the judges of the appeal and supreme courts were appointed by the president of Sri Lanka on the advice of the prime minister. The Judicial Services Advisory Board was appointed to make recommendations on the appointment and transfer of judges. Responsibility for disciplinary control and for recommending the dismissal of judges was vested with the Judicial Services Disciplinary Board.

The 1972 constitution introduced a constitutional court as another new feature. The aim was to have a separate court to examine the constitutional validity of the bills presented to the National State Assembly in the instances where it was questioned.65

The Administration of Justice Law, which came into force on 1 January 1974, made further changes in the legal system. It established the magistrates' courts, district courts, high courts and a supreme court. Sri Lanka was

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divided into sixteen judicial zones and a high court was established for each zone. The powers exercised by the former supreme court were given to the high courts. The supreme court, comprising a chief justice and twenty other judges, functioned as an appeal court to hear appeals from the other courts. Under the provisions of the 13th Amendment to the constitution, the jurisdiction of high courts was further expanded by establishing a High Court for each province.***

The Judicature Act No 2 of 1978 which came into force on 2 July 1979, made provision for the establishment of other courts known as courts of first instances. These included district courts, family courts for judicial districts, magistrate courts and primary courts for the judicial divisions. Moreover, this constitution conferred on the supreme court powers and functions similar to those exercised by the constitutional court.***

1.2.6 The Judicial Administration

The Ministry of Justice co-ordinates the judicial administration in the country through other departments and statutory bodies which come under the purview of the ministry. For example, the Attorney General's Department renders legal advice to the government in civil and

*** Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Section 154p, Colombo, Govt. print., 1987, pp 14-15

criminal matters. It conducts court cases on behalf of the government. Moreover, this department examines bills presented to Parliament to ascertain their constitutionality. Further, it gives approval on behalf of the government to the draft agreements, contracts and leases submitted by various public institutions.

The Legal Draughtsman's Department is responsible for drafting bills, revising subordinate legislation and translating all legislation. This department expresses legal opinions on draft legislation which is to be presented to parliament as bills.

The Law Commission's Department is concerned with law reform and with codifying the law in English, Sinhala and Tamil. It formulates draft bills or proposed reforms to existing laws. Moreover, it is responsible for running the system of legal education in Sri Lanka in consultation with the Council of Legal Education and for formulating programmes to be submitted to the minister for reform and development of legal education.68

2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCHIVES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF NON-CURRENT RECORDS: 1802-1948

2.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter is concerned with the management of non-current official records created during the period of British colonial administration described in Section 1.1. Attention is drawn to three main areas. Firstly, the development of the Archives and its limitations in managing non-current records in government institutions is examined. Secondly, government regulations concerning the disposal of court records will be considered briefly. Finally, the establishment of the Historical Manuscripts Commission and its functions are discussed. The commission is important due to its continuous attempts to make administrators aware of the necessity for the Archives to develop work programmes and to hire qualified personnel to deal with the custody and management of non-current records.

2.2 RECORDS OF THE DUTCH ADMINISTRATION

On 15 February, 1796, the Dutch government agreed that "All public papers [belonging to the Dutch East India Company in Ceylon] shall also be faithfully delivered over"\(^1\) to the British authorities. Brigadier General P F de Meuron was commissioned by the Madras government to examine and report on records, which included the records created in the central seat of the government in Colombo, along

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with those from Jaffna,\textsuperscript{2} Galle\textsuperscript{3} and all subordinate Dutch stations in Ceylon.

The British colonial administrators' major concern was to continue the Dutch practices of administering the maritime provinces of Ceylon over one and half centuries. In 1799, all Dutch records were placed in the hands of the Dutch secretary to Governor North. He was succeeded by a Keeper of Records, who made translations of Dutch documents needed for administrative purposes. He also issued the public with extracts from the Dutch thombos\textsuperscript{4} of Colombo and Galle in support of land claims registered in the thombos. These documents had been modelled on Portuguese tombos and *forais*.\textsuperscript{5} Another development relating to the keeping of Dutch archives was the publication of a list of Dutch Plakkaats, or Legislative Enactments in 1833.

In October 1859, a committee was appointed to report on the non-current records which had been transferred from the Colombo Kachcheri to the Colonial Secretary's Office from time to time in the first-half of the nineteenth century. The committee criticised their unsatisfactory condition as follows:

\textsuperscript{2} Main town in the Northern Province (see map IV)
\textsuperscript{3} Main town in the Southern Province (see map IV)
\textsuperscript{4} This word has been derived from the word 'tombo', first introduced into Ceylon by the Portuguese. It denotes a large folio register used for the compilation of family and property particulars of people living in a village under Dutch rule
\textsuperscript{5} Portuguese Land Registers
The Dutch Records have lately been transferred from the cutchery [Colombo Kachcheri] to the Colonial Secretary's Office; and are in a state so discreditable to the Government, that we feel, that in requesting that a sum of money may be specially devoted to their arrangement and preservation, we are seeking to remove a reproach from the Colony.*

The committee emphasised the need for an immediate conservation programme for the records and submitted an estimate for conserving and arranging them in the Colonial Secretary's Office.

The next development, which occurred in the 1860s, resulted from a claim against the pearl fishery industry made by certain temples in India. George Lee,® the postmaster general at the time, who was competent in Dutch, was appointed to search the records pertaining to the Pearl Fishery. During his survey, he organised the records, which were then housed in the Old Secretariat® record room.

Three decades later, the government's attention was drawn to the thombos due to land claims based on alleged Dutch titles to lands in the Matara¹⁰ District. C J R

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* Letter from the committee to the colonial secretary, 14.5.1860, Records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Sessional Paper No II of 1860, Colombo, Govt. print., 1860, p 21

® The Dutch took special interest in pearl fisheries. Pearls were one of their main trading items

® The Ceylon Almanac and Annual Register for the year 1860, Colombo, Govt. print., 1860, p 67

® The building which was used as the secretariat during the Dutch Administration on the island

¹⁰ Matara is a town situated on the southern coastal belt, a hundred miles from Colombo. This is a separate administrative district in the Southern Province today (see map IV)
LeMesurier,\textsuperscript{11} a retired civil servant,\textsuperscript{12} became involved in land speculation in the 1890s. This brought him into conflict with the government. He launched a series of land actions against the crown and claimed huge tracts of land on the basis of a number of documents which were alleged to record land grants. The government was unwilling to concede to these exorbitant demands but could not refute them without recourse to the original Dutch documents buried in its impenetrable archives. This situation, along with the claim against the pearl fishery industry made the colonial government aware of the importance of the Dutch records for current administrative needs. In 1898, initiatives were taken to transfer the remaining Dutch records from the Colombo, Galle and Matara Kachcheries to the Colonial Secretary's Office. The purpose of this exercise was to bring all the records of the Dutch administration together in one place.

In 1899, R G Anthonisz,\textsuperscript{13} an assistant registrar general was seconded for services as examiner of Dutch records. He was appointed as Ceylon's first archivist on 1st January 1902 and also functioned as the Dutch translator. The duties of the archivist were basically confined to the requirements of the Colonial Secretary's Office. As officer in charge of the Dutch records, he had

\textsuperscript{11} Toussint, J R, Annals of the Ceylon Civil Service, Colombo, Ceylon Apothecaries Co., 1935, pp 171-172

\textsuperscript{12} Ceylon Civil List for the year 1895, Colombo, Govt. print., 1896, p 60

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 1918, p 89
to supply information needed for current administration from the records. His first responsibilities were to describe the Dutch records, file by file, and to arrange them in chronological order. He was particularly concerned with land records. When Anthonisz retired in 1921, E Reimers\textsuperscript{14} was appointed as the archivist.

In 1928, Dr Godee Molsbergen, the archivist at Batavia\textsuperscript{15} was commissioned by the government to report on the proper arrangement of the Dutch Archives in Colombo. Dr Molsbergen recommended the appointment of two Dutch archivists and two copyists.\textsuperscript{16} However, the scheme was not implemented due to financial pressures during the economic depression of the 1930s.

Towards the close of 1932 the report of the Salaries and Cadres Commission\textsuperscript{17} recommended the abolition of the post of assistant to the archivist. Nevertheless, Miss M W Jurrianse, from Holland, was appointed on a five year contract, to catalogue and describe the Dutch records in the Archives and also to copy damaged documents. She compiled a catalogue of the records of the Dutch

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 1931, p 44
\textsuperscript{15} Administrative centre of the Dutch East India Company administration
\textsuperscript{17} Report of the Salaries and Cadres Commission, Sessional Paper XII of 1932, Section 46, Colombo, Govt. print., 1933, p 19
administration of Ceylon.  

2.3 MANAGEMENT OF BRITISH RECORDS

2.3.1 Custody of British Records

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the records of the British colonial administration were placed under the archivist. Among the most important series were Governor North's letter books, despatches to and from the secretary of state for the colonies, Executive Council proceedings and the correspondence of the colonial secretary with the heads of departments and the kachcheries. An assistant archivist was recruited to catalogue these records. He found that the majority of records could easily be identified as belonging to a definite series due to their proper maintenance by the creating agencies. He also observed that:

Through the diligence and foresight of the chief administrative officers of that period, [the] major part of the British records of the last century contain detailed summaries or registers of documents of each file or volume, bound up in the volume or file itself, thus facilitating to a great extent the work of the students of future research.

This comment is evidence of the fact that the colonial administrators did give attention to the management of current records. Chapter Three evaluates the administrators' continuous efforts to find better means of managing current records.

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19 SLNA/HMC 5/27
Although a unified system of administration was in place on the island from 1833, no attempt was made to systematise the management of non-current records. There is evidence that some administrators took an interest in preserving the official documents they created. Occasionally the heads of institutions instructed their assistants to prepare lists of non-current records\(^{20}\) (See Appendix I). However, an examination of these lists revealed that they were prepared haphazardly. This was due mainly to a lack of proper guidance on the arrangement and upkeep of inactive records.

2.3.2 The Destruction of Valueless Records in Government Offices

From time to time, the heads of departments took ad hoc measures for the disposal of valueless records on the advice of the colonial secretary. However, there was no systematic programme for managing semi-current and non-current records in government institutions during the period of British colonial administration. It would appear that the quantities of records created in government institutions, other than the courts, were manageable and did not create major problems for the administrators in the nineteenth century. It can be assumed that the administrators' attention was focused on records required for current administration and therefore scant attention was paid to setting up proper criteria for the selection of

\(^{20}\) Assistant Government Agent, Kalutara to Government Agent, Colombo, 22.9.1914, SLNA 33/227

57
valuable non-current records and the disposal of valueless records.

In the early part of the twentieth century the government realised the necessity of regulations for the destruction of valueless records in government offices. Moreover, the Colonial Office issued instructions on the preservation and destruction of official documents. Harcourt's Circular of 1913 may be cited as an example. As a result the Colonial Secretary issued a circular to the heads of departments in July 1916 on the Destruction of Useless Documents in Government Offices and requested comments and observation for the proposals made in that circular. No direct action was taken in response to the circular. However, in the 1920s L J B Turner, a senior civil servant, was asked to carry out several studies on managing government records. In these studies he paid attention to the destruction of valueless documents.

21 Harcourt's Circular Despatch on Preservation of official Documents, 9.3.1913, SLNA 4/421, (See Appendix II)

22 Colonial Secretary's Circular No 26 on Destruction of Useless Documents in Government Offices, 13.7.1916, SLNA 33/227 (See Appendix III)

23 Turner was a civil servant who held responsible positions in the civil service throughout his career in Ceylon. He retired from the government service as the Director of Statistics and Office Systems. This wide range of experience enabled him to evaluate problems which the administrators faced in dealing with records on a day to day basis. Further his study tours to Europe and America gave him an exposure to the record-keeping systems in practice in those areas. His service details are provided in the Ceylon Civil List for the year 1933, Colombo, Govt. print., 1933, p 10

Turner's studies are discussed in Chapter Three, Section 3.2.

The major drawback of Turner's approach was that he did not provide adequate guidelines for determining the retention value of the records. Instead, the responsibility for appraising records was entrusted directly to subject clerks and record keepers, under the supervision of office assistants. They were not competent to determine the future value of the records, having had no training to prepare them to undertake such a responsibility. Nevertheless, records were destroyed in the kachcheris and other government offices according to Turner's instructions.

Some weeding was carried out by the Archives Division of the Colonial Secretary's Office, which attempted to remove routine and less important papers from the Colonial Secretary's Office files. This is illustrated by records presently held in the National Archives. For example, Record Group 8 contains inward correspondence of the colonial secretary for the period 1833 to 1853 which was removed from the main series but not destroyed. It comprises 143 bound volumes and is described as a 'weeded series'. The volumes are marked with the letter 'C' on the spines and on the inside cover. An examination of the weeded series reveals that in some instances the weeding broke the continuity of the subject matter of the file. The main series of the colonial secretary's inward correspondence is found in Record Group 6.

The Ceylon Government Manual of Procedure published in

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1931, laid down regulations for procedures to be followed by public servants. In this manual the following regulations were listed on periodical destruction of records:

1. Every Head of a Department should prepare and revise from time to time a list of documents which should be periodically destroyed and a list of those which should be preserved.

2. These lists should be submitted through the proper channels for the approval of the Governor before any documents are destroyed in accordance with the distinctions made in such lists.

3. Subject to the preceding Regulation the following rules should be observed:
   
   (i) A date should be fixed by each Department for the periodical destruction of useless documents

   (ii) Documents should be destroyed only on the orders and on the responsibility of the Heads of Departments

   (iii) A record should be kept of the documents destroyed and of the dates on which they were written

   (iv) The following are some of the documents which should not be destroyed:

   Documents made prior to 1833, unless they are of a purely routine character;

   Correspondence with the Colonial Secretary's Office prior to the establishment of the State Council

   Documents required by law to be preserved;

   Documents of historical or other interest including those relating to the history, constitution, administration, &c., of the Departments, appointments of officers, &c.;

   Documents relating to land and claims thereto, and to the value of land and property, especially Crown land, chenas, forests, &c.;

   Gazettes (except Part IV) in Kachcheris

60
Documents enumerated in Ordinance No. 12 of 1894 as not to be destroyed.\textsuperscript{25}

According to these provisions every head of department was compelled to prepare lists of records which were to be destroyed and these were to be forwarded to the colonial secretary for the approval of the governor. The purpose was to protect public records from wilful or negligent destruction.

Following the above guidelines, in 1934, the governor approved a schedule prepared by the Ministry of Home Affairs for the destruction of valueless records in government institutions.\textsuperscript{26} This schedule related primarily to the records of kachcheris.

Although this programme was good in principle, it did not work out in practice. Heads of institutions should have prepared schedules for their records but did not do so. There was no follow up action. Moreover, it was impossible for the colonial secretary to take responsibility in this area in addition to his other duties.

2.3.3 Regulations for the Destruction of Court Records

The enactment of Ordinance No 17 of 1866\textsuperscript{27} was the first attempt to dispose of non-current records

\begin{itemize}
  \item[^{26}] Destruction of Valueless Documents, Colombo, Govt. print., 1934
  \item[^{27}] The Destruction of Old and Useless Processes and Documents, The Legislative Enactments of Ceylon up to 1870, London, Eyre and Spottiswoody, 1874, pp 821-822
\end{itemize}
systematically. This ordinance authorised the destruction of old and valueless documents which had accumulated in the courts of justice. The preamble to the ordinance gave an indication of the deplorable condition in which the records were found.

Whereas certain documents now preserved in the courts of justice of this Colony are utterly useless, and the accumulation of them is productive of inconvenience. It is therefore enacted as follows:
1 It shall be lawful for the governor from time to time to authorise one or more persons, to be named by him, to destroy the following documents, now of record in the different courts of justice in this Colony or any of them. 28

In the years that followed several other ordinances, namely No 12 of 1894, 29 No 7 of 1905, 30 and No 24 of 1930, 31 also addressed the destruction of valueless non-current records created by the courts of justice. It is likely that these steps were taken due to the fact that large quantities of court case records had accumulated in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the Waste Land Ordinances. 32 These records could have hindered

28 Ibid, p 821
29 An Ordinance to Authorise the Destruction of Valueless Documents Preserved in Courts of Justice, Legislative Enactments of Ceylon, Rev. Ed. Vol 2, 1890-1894, Colombo, Govt. print., 1907, pp 1019-1022
31 Ibid, Rev. Ed., Vol 6, Colombo, Govt. print. 1956, pp 771-775
32 After 1831 the government started selling off crown forest lands to foreign investors. The local people realised that they were losing hereditary rights over the chena lands, high lands where jungle is felled and burnt at intervals and fine grain is grown. They
the day to day functions of the courts had they not been scheduled.

Local politicians were critical of the destruction of court records. For example, when the Destruction of Valueless Documents Amended Ordinance No 24 of 1930 was introduced to the State Council, most of the members taking part in the debate were of the opinion that this ordinance would empower administrators to camouflage administrative blunders by destroying valuable documents. A member of the House, E W Perera, cited a specific example. A charge of unauthorised shooting had been made during the period of Martial Law in 1848 but had been denied by the Ceylon Government. Perera noted that:

Instructions had been given to destroy all inquest proceedings. A village korale in the neighbourhood of Kegalle did not carry out those instructions, and fortunately those who were representing matters to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, discovered the documents and proved conclusively to the Imperial government that such shooting did take place. The Imperial government ordered a special inquiry and brought their claims before the government which took the path of least resistance by enacting the Waste Land Ordinances, compelling such claimants to obtain a court ruling establishing their claims. Subsequent enactments forced the local people to register their old deeds and grants with the government agents within a stipulated time in order to obtain official recognition. These steps gave security to the foreign investors and drove the local people to litigation.

33 He was a local official who looked after a 'korale', which was a territorial division consisting of two or more 'pattus', or groups of villages, Sri Lanka Archives, Vol 3, 1986, pp 106 and 160

34 Kegalle is a separate administrative district in Sabaragamuwa Province. This province was created in 1889 (see maps III and IV)
ultimately Sir John Anderson\textsuperscript{35} declared that [the] shooting had taken place under such conditions of barbarity that the persons responsible should be ashamed of it.\textsuperscript{36}

In this instance the administration was openly criticised for the destruction of documents, concealing maladministration and abuse of power from the British government and the local people. Such allegations emphasised the necessity for proper control over official records and the danger that the mismanagement of records would lead to the abuse of power.

The ordinances on the destruction of court records were not effectively implemented, as National Archives surveys later revealed, nor were court records transferred to the Archives during the British period. As a result, large quantities of records accumulated in the court record rooms. This situation eroded the conditions in most record rooms and caused worsening problems as time went on.

2.4 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION

2.4.1 The Objectives of the Commission

The Historical Manuscripts Commission was established in February 1931. Its functions were

(1) to inquire into the existence of unpublished manuscripts in the possession of private persons and in institutions calculated to throw light on the civil, ecclesiastical, literary or scientific history of the Island and to give advice as to the housing and keeping of valuable papers and

\textsuperscript{35} Governor of Ceylon from 1850-1855

\textsuperscript{36} Hansard of Ceylon Legislative Council Debates, 14.11.1930, Colombo, Govt. print., 1930, folio 1902

64
the repair of any that may be in a state of decay;

(2) to make recommendations as to the housing and preserving public records and how to make them easily accessible and readily available in order to facilitate and encourage research; and

(3) to make recommendations regarding the translation and publication of unpublished documents; 37

The establishment of the commission marked the government's acceptance, for the first time, of the need to identify, keep and manage valuable non-current records in private hands and in government institutions. The commission's main functions were to make recommendations for housing and preserving such records in order that they would be readily available for purposes of research. The archivist acted as ex-officio secretary to the commission from the time of its establishment. Moreover, most of the commission's administration, programming and execution of work was done through the Archives.

It appears that the government became interested in non-current records for two reasons. Firstly, from the beginning of this century non-current records began to cause problems for the current administration in the areas of storage, preservation and retrieval. Secondly, throughout the British period, some British civil servants, lawyers and local and foreign scholars were engaged in scholarly research on historical, sociological, linguistic and cultural questions. Searches also were carried out in relation to administrative and legal questions,

37 SLNA/HMC 5/9
particularly in relation to land ownership. Requests for records of these various uses gradually made the government aware of the value of its records.

2.4.2 Accommodation for the Commission

In October 1931 the Chairman of the Historical Manuscripts Commission wrote to the chief secretary requesting accommodation for the commission in the office of the government archivist. The commission needed space to interview the owners of documents, examine the documents and keep them securely. The chief secretary replied in the same month stating that this was not possible due to a lack of space in the secretariat building where the archives were housed. The commission then went in a deputation to the chief secretary to convince him of the necessity for an office for its work. Accordingly, in November 1931 space was provided for a search room in the chief secretary's record room at the Galle Face Secretariat in Colombo.  

2.4.3 Publication of Valuable Records

The commission appointed a committee in November 1934 to investigate and report on records available in local and foreign archives that were suitable for publication. The committee's report, tabled in April 1935, included a list of records from the India Office Library and Records and from the Public Record Office in London which it considered

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38 SLNA/HMC 5/51
39 SLNA/HMC, 6/6
worthy of publication. In subsequent years the commission published a series of publications based on historical records.

### 2.4.4 Activities of the Commission

The commission's main activities prior to 1947 were broadly concerned with two aspects of the management of non-current official records. Firstly, surveys were carried out in the kachcheris and departments resulting in reports describing the nature of records in those institutions and setting out procedures for accessioning and preserving them. Secondly, work programmes were organised to arrange, describe and prepare finding-aids to the records in the Archives. The chairman, in his second report to the governor, in May 1935, stated that:

> certain recommendations have been made with regard to the accessibility and preservation of public records. There only remain to be completed examination and gathering together into the Government Archives of certain documents in kachcheries dealing mainly with the British period of Sri Lankan history.  

The accumulation of records over a hundred years in comparatively small record rooms in the creating agencies made this a difficult task. The situation was further aggravated by the lack of trained personnel. Moreover, most of the documents had been damaged by termites, dust and heat due to the lack of attention by the administrators. The chairman's 1935 report described the plethora of

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40 SLNA/HMC, 5/48

41 SLNA/HMC, 5/7
problems of processing records in these government institutions. It stressed the need to give first priority to arranging records in the Archives and prepare finding-aids before more records were accessioned. He noted that:

the great mass of valuable material in the government archives, may be catalogued at the earliest possible opportunity. The commission considers this work an essential prelude to the undertaking of any effective research, the absence of any adequate catalogue at present renders this difficult or perhaps impossible.  

In a memorandum to the governor in February 1938, the commission proposed a comprehensive development programme for the Archives. This included destroying valueless records in the Dutch and the British archives, accessioning documents from creating agencies and building a proper archival building to house the records. To carry out this programme, the chairman pointed out that the professional work and staffing structure of the Archives would have to be reorganised and provisions would have to be made for hiring and training more staff. He invited the governor's attention to recommendations made by Dr Godee Molsbergen, the archivist from Batavia, in 1929 concerning the organisation of the Archives and the need to appoint professionals. However, the proposed programme was deferred due to the problems created by the war.  

Another major hindrance to the commission's work was the limited resources at its disposal. Funds for archival work were allocated by the State Council, which neither the

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42 SLNA/HMC, 5/7
43 SLNA/HMC 5/23
chairman of the commission nor the archivist could influence. The commission was not a priority for the colonial administration. Moreover, under wartime conditions there were even less funds available. In 1941, the commission's vote was reduced to a fifth of the amount provided in the 1940 estimates. Similarly a 25% cut was imposed on the Archives estimates for conservation and reprographic material. Funds for the purchase of reference books were cut completely.

2.4.5 The Commission's Record Survey Programmes

The commission's annual reports from 1932 onwards described its annual record survey programmes to identify non-current records in government institutions which were worthy of permanent preservation. These were pioneer attempts at preserving and managing non-current government records. However, this survey work was hampered by the financial restrictions imposed during the 1930s and 1940s. In fact in August 1939, the colonial secretary asked the chairman whether

the H.M.C. should continue its work and whether you consider the importance of any further possible discoveries of historical manuscripts is likely to justify further expenditure on the Commission.

This indicates how little the government had grasped the functions of the commission. The chairman had to write to the deputy chief secretary stressing that a large amount of work remained to be done. In December 1939 the governor

"SLNA/HMC, 5/7"
did authorise the commission to continue its investigations but only to the extent possible on the funds released for the purpose.

During 1939 members of the commission submitted their reports on the Ratnapura and Anuradhapura Kachcheries. In 1940 another report was submitted on the ola documents at the Registrar General's Office which had been brought from the Kurunegala Land Registry. In 1940, members of the commission visited the kachcheries of Badulla, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Vavunia and Mannar. That year the annual report noted that:

the examination of old documents in kachcheries revealed the fact that in most cases old documents which would have proved to be very useful to the student of the early British period of Ceylon history had been destroyed.

The commission's surveys revealed that most of the kachcheri record rooms were cluttered with records, valuable and valueless, which had accumulated from the inception of the kachcheries. For example, the report on the visit to the Kegalle Kachcheri, revealed the

45 One of the major towns in Sabaragamuwa Province (see map IV)
46 Main town of the North Central Province. This province was created in 1875 (See map III)
47 Treated palmyrah leaves which were used as a writing material
48 SLNA/HMC, 5/13
49 Trincomalee and Batticaloa are in the Eastern Province; Vavunia and Mannar are in the Northern Province; Badulla is in the Uva Province which was created in 1886 (See maps III and IV)
50 SLNA/HMC 5/7
availability of diaries of the government agents from 1838 to 1939. There were also *chena wattorus*\(^{51}\) from 1857 and *hi-lekam mitiya*\(^{52}\) from 1792 which were clearly written on *ola* manuscripts for each 'korale', or territorial division. These were found in the record room where no provisions had been made for their proper custody or preservation. At Kurunegala\(^{53}\) Kachcheri, E W Perera, a member of the commission, and E Reimers, the secretary of the commission, found the government agent's diaries, from 1848, and the Service Tenure Reports, from 1872, in the kachcheri record room.

The reports of visits to other kachcheries visited cited similar examples of this nature. These findings revealed the improper conditions prevailing in the kachcheris, indicating poor management and maintenance of non-current records.

The commission attempted to help the Archives to develop programmes to overcome these problems. It stressed the need to survey and accession records in the kachcheries and at the same time to house, preserve, arrange and describe records in the Archives. However, the commission did not address the major underlying problem of finding a means of preventing the accumulation of unnecessary records by developing selection criteria and disposal methods.

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\(^{51}\) Registers of lands given for dry grain cultivation

\(^{52}\) Land registers maintained by the local rulers upto 1815

\(^{53}\) Main town of the North Western Province. This province was created in 1845 (see map III)
Such a scheme, if well developed would have been of interest to administrators in the light of the problems they were facing. However, it was clear that the commissioners' main concern was to explore historical sources lying in public offices.

2.4.6 Facilities for Research in the Archives

The commission did succeed in helping to make the records available to the public. In 1939, drawing on the pattern in the Public Record Office in London, it drafted a set of rules and regulations for researchers who wished to use the archives. Until that time, the use of public archives was restricted to government officials and other privileged people. The liberalisation of this policy enabled the general public, especially students, to use the archives. Rules for public use of the archives were gazetted on 1 September 1939. An archives search room was opened to the public on 1 November 1939, and this fact was noted in the newspapers.54

2.4.7 Colonial Office Instructions on Record-Keeping

Two circular despatches from the secretary of state for colonies on the preservation of official records, issued on 2 January 192955 and on 16 October 193656 had a

54 Ceylon Observer, Colombo, 1.11.1939, p 1
55 Amery's Circular despatch on Preservation of Official Documents, 2.1.1929, SLNA 4/591, (see Appendix IV)
direct impact on the commission's activities. These circulars concerned the preservation of colonial records of historical interest.

The 1936 circular despatch observed that it was necessary to destroy 'out-of-date' documents from time to time. It commended the Government of Ceylon for the instructions drawn up in this regard and set out in the Ceylon Government Manual of Procedure in 1931. It also noted that in Mauritius, a standing committee had been established to examine records which were to be destroyed. However, in most territories disposal procedures had not been clearly defined.

The secretary of state stressed the need for the colonies to preserve colonial records in a satisfactory manner and requested that this be regarded as a primary duty of the colonial governments. He warned that, "delay in the institution of suitable protective measures may and does lead to the inevitable loss of documents of value." He urged colonial administrators to give immediate attention to the problem and to take the necessary steps to solve it. He noted that the climatic conditions of tropical countries were not favourable for the physical condition of documents and asked governors to consider transferring

56 Ormsby Gore's Circular Despatch on Preservation of Official Documents, 16.10.1936, SLNA 4/675, (See Appendix V)
57 The Ceylon Government Manual of Procedure, Section 9, Chapter 11, Clause 89 (iv), Colombo, Govt. print., 1931, p 10
58 SLNA 4/675
documents to the Public Record Office, London.

The circular despatch helped to put the Historical Manuscripts Commission on a better footing. It could now maintain that if the objectives of the despatch were to be achieved, the Archives staff had to be better trained. In 1937, the Commission obtained government funding to send a clerk of the Archives staff to London for training at the Public Record Office in the conservation of fragile documents. When this officer returned in the middle of 1937, the conservation section of the Archives was established.

With Japan's entry into the war in 1941, the government decided to evacuate the Archives from Colombo and move it to Nuwara-Eliya in the central province, 112 miles away from Colombo. The transportation of the archive collections from Colombo to Nuwara-Eliya was carried-out during the period March to September 1943.\(^59\)

Under the new constitution, in October 1947, the Archives was raised to the status of a separate department under the Ministry of Education. The resulting expansion of its professional activities in a more independent situation provided an environment to design programmes to meet the requirements of a newly independent country.

\(^{59}\) The archives were transferred to Colombo in July 1963
3.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter focuses on records management practices prevailing in the central and provincial administration during the period of British colonial administration. First, the internal administration of the Colonial Secretary's Office, the hub of the colony's administration, and its records are examined up to 1925. Second, correspondence and file handling in the kachcheris, and particularly Colombo Kachcheri as an example, is considered up to 1925. Finally, L J B Turner's important studies on improving the record-keeping practices in the kachcheris and in other government institutions in the 1920s and their impact on the administration's view of record-keeping are examined in order to understand their strengths and weaknesses. This discussion brings together the findings on record-keeping in the Colonial Secretary's Office and the kachcheris since it covers central administration as well as kachcheris.

3.2 THE COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

3.2.1 Administrative Structure

In the first decade of British colonial administration, Governor Maitland described the unique nature of the Colonial Secretary's Office and its importance to the administration of the colony. He stated that:
This office is the great office in the island—in it are ultimately lodged, generally the documents, but at all events the substance of the documents, connected with every branch of the service.

Maitland's description highlights the significance of the records in this office and the importance accorded to them. As stated in Chapter One, in 1802 the chief secretary was designated as keeper of these records. With the expansion of the functions of the Colonial Secretariat, the posts of additional colonial secretaries, deputy colonial secretaries and assistant colonial secretaries were created. They took charge of different areas of the Colonial Secretary's Office administration. From time to time one of these officers was designated as the keeper of records; for example, in 1853 the assistant colonial secretary was designated as assistant colonial secretary and record keeper.

By 1900, the functions in the Secretariat had expanded and the number of staff increased. By that time the record-keeping functions were under the second colonial secretary, who was designated as record-keeper and clerk to the Legislative Council. Thus, the management of records remained in the hands of the key figure of the colony's administration but he assigned this responsibility to one

1 Maitland's Instructions to Heads of Departments, C O 54/28, Maitland to Castlereagh, 17.8.1808 and Mendis, G C, Colebrooke - Cameron Papers: Documents on British Colonial Policy in Ceylon, 1796-1833, London, Oxford University Press, 1956, p 244

2 The Blue Book of Ceylon for the year 1900, Colombo, Govt. print, 1901, p 8
of his senior assistants. This demonstrates the importance placed on current record-keeping work by colonial policy makers.

3.2.2 Record-Keeping Practices

From the beginning of the colony's administration the Colonial Secretary's Office maintained a central registry or a registration room which served the various departments of the office. For example, in 1853, these comprised the Despatch, Blue Book\(^3\) and Circular Department; Civil and Revenue Department; Judicial and Miscellaneous Department; Council Department and Printing Branch.\(^4\)

The superintendent, who was the officer in charge of the mail room, received the mail. He was assisted by clerical officers. All incoming letters were first sent to assistant colonial secretaries. Thereafter, the documents, except those of an important and confidential nature, were sent to the registration room for registration. There, the clerks put them on to files which were forwarded to the relevant departments of the office. Documents of an important nature, for example all despatches from the

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\(^3\) The Blue Book was the Annual Book of Returns for the Island which started in 1817. It contains information relating to revenue and expenditure, defence, public works, legislation, civil establishments, pensions, population, schools, imports and exports, agricultural produce, manufacturers and other matters on the conditions of the island. The governor was required to send this report annually to the secretary of state for colonies. This was printed from 1862

\(^4\) The Blue Book of Ceylon, 1853, pp 174-177
Colonial Office, were not sent to the registration room but registered by the despatch clerk in the Despatch, Blue Book and Circular Department. There the registration procedure was similar to that in the registration room.

After registration, despatches were forwarded up the hierarchy to the official appropriate to the level of action required. They came back down through the action officers and through the hierarchy for filing and for replies to be despatched. Subjects of despatches were arranged in alphabetical order and kept in separate folders. Lists of contents were attached to the respective correspondence folders.

Letter registers were kept as indexes to the contents of folders. When the despatches were bound, these registers were bound into separate volumes, and in some instances the registers were bound at the front to facilitate retrieval. These registers contained particulars of the subjects, dates of the letters and references to subject files and an alphabetical index. Examples of other series of records which originated in the Colonial Secretary's Office and generated correspondence were circulars, minutes, proclamations, advance warrants, grants of lands, notarial warrants and memoranda.

3.2.3 Committee to Inquire into the Colonial Secretary's Office Records: 1859

Despite these arrangements for handling correspondence, the record-keeping system in the Colonial Secretary's Office had proved unsatisfactory by the middle
of the nineteenth century. As a result a committee\(^5\) of enquiry was appointed in 1859. Its report throws light on the pattern of record-keeping in the first half of the nineteenth century:

The Record Establishment up to the beginning of 1859, consisted of one clerk and one peon. In the beginning of that year, a book-binder was added, and towards the close of it, a writer was placed in charge of the records. At the beginning of the present year, it was found desirable to attach another writer to assist in reducing the heavy arrears which have accrued from years of neglect.*

The report demonstrates the gap between the administrators' concern with the importance of the records and the actual arrangements for their management. Although the colonial secretary was responsible for the record-keeping system in the office, in practice, it was entrusted to a clerk until 1859. In addition to recommending improved practices the committee stressed the necessity of employing qualified staff at attractive salaries in the record establishment and for setting up a record room.

There is no evidence to show whether the committee's recommendations were implemented, but it may be that the changes made to the system of filing correspondence in 1870 were a result of its recommendations. For example, from 1871, inward and outward correspondence was filed together

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\(^5\) This committee was appointed on 21.11.1859 to report on the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office. It comprised J Caulfield, T Skinner and J Bailey. Their report was submitted to the colonial secretary on 14.5.1860

\(^6\) Records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Report No 2, Paragraph 8, Sessional Paper No 2 of 1860, Colombo, Govt. print., 1860, p 2

79
and bound into volumes yearly or half yearly, depending on the amount of correspondence which accumulated during that period. In any case, the fact that the committee was established demonstrates the vital importance to the administration of efficient record-keeping systems.

3.2.4 Colonial Secretary's Instructions to the Heads of Departments on Handling Correspondence

Several early circulars issued by the colonial secretary provide further evidence of the importance of efficient record-keeping within the office and within the colony's administration in general. Circulars on managing correspondence were issued in 1837 and 1838. These circulars made the heads of departments and the provincial administrators responsible for forwarding lists of unanswered letters to the colonial secretary along with a precis of their contents. A third circular, in 1849, provided guidelines for sending letters to the colonial secretary. It went into minute detail on the physical format of the documents and the way they were to be forwarded. For example it instructed that letters to the Chief Secretary's Office were to be:

written on a full sheet of paper, enclosures not be folded separately unless very voluminous, and to be placed one within another in the order in which they are to be read. Enclosures, if copies, may be on half sheets; if originals, the fly sheet may be cut off to diminish the bulk of the

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7 Government Circulars of 28.8.1837 and 26.11.1838, SLNA 33/193, p 27
3.3 KACHCHERIS OR PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRES

3.3.1 Administrative Structure

From 1831, kachcheris had been the centres of provincial administration. The government agents in the kachcheris were directly responsible to the colonial secretary for the internal administration of the province. Their letters to the colonial secretary and draft copies of his replies accumulated in the Colonial Secretary's Office, while the colonial secretary's letters to the government agents and the drafts of their replies accumulated in the kachcheries.

Within each province, administration was carried out through correspondence between the government agent, assistant government agents and subordinate native administrators, namely, mudaliyars, *rate mahathmayas*, korales and village headmen. The administrative structure of each kachcheri was similar, although the size and the complexity of the administrative structure varied from district to district, depending on the volume of work and the diversity of activities.

The record-keeping practices in the Colombo Kachcheri, which is the largest and most important, are examined here as a case study to illustrate the nature of the systems

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8 Minute on Official Correspondence, 7.5.1849, Heads of the Minute, Circular Letters and General Rules, Colombo, Govt. print., 1849, p 3
prevailing in the kachcheris for managing current records between 1833 and 1948.

3.3.2 Procedure for Handling Correspondence

From the earliest days of kachcheri administration, the mail arrived in the Administration Branch of the kachcheri and was received by the mail clerk who registered it under the supervision of the head clerk or office assistant. It was then forwarded to the government agent or assistant government agent for orders. Thereafter, it was distributed to various branches. The distribution of incoming mail among the divisions of the kachcheri was inefficient. The various circulars and memoranda issued on the subject of mail distribution testify to the administrators' determination to streamline the system. For instance, a memorandum issued in 1855 outlined a recommended procedure as follows:

> the letter books [should] be sent every morning to any one of [the] assistants who may first attend the office, together with the drafts of letters in order that he may examine them and affix his initial [as] to their correctness. 

This memorandum outlined the steps to be followed in handling correspondence and authorised any responsible officer to take prompt action on daily tappal (mail). The idea was to avoid delays due to the absence or late attendance of the clerk normally handling mail distribution.

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9 Departmental Memorandum, 16.2.1855, SLNA 33/193, p 24
The kachcheri staff did not follow these instructions, as is illustrated by a departmental memorandum issued by the government agent himself. Commenting on the memorandum he stated: "I don't see this order ever attended to. Do not let this order be neglected again."\(^{10}\)

Concerned to find means of encouraging the kachcheri staff to follow instructions on handling correspondence, the government agent issued another memorandum in the same year reiterating the need for the clerical officers to take prompt action on correspondence. He emphasised that all letters which came into clerical officers' hands should be filed within twenty four hours of receipt.\(^{11}\)

File movement was another area which created problems for the administration. Therefore, in 1856 specific instructions were issued to the officers on procedures for the release of files from the office. The government agent's prior approval was needed before records could be removed from the office.\(^{12}\) A register was maintained in the office which noted the title of the document issued, to whom it was issued and when it was returned. Further instructions issued in 1860 specified that even where documents were required to be produced before a court of law, they should be released only to the officer who was nominated to attend the courts and not to any other officer.

\(^{10}\) Departmental Memorandum, 16.2.1855, SLNA 33/193, p 24

\(^{11}\) Departmental Memorandum of Government Agent, 12.7.1855, SLNA 33/195, p 8

\(^{12}\) Departmental Memorandum, 4.7.1856, SLNA 33/193, p 34
on his behalf.\textsuperscript{13}

Any improvements achieved as a result of these instructions did not last long. In 1880, instructions again were issued on handling correspondence. Tracing incoming letters for further action was presenting problems because there was no indexing system. Moreover, there was a lack of discipline concerning the distribution of letters to action officers and delays in distributing letters to clerical officers for filing and action.

The ongoing problems in managing the kachcheri's records are illustrated by the head clerk's minute to the government agent in 1886 on missing correspondence:

Mr. Peiris [subject clerk] said he had searched but he could not find them. Half an hour afterwards, they were found by him in a bundle in his almirah\textsuperscript{14} with the letters. He said that he did not expect to see them in that bundle so did not examine it. That the bundle contained other old papers bound and plainly docketed [and] entered in the list of records and placed in the record room. Then if they are wanted they can be found at once.\textsuperscript{15}

This quotation illustrates another problem. Semi-current files were not sent to the record room. The practice of keeping semi-current and non-current records in administrative areas caused congestion and made it difficult to locate current records.

The problems were highlighted once again in January 1887 when the government agent observed that the procedures

\textsuperscript{13} Departmental Memorandum, 2.8.1860, SLNA 33/193, p 50

\textsuperscript{14} Portugese word use for cupboard or wardrobe

\textsuperscript{15} Minute of Head Clerk, 26.2.1886, SLNA 33/195
for official letter writing were applied haphazardly. "The instructions of the government as to the proper heading of letters with the "subject" of the letters must be attended to. They are now continuously disregarded." A government circular issued in June 1887 outlined the procedures for drafting letters. In July, the government agent issued another circular reiterating these procedures. The text of the circular is provided in Appendix VI. These instructions were quite useful to clerical officers. However, the practice of issuing rudimentary instructions of this nature to the clerical staff at frequent intervals implies that either the staff did not understand them or that they were reluctant to follow directives.

Overall, the many attempts to improve correspondence handling in Colombo Kachcheri failed due to the poor response of the clerical staff to departmental orders on handling records. In their determination to overcome this problem, the administrators took strict disciplinary action. In some cases the staff were fined and others were removed from office on the grounds that they had

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16 Minute of government agent: 'Heading to Letters to be strictly observed', 17.1.1887, SLNA 33/195

17 Rules Regulating Correspondence: Government Circular of 14.1.1886 & No 67 of 23.6.1887, SLNA 33/195

18 Government Agent's Circular on Rules Regulating Correspondence, 14.7.1887, SLNA 33/195

19 Mr Peiris [clerk] was fined Rs 5/= for negligence at work

20 Mr Oliver Visser [clerk] was removed from the Provincial Road Committee for constant neglect of duty
neglected their duties. Nevertheless the administrators were not able to overcome the problem.

3.3.3 Head Clerk's Proposal for Efficient Handling of Correspondence: January 1888

Having closely observed the government agent's repeated attempts to improve correspondence management, the head clerk of the Colombo Kachcheri submitted a proposal to the government agent in January 1888 for new procedures for handling incoming mail. Although the government agent did not consent to the proposal, it was significant as it appears to have been the first time that the prevailing system was criticised and constructive suggestions put forward by an officer with practical responsibility for co-ordinating official correspondence. The head clerk, as the man on the spot, was in a position to make realistic suggestions.

The head clerk proposed that he and the second clerk would open the mail at 10.00 A M each day. If they were busy with the cash book or other work, another officer would be assigned to the office to open and arrange the correspondence. Important letters received from the central government would be given priority and be forwarded to the government agent. Other letters would be sent to the registration clerk with instructions for their distribution to the branches of the kachcheri. The morning's mail should be registered by 12 noon. Draft letters would be prepared by the clerks, on the instructions of the officers, and sent to the assistant government agent for his signature.
The memorandum suggested that:

He [assistant government agent] would then have an hour for the clearance of signed letters and to see everything carefully before it leaves the office - The outgoing tappal will then be ready for registration at noon and the registration clerk would be required to see that every letter sent out on the day of signature.  

However, the head clerk went much further than a series of recommendations aimed at improving specific practices. He analysed the cause behind the problems and their effects. He was convinced that the breakdown of correspondence handling procedures undermined the efficiency of the kachcheri administration. He pointed out that valuable working hours were being lost in finding connected papers due to the habitual carelessness of even good clerks. He emphasised that this was not due to the absence of a system, but to the inefficiency of the record clerks themselves:

This important work, the custody and the arrangement of the kachcheri papers requires an intelligent and methodical man of considerable experience and he should be much under the supervision of the head clerk.  

The memorandum revealed that no attention had been paid to the training or career development of record staff in Colombo Kachcheri nor did the salary structure attract intelligent or enthusiastic staff. In contrast, the records staff of the Kandy Kachcheri were paid at a higher level in relation to the work load and revenue of the kachcheri. The

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21 The Head Clerk's Memorandum to the Government Agent concerning the office work of the Kachcheri, 24.1.1888, SLNA 33/226
22 SLNA 33/226
report noted that:

In Kandy Kachcheri, the record work is the exclusive duty of a clerk drawing a salary of Rs.800/= per annum and who has 10 years service in that department in that kachcheri. He has moreover the assistance of a deputy record keeper.23

He also compared the relative difficulty of keeping records in Kandy and Colombo and the costs involved. "There is no reason why the Kandy records should be more voluminous or difficult to keep than those of Colombo"24

The memorandum concluded by emphasising the need to employ more personnel for records work. Colombo was the biggest kachcheri in the island, and the complex nature of its activities resulted in the creation of a large quantity of records. Moreover, it collected the highest revenue of all the kachcheries.

The administrators accepted the head clerk's conclusion that the clerical officers' irresponsible attitude towards their responsibilities was the major cause of the breakdown. However, they did not accept their own responsibility for the origins of the attitude. They did not believe that the record-keeping problems they experienced were due to the lack of training or career prospects and poor pay for records staff and did nothing about this. As a result the system continued to deteriorate.

23 SLNA 33/226
24 SLNA 33/226

88
3.3.4 Assistant Auditor General's Proposals for Record-Keeping: February 1888

Although the chief clerk's proposals were not taken seriously, the assistant auditor general suggested an alternative system of correspondence management in February 1888 and this system was introduced in the Colombo Kachcheri by means of a circular in the same month. Under these arrangements the assistant government agent had overall responsibility for the system with the support of the head clerk, second clerk and two registration clerks in the following manner.

The assistant government agent opened the mail. He minuted instructions to the heads of branches on the letters and they were passed to the second clerk through the head clerk. The second clerk marked in red pencil all important correspondence and drew the registration clerk's attention to important and urgent letters by drawing lines across the left hand corners of the letters. Thereafter, the inward registration clerk wrote a precis in the inward letter register and at the same time provided the date of the previous letter(s) on the same subject to enable cross referencing. A checking system was also introduced to ensure that letters did not go astray, and this became the responsibility of the registration clerk:

If a letter does not reach him [registration clerk] for registration, he will within 48 hours of the receipt of the next subsequent letter

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25 Circular issued by the Office Assistant on managing clerks of departments, 29.2.1888, SLNA 33/226

26 SLNA 33/226
bring the fact to the notice of the AGA [assistant government agent] and get his permission to apply for a copy.27

Thereafter the letters were distributed to the clerical officers who initialled the letter register to acknowledge receipt. Letters which needed the government agent's and assistant government agent's special attention were supposed to reach them within twenty four hours of their receipt and to be answered within forty eight hours.

In this circular, modifications were made to the prevailing system to accommodate the assistant auditor general's proposals. This circular set out the format to be adopted in official letter writing. It provided detailed instructions on identifying the subject, providing short headings, paragraphing and page numbering of letters.28

In March 1888 the government agent issued yet another circular based on the assistant auditor general's proposals. This time instructions were issued to inward and outward registration clerks, instructing them to follow special procedures in noting replies to letters. They were instructed to check their registers every morning and to note incoming letters received in reply to outward letters against the entries for these letters.29 According to these instructions, the outward registration clerk had to work for half an hour every evening with the inward registration

27 SLNA 33/226
28 SLNA 33/226
29 Rules to be Observed in the Registration of Letters, 7.3.1888, SLNA 33/226
clerk, comparing the entries in these registers.\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, the emphasis was on the strict control of letters, as a basis for efficient control, rather than on improvements based on an understanding of the causes of the problems. In fact, the confused nature of the instructions provided in the circulars made the registration clerks' work even more difficult.

In July 1888 yet another circular introduced a systematic scheme aimed at handling files in the office.\textsuperscript{31} Subject files were created and a subject index was prepared arranging the subjects in alphabetical order. File numbers were indicated against the subjects for easy retrieval of files. Initially this scheme appeared to be helpful. The government agent, commenting to the colonial secretary on the progress achieved under this system, mentioned that:

\begin{quote}
On the suggestion of the Assistant Auditor General, I have introduced into this office the file system of correspondence, which I find is working very satisfactorily, up to date 35 files have been made and an index opened giving reference to the files alphabetically and numerically. I have also opened 33 registers of letters sent, and I find that 7572 letters have been registered and despatched up to 30th June 1888.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

However, the system was not as effective as had been hoped. For example, in contradiction to his earlier statement the government agent, writing to the colonial secretary in October 1888, stated that:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{30} SLNA 33/226

\textsuperscript{31} SLNA 33/226

\textsuperscript{32} Letter No 908 of Government Agent, 7.7.1888 to Colonial Secretary, SLNA 33/195
\end{quote}
The Registration Branch of my office is undermanned, and is I am obliged to admit, not in as satisfactory a state as I could wish.\textsuperscript{33}

Further examples could be cited in the years that followed of instructions issued concerning precautions against misdirected letters\textsuperscript{34} and procedures for making up files, forwarding correspondence\textsuperscript{35} and drafting letters.\textsuperscript{36} These examples suggest that, although efforts were made on various occasions to improve the record-keeping system by patching up the major points of breakdown, problems continued to occur. Instead of issuing circulars one after another, the administrators needed to take remedial measures to maintain the working order.

3.4 TURNER'S STUDIES IN HANDLING CURRENT RECORDS

3.4.1 Turner's Study on Office Systems in Kachcheris

The administrators' repeated attempts, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century to address the issues involved in handling current official records were unsuccessful. Administrators complained that the prevailing record-keeping practices were inadequate to meet the expanded administrative requirements in the twentieth century and emphasised the need for improvements. For example, the Retrenchment Commission Report of 1923

\textsuperscript{33} A Letter from the Government Agent to the Colonial Secretary, 13.10.1888, SLNA 33/226

\textsuperscript{34} Government Agent's Minute of 5.4.1889, SLNA 33/195

\textsuperscript{35} Government Agent's Minute of 1.8.1890, SLNA 33/195

\textsuperscript{36} Internal Circulars Issued to English and Native Departments, 2.10.1890 & 7.7.1891, SLNA 33/195

92
commented on the office administration in Ceylon, thus:

We think there is much room for improvement in the office routine of Government offices generally in the Colony, and are of opinion that considerable savings in clerical staff might be effected by (1) the tightening up of supervision over the clerical staff by the higher officers; (2) improved arrangements of offices whereby a clear view could be obtained of all the clerical staff; (3) the avoidance of unnecessary registration; and, as regards kachcheris, (4) by the introduction of a uniform system of record keeping. The above points are a few points which have struck us during the course of our inquiries."

Accordingly, L J B Turner, was appointed in January 1924 to examine these problems and other matters which affected the administration of the kachcheris in Ceylon. His report contained the following proposals for the improvement of the office system in kachcheris:

(1) Distribution of work by subjects

(2) Pending papers to be kept by the subject clerk (those relating to replies from correspondents)

(3) Equipment to be provided for vertical lodging of cases" (pending papers are generally lodged horizontally in a tray one on the top of another)

(4) The case, and not the individual paper, to be the unit and the case numbers to consist of the subject clerk's code letter and serial case number

(5) Gradual reduction of registration (prior to this study all inward and outward letters were

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39 Originally, "case" was used to mean a small file and "file" to mean an aggregation of cases. Now the terms have become more nearly equivalent
(6) Separate series for different correspondents to be maintained in exceptional cases only, and, in general, to be replaced by calling for acknowledgements of papers of sufficient importance

(7) Maintenance of separate registers for each subject clerk

(8) Central registration, but individual if preferred [Central registration was preferred since it relieved the subject clerk of registering letters]

(9) Continuous registration [papers are registered in their receipt or despatch order, irrespective of their subject]

(10) Abolition of purports [short precis] of the contents of each paper

(11) Card index for endorsements

(12) Abolition of tappal book [a tappal book is generally maintained as a record of papers sent to the post]

(13) Centralised typing

(14) Subject indexes for important cases

(15) Call-up system to be operated by diary bookings or the card index and the three days rule [subject clerks were not allowed to retain action papers with them for more than three days without the authority of the office assistant]

(16) Lacing of files [all settled papers are generally stitched in files by the record keeper or his assistant or binder]

(17) Case filing (possibly "loose leaf") [case is the unit instead of the letter]

(18) Card index for issue of files from the record room [instead of entering the issues in a file register the record keeper maintains a card index in numerical order and the card is returned to the clerk when the file is received back]

(19) Classified or alphabetical filing [instead of serial numbering of files, new files to be opened under subjects on classified basis]
According to Turner’s observations, under the old system used prior to 1924 much attention had been given to decentralised registration and too little consideration to the movement of papers. Separate registers were maintained for the registration of letters under the government agent, assistant government agent and native officers. It was not easy to trace a letter which had been registered in the government agent’s register due to the fact that it would have been directed to various branches in the kachcheri depending upon its contents. Therefore tracking of papers was a constant problem which wasted the clerical officers’ time. As a way out of to the problem, Turner introduced two alternative systems. The various offices in the kachcheris were to identify their specific requirements and apply the appropriate system.

The first was a central registration system operated through a central registration branch. In this system all subject clerks were assigned code letters. The head clerk received the mail and sorted it according to the code letters of the subject clerks. Then the mail was passed on to the central registration clerk. He maintained a separate case register for the correspondence of each subject clerk. He registered the letters for a given subject clerk and

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forwarded the letters to him together with the register. The subject clerk checked the letters, initialled the register and returned it to the registration clerk.

The second suggestion was a decentralised registration system. Under this system the head clerk distributed the letters direct to the subject clerks. Each subject clerk was assigned a separate register for the subjects he handled in which he entered all correspondence he dealt with.

Although the first suggestion was adopted in a few kachcheris and some government departments and courts, most offices operated decentralised registration systems. Under either option Turner's programme could have brought improvements. His emphasis on managing cases rather than files, on indexing, file tracking and on destruction were important innovations. However, they did not bring the expected benefits because they were not followed uniformly and because other problems, notably staff management and staff development, were not addressed. For example, under the centralised registration system, letters accumulated in the registration room due to the absence of proper supervision by the head clerk and the inefficiency of the registration clerk which caused delays to the administration.

To give another example, under Turner's system all active files were to be kept with the subject clerks, but as soon as a file was closed the subject clerk was to recommend whether it should be destroyed or preserved and
send it to the record room. The subject clerks did not perform these functions efficiently. They had no guidelines upon which to decide whether a file should be kept or destroyed nor did they have regular procedures for closing files. Therefore, Turner's system did not help to control the volume of paper in the departments as much as was expected.

The lack of progress compelled the government to consider introducing record-keeping practices which had proved successful elsewhere. Turner was appointed to undertake a mission, from September 1927 to May 1928, to the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America to examine the prevailing systems used in these countries, with a view to finding remedial measures for local problems.

This mission provided an opportunity for him to revise his own ideas in the light of the systems he observed. In 1928, based on his experience and observations, he prepared a report making recommendations for the improvement of office systems in public offices in Ceylon. In this report Turner revised the conclusions he had put forward in his earlier report.

According to Turner, the distribution of work by subject was a recognised practice in most of the countries he visited. The system which prevailed in Ceylon was that

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a clerk should deal with all the subjects handled by a
given officer or group of officers. He felt that this
system was inefficient. He argued that when a clerk to
dealt with correspondence pertaining to a broad range of
subjects, it lead either to misfiling or misplacement of
correspondence. Therefore, he recommended that this system
should be replaced and instead responsibility for a small
number of clearly defined subjects should be assigned to
each subject clerk.

In his second report Turner noted that he did not
favour a central registration system and that he believed
that decentralisation was the proper solution for Ceylon.
He admitted that it was difficult to decide on whether or
not to centralise registration. He recognised that there
was a marked tendency towards centralisation in developed
countries and that the office management consultants at the
time were in favour of this idea for the efficiency of
administration. However, he noted that:

\[\text{it is true that a central registry was the more common practice in all the countries visited. In Ceylon the decentralised system is a continuation of that found in the kachcheris prior to reorganisation; while in certain offices which had a central registry, this branch was often so much in arrears and so badly organised that it was necessary as a first [step] to efficiency to break up the central registry rather than to attempt to reorganise it.}\]

Turner recommended that where centralised registries
were functioning inefficiently, rather than reorganising
them, decentralisation would provide the answer. However,

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42 Ibid, Section 5(2) p 3
where this was not the case he proposed that the branches or administrative divisions of the institutions should be given custody of their own papers, a change which would not involve major alterations in the internal administration of the offices.

In justifying his decision to develop a decentralised system Turner emphasised that the situation in Ceylon was different from that in Europe. He pointed out that the clerical staff in Ceylon did not handle work of a responsible nature, as did their European counterparts. His contention was that the Ceylonese clerical officers were not capable of carrying out the responsibilities involved in a central registry. They attended to work of a more routine nature, namely tracing files, filing letters and forwarding them to action officers. He hoped that even this routine work would be simplified by the new system which was being proposed. Turner was optimistic that a decentralised system would succeed and urged that it at least be tried on an experimental basis. However, he further noted:

If after a further discussion and experiment it is found that centralised custody is likely to be more advantageous, it would not be a difficult matter to withdraw their files from subject clerks and to hand them over to the central registry or record room. But it is necessary to see that the record keeper is able to cope efficiently with the work at present in his charge before giving to his branch additional duties of considerable importance. Under the new system the custody of the older files is centralised in the record room and the controversy only refers to pending cases.\(^43\)

\(^{43}\) Ibid, Section 5 (2), p 4
Here Turner seems to have missed a fundamental point. For any record system, centralised or decentralised, to function well it must be based on an understanding of the policy of the institution, its objectives and its functions. This could not be achieved by record keepers, who in most instances were employed at the lowest grades in public service as custodians of files. Apparently Turner gave little thought to the need for trained supervisors and managers.

Yet Turner remained optimistic that his system would be effective. In his conclusion, he stated that:

....there is considerable variety of practice in different offices on different points, and consequently there were no two offices with the same system. This was certainly an unexpected state of affairs, and also it was the view of various authorities that different offices and classes of work would give rise to different systems, one would have thought that there was a good deal in common which could have been reduced to a uniform system. It is possible that the idiosyncrasies of successful executive heads have been allowed too much individual weight, and it is to be expected that the development of office organisation will produce a standard office system which, while being sufficiently flexible to be applied to various offices, will yet retain most of its main features in all offices, irrespective of kind and size."

In 1929, Turner prepared a manual entitled 'An introduction to the Principles of Office Organisation' for use in government departments." In it he synthesised his findings on surveys in public institutions and his experience on his foreign visits to produce comprehensive

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"Ibid, Section 26, p 11

"Turner, L J B, An Introduction to the Principles of Office Organisation, Colombo, Govt. print., 1929"
guidelines for managing the current phase of record-keeping. He was aware that his earlier work had not resulted in real changes, but his approach was essentially the same as in his first report.

3.4.2 A Case Study of Record Systems in the Colonial Secretary's Office in Turner's Period

Turner's initial studies on the improvement of office systems in the kachcheris had an impact on the record-keeping system in the Colonial Secretary's Office. Based on Turner's recommendations for kachcheris, a new office system was introduced to the Colonial Secretary's Office in 1926 and a manual was issued. However, some of the fundamental principles which Turner tried to introduce were not incorporated in the manual. Notably his emphasis was on information about cases or files rather than about individual papers, whereas the manual noted that:

It appears that in the present system, a great deal of time is wasted in searching [for] papers and it was one of the main objects of the new system to reduce this waste of time."

The manual provided detailed instructions on handling letters. It specified that incoming letters were to be read and date stamped by assistant colonial secretaries and then sent to the registration room for registration. Alphabetical letter codes were introduced to represent subjects, and the superintendent in-charge of the registration room recorded the relevant subject code on

"Colonial Secretary's Office: Orders for the introduction of the new office system, Colombo, Govt. print., 1926, p 8

101
each incoming item and passed it on to the registration clerk. The registration clerk entered the letters in the general register and in an alphabetical subject register and submitted them for action. Confidential letters and despatches were registered separately. Specific instructions were issued on procedures to be followed in the registration room covering such areas as sorting papers, maintaining the general register, filing papers, serial numbering the contents of files and registering out-letters. Each registration clerk was instructed to prepare an index card, indicating the case number, address and date, before each outward letter was despatched. The format of this card changed according to the subject of the letter or its movement. For example, if it was an internal letter being forwarded for instructions, the reference and signature was noted.

All closed records, whether of ephemeral or archival value, were transferred to the Record Office of the Colonial Secretary's Office. There the records were weeded and those of archival value were filed by subject following the same system adopted in the Registration Room. The superintendent prepared a subject card index to the content. An abstract of the letter, the date, reference and location were recorded on 5"x3" index cards arranged in alphabetical order by subject. This enabled easy access to

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47 Ibid, p 1

48 The Record Office was a section of the Archives Division of the Colonial Secretary's Office
the records pertaining to the various divisions of the Chief Secretary's Office. This system remained in practice until the end of British colonial administration of the colony. These indexes then were transferred to the Archives along with the Colonial Secretary's Office records.

3.4.3 Evaluation of Turner's Findings

Turner's reports and manual did have an impact. Administrators made efforts to introduce the record-keeping systems he recommended as their administration reports indicate. Moreover, Turner's recommendations even became part of administrative changes introduced with the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931. For instance, the guidelines for the Executive Committees included the following instructions, which were based on the guidelines in Turner's reports and manual:

All official papers including communications to and from Ministers should as far as possible, be filed in the files of the Departments concerned, to avoid the clerical labour, expense, delay and mistakes which would be caused by duplication of a portion of the records for the sole use of the Ministers.49

Perhaps the most significant result of Turner's work is that instead of maintaining or developing central registry systems, every division, unit and branch of the government started its own registration system. The problem was that these systems were not co-ordinated and their operators did not receive any ongoing advice or support.

49 Government Gazette No 7858, 6.5.1931, Section 15, Colombo, Govt. print., 1931, p 10
This is the reason why today central registries are not found in public institutions in Sri Lanka, as they are in the United Kingdom or in most other Commonwealth countries, and why there is such a bewildering variety of registry classification systems in use.

Another problem with Turner's analysis was that it focused on the current phase of records but gave very little attention to the semi-current phase of records. It provided no guidelines for the appraisal of records as they passed through the semi-current phase to the non-current phase. Rather, closed records were to be passed on to record rooms, marked only with the subject clerks' view on disposal and with no provision for disposal action. As a result, valuable and valueless records accumulated indiscriminately in government institutions. With the increased level of activity in government institutions following the Donoughmore reforms in 1931, the volume of records began to grow more rapidly and the need to control this material became more pressing.

Turner's conclusions focused on the manifestation of the problems rather than on the underlying causes. He did not get to grips with the real issues which continued to undermine all attempts at providing an effective service. He was not able to separate the shortcomings of the system itself from issues relating to the personnel who operated them. His belief that records work could be handled by junior clerical staff without proper training was unrealistic. Had he concentrated on the management,
organisation, grading and training needs of the clerical officers his work would have resulted in lasting changes. As it was, his efforts at best, like those of his predecessors, did little more than alter the nature of the existing systems. At worst his reforms undermined what central management control there was of record systems and left them in the hands of junior staff who attempted to devise ad hoc solutions to problems beyond their understanding.

4.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter traces the development of the Government Archives as a department since independence. In 1966, the department was renamed 'The Department of National Archives'. The designation of the head of department was changed from 'government archivist' to 'director national archives'.

The administration of the Archives is examined here from two perspectives. Firstly, the development of the Archives and its functions are reviewed. The enactment of archival legislation and the establishment of branch offices are examined. Secondly, the administrative structure of the department is considered with a special emphasis on recruitment schemes, training facilities and job prospects for personnel. The effectiveness of these arrangements is evaluated in order to understand what hinders the execution of the department's responsibilities.

4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARCHIVES

4.2.1 Establishment of the Government Archives

The Department of Government Archives was established in 1947 as a separate department under the Ministry of Education. According to the archivist's first administration report, the functions of the department were to:

(1) Ensure 'official custody' for the records, with all its implications, so that the safety of their essential qualities may be guaranteed.
(2) Take steps to protect them against physical damage - from fire, water, rodents, dust, mildew, insect pests, pilfering, mischief and other destructive agencies, human as well as animal

(3) Make them available for reference by arranging them in proper order and providing adequate lists, inventories, catalogues and indexes so that any desired document can be traced

(4) Carry out searches for the Government departments and members of the public; issue certified copies of extracts from the Dutch and English records; prepare historical notes on various subjects for official information; answer a variety of inquiries on antiquarian points from scholars in Ceylon or abroad who are unable to visit the Archives themselves

(5) Give advice to litigants and Government departments on questions affecting the system of land tenure in Dutch times; examine and report on documents alleged to be Dutch land grants; attend Court to give evidence in these cases

(6) Receive and register and prepare lists of all books and all newspapers published in the island; ensure their proper arrangement and preservation; produce declarations or extracts as evidence in the courts. (To this is being added the control of all Printing Presses)

(7) Supervision of the Government Record Office (containing the files of the old Colonial Secretary's Office for the last 50 years, still required by Ministries for reference) and carry out the duties appertaining thereto. Weed and prepare schedules of valueless papers, marked for destruction

(8) Administrative work - routine duties, discipline

(9) Carry out semi-official duties, such as work for the Historical Manuscripts Commission, copying and collection of documents which though not archives, are of historical importance; Exhibition of Manuscripts; maintain National Archives Register.¹

¹ Administration Report of the Government Archivist for the years 1947-1950, Colombo, Govt. print., 1951, pp m4-m5
Although the Archives had no role in selecting records for retention, it did accession the material identified by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and Section 13 of the report gives details of new accessions from government institutions up to 1951. Accessions were carried out according to Section 89 (v) of the Manual of Procedure. Accessions to the Archives are discussed in Section 5.5.

Even after the establishment of the Archives as a separate department in 1947, the Historical Manuscripts Commission\(^2\) was responsible for the selection of documents for permanent retention as laid down in regulation No 87 of the Manual of Procedure. The Government Archives took care of preserving valuable documents. This situation changed with the enactment of the National Archives Law in 1973 when the Archives was empowered with the management of non-current records in public institutions. These changes are discussed in Section 4.2.8.

Today, the commission's activities have been restricted to locating private record sources. Since the Director of National Archives functions as the honourary secretary of the commission and the commission has neither an office nor its own staff, the Archives carries out work programmes and other administrative work relating to the commission's functions.

In 1951 the Archives took over the functions which were previously the responsibility of the registrar general

\(^2\) Establishment of the commission and its functions upto 1948 was discussed in Chapter Two
as the registrar of books and newspapers. Under this arrangement, four copies of all published books and any subsequent editions and one signed copy of each newspaper printed in Ceylon were to be transferred to the Archives. The Director of the National Archives still receives this material by law.

In 1957, the government archivist first raised the need for a national bibliography. In 1960 he stated that, "Ceylon is one of the few countries in the world which does not have a National Bibliography." The Archives recommended a bibliography issued monthly, containing all books and other publications published during that month.

In 1962, A J Wells, the chief editor of the British National Bibliography, was appointed as a consultant in this area under the UNESCO Technical Assistance Programme. On his recommendations a division was set up to look after the bibliography in the same year. It was transferred from the National Archives to the National Library Services

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3 Ordinance No 1 of 1885, Printers and Publishers Ordinance: An Ordinance to Regulate the Printing and Publication of Books and to Provide the Preservation of Copies of Books and for the Registration of Particulars relating Thereto; and Amendment Act No 28 of 1951, Colombo, Govt. print., 1951

4 Ordinance No 5 of 1839, 'An Ordinance to Regulate Printing and Publishing Newspapers in Ceylon', and Amendment Act No 18 of 1951, Colombo, Govt. print., 1951


6 Ibid, 1961-1962, pp m11-12
4.2.2 The Archives' Move to Colombo

In 1958, the government appointed a Special Committee on Antiquities to report on those government departments responsible for the custody and management of antiquities. This report threw light on the internal administration of the Archives:

The three departments of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, the Department of National Museums and the Department of Government Archives have originated and developed in a most haphazard manner. Their development was not controlled by a definite conception of the scope of what their activities should be. The work of the departments was mainly guided by the individual ideas of the different men who successively manned the posts of Heads of those Departments.

This committee recommended that the Archives move to Colombo from Nuwara Eliya. Later, the archivist stated that:

The location of the Archives at a place more central and easily accessible to the general public and to research students, and to have the records housed in a suitable building providing more space and better storage facilities were the major considerations which motivated this move.

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7 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1973, Colombo, Govt. print., 1975, p 55

8 Interim Report of the Special Committee on Antiquities, Sessional Paper V of 1958, Colombo, Govt. print., 1958, p 1

9 Ibid, p 4

In July 1963 the Archives was transferred to the premises of Vidyodaya University at Gangodawila, seven miles from Colombo. Moving the Archives closer to the main administrative centre of the country led to an expansion of the department's services.

In 1969, the construction of a new Archives building commenced in Colombo. Between 1970 and 1975, all records housed at the Vidyodaya University were transferred to parts of the new building.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{4.2.3 Kandy Branch}

The first provincial branch of the Archives was set up in the Central Province in 1980\textsuperscript{12} to provide archival services to public institutions and to the general public of this province. The administration reports of the Archives for the years 1980 to 1989 reveal that except for a few accessions of non-current records from public sector institutions, the officers of the branch had spent most of their time listing and conserving temple records. Today this branch provides search room facilities to the public, but it functions more or less as a repository, rather than as a branch office. If its functions were broadened, it could offer a service to administrators and to the general public of the province. As the distance from Colombo makes it impossible to supervise branch work closely, there is a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1975, Colombo, Govt. print., 1980, p m49
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 1980, p m53
\end{itemize}
need to appoint a trained archivist.

4.2.4 Access to the National Archives Holdings

Before 1939 the public had no access to the Archives in Ceylon as was the case in most British colonial territories. The Colonial Secretariat records were kept carefully for reference purposes by administrators. Thus research was very limited during the colonial period.

Even during the first decade after independence, the archives were rarely used for research by administrators or researchers. A study of the Archives' administration reports for the period 1960 to 1990 shows that access to the records has increased considerably since the 1960s. From the 1970s, after the Archives was moved to Colombo, the records held by the Archives have been used by historians for a wide range of research topics, by government officers to identify administrative and legal information and by the public for civil and legal purposes.

The National Archives Law of 1973, which has been discussed in Section 4.2.5, authorised the minister responsible for the Archives to make regulations for public access to public records. Section 16 (d) of the law stated that:

Public access to the public archives and the terms and conditions subject to which public archives or any specified class or description of public archives are open to inspection by the members of the public.

According to Sub-section 16 (2), the following procedures had to be followed to enforce the provisions
made under Sub-section 16 (1).

No regulation made by the Minister under sub-section (1) shall have effect until it has been approved by the National State Assembly and notification of such approval is published in the Gazette.\(^{13}\)

In 1978, The Minister of Cultural Affairs made regulations and reduced the period of access from fifty years to thirty years.\(^{14}\)

The Dutch records in the Archives relate mainly to the Dutch administration of the Maritime Provinces of Ceylon from 1640 to 1796. These records are covered reasonably well by finding aids, which are in printed and manuscript form.

Records of the British Colonial Administration are much more extensive. They include the records of the central administration and the provincial administration up to 1947. However the finding aids are not well developed. Although lists and card indexes to most of these record groups have been compiled and arranged under series and sub-series following the principle of provenance, they are incomplete and do not give a clear picture of the contents of the records. This makes it difficult for researchers to make full use of the records.\(^{15}\)

\(^{13}\) The National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973, Colombo, Govt. print., 1973, p 8 (See Appendix VII)

\(^{14}\) Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1978, Colombo, Govt. print., 1981, p 441

Few records belonging to the post independence period have been transferred to the Archives. The problems the Archives has encountered in this area are discussed in Chapter Five.

The printed holdings include newspapers printed in Ceylon from 1832 and books and other publications printed from 1885 acquired under legal deposit. Government publications, namely gazettes (from 1802), blue books from (1817 to 1937), sessional papers (from 1862), administration reports (from 1867) and Hansards (from 1860) are also available.

Private papers of individuals and institutions and manuscripts from temples have also been collected and deposited. In addition, there are maps and plans from the seventeenth century to the present.

In addition, microfilms of records pertaining to the country's history between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries have been purchased from Portugal, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

4.2.5 The Enactment of the National Archives Law

The first administration report of the Archives for the period 1947 to 1950 highlighted the necessity for legislation to ensure that non-current official records were kept properly. However, it took nearly twenty years to pass the National Archives Law. The law was enacted in 1973 and came into effect in March 1974, giving legal
recognition to the Department of National Archives. The Archives' activities were regulated under the provisions of this law.

The law redefined the main objectives of the Archives. These were to accession valuable state records over twenty-five years old for permanent preservation, to be responsible for their conservation, to provide facilities for public research into the records, to arrange for the publication of the records, to serve as the principal legal depository for all printed material on the island and to conduct surveys of documents in private possession.

4.2.6 Archives Advisory Council

Under this law, provisions were made to set up an Archives Advisory Council to advise the minister responsible for the Archives. This advice was to be on the following matters: preservation and use of public archives; custody and transfer of public records; inspection and preservation of privately held documents and manuscripts of historical, cultural, literary, economic or scientific value; inspection of records by the public; the editing and publishing of public archives and private manuscripts. The council consists of the Director of the National Archives as chairman ex-officio and not less than five nor more than seven other persons appointed by the minister of cultural

16 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1974, Colombo, Govt. print., p m47
affairs.\textsuperscript{17}

\section*{4.2.7 The Presidential Archives}

In 1978, the government took preliminary measures to establish a Presidential Archives Division and a Reference Service under the control of the National Archives in order to preserve and administer the records created by the executive president of Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{18} An act passed in 1981\textsuperscript{19} amended Section 9 of the National Archives Law, No 48 of 1973, to enable the transfer of Presidential Secretariat records to the Archives at the end of the term of a president. Under this provision, the Director of the Archives was entrusted with responsibility for ensuring that the records were transferred to the Presidential Archives Division.\textsuperscript{20}

This marked an important stage in the development of record-keeping practices in Sri Lanka. For the first time, the archival profession received recognition from the chief executive of the country. However, as can be seen from the administration reports of the Archives between 1978 and 1989, the Presidential Archives Division's services were very limited. Its only function was to make records

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17}National Archives Law No 48 of 1973, Section 6, Colombo, Govt. print., 1973, p 2
\item \textsuperscript{18}Wickramanayake, S S K, 'Presidential Archives', Sunday Observer, 20.1.1980, p 10
\item \textsuperscript{19}National Archives (Amendment) Act No 30 of 1981 (see Appendix VIII)
\item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid Section 4, pp 1-2
\end{itemize}

116
available to the president and other persons authorised by the president. Had more attention been paid to managing these records in their earlier phases, the division could have played an active role in managing records in the Presidential Secretariat as a whole, and thus have set an example for other public institutions.

Another law enacted in 1988 established the Archival Depository, Library and Research Centre for Historical Research for official and private records pertaining to the ex-president. A board of governors, appointed under the act, was responsible for the administration, management and control of this institution.

Under this act the Presidential Secretariat records were now transferred to the new centre rather than to the Presidential Archives. According to section 4(1) (a):

The Board shall, in the name of the centre, have the power to hold all public records and printed matter transferred to the National Archives at the expiration of the term of office of His Excellency J.R.Jayewardene, the first elected Executive President of Sri Lanka 1978 - 1988; under section 9A of the National Archives Law, No.48 of 1973;

This provision created new and potentially serious professional problems. Until this time, the National Archives had been the legal depository for all non-current

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21 An Act to provide for the Establishment of an Archival Depository called the J.R.Jayewardene Centre for Historical Research, Archives and Library; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto: J.R.Jayewardene Centre Act No 77 of 1988 (see Appendix IX)

22 Ibid, Section 3, Subsections 1,2,3 (a) to (i)

23 Ibid, Section 4 (a), p 2
records of public institutions in Sri Lanka. The provisions of the new law did not permit records of the chief executive of the country to be accessioned to the National Archives. Yet presidential records form the hub of the country's administrative records, just as the colonial secretary's/chief secretary's records are the starting point for studies of most aspects of British colonial administration. Once they cease to be public records there is no guarantee that they will be subject to the same rules of access as other public records.

The removal of the Presidential Secretariat records from the national collection therefore could undermine research into the country's administration and have a serious effect on historiography. This vacuum cannot be filled by any other group of records, for presidential records are needed to understand policy decisions, at any given point in time, regarding every aspect of the country's welfare and development. The records of ministries, departments and other agencies provide only part of the information which researchers need and they lose much of their meaning without the Presidential Secretariat records.

Moreover, if this new research centre sets a trend, other chief executives may prefer to have separate centres for the records created during their terms of office. If this were to happen, the records of the presidents of Sri Lanka would be physically and geographically dispersed and moreover, conditions of access might differ. H C Jones'
comments on the American Presidential Libraries could then apply to Sri Lanka:

... to the Archives kept by government at every level these are now added - since Franklin Roosevelt - the libraries of "Presidential Papers." The precedent once set will most likely continue, until conscientious students of American history find that they must spend the better part of their life travelling from one presidential birth place to the next.24

While geographical distance would not be such a problem in Sri Lanka, the potential problems of having separate collections of records for each executive president of Sri Lanka need to be resolved without delay.

4.3 PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ARCHIVISTS

4.3.1 The Archives' Work Programme

From its creation the Archives has lacked a clear work programme. Archivists have paid inadequate attention to defining the scope of their responsibilities. In the 1950s, the shortcomings of the department could be excused due to limited staff, lack of resources and the location of the Archives (112 miles away from the administrative capital). Most of these problems were resolved in subsequent decades. However, there are major areas of professional activity which have yet to be addressed. There is a need to review responsibilities, to design programmes aimed at achieving the intended objectives of the department and to recruit appropriate personnel and train them effectively.

The department's work programmes have been seriously affected by the fact that management principles have not been applied. As will be seen in Chapter Five, the responsibilities of the personnel in the department have not been clearly defined. Over the years much of the senior archivists' valuable time has been devoted to general administration. The failure to separate general administrative responsibilities from professional activities has prevented the senior professionals from utilising their professional knowledge and experience in planning, organising and executing the work of the Archives.

This situation still persists. The two senior professionals in the country, the director and the deputy director handle matters pertaining to general administration and finance assisted by an administrative officer and other clerical officers.\textsuperscript{25} It is clear from the administrative chart in Figure I and from the annual estimates of the National Archives for the year 1989\textsuperscript{26} that the responsibility for co-ordinating professional work lies with the assistant director at head office. This is too great a task for one officer. The National Archives is not organised into functional divisions and the staff do not have clear job descriptions or reporting lines. The quality

\textsuperscript{25} Estimates of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 1989, Project 1: General Administration and Staff Services, Colombo, Govt. print., 1989, p 746

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, Project 2: Archive Management and Record Services, 1988, p 748
and efficiency of professional work could be improved if professional responsibilities were clearly defined and a systematic distribution of work developed for the professional staff, taking into account their capabilities and special interests. A proposed approach to introducing improvements is discussed in Chapter Seven.

4.3.2 The Staffing Structure of the Archives

In 1948 the administrative structure of the Department of Government Archives comprised the archivist, an assistant archivist, a librarian and clerical and other support staff. Three more assistant archivists and a technical officer were appointed in 1951. When the department was renamed the Department of National Archives in 1967 the designation of 'archivist' was changed to that of 'director' and a post of assistant director was created. It was not until eleven years later, in 1978, that a deputy director's post was created. After this it took another five years to create a second assistant director's post for the Presidential Archives Division in 1983. Meanwhile the number of assistant archivists had increased from four to ten. Today this is still the


28 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1978, Colombo, Govt. print., 1981, p m41

29 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1983, Colombo, Govt. print., 1984, p m2

121
structure at the professional level.

The designation 'assistant archivist' has become an anomaly because there is no longer an archivist's post. It would be more logical if the designation of assistant archivist were changed to 'archivist', or if one or two 'archivist' posts could be created for senior assistant archivists as a promotional grade. This would benefit senior assistant archivists who at present are not eligible for scholarships to study for qualifications abroad and who therefore cannot be promoted.

With the passing of the Archives Act in 1973, the Archives had a statutory responsibility to regulate the management of non-current records in public administration. Yet while the staffing level had grown since the early 1960s, the Archives was not in a position to carry out these responsibilities. This was partly due to the fact that it was difficult to retain professional staff, particularly at the assistant archivist level. Many energetic assistant archivists, some of whom had served for many years, became frustrated and left the Archives to join state corporations and universities because there were almost no opportunities for training abroad or for promotion.

No steps have been taken toward solving the dilemma of the assistant archivists or of developing the professional capacity of the staff through training. These problems will have to be solved if the Archives is to fulfil its legal obligations.
It is inappropriate here to analyse all the department's recruitment schemes. However, it is important to highlight the anomalies and disparities of recruitment schemes within the professional and sub-professional grades and their contribution to the atmosphere of discontent within these grades which undermines job performance and reduces the quality of service provided.

The administrative chart in Appendix I shows the hierarchy of the department. The director, deputy director, assistant directors and assistant archivists belong to professional grades. Six record investigation officers posts were created in the late 1980s, and these officers belong to the professional and sub-professional grades, according to the nature of the responsibilities they perform. The graduate assistants are classified as sub-professional grades.

The basic academic qualifications required by the recruitment schemes is similar for all professional grades working in the Archives. The officers are required to have a first or a second class honours degree in languages, law or social sciences. The only exception is that recently

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30 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1987, Colombo, Govt. print., 1989, p M15


32 Clarifying the professional status of the Investigating Officers, the DNA stated that, "If you define RIO as Record Indexing Officer it is a sub-professional post. If you define RIO as Record Investigation Officer it is a professional post." DNA's Letter dated 25.1.1991

123
'science' has been added to the director's recruitment scheme, but without a proper definition of which subjects are required.

There are inconsistencies in the professional requirements set out in the recruitment schemes for director, deputy director and assistant director. For example, the deputy director must have a post graduate diploma from a recognised university whereas the director only needs a diploma or equivalent qualification from a 'recognised institution'. Moreover, service experience required for the director's post is different from that of the deputy director's post. There are other disparities in the recruitment schemes for professional grades in terms of academic qualifications and professional and service requirements. All of these need to be carefully considered and resolved.

There are also anomalies in the recruitment schemes of sub-professional and technical posts. Graduate assistants must be graduates of recognised universities and must have obtained a first class or a second class degree. However the subjects have not been specified as they are for the higher professional grades in the department. Therefore, there is a danger that a graduate selected for this post may not have subjects required for other promotional grades and could find problems developing a career in the department.

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124
In fact, until 1985, graduate assistants had no promotional prospects, but in that year the recruitment scheme was changed. A provision was made to enable those with no honours qualifications but with five years service to apply for one of two posts at the assistant archivist level which were available to graduates holding a general degree. This was not a very satisfactory solution. Both of these posts were filled in 1985 and they still are since general graduates do not have many career prospects in the public service. Until these two post holders either leave the department or are promoted, the other graduate assistants who have no honours degree have no chance of promotion.

This situation has created an atmosphere of discontent among the graduate assistants. The intermediate post of 'record investigation officer' was created in 1988 as a result of their representations and is open to senior graduate assistants who have completed seven years service as graduate assistants in the department. However, they must compete with graduates with first or second class degrees in history, languages, sociology or law, who are recruited directly from university.

34 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1985, Colombo. Govt. print., 1985, p m2
35 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1988, Colombo, Govt. print., 1989, p m56

125
4.3.3 Training

In the 1950s and early 1960s, archivists and assistant archivists underwent professional training in archive administration at the Public Record Office and the British Museum in London. One was sent to India to study the administration of the press, publication and copyright laws in India. These were not specified academic or professional courses conducted by universities or archival institutions but special study programmes designed to meet the department's needs.

In contrast, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s some professionals and sub-professionals obtained scholarships for professional and practical training, as well as for research degrees in archive administration, records management, reprography and conservation fields at universities and other archival training institutions in the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, West Germany, India, Malaysia, Australia and Canada.

Some of these professionals did not stay long in the department. For example, in the 1960s two assistant archivists did a post graduate diploma course in librarianship at University College London. On their return, after working in the department for a few years, they left to join the university service. One of them was trained, on the recommendation of A J Wells, to work on the compilation of the National Bibliography, which began in

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126
Their expertise could have been used for the preparation of catalogues for the printed publications and newspapers which have been deposited with the Archives as legal copies under the Printers and Publishers Ordinance. Since the 1960s the Archives has had no qualified librarian and no proper index has been prepared for printed government publications. In addition, the department maintains a library containing books on Sri Lanka and on library, archive and information studies which have not been adequately catalogued. Further, the Presidential Archives Division has a library covering most areas of social science. All these collections need professionally prepared catalogues. This problem has not been addressed since the departure of the two assistant archivists with library qualifications.

Even when archivists have received specialised professional training abroad, they often have not been in a position to utilise their training for the benefit of the department. For example, an assistant archivist who was trained for one and half years in the State School of Archivists in the Hague was appointed to the Presidential


38 Chapter 179, 1.4.1885, Legislative Enactments, Vol 14, Colombo, Vauxhall Investment Ltd., 1980, pp xiv/86-xiv/88

39 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1979, Colombo, Govt. print., 1982, p 48

127
Archives Division on his return from training. His knowledge and training in the Dutch language and archives was not used to prepare finding aids for the documents of the Dutch colonial administration or to translate and edit Dutch documents.

The lack of attention to the professional and personnel requirements of the Archives has adversely affected ability of the staff to carry out its responsibilities as will be evident from the discussion which follows in Chapter Five.

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40 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1980, Colombo, Govt. print., 1982, p 49
5 MANAGEMENT OF SEMI-CURRENT AND NON-CURRENT RECORDS: 1948-1990

5.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the problems of managing semi-current and non-current records in the post independence period. Neither archivists nor administrators have given serious attention to the problems which public institutions in Sri Lanka face in relation to managing semi-current and non-current records. Therefore, firstly, attention is drawn to the regulations and laws relating to the custody, preservation and disposal of records from 1948 to 1990. Up to 1973 the regulations in force were inadequate. Although effective regulations and laws have been enacted subsequently, they have not been applied consistently and have not made an impact on the management of semi-current and non-current records.

Secondly, the application of disposal regulations and laws is reviewed through an examination of the conditions in the record rooms where semi-current and non-current records are housed. Due to the absence of proper disposal programmes, non-current records have been mixed with semi-current ones and have accumulated in large quantities in the record rooms, turning them into 'tips'. Records of archival value have not been transferred to the Archives. The procedures developed to rectify this situation have not been applied and the reasons for this situation are examined.
Thirdly, attention is drawn to archivists' attempts to prepare retention schedules in public institutions. Scheduling programmes carried out in the ministries and departments have not been successful due to inadequate planning by the Archives. However, the Archives has been able to finalise and gazette common retention schedules for house-keeping records in public institutions and common schedules for kachcheri and court records. These schedules are examined in order to understand their value in managing semi-current and non-current records.

The failure to develop and apply regulations on the disposal of records, to manage record rooms and to execute retention schedules has had an important effect on the Archives' ability to accession records. The resulting problems are discussed in the final section and examples are drawn from the situation in public institutions.

5.2 LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE DISPOSAL OF RECORDS

5.2.1 Overview

The regulations set out in the Manual of Procedure of the Government of Ceylon on the preservation and destruction of records are discussed in Section 2.3.3. This section examines the revisions to the Manual of Procedure made in 1947 and other regulations and laws, namely Treasury circulars, the National Archives Law and the Establishment Code, as they relate to the disposal of records.
5.2.2 Regulations and Laws

Manual of Procedure

The revised regulations on the disposition of records in the Manual of Procedure came into effect in September 1947 and were described in Chapter 2, Section 9, Clauses 86 to 89 of the manual. These related to the records of the ministries, departments, kachcheris and courts. The regulations did not contravene those approved by the governor in 1934 on the destruction of records nor the rules prepared for the destruction of records under departmental orders. Rather, they emphasised the necessity of preparing schedules for the records which were to be destroyed periodically.

According to Section 86, every head of a department was to prepare lists of files which were to be destroyed periodically. Under Section 87 these lists were to be submitted to the Historical Manuscripts Commission to enable it to select records of historical value. Sections 86 and 87 advised the creating departments to simply list file titles. They were not asked to ensure that the titles corresponded to the contents. Many departments only listed broad categories of records, for instance, accounts.

The commission had authority to select historical records but it could not force the administrators to prepare lists. As will be seen in Section 5.4, in most instances the commission had to wait until the heads of

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1 The Manual of Procedure, Colombo, Govt. print., 1947, pp 11-13

131
departments sent in their lists. The commission reviewed the lists and made recommendations for disposal or preservation. The heads of departments then had to consult the Treasury, Audit or other departments to get consent for disposal.

Finally, as stated in Section 88, the heads of departments had to submit the lists of records identified for destruction to the permanent secretaries of their ministries to obtain their approval. The permanent secretaries now were empowered to authorise disposal, where as in the past it was necessary to obtain the governor's approval.

Under the regulations of the manual, the relationship between the commission and the Archives was not clearly defined. The manual did not give the Archives authority to be involved in disposal of records in public institutions. According to Section 89 (v), the archivist was simply a custodian of public records and, as honourary secretary to the Historical Manuscripts Commission, he had only an indirect influence on the selection of records. Therefore the Archives had to carry out its functions in the shadow of the commission as it did before independence.

After 1948 a few government institutions continued to carry out the periodic destruction of their records under departmental orders or manuals. For example, the Police Department continued its disposal programmes through Order B8, which had been prepared in 1939. Section 18 of the
Manual of the Registrar General's Department of 1951 indicated that certain record series needed to be destroyed from time to time. Similarly, Sections H22-24 of the Postmaster's Manual of 1966 listed the record series of the Department of Posts which were to be destroyed periodically.

Although the Archives had no authority to become directly involved in disposal activity, in 1954 it issued a set of instructions to public institutions for the disposal of records in accordance with the provisions of the Manual of Procedure. These instructions explained the need to appraise records more than fifty years old and to set out procedures for removing ephemera from the files.

Both the guidelines set out in the manual and the Archives' instructions reflect the prevailing belief among archivists that weeding of records was a proper professional procedure. The Archives not only instructed the departments to weed records, but its staff weeded files which had been deposited in the Archives. This practice disturbed the continuity of the information on files and was not an effective use of staff time.

During the 1950s the Archives carried out surveys which revealed that most public institutions had not followed the instructions in the Manual of Procedure or the instructions issued by the Archives. As a result, house-keeping records had accumulated in large quantities in most

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2 Manual of the Registrar-General's Department, Ceylon, Colombo, Govt. Print., 1951, p 73

133
record rooms of public institutions and were mixed with records of long term value. In some instances, the records which had accumulated in the record rooms over the years were sent indiscriminately to the Archives without being appraised. In 1955, the archivist observed that:

I find that weeding is almost totally neglected, with the result that we receive here a mass of useless papers with departmental records and the task of original weeding, which really should be done by the departments concerned before their records are transferred to the Archives, falls entirely on this department with its limited staff.

Most public institutions did not even inform the Archives that records were available for disposal. By the mid 1950s the government had become aware of the serious problems being caused by the accumulation of non-current records. Most of these were house-keeping records and as a result further attempts were made to set up systems for their disposal.

Treasury Circulars

Treasury Circular No 261 was issued in 1955 in another attempt to dispose of records which had no ongoing value. It provided a list of common house-keeping series with recommended disposal periods and stated that:

This list is intended to be merely a guide to the staff officer. This list should not be considered as giving any authority to subject clerks to destroy any document without the specific orders of a staff officer.¹

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¹ Jale 4/24, 9.5.1955

² Treasury, Destruction of Valueless Records, (Circular No 261), 30.9.1955

134
However, administrators tended to apply the regulations only where the accumulation of records disturbed their day to day administrative functions. The circular also addressed the need for defined disposal periods for records specific to institutions:

Action should be taken by the Permanent Secretary to prepare similar lists for documents peculiar to departments in their charge and approve them after consulting the Treasury, the Auditor General, the Government Archivist and the Historical Manuscripts Commission.5

Most government institutions did not follow these instructions, although some did request the assistance of the Archives or the Historical Manuscripts Commission in disposing of records they no longer required. Their concern was to get rid of ephemeral records in the short term rather than to introduce systematic disposal programmes.

In subsequent years, more circulars were issued concerning the disposal of records.6 However, things did not improve for three main reasons. Firstly, the archivists did not have the authority to intervene in disposal activities. Secondly, the archivists did not have the training or the experience needed to formulate proper guidelines on the disposal of records. Finally, the

5 Ibid
6 (a) Treasury. Custody of Audited Accounts-Records, (Circular No 328), 14.11.1956
(b) Treasury. Disposal of Used Counterfoils and Receipt Books, (Circular No 521) 10.10.1960
(c) Treasury. Disposal of Petrol Orders, (Circular No 609) 10.5.1963
(d) Treasury. Custody of Documents Pertaining to Disciplinary Proceedings, (Circular No 689), 2.5.1966
(e) Treasury. Disposal of Confidential Documents, (Circular No 691), 3.5.1966
majority of administrators did not pay much attention to the need to manage semi-current records.

In the light of these problems, from the beginning of the 1950s the archivists were concerned to have an archives law which would define their involvement in the management of non-current records in public and parastatal institutions. The law was enacted only in 1973.

The Archives Law No 48 of 1973

The National Archives Law No 48 of 1973 was enacted in 1973 and came into effect on the first of March 1974. Its major emphases were the acquisition of records of long term historical value by the Archives, their conservation and access by the public. The act widened the scope of regulations relating to non-current official records. It covered the records of the national state assembly (parliament), central government offices, law courts, local government offices, state corporations and other statutory bodies involved in government which had exceeded twenty-five years from the date of creation and were determined to be of permanent value.  

Under Section 9 of this law, the authority of the Director of the Archives is restricted to the selection and transfer of non-current records to the Archives and their preservation. The act states that:

^7 Under Section 89 (v) of the Manual of procedure and Section 39 (9) of the Establishment Code which came into effect on 1.1.1971, the records which passed 50 years had to be transferred to the Archives. This was amended on 12.9.1974 reducing the period to 25 years.
The Director shall have access to any place of deposit of public records and shall have the power to examine such records with a view to listing or collecting information therefrom or to taking such steps as are necessary for their transfer to the National Archives for permanent preservation.

The law makes the heads of departments responsible for listing records with archival value, keeping them in safe custody and transferring them to the Archives. If the creating agencies wish to retain documents selected by the Archives as having archival value because they are still needed for administrative purposes, a list of these records has to be transmitted to the Archives. If the documents transferred contain information of a confidential nature, the Archives should take steps to preserve their confidentiality.

This legislation does not give the Archives authority to manage semi-current records, but the Archives can advise the administrators in this regard. However, the absence of proper storage facilities to house and manage these records for the long period until they become archives often leads to their being lost or destroyed.

As a means of strengthening the Archives' position, Section 16 (h) of the National Archives Law No 48 of 1973 gave authority to the minister in-charge of the Archives to make regulations on the "destruction of valueless records and documents in public offices and preparation of

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8 National Archives Law No 48 of 1973, Section 9(1), Colombo, Govt. print., 1973, p 4
9 Ibid, Section 9 (2), A to D, p 4
schedules therefore". Furthermore, under Section 16 (2) of the law, these schedules had to be submitted to the National State Assembly for approval:

No regulation made by the Minister under sub-section (1) shall have effect until it has been approved by the National State Assembly and notification of such approval is published in the Gazette.

Thus the Archives Law removed the authority granted to the permanent secretaries by the Manual of Procedure to authorise retention schedules. This had the effect of making disposal much more difficult. It now took a long time to finalise a schedule. The administration reports by the Director of the National Archives from 1974 reveal that the Archives did launch records scheduling programmes in ministries and departments in the late 1970s and early 1980s but these programmes did not lead to approved schedules for record series specific to the ministries and departments. The Archives staff were able to finalise common schedules for house-keeping records and for kachcheri and court records. These attempts to draw up schedules and the reasons for the lack of progress are discussed in Sections 5.4.2, 5.4.4 and 5.4.5.

The National Archives (Amendment) Act No 30 of 1981

Due to the practical difficulties involved in gaining authority to introduce retention schedules, the National

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10 Ibid, Section 16 (h), p 8
11 Ibid, Section 16 (2), p 8
Archives (Amendment Act) No 30 of 1981 amended Section 16 (2) by amending the sections relating to schedules as follows:

"(2) Every regulation made by the Minister shall be published in the Gazette and shall come into operation on the date of such publication or on such later date as may be specified in the regulation"

and

(3) by the insertion immediately after subsection (2) thereof, of the following new subsections:

"(3) Every regulation made by the Minister shall, as soon as convenient after its publication in the Gazette, be brought before Parliament for approval. Any regulation which is not so approved shall be deemed to be rescinded as from the date of disapproval without prejudice to anything previously done thereunder."

Thus, retention schedules could be put into operation from the date of gazette notification. Unfortunately, even with the improved situation brought about by the amendment as in the examples in Section 5.4.3, the Archives still has been unable to finalise any schedules for records specific to ministries or departments during the last decade.

The Establishment Code

The Establishment Code replaced the Manual of Procedure in December 1971. Chapter 39 Section 9 of this code reproduced the provisions made in the Manual of Procedure in the section on the Preservation and Destruction of Documents. To accommodate the provisions

12 This act came into effect on 21.5.1981

13 National Archives (Amendment) Act No 30 of 1981, Colombo, Govt. print., 1981, pp 3-4
made in the Archives Law, Chapter XXXIX-9 of this code was amended in 1974 by substituting a new Section 9 under the title Custody, Preservation and Destruction of Official Documents. This amendment outlined the procedures for the transfer of records to the Archives, the preparation of schedules and the destruction of public records.

When the Establishment Code was revised in 1985, the amendments to Chapter 39 (9) were included in Chapter 28 (9) of the new volume.

Under Chapter 39, Section 9.1, responsibilities of the heads of departments for custody and preservation of their institutional records were very vague. As a precaution, the 1985 revision placed the responsibility on the heads of departments thus:

9.1 A Head of Department or the "Responsible Officer" as defined in section 24 of the National Archives Law [No] 48 of 1973 is responsible for the safe custody, management and preservation of all documents or papers in such public office under his charge.

Under Chapter 39 Section 9.2 of the 1974 revision, records were to be transferred to the Archives after 25 years. However, it was not clear whether they were to be transferred 25 years after their creation or after their closure. Some administrators argued that records should be transferred 25 years after their closure. However, even if they wanted to do so, this was difficult due to the lack of

14 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1974, Colombo, Govt. print., 1975, p m47

15 Establishment Code, Amendment No 39, Colombo, Govt print, 12.9.1974
procedures and guidelines for the closure of files. To avoid these ambiguities, Section 9.2 of the 1985 revision of the Establishment Code replaced the previous section thus:

9.2 Transfer of public records not less than 25 years old from the date of their creation, from public office to the National Archives, and the destruction of valueless and ephemeral records in public offices are governed by the National Archives Law, No.48 of 1973 as amended by Act No. 30 of 1981 and by regulations made thereunder

According to the changes made in Section 9.3, the preparation and updating of schedules were entrusted to the heads of public institutions. They were to consult the Archives on all issues pertaining to the preparation of schedules:

9.3 A Head of Department should, in consultation with the Director, National Archives, prepare and update from time to time, schedules of records which should be transferred to the National Archives for permanent preservation and schedules of records which should be destroyed as valueless or ephemeral records

Under Section 9.4, the Director of Archives was empowered to authorise the preliminary schedules. This was stated in the Archives Amendment Act No 30 of 1981:

9.4 The preliminary schedules prepared under subsection 9:3 should be sent to the Director, National Archives within a month after the completion of such scheduling for purpose of approval

Administrative, financial and legal authorities then had to be consulted for necessary instructions and their agreement had to be sought before the preliminary schedules could be

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16 The schedules which are not approved by Parliament are considered as preliminary schedules
finalised, published in the government gazette and submitted to Parliament.

There were no major changes to Sections 9.5, 9.6, 9.7 and 9.8. The only exception was that in section 9.6 two sections were added under numbers 6 and 7 to specify the mode of destruction and the date of destruction:

9.5 A date should be fixed by each department for the periodical destruction of valueless records and documents approved for destruction (see section 9:4) and the destruction of such documents should be done only on the orders and the responsibility of the Head of Department,

9.6 A descriptive record giving the following information in respect of every document or record destroyed should be kept in a suitable register which should be carefully preserved:-
1 Number and date of document or file
2 Subject
3 Period covered
4 A short precis, if the contents do not deal with routine matters
5 Reference to the letter granting authority for destruction
6 Mode of destruction (e.g. whether by shredding, burning or handing them over to the National Paper Mills Corporation etc.)
7 Date of destruction

9.7 A Head of Department should fix a date, in consultation with the Director, National Archives, for the transfer once every year, of records and documents not less than 25 years and which have been scheduled for permanent preservation.17

17 These provisions are appended in Chapter XXVIII of the revised edition of the Establishment Code, Ministry of Public Administration, Colombo, Govt. Print., 1985, pp 280-282
5.3 THE APPLICATION OF DISPOSAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

5.3.1 Overview

Since 1974, the Archives has sought to reach agreement with public institutions on the annual date on which they should transfer their records to the Archives. Only a very few, have transferred their records on the agreed dates. As yet, the departments have no expertise in this area, and it therefore is not practical to assign transfer dates before identifying the records which are to be transferred to the Archives. A record appraisal scheme which explain criteria for selection of records is needed as the initial step, and transfer dates should be assigned to institutions as the next stage of this programme.

The basic importance and advantages inherent in a disposal programme for records no longer needed for current administration have never been properly understood by administrators in Sri Lanka. As discussed in Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, administrators have taken sporadic measures to dispose of non-current records. However, the disposal of records has not been treated as an integral part of administration. Rather, it has been seen as a means of getting rid of unwanted records as and when the necessity arises.

Record surveys carried out by the Archives since independence have revealed that even where instructions have been issued with the aim of introducing a systematic programme for the destruction of ephemeral records these have not been followed. Instead, records have been dumped
in crowded storage areas or even destroyed to release office space. Their longer term values often have been overlooked.

The failure of the administration to carry out disposal programmes over the years has resulted in large accumulations of both valuable and valueless records in over-crowded file cabinet drawers, in or on top of cupboards in office areas, in unused corners of the offices, along the corridors and under stair cases as well as in the record rooms. This section describes the difficulties that have arisen in appraising these records. The consequence for Sri Lanka, in terms of administrative efficiency, storage costs and the documentation of Sri Lanka's history are very serious indeed.

Most departments did not take seriously the provisions made under the Manual of Procedure, the Treasury circulars and the Establishment Code. Many have failed to seek the advice of the Archives or of the Historical Manuscripts Commission for the destruction of their unwanted records.

5.3.2 Conditions of the Record Rooms

In Sri Lanka, record rooms are the transit points for records which are to be transferred to the Archives. These record rooms are under the care of record keepers who are transferable officers, either members of the general clerical service or of the minor employee grades.

In 1948, the Organisation, Staffing and Operative Methods of the Government Departments Commission recognised
that the responsibilities of running record rooms could not be performed by junior employees. Its report stated that:

In the case of Record Rooms of any size we recommend that an assistant clerk should be put in charge rather than a peon [minor employee] since the proper filing of a considerable number of files requires more intelligence than it is fair to expect from peons. The assistant clerk should not determine the system of filing and indexing to be adopted: this should be [the] matter of [the] Establishment Officer or Administrative Secretary where there is one and in other cases for a senior staff officer of the Department.¹⁸

In the years that have followed, policy makers and administrators have not taken account of these recommendations. As a result, conditions in the record rooms have grown worse. In 1966 an administrative reform commission emphasised the total breakdown of record-keeping systems in public offices.¹⁹ As a result, C S Chinniah, a senior administrative officer at the Organisation and Methods Division of the General Treasury, was asked to investigate the causes of the problems and prepare a manual on office systems. The manual, introduced in 1967, set out guidelines for clerical officers and record room staff. It listed the record keepers' functions as:

filing of papers which are ordered to be kept permanently, the issue and receipt of files and the location of cases which have been put into


However, the basic problem was not clarity about the duties of record keepers but the absence of properly trained personnel. This situation has not changed. Little will change until they are trained to carry out their duties efficiently.

The prevailing practice is that records are transferred from administrative divisions to the record room after current administrative requirements have ceased. They should be accompanied by a transfer list, but in most instances records are transferred without lists. The record room staff are expected to enter the transferred files in a file register, but this is not generally done. Generally they are literate but they have had no training in recording information about the records in their custody. If the record keepers maintained the transfer lists in an orderly manner they could be used to control the holdings in the record room.

In the sections that follow attention is drawn to the prevailing practices and working conditions in the record rooms in order to identify problems in the management of semi-current and non-current records.

The Ministries and Departments

The surveys carried out for this study revealed that the majority of ministry record rooms were poorly

\[^{20}\text{Chinniah, C S, Office Systems in Government Departments, Colombo, Govt. print., 1967, p 33}\]
organised. Ministries were established in 1931 following the Donoughmore Constitution, but their number and functions were expanded after independence. They are new establishments in comparison with the departments, courts and kachcheris. Their record rooms were not set up well in the beginning and they have continued to operate in a disorderly manner.

For example, when the record room of the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction was inspected by the Archives staff in 1982 it was found to be unsuitable for storing records due to a lack of security and ventilation. Further, there was no file list or file register for records kept in the record room. The Archives informed the ministry that the records held in the room should be listed and stressed the need to arrange them according to the administrative divisions of the institution. The ministry also was advised to separate printed material from the files. However, when the ministry was visited again in 1990 as part of the field work carried out for this study, it was observed that these instructions had not been carried out. Instead, records were stacked on the racks without any logical arrangement.

Some ministries have no record rooms. According to a survey carried out by the Archives in 1983, the Ministry of Plan Implementation had no record room at all. As a result, semi-current and non-current records have remained in the administrative offices. The Archives has not yet taken action to convince the ministry of the need for a record
room to house semi-current records. These records contain valuable material on the implementation of important aspects of government policies and need to be properly managed until they are transferred to the Archives.

The conditions of the record rooms in the departments are worse than those in the ministries because the departments are older. For example, the Report of the Commission on the Organisation, Staffing and Operative Methods of Government Departments of 1948 revealed the unsatisfactory condition in the Medical Department record room:

There is no systematic destruction of valueless documents; the Record Room is badly kept and the filing system is chaotic. To give one instance of the last point - there is one file for equipment for the whole department which now runs into 25 volumes. None of the sub-files in these 25 volumes is properly indexed, so that if reference needs to be made to the past history of any particular item, it is a matter of hours to sort out relative papers.

The situation in the Loan Board Office illustrates yet another problem. In December 1957 an assistant archivist carried out an inspection of the office. Here, the administrators had completely ceased caring for non-current records, assuming that they were not their responsibility. The assistant archivist criticised the unsatisfactory care of records thus:

The record room is closed up all the time, except when a file is required for reference. I found the condition of this record room most appalling

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148
when I went there this week. The place has never been cleaned or dusted since the office vacated the adjoining room. White ants have started to attack one of the shelves. The place was smelling of droppings, probably of rats and cockroaches. The chief clerk is anxious that we take over the records early. They have no sweeper on their staff....

The assistant archivist wanted these records to be accessioned quickly in order to protect them from further damage. He urged the archivist to make arrangements for their transfer, although there was no space in the repositories. Accordingly, the archivist informed the Secretary of the Loan Board:

Although our repository accommodation here is restricted at the moment, I consider that it would be desirable to transfer these records here, as early as possible in order to avoid further damage.

The prompt action of the Archives saved these important records, but the Archives should have drawn the ministry's attention to the need to arrange the record room in an orderly manner to accommodate records in the future. Simply transferring a mass of records to the Archives did not solve the problem and unless control systems were developed the problem would only recur.

As is the case in the ministries, some departments have no record rooms. The Department of Rural Development can be cited as an example. Semi-current and non-current records have remained in the administrative divisions of the department. In 1980, the Archives explained the

22 Minute of 14.12.1957, Jale 6/37/37
23 Letter from Archivist to Secretary, Loan Board, 17.12.1957, Jale 6/37/37
necessity for setting up a record room and offered assistance establishing one. However, neither the Archives nor the Department of Rural Development has taken action on this issue. The Archives' failure to monitor the situation demonstrates the need for the Archives to develop effective work programmes.

A similar example is found in the Department of Commerce. In 1978 it was observed that this department had neither a proper record room nor a record keeper. Semi-current and non-current records were kept in an office without a file list. The Archives advised the department to establish a record room and to prepare retention schedules for its records. The department appreciated these proposals and indicated that steps would soon be taken to implement them. However, while a record room was established, no steps were taken to arrange it in an orderly fashion to prepare lists of the records transferred to it.

The Kachcheris

The condition of some of the kachcheri record rooms is worse than in any other government institutions. These rooms are quite old, most of them having built in the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the record rooms have been treated as store rooms where stationery, garden tools and vehicle spare parts have been and still are stored. In some places the record keeper acts as a store keeper, and sometimes this is seen as the most important part of his job. In most of the record rooms the records have not been
arranged properly and no regular cleaning programmes have been executed. The following examples give an indication of the conditions in the kachcheri record rooms.

Reporting on the situation at the Puttlam Kachcheri record room in 1956, an assistant archivist stated that:

....the files were in a very torn and ragged condition, only a few files had escaped the ravages of insect and damp. These ill effects could have been reduced to a minimum if the agency before transferring them to the Archives obtained advice from our department on methods of ensuring [the] physical safety of their Archives. May I submit that therefore that all agencies hoping to send their archives, must be compelled to ensure the physical safety of their records as far as possible and when ready for transfer these agencies must prepare a correct list of accessions they transfer to this department. 24

The record room at Jaffna Kachcheri was visited during the same period and the conditions were not very different from those at Puttlam. Scholars and members of the public had reported the unsatisfactory condition of the record room to the Archives. This was not uncommon as members of the public sometimes had to go to the kachcheris to obtain information from the records. When they were unable to obtain the information they needed they tended to complain to the Archives and requested that the records be accessioned before they were destroyed. Replying such a complaint about the record room in Jaffna, the archivist stated that:

We are often confronted with the usual difficulties of repository accommodation and the

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24 Assistant Archivist's Report on Puttlam Kachcheri records, 10.3.1954, Jale 6/7/6

151
lack of necessary funds... I have noted what you say about the Jaffna records and will do my best to give it priority in making arrangements to take them over here.  

In 1967, Archives officers inspected the same record room and found the storage conditions unsatisfactory. The record room was congested with miscellaneous articles such as garden tools. The Archives transmitted these findings to the government agent and explained the necessity for the proper maintenance of the record room. A subsequent survey in 1982 revealed that these instructions had not been carried out and that the record room had been in a state of disuse for several years. As a result, the semi-current and non-current files have accumulated in the administrative areas.

Some kachcheri record rooms were maintained in good order when the Archives staff visited in the early 1950s. A survey report on Mannar Kachcheri noted:

The record room is well provided with sufficient sunlight and ventilation and no traces of damage by white ants etc. could be detected among the records. A more regular programme of dusting and cleaning is enough to keep these records in a good state of preservation.  

Unfortunately, the situation in Mannar started to change in the mid 1960s. By 1980, 2,000 records had accumulated in the record room and it was badly overcrowded. This situation could have been avoided if these records had been either transferred to the Archives

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25 Archivist's reply to Michael Banks' [member of the public] letter, 7.9.1953, Jale 6/7/4

26 Assistant Archivist's Report on Mannar Kachcheri Records, 15.12.1954, Jale 6/7/1

152
or destroyed by using the gazetted retention schedules for kachcheris.

**The Courts**

Like record rooms elsewhere in government, the court record rooms are not properly maintained. These unsatisfactory conditions have existed for many years. This is borne out in the observations of a scholar and a member of the Historical Manuscript Commission and the Archives Advisory Council who visited a court record room in 1954 and noted:

Yesterday, I went with a friend of mine, a proctor, to the Negombo District Court, record room. To our astonishment, we found that some of the records of the cases - about 50 - of such recent dates as 1948, have been destroyed by white ants. These damaged files are just heaped up, without order or any attempt to salve them, as rubbish. No one seemed to be concerned about their fate, except that the clerks have most assiduously noted down in red ink that file no. [numbers] such and such have been destroyed by white ants.\(^{27}\)

This comment could be applied to many other court houses in the island. To give another example, a survey report by an assistant archivist in September 1950 revealed that in the Chilaw District Court:

the older records to be removed to the Archives, consist of documents ranging from round about 1814 to the beginning of the present century. They are a jumbled heap of damped and damaged files and they were in such a miserable condition, that it was impossible for me to make even tentative list out of them.\(^{28}\)

\(^{27}\) Rev Dr Edmund Peiris' letter to Archivist, 6.5.1954, Jale 6/18/4

\(^{28}\) Jale 6/18/3
His report also revealed that the case files were folded vertically and tied up into bundles. This practice resulted in the older case files breaking into two pieces. The Archives brought this to the notice of the judicial authorities in the same year and stressed the need to rearrange these records by unfolding them and placing them in properly made boxes.\(^2\) The same office was visited in September 1990, during the field work period. It was observed that the old system was in practice, without any improvement.

5.3.3 Disposal of Records

Despite the fact that there have been regulations on the disposal of records since the 1930s and longer in the case of court records, little has been done to implement them. The examples which follow illustrate the administrators' lack of awareness of the regulations and the archivists' inability to develop effective programmes to overcome the problems.

Ministries and Departments

The failure to implement the regulations on the disposal of records and to introduce retention schedules in the ministries and departments after 1973 has arisen on the one hand due to the administrators' ignorance of the law and regulations on record-keeping practices, and on the

\(^2\) Assistant Archivist's Report on Records of the District Court Chilaw, 11.9.1950, Jale 6/18/3

154
other hand due to the lack of continuity in the Archives' work programmes. This is illustrated by the situation in the Ministry of Health.

In 1947, the Ministry of Health forwarded a list of records\(^{30}\) to the Historical Manuscripts Commission and sought approval for their destruction. The Commission was not satisfied with the disposal action proposed by the ministry, and an assistant archivist was sent to examine the records. His report revealed that there were valuable records among those identified for destruction. The archivist drew attention to the regulations in the Manual of Procedure on the destruction of records and requested that the ministry amend its proposal for disposal as instructed by the assistant archivist.\(^{31}\) Surprisingly, there was no further action on either side for thirty-five years.

In 1982, an assistant archivist visited the same office and found that house-keeping records had been destroyed the previous year under the Treasury Circular No 261 of 1955. He did not query the fate of the records which had been identified as valuable by one of his predecessors years earlier. However, he did note that the Health Ministry authorities were not aware of the provisions of the National Archives Law of 1973, which had superseded all previous regulations on disposal, and the regulations made

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\(^{30}\) This list is found in the file Jale 6/5/1

\(^{31}\) Letter from Archivist to Medical Superintendent, 13.12.47, Jale 6/5/1
under the Establishment Code.

Field investigations carried out in 1990 at the head office and branch offices of the Registrar General's Department revealed that the administrative records of this department have been periodically destroyed in compliance with regulations set out in department's manual. In 1974, the Archives explained to the Registrar General that the National Archives Law superseded all previous regulations in this regard and advised that disposal schedules should be prepared. However, the Registrar General's Department still has not prepared specific schedules for gazetting and submission for Parliamentary sanction.

It is important that the Registrar General's Department should develop a policy on the vital series of records which it maintains. These are birth, marriages and death certificates and land records. According to the prevailing regulations, they have to be kept in the department for 100 years. However, these series cannot be kept in the department's record rooms for such a long time due to the inadequate storage facilities and the absence of properly trained personnel to handle them. As early as 1952, the Registrar General informed the archivist of these unsatisfactory conditions, thus:

The numbers of these old records now extant would be very much more had it been possible for this department to maintain them in a proper state of preservation. In the absence of necessary action by this department, I am afraid very much of these old and very valuable records are no longer extant - lost as [a] result of decay caused by the afflux of time. As I have neither the trained staff nor the material to take necessary action even now to ensure the preservation of these
'ancient' documents the probability is that still more of these valuable records will be lost.

In a number of departments, including the Registrar General's and the Police Department, routine records are destroyed on the basis of departmental orders or instructions in departmental manuals. This is illegal under the terms of National Archives Law and the Establishment Code. For instance, in 1977 the Archives discovered that the Department of Posts also followed its own regulations on the destruction of records, as set out in the Postmaster's Manual of 1966 which had been superseded by the National Archives Law and the Establishment Code. The Archives informed the Department of Posts that the Archives' approval was necessary before records could be destroyed. It also drew the Postmaster General's attention to Chapter 39 (9) of the Establishment Code. Accordingly in 1977 the Postmaster General issued guidelines to his staff on the custody, preservation and destruction of official letters and documents. However, neither the Archives nor the Department of Posts have monitored the application of the guidelines and the Postmaster's Manual is still being used for the disposal of routine records.

The Department of Posts does need to apply the schedules set out in the Postmasters' Manual in order.

32 Letter from Registrar General to Archivist, 17.9.1952, Jale 6/6/47


34 Establishment Code, Chapter 39, Section 9:3, Colombo, Govt. print., 1971, pp 535-537
regularly to destroy the large quantities of routine papers, such as money order forms and telegram forms which accumulate in the course of its day to day work. However, since these are now legally obsolete, new schedules should be prepared for all record series of the department and gazetted. It is important that administrators' should be made aware of these schedules and should be given guidelines on how to implement them.

**Medical Records**

Medical records present particular difficulties for the ministries and departments in terms of their administrative, legal and research value as do other records containing scientific and technological information. A detailed examination is provided below to illustrate the nature of these problems.

In 1945, the Director of the Department of Health Services issued instructions\(^5\) to all hospitals throughout the country on the need to preserve patients' charts or bed-head tickets.\(^6\) Within a short space of time there were huge accumulations of bed-head tickets in hospital record rooms. Realising the impracticability of the situation, in

\(^{35}\) Health Department. Director of Health Services, Preservation and destruction of documents in Health Department, dated 1.4.1945, (Circular No.C.760 FV 54/41), Jale 6/5/1

\(^{36}\) This contains the admission card of a patient, documentation paper, fever indication chart, doctor's diagnosis notes and X-ray reports for some patients. These indicate particulars about a patient - personal as well as medical history. Therefore, these particulars may be needed for administrative, medical, legal or personal requirements.
1948 the Director of Health Services issued another circular, with the consent of the archivist and the Historical Manuscripts Commission, which authorised the destruction of bed-head tickets over fifty years old.\textsuperscript{37} This advice was not carefully thought out. Those involved had no idea of the voluminous nature of these records and the factors that needed to be considered in assessing their value. Moreover, fifty years was an unnecessarily long retention period. Within ten years, the medical authorities were confronted with the same problem of overcrowding.

In the early 1960s medical authorities and archivists recognised the necessity for obtaining expert advice on these records in terms of their current use and future research value. There were practical difficulties in developing a disposal programme. Firstly, it was difficult for the medical administrators to categories the records in order to refer them to experts to obtain their advice on disposal. They should at least have been grouped by diseases, but they were kept in the record room in no identifiable order. Secondly, there were practical difficulties in obtaining the services of the medical experts due to their busy work programmes. An attempt in 1979 to appoint a committee of experts to set up standards for evaluating medical records was unsuccessful.

As a result, bed-head tickets continued to accumulate

\textsuperscript{37} Health Department. Director of Health Services. \textit{Preservation and destruction of documents in Health Department}, dated 19 January 1948, (Circular No. 6/D/R/18/41 and No C 1284), Jale 6/5/1
in the record rooms. In the early 1970s, in the Colombo General Hospital alone one hundred thousand bed-head tickets were transferred annually to the record room from fifty-six wards. In addition, other records, many of them ephemeral namely nurses' attendance registers, death declaration records, transfers of patients to wards, nurses' reports on patients', investigation reports, patients' admission records and records relating to surgery, were also transferred to the record room adding to this huge accumulation of records.

The matter was referred to the Archives in 1973, which advised that the bed-head tickets should be microfilmed. There was no proper study of the high costs involved in the project nor were the legal implications considered. The series is of considerable legal significance, and the records are frequently referred to in court cases. In Sri Lanka, a microfilm or a reproduction of a film is not acceptable before courts of law, and therefore the original paper record has to be produced in cases of doubt. If due consideration had been given to these factors, the recommendation would have centred on the retention requirements of these records and their storage until their disposal phase was reached.

After monitoring the situation for fifteen years, the Archives made several attempts to find ways of managing the bed-head tickets in the latter part of 1970s and early 1980s. Even these attempts did not address the crucial point of a disposal policy for bed-head tickets. No
retention criteria were set. As a result, by the 1980s it was common practice to destroy bed head tickets over ten years old.

The only positive outcome of the exercise was that a medical doctor, who had done research on the history of medical services in the island, was appointed to the Archives Advisory Council to advise on medical records in 1986. However, to date, no significant progress has been made on the problems of medical records, and there is a real need to draw attention to this highly specialised area of public records.

Householders Lists

The attempts to apply retention criteria to householders' lists illustrates another major problem area. Large and fast growing series of this nature need special consideration in relation to the cost of storage and the Archives' storage capacity.

In 1971 the Food Commissioner himself decided to destroy householders' lists for the period 1957 to 1960. These were large registers containing information on the occupants of the houses. The Commissioner was unaware of the regulations on destruction of records and wanted to create storage space in the department. He published a notice in the daily papers in January 1971 informing the public that the records were to be destroyed. He also indicated that facilities would be provided for interested parties to obtain certified copies of extracts prior to the
However, the Archives, on the instructions of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, objected to the records being destroyed. The archivist drew the Food Commissioner's attention to Section 89 of the Manual of procedure and explained that as the records had sociological value for future research, random samples should be kept at the Archives.

The Food Commissioner then sent lists of the records to be destroyed to the Archives and they were submitted to the Commission for review. The Commission decided that the records belonging to urban areas should be transferred to the Archives once every five years. This already has led to the accumulation of very large numbers of records in the Archives.

If the commission's recommendations is carried out, approximately 8000 linear feet of records will be transferred to the Archives from 22 branch offices of the Food Department every five years, and as the population grows, this number will increase. These records could soon occupy most of the space in the Archives repositories, and this situation therefore needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

When a decision is taken about these records, it will be important for archivists and administrators to consider

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38 The Times of Ceylon, (Colombo City edition) 3.8.1971, p3
39 The administration reports of the Archives indicate that some of these records have been transferred to the Archives from various branch offices of the department in 1976, 1977, 1983, 1986 and 1990
where else the information in householders lists is found. For example, voters lists kept in the Elections Department provide basically the same information, and the Elections Department transfers these lists to the Archives. Further, vital records like births, marriages and death registration records maintained by the Registrar General's Department contain similar information and legally these records have to be retained.

It is true that householders' lists contain unique sociological information, that they could demonstrate the migrations within the country and that they could be cited as proof of the occupancy of a house. However, it is doubtful whether this is a sufficient reason to justify the cost of storing such a large and fast growing series of records.

The Kachcheris

The absence of proper appraisal criteria has led to the accumulation of large quantities of records in the kachcheri record rooms. Very little has been done about this situation. Even those minimal guidelines which Turner provided on the disposal of ephemeral records have not been systematically applied.

Since independence archivists have frequently highlighted these problems in their survey reports. However, instead of developing retention policies, archivists and administrators have believed that 'weeding' based upon proper professional advice could bring these
record accumulations under control, and this has been the archivists' advice as described in Section 5.2.2. For example, a report on Kandy Kachcheri in 1954 recommended that, "the kachcheri be advised to undertake and carry out a general weeding campaign of their records." In these weeding exercises the Archives advised the kachcheri staff to take out individual letters and other material which were of ephemeral value. The archivists did not consider that it would affect the continuity of the file subject.

In most instances where destruction has taken place it has been the record keeper himself who did the appraisal. For instance, the archivist noted with regard to the Galle Kachcheri record room in 1950:

The Record Keeper may be authorised to put in hand a systematic programme of weeding out valueless papers or rather merely marking valueless papers for eventual destruction, subject to the procedures laid down under the Manual of Procedure for destruction of documents.

In 1957 the archivist warned the government agent at Galle of the danger of leaving this responsibility to a junior member of staff and advised him to make proper arrangement for weeding records. Similarly, in Kalutara Kachcheri the responsibility of weeding records was

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40 Report of Assistant Archivist, 20.9.1954, Jale 6/7/2
42 Letter from Archivist to Government Agent, Galle, 2.6.1950, Jale 6/7/10
entrusted to the record keeper.43

The archivists' attempt to draw up schedules for kachcheri records in 1980 will be discussed in Section 5.4.4.

The Courts

Disposal procedures for court records were laid down in Legislative Enactments in 1866, 1894, 1905 and 1930 but were not put into practice. As a result, by the beginning of the 1970s valuable and valueless records had accumulated in the court record rooms in large quantities.

In 1973 provisions were made under the Administrative Justice Law44 to overcome this problem. The law gave the minister of justice authority to formulate regulations indicating the specific period after which each record series could be destroyed:

The record or part of the record maintained by any court of any case shall be destroyed on the expiry of such period as may be prescribed by the minister by regulation43

Accordingly, in 1974, the Minister of Justice made regulations for the destruction of case records. District judges and magistrates were required to publish notices in daily papers and government gazettes indicating their intention to destroy records which were no longer required

43 Jale 6/7/13

44 Administration of Justice Law No 44 of 1973, Chapter V, Sections 357 to 360, Colombo, Govt. Print., 1973, pp 179-180

45 Ibid, Section 357, p 179

165
by the courts. They soon did so, as in the following example:

Notice is hereby given that after one month hence the following civil case records of this court will be destroyed in terms of Section 357 Chapter V of Administration of Justice Law No 44 of 1973."

The Archives pointed out to the Ministry of Justice that the provisions of the Administration of Justice Law and the National Archives Law contradicted each other. Further, the Archives requested that the Ministry of Justice instruct all courts to send records prior to 1833 and records pertaining to partition and testamentary cases to the Archives. Accordingly, the ministry informed all judges that when court records were sorted for destruction, the records required by the Archives were to be separated from others and that further instructions, if necessary, were to be obtained from the Archives.

The magistrates' courts also published gazette notification when they intended to destroy records. For instance, in 1978 the magistrate at Kandy published a gazette notification regarding the destruction of criminal, traffic and inquest reports and circuit court documents. Some of the magistrates took the trouble to inform the Archives that large numbers of old case records had accumulated in their record rooms, and they recommended

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"Government Gazette, Colombo, Govt. print., No 329, 4.8.1978, p 24
that these records be destroyed once litigation had been finalised. In these instances, the Archives drew the magistrates' attention to the provisions of the National Archives Law\(^ {48}\) and the Establishment Code.\(^ {49}\)

To avoid ambiguity about what records should be retained, the Archives took initiatives in the late 1970s to prepare schedules for the preservation and destruction of court records. Judges' comments on retention and disposal criteria were invited and were very helpful to the Archives in preparing the schedules. These schedules are discussed in greater detail in Section 5.4.5.

5.4 THE INTRODUCTION OF RETENTION SCHEDULES

5.4.1 Overview

This section evaluates the Archives' attempts to prepare retention schedules in public institutions following the passing of the Archives Law. Under the National Archives (Amendment) Act of 1981, before schedules can come into effect they must be ratified by relevant authorities, approved by Parliament and gazetted. Once these schedules have been finalised and gazetted it will no longer be necessary for the creating agencies to submit lists to the Archives before carrying out destruction.

In the discussion which follows, the Archives'

\(^{48}\) National Archives Law No 48 of 1973, Section 9, Colombo, Govt. print., 1973, pp 4-5

\(^{49}\) Establishment Code, Chapter 28, Section 9, Colombo, Govt. print., 1985, pp 280-282
attempts to draw up schedules for the ministries, departments, kachcheris and courts and the problems encountered are reviewed. The situation in the departments is similar to that in the ministries, so this is not discussed in detail.

The Archives' shift in emphasis away from 'weeding' and towards retention schedules took place from the 1970s onwards. This marked a significant step in the development of the Archives in performing its professional responsibilities.

5.4.2 Schedules for House-keeping Records

With the enactment of the Archives Law in 1973, steps were taken to establish procedures for the periodic transfer and destruction of house-keeping records created in all public institutions. These common schedules have been developed successfully.

After 1980, Archives officers occasionally visited public institutions to examine the destruction of house-keeping records. The findings of these surveys were used to modify and update the schedules provided in Treasury Circular No 261 of 1955.50 Although the recommended destruction periods were reduced for most series and increased in few instances, on the whole they were similar to those in the 1955 circular. The schedules also covered twenty-three series created since 1955, bringing the total

50 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1983, Colombo, Govt. print., 1984, p m6
to 301. The most significant feature of the new schedules was that they could be applied to the records of the statutory bodies as well as to records of other government institutions. Thus they covered the records of the ministries, departments, kachcheris, courts and statutory bodies.

The draft schedules were completed in 1982 and sent to the Treasury, the director of establishment and the auditor general for their observations and comments. After their comments had been incorporated, the schedules were approved by the Ministry of Public Administration, the Treasury and the Auditor General's Department. Parliamentary sanction then was obtained, and the schedules were gazetted in August 1984. The schedules are provided in Appendix X.

Surveys carried out in 1990 for this study revealed that most public institutions had not implemented these schedules. Some administrators were not aware of them. The Archives should have done more to educate the administrators about the existence of the schedules and the fact that the schedules would result in the removal of ephemeral records from office areas if used systematically. The Archives needs to design a systematic programme to introduce the schedules and ensure that they become an integral part of administration.

5.4.3 Scheduling of Records in the Ministries and Departments

To date the Archives' attempts to introduce schedules for series specific to individual ministries and departments have been unsuccessful. From 1974 onward, as the administration reports of the Archives show, Archives officers visited various ministries and departments from time to time to advise the administrators on the preparation of retention schedules. However, none of these schedules has been implemented because they have not been gazetted. This is due to inadequate follow-up by the Archives. The examples which follow, drawn from the ministries, illustrate the problems in this programme.

The Archives took the initiative, in February 1976, to schedule the records at the Unesco National Commission, a division of the Ministry of Education. The Archives pointed out to the commission that record series should be scheduled from the point of creation in order to avoid unnecessary accumulation of records. The commission submitted draft schedules to the Archives in December 1976, indicating the proposed disposal action against each series. However, attempts to extend this programme to other divisions of the Ministry of Education were not successful. As the schedules for the Unesco National Commission could not be gazetted until schedules were developed for all the divisions of the ministry, these schedules never came into effect.

The scheduling of records at the Ministry of Health began in May 1976. At that time, most semi-current and non-
current records were kept in the administrative division of the ministry, along with current records. The officers of this division were totally unaware of the need to send semi-current and non-current records to the record room. Sixteen years later, this scheduling programme still has not been completed, and the records remain in the offices.

In 1986, the Ministry of Home Affairs faced space problems in its record room, and as a solution it forwarded a list of records recommended for destruction to the Archives. The Archives sent an officer to examine these records and, on the basis of his report, it recommended that some of the files could be transferred to the Archives instead of being destroyed. As a result, some records were transferred. For example, those pertaining to the Salary Anomalies Committee arrived in 1987.\(^52\) Thus the Archives did succeed in clearing a backlog of records. It also took this opportunity to introduce the concept of retention schedules. Late in 1986 the ministry drew up draft schedules and submitted them to the Archives. However, they were not finalised. In this instance, as in the Ministries of Education and Health, the Archives has not pursued the preparation of final schedules.

Instead of initiating scattered programmes simultaneously in various ministries and terminating them half way, it would have been better if one ministry had been chosen to launch a well-planned scheduling programme.

\(^{52}\) National Archives Law No 48 of 1973, Section 11, Colombo, Govt. print. 1973, p 5
This would have created a better impression on the administrators and have provided the experience necessary to extend the programme to other ministries. As it was, the programme created a bad impression among administrators of the archivists' professional capabilities. This made it difficult to get their active participation to the programme. In the future adequate planning and discussions on the feasibility of work programmes, rather than merely getting down to work, will be essential.

5.4.4 Scheduling of Kachcheri Records

Between 1976 to 1978 Archives officers visited the kachcheris, and draft schedules were prepared after discussions with government agents and other relevant officials. In January 1977, the government agents were asked to evaluate the draft schedules. Their comments were taken into account, along with observations by Treasury staff. An agreement then was reached with the Ministry of Public Administration, which was the ministry in charge of the kachcheris at the time. The schedules were signed in May 1979 and gazetted\(^5^3\) after the receipt of Parliamentary sanction. (Appendix XI)

\(^{53}\) Government Gazette, Colombo, Govt. print., No 99 of 25.7.1980, pp 584-585, 626-627
The schedules were divided into three classes. Class 'A' consisted of fifty-three record series from all branches of the kachcheris. These were to be transferred to the Archives under the National Archives Law twenty-five years from the date of their creation.

Class 'B' consisted of records pertaining to administrative matters from three branches of the kachcheri. These were to be reviewed after five years and selected either for preservation or for destruction.

Class 'C' consisted of a list of three series of house-keeping records from five branches of the kachcheris and indicated the disposal action.

These schedules could have enabled the kachcheris to clear the backlog of records which had accumulated over the years. Once the unwanted bulk had been removed, a proper environment would have been created for the administrators to embark on an efficient management system for their current records.

So far, the Archives has not done a survey to find out how far these schedules have been applied. However, the

54 The practice of using classes A, B, C was developed in the British India Administration. Correspondence between India and London was separated under these categories. Even the schedules prepared for the destruction of court records in 1894 classified the record classes under A and B. Part 'A' contained classes of documents not to be destroyed and Part 'B' listed classes of documents which could be destroyed, subject to the provisions of Sections 6 of the Ordinance No 12 of 1894. Sri Lankan archivists would have adopted this system of dividing schedules into classes A, B and C. [See Appendix XII]

55 National Archives Law No 48 of 1973, Section 9 (2) (d), Colombo, Govt. print., 1973, p 4
surveys carried out in 1990 for this study in Colombo and Puttlam Kachcheris revealed that the schedules had not been implemented. Moreover, the limited number of accessions from the kachcheris to the Archives during the last decade indicate that the majority of the kachcheris have not applied the schedules nor transferred their records to the Archives.

5.4.5 Scheduling of Court Records

Archives officers visited the offices of the Supreme Court in Colombo and the high courts, district courts and magistrate courts in various districts of the island from April 1974 to April 1975. They studied the nature of the records created and their importance to the creating agency and to the nation as a whole. Discussions were conducted with judges, magistrates and registrars. Based on these surveys and discussions, draft retention schedules were drawn up and submitted for comments in May 1975 to the Management Services Division of the Ministry of Public Administration, Local Government and Home Affairs which was responsible for the management aspects of the public administration.

The next version of the draft schedules, which incorporated the comments of the Management Services Division, was circulated to the judges of the high courts, district courts and magistrate courts. The judges showed great interest in the potential benefits of the schedules and examined them in relation to the Administration of
Justice Law. The final version of the schedules, which incorporated the judges' comments, was completed in November 1976. It was gazetted in January 1979 after Parliamentary sanction was obtained (see Appendix XIII).

In the gazetted schedules, the records were broadly divided into three classes. Class 'A' consisted of nineteen record series which were identified for permanent preservation. The majority of these series comprised the judges' correspondence with the Ministry of Justice and with other judges. The petitions sent to the supreme court also were included in this schedules. These records were to be transferred to the National Archives twenty five years from the date of their creation. Class 'B' consisted of seven record series pertaining to general administration which were to be reviewed at the end of every five years, either for permanent preservation or for destruction. Finally, class 'C' consisted of forty-nine series of records. These were all house-keeping series and the disposal action was indicated.

56 Administration of Justice Law, No 44 of 1973, The Destruction of Court Records, Chapter V, Section 357, Colombo, Govt. print., 1973, p 179
57 Government Gazette, No 21, 26.1.1979, Colombo, Govt. print., 1979, pp 71-73
58 Administration Report of the Director, National Archives for the year 1976, Colombo, Govt. print., 1977, p m40
5.4.6 Evaluation of Kachcheri and Court Schedules

Setting apart the practical success of the scheduling programmes, it is worth analysing the basic professional assumptions behind this exercise. Firstly, the separation of records under rigid labels of preservation and destruction and linking these to fixed periods of time cannot be considered a complete answer to the problem. It is true that there are many record series which can be scheduled for destruction or retention at fixed periods. However, some records must be re-examined at a later date. These are primarily policy files series which should be reviewed at intervals to determine their ongoing administrative value. In this way records will not be kept longer than necessary and storage space can be used economically.

The manner in which the schedules for policy files were drawn up failed to take account of the fact that the content of files cannot be determined by their subjects. The administrative structures of government institutions and their functions can change as a result of changes in policy. Therefore, instead of rigid schedules dictating decisions for the future, these schedules needed to provide for reviews at reasonable intervals during the semi-current phase of records. Provisions should have been made for administrators' participation in a first review.

In most cases the action proposed in the schedules for court and kachcheri records for classes 'B' and 'C' was appropriate as it took account of the experience and
requirements of the administration and the Archives. However, provisions for the record series listed in class 'A', of the kachcheri schedule and court schedule which were to be transferred to the Archives twenty-five years after their creation, needed much more thought. For example, the correspondence of the government agent with regard to general subjects may not necessarily need to be transferred to the Archives. The petitions sent to government also need to be reviewed. Moreover, the retention periods for files in the excise series, such as those relating to opening and closing of taverns, need revision. Similarly, the retention value of court records varies from time to time and from case to case. These large series always contain records of an ephemeral nature and therefore they need to be reviewed file by file.

Finally, quite a few of the series listed in the kachcheri and court schedules are very broad and vague. For instance, item No 1 in 'Class A' of the kachcheri schedule covers the correspondence between the government agent and ministries 'Regarding Special Subjects'. All of this correspondence is to be transferred to the Archives. The court schedules which provide for transfer of judges' correspondence with the Ministry of Justice, the Police and Attorney General to the Archives are equally vague. This inevitably will lead to the transfer of records of an ephemeral nature.
5.5 PROBLEMS OF ACCESSIONING NON-CURRENT RECORDS

5.5.1 Overview

Prior to 1973 non-current public records were not transferred regularly to the Archives due to its inadequate authority. Moreover, ignorance and inattention on the part of administrators and the absence of the required professional skills and experience on archivists' part with regard to non-current records led to problems in appraisal and accessioning.

The examples given below testify to the fact that the administrators usually paid attention to this problem only when the current administration was adversely affected by the accumulation of non-current records. In some instances, the Archives' efforts to accession non-current records helped to change administrators' attitudes. In some institutions there were procedures for transferring records to the Archives when they reached their non-current phase. Yet, this was neither a continuous process nor a methodical exercise, and there is a need to develop a regular work programme whereby records are appraised and listed on a systematic basis.

5.5.2 Ministries and Departments

It is clear from the administration reports of the Archives that the programme of accessioning records from ministries only began in the latter part of the 1970s. The majority of ministries were created after independence and the volume of non-current records was not very great during
the first two decades after independence. However, once the rapid political, administrative and social changes began, the ministries' activities expanded greatly and so did the volume of records. As a result, large quantities of non-current records began to accumulate in the offices.

The Archives experienced both negative and positive responses to its attempts at accessioning non-current records in the ministries. Some administrators took the initiative to organise listing as a part of their responsibility, others saw it as additional burdensome work as illustrated below.

A survey at the Establishment Division of the Ministry of Public Administration in 1984 revealed that non-current records of archival value had become mixed with non-current ephemeral records. The Archives informed the director of the division that a transfer schedule should be prepared as a remedial measure. He indicated that the records did not belong to the Establishment Division as they had been created prior to 1970 when this function came under the General Treasury. He requested that the Archives take up the matter with the Ministry of Finance. The ministry agreed to list the records, and the work commenced in 1976 under the supervision of the Archives staff. Finally the valuable non-current records were transferred to the Archives in 1988, along with transfer lists.

The situation in the departments was slightly different from that in the ministries. From the beginning of the post-independence period, the Archives placed major
emphasis on accessioning records which had accumulated in the departments during the British colonial period. The archivist's first administration report stated that:

"...until within the last few years, owing to lack of space, only departmental records had been accepted for deposit in the Central Archives; these too did not extend beyond the earlier part of the British rule."  

A common problem involved in accessioning records from public institutions to the Archives was that the transport cost had to be borne by the Archives. Yet the Archives transport vote was inadequate to cover these costs. This was particularly true between 1942 and 1962 when the Archives was located in Nuwara-Eliya, 112 miles from the government institutions in Colombo. In most instances, even after listing was completed, the records could not be transferred to the Archives due to financial difficulties.

Another problem was the lack of clear appraisal policies among the Archives staff as the following example illustrates. In 1958 the Director of Commerce recommended the destruction of records for the period from 1948 to 1953, stating that they were not necessary for current administration. The Historical Manuscripts Commission decided to call for a report. An assistant archivist was sent to investigate and his report reiterated the

60 Letter from Director of Commerce to Archivist 8.2.1958, Jale 6/6/58

180
recommendations of the Director of Commerce.\textsuperscript{61} Three members of the Commission agreed to destroy the records on the basis of the recommendations made by the assistant archivist. Yet, another of the members questioned this decision and noted that:

Although the documents in question are not of immediate historical value, we should not forget the fact that what is of ordinary interest to us now, may with the passage of time become historically very important. If we recall [the] assiduous care with which the records of the early British period, even the most trifling, have been guarded and how many have become important to students of the present day, we should not agree to destroy any of the papers of the present lot. I would favour of their preservation.\textsuperscript{62}

The Historical Manuscripts Commission therefore decided to ask for another report. The second report in contrast to the first, indicated the value and usefulness of most of the records thus:

Many of the files are recent ones and they are definitely of historical interest. Many of the files dealt with the agreements that the Ceylon Government has signed with other governments giving due considerations to protect local industries. Among the lot there are very important files relating to the establishment of the Bank of Ceylon.\textsuperscript{63}

The Commission decided that these records should be preserved and accordingly they were transferred to the Archives. This reflected badly on the professionals of the Archives who had not evaluated the records effectively due

\textsuperscript{61} Assistant Archivist's Inspection Report, 19.9.1958, Jale 6/6/58

\textsuperscript{62} Rev Dr Edmund Peries' [a member of the Historical Manuscripts Commission] Comments, 28.8.1958, Jale 6/6/58

\textsuperscript{63} Assistant Archivist's Inspection Report, Jale 6/6/58
mainly to a lack of proper training. Today there is still a need for the archivists to develop their skills in this area.

The Police Department records illustrate the difficulties present in trying to obtain the administrators' participation and co-operation for accessioning records to the Archives. The Archives has a long history of initiatives to accession records from the Police Department. In 1957 the Finance Controller of the General Treasury, writing to the Inspector General of Police stated that:

it is observed from D.O.67 [departmental Order] relating to the list of documents for retention in the IGP's [Inspector General of Police] office, that the following documents could be sent to the Archives.

(a) documents prior to 1885  
(b) correspondence with the Colonial Secretary prior to the establishment of the State Council  
(c) documents of historical or other interests including those relating to history, constitution, administration etc. of the department  
(d) all government and police gazettes  
(e) the records of the similar nature in the offices of the Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents of Police could also be sent to the Archives.**

The main objective here was to free space for storing audited documents, as required by a Treasury Circular in November 1956.** However, the inspector general denied that such records were available and stated that:

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** Letter from Controller Finance to Inspector General of Police, 12.2.1957, Jale 6/6/57  
** Treasury. Custody of audited accounts records, (Circular no 328), 14.11.1956  

182
historical documents are not available in this record room......neither do the provincial and district offices have any of the documents referred to by you."

The archivist was not satisfied with this explanation, since the Police Department was one of the oldest on the island and must therefore hold key documents of historical value. Subsequent record surveys revealed that documents were available from the beginning of this century. These surveys convinced the department's administrators that it was necessary to transfer records to the Archives. For the first time, in 1964 printed material was transferred to the Archives and in 1984, 4,043 correspondence files on administrative and policy issues of the department were transferred to the Archives with transfer lists. Thus, after twenty-seven years, the Archives managed to accession non-current records of archival value from the Police Department.

In 1984, the administrators of the Highways Department were due to transfer their department from Colombo Fort to a new administrative complex at Sri Jayewardane Pura. This move compelled them to find a practical way of disposing of non-current records which had accumulated over the years. The problem was finally resolved when these records were

"Letter from Inspector General of Police to Controller Finance 22.2.1957, Jale 6/6/57


"Administration Report of the Director, Department of National Archives for the year 1984, Colombo, Govt. print., 1985, p m5

183
'appraised' with the assistance of the Archives and 46,895 records pertaining to the construction of highways in the country were transferred to the Archives." The records comprised policy and administrative files, building plans, drawings of bridges, buildings and roads.

This example shows the administrators' ability to solve problems inherent in managing records when the situation compels them to do so. Here, little thought had been given to the records accumulating in the record room for over 100 years. When the office had to be moved administrators were compelled to find way out. They chose to transfer records which were of no use to the current administration to the Archives.

This example illustrates the problem which arise when large numbers of files are appraised in a short period of time. In this instance the officers who did the listing did not have time to check the contents of each file to ascertain the accuracy of the file title. Those who carried out the appraisal depended on the file description in the list. Had they examined the files individually it is most unlikely that so much material would have been transferred.

5.5.3 The Kachcheris

The Archives has made considerable efforts to accession kachcheri records in the post-independence period. The majority of these records are from the British colonial period. The first administration report of the

9 Ibid, p m3

184
Archives for the period 1947 to 1950 stated that:

... large new accessions, for the most covering the years 1820 to 1885 were taken in from number of kachcheris.\(^70\)

The administration did little to support this endeavour, and the Archives staff took most of the responsibility for appraising and accessioning the records. At that time the Archives did not have enough vehicles to send officers on circuits and in most instances the officers used public transport. In some instances, even after appraisal and listing was completed, the record transfers were delayed due to transport and other financial and administrative problems. For example, although Archives staff listed the records at the Kandy Kachcheri within a few weeks in 1953, administrators took another year to transfer them to the Archives.\(^71\) As mentioned earlier, although the kachcheri schedules were gazetted in 1980 they have not been implemented properly. As a result accessioning of records from kachcheris to the Archives has not been methodically carried out.

5.5.4 The Courts

No real progress was made on accessioning court records in the post independence period. The archivist noted in 1954:

The latter accumulations and the vast and almost untouched, masses of judicial records had to

\(^70\) Administration Report of the Government Archivist for 1947-1950, Colombo, Govt. print., 1951, p m10,

\(^71\) Report of Assistant Archivist, 15.12.1954, Jale 6/7/1
remain in their offices and courts of origin....... a start has been made with the transfer of legal archives.\textsuperscript{72}

This situation has not changed during subsequent decades. The administration reports of the archives show the limited number of accessions of court records during this period. The few accessions that were made, other than those from the Supreme Court, dated mostly from the nineteenth century, but the later records also contain important material documenting the rights of individuals and the nation as a whole. These records are essential sources for researchers looking into the judicial history of the island.

\textsuperscript{72} Administration Report of Government Archivist for 1947-1950, Colombo, Govt. print., 1951, p m10
6.1 OVERVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the practices for keeping current records in ministries and departments, the problems which have arisen in this area and the impact of the management of current records on the life cycle of the records. Firstly, the record-keeping practices in public institutions in the period after independence are discussed and evaluated. Secondly, the practices at the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the General Treasury are examined in detail as a means of illustrating these problems. These institutions have been selected for study because of their central role in public administration and the wide variety of record-keeping systems in use there. Moreover, the problems they face in managing their records are representative of those experienced in public institutions in Sri Lanka.

6.2 RECORD KEEPING PRACTICES IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

6.2.1 Impact of Post-Independence Administrative Reforms

In 1948 a commission was appointed to inquire into the organisation, staffing and procedures of government departments. This commission's primary concern was to make recommendations on the reorganisation of public administration in the country. Record-keeping practices
were one area of reform which it considered as part of its
terms of reference.¹

By this time, most government departments were
following Turner's recommended record-keeping systems and
yet there had been no significant improvement. For
instance, the commission noted that the filing systems were
unsatisfactory and the indexes to files were inadequate.
Its report noted that:

The whole present system of titling files by
reference to general subjects should be
abandoned. There should be a separate file for
each matter dealt with, with a title descriptive
of its contents. These titles should be indexed
and cross indexed in the fullest possible manner,
so that papers can be traced in the minimum
time.²

Turner had not been in favour of giving clerical
officers much responsibility for record systems, but the
commission re-examined this position. It recommended that
mail handling should be the responsibility of clerical
officers under the immediate supervision of the office
assistant³ or junior staff officer.⁴ Letters pertaining to
routine matters should go directly to the chief clerks of
branches. Other letters should be passed to the appropriate
staff officer to indicate the necessary action.

¹ Report of the Commission on the Organisation, Staffing
and Operative Methods of Government Departments, Chapter
41, Office Systems, Section 13, Sessional Paper V of
1948, Colombo, Govt. print., 1948, p 3

² Ibid, Chapter 65, Section 594, p 130

³ This designation was subsequently changed to
administrative officer

⁴ A staff officer is an executive officer
Although the Commission was able to explore the shortcomings of the record-keeping and other systems in government institutions and to make some recommendations for improvements, it was unable to develop adequate overall proposals for the reorganisation of the administration. Therefore, in October 1949, the Government of Ceylon, having considered the Commission's recommendations, obtained the services of British experts to set up a permanent Organisation and Methods Division to improve the quality of management techniques in administration.

The British experts' report again commented on record-keeping practices. It observed that Turner's approach to office organisation, although a pioneer study in the 1920s and 1930s, had its limitations in the expanded administrative environment of the 1950s. However, the report did not recommend that the Organisation and Methods Division should take responsibility for monitoring the efficiency of record-keeping practices, nor did it suggest further studies on record-keeping systems in government institutions.

In 1966, the Administrative Reforms Committee criticised the haphazard record-keeping procedures in government offices. It suggested that no significant changes or improvements had taken place since the establishment of the Organisation and Methods Division in

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1953. This committee observed that the breakdown of systematic office procedures created inefficiency in administration throughout the government.

The committee was concerned particularly to find ways to avoid the creation of unnecessary correspondence between the branches and institutions under the same ministry which were located in different places. Yet, while this issue is important, it diverted the committee from addressing problems created by inefficient record-keeping systems in the critical area of mail handling in terms of file management. As a result the committee's report ascribed the deficiencies of the record-keeping system to the poor performance of clerical officers who, it acknowledged, did not understand the system themselves. It described the growing record-keeping problems as follows:

The volume of correspondence of Government Departments and Ministries had increased enormously. Delays in dealing with this correspondence has been the cause of considerable irritation and annoyance to the public and a source of inefficiency. This is largely due to a break-down in the office system in most departments. The system is a simple one. It involves the maintenance of a Case Register, a Call up Diary and a Card Index and the observance of a simple procedure by the Subject Clerk. Unfortunately, most recent recruits to the clerical grades in the Public Service have not been trained in the system. ....Delays in correspondence not only bring the Government into disrepute but are also a source of corruption."

The committee did not recognise that the inefficiencies were unavoidable due to the low priority

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given to record-keeping. Like Turner and other administrators, the committee members did not realise that special skills were needed to analyse the administrative framework of the institution, its functions and its legal obligations. Nor did they understand that record-keeping functions had to be managed and that this would mean entrusting more responsibility to clerks and at the same time developing clear guidelines for the responsibilities of supervisors and their line managers. This lack of understanding persists today.

6.2.2 C S Chinniah's Approach to Record-Keeping Problems

The Administrative Reforms Committee's observations on record-keeping systems in public institutions led the government to appoint C S Chinniah, a senior officer of the Ceylon Administrative Service, to prepare a manual on office management. He completed it in 1967. The director of the Organisation and Methods Division of the Treasury noted in the preface that it was intended to serve as a reference book for the new entrants to the clerical and administrative grades in the public service. In fact, the manual has been widely used, and Chinniah's recommendations on correspondence, tappal (mail), files and filing systems, have had an important influence on record-keeping procedures in public institutions.

Chinniah had experience as an organisation and methods officer in the O & M Division of the Treasury and at the Academy of Administrative Studies as a senior training officer.
Chinniah advised that files should be divided into subject files, case files, central files, procedure files and reference files.\(^8\) However the distinction between these categories was not always easy to identify. Moreover, he did not have a clear understanding of the concept of a record series and its use in bringing together records of a like nature relating to a common function. Therefore the filing systems based on the instructions in this manual have not been designed to support the functions of the institutions.

The manual emphasised that subject clerks should keep the files for which they were responsible with them and that they should do their own mail registration. This reversed the recommendations of the 1948 Report of the Committee on the Organisation, Staffing and Operative Methods of Government Departments that "current files on which no action is at the moment proceeding should not be in the possession of individual clerks, but should be filed near at hand".\(^9\)

Chinniah took a step forward by stressing that subject clerks were not mere paper-keepers and that they should be entrusted with the responsibility for the custody and handling of records. He believed that if the files were with the clerical officer who handled them it would be

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\(^8\) The reference file contained circulars and other instructions. Letters were not issued in this file.

easier to retrieve them and this would improve administrative efficiency. However, he failed to develop guidelines for the training or supervision of these clerks.

Chinniah's manual made another recommendation which became significant in subsequent years. It had always been the practice for subject clerks to pass papers or files to the staff officers through an administrative officer. Chinniah discouraged this practice which he believed was a waste of time. He felt that the administrative officers made no useful contribution to the subject at hand and that their minutes on the files added nothing to those of the subject clerks.

What Chinniah failed to take into account was that the administrative officer, as the immediate supervisory officer of the office, was responsible for the functions of the office and was required to answer queries from his superiors. As long as files were passed through him he was able to provide information on the subject at hand even in the absence of the subject clerk. Once this practice ceased, he was no longer in a position to know what was going on in the office and at the same time he lost a large measure of control over the clerks. Chinniah's recommendation undermined even the weak supervisory link which had been in place.

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10 C S, Chinniah, Office Systems in the Government Departments, Section 82, Colombo, Govt. print., 1967, p 19
6.2.3 Role of the Organisation and Methods Division of the Treasury

In 1970 the Organisation and Methods Division of the Treasury was transferred to the new Ministry of Public Administration, Local Government and Home Affairs and became the Management Services Division. This division provided consultancy services to the public institutions on systems and procedures, cadre assessment, work norms, forms design and prepared operational manuals on the above areas. In 1980 government decided to integrate the functions of the Management Services Division with the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration. Although the division had responsibility for developing procedures in all areas of office management, including record-keeping procedures, it has never played a significant role in establishing efficient record-keeping practices in the public administration.

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING AND THE GENERAL TREASURY

6.3.1 Overview

The Ministry of Finance and Planning and the Treasury are situated on four floors of the former secretariat building in Colombo Fort. Neither has a registry. Each section and division of the ministry and the Treasury maintains its own files and thus the files are kept near the users.

The Treasury is one of the oldest public institutions in Sri Lanka. Today, it comes under the Ministry of Finance
and Planning, one of the country's largest ministries. The record-keeping requirements of the ministry and of the Treasury, and the record-keeping problems they face currently, can only be understood in the context of their organisation and functions. The administrative background of these institutions, their organisational structures (see Figure 2) and their functions are discussed below.

6.3.2 Administrative Background

The Ministry

The ministry was established when the Financial Secretary's Office was created in 1931. The financial secretary was a state officer with ministerial responsibility. He had control over the General Treasury.

Under the new constitution in 1948, the financial secretary's post was abolished and the post of Minister of Finance was created. He was responsible for the ministry and the institutions under it. At the same time the post of permanent secretary, as the chief administrator of the ministry, was created. In 1977, the Finance Ministry was redesignated as the Ministry of Finance and Planning with responsibilities for national planning added to its functions.

The Treasury

The Treasury is a much older institution, having been established in 1798. The governor acted as ex-officio colonial treasurer and commissioner of revenue and was
responsible for the functions of the Treasury up to 1811. In 1812, the post of vice treasurer was created and the holder was placed in charge of the Treasury. The post of colonial treasurer was created in 1841. Under the Donoughmore Constitution of 1931, a deputy financial secretary was appointed to replace the colonial treasurer as the officer responsible for the accounts and cash balances on the island. In 1948, the deputy financial secretary's post was abolished and the post of deputy secretary to the Treasury was created in its stead. This post still exists today.

6.3.3 Functions and Staff Structures

The Ministry

The Ministry of Finance and Planning formulates government financial policy. It is responsible for administering a number of departments and statutory institutions namely the Treasury, Inland Revenue Department, Customs Department, Excise Department, Valuation Department, Loan Board, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Bank of Ceylon, People's Bank, National Development Bank, State Mortgage and Investment Bank, State Gem Corporation, State Distilleries Corporation, National Lotteries Board and the Lady Lochore Loan Fund.

11 The Ceylon Manual for the Use of Officials, Colombo, Govt. print., 1904, p 77
12 Ferguson: Directory of 1933, Colombo, Observer Office, 1934, p 222
13 Ibid, p 224
The secretary, as the chief administrative officer of the ministry, also functions as the secretary to the Treasury. He has overall responsibility for the work of the ministry and the Treasury. He is supported by two additional secretaries, one of whom acts as deputy secretary to the Treasury and is responsible for its administration. The other functions as the state secretary and is responsible for programme evaluation and for monitoring the work in the departments and other statutory bodies under the ministry. These two additional secretaries are assisted by six senior assistant secretaries and eight assistant secretaries.

The ministry is divided into several administrative sections. These are the General Office, State Secretary's Office, Parliamentary Affairs Unit, Publicity Division and Insurance Division.

The General Office co-ordinates overall administrative and policy matters of the departments and statutory bodies under the ministry. It is headed by an administrative officer.

The State Secretary's Office\(^\text{14}\) is responsible for evaluating programmes and monitoring work in the institutions under the ministry. An assistant director, a statistical assistant and a co-ordinating secretary to the

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\(^{14}\) Under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution state ministers were appointed by the president to perform the functions assigned to them within or outside the ministries. The state secretary is the chief administrative officer of the State Ministry

197
The Parliamentary Affairs Unit functions under the direction of a senior assistant secretary with the assistance of a senior clerical officer as the head of the branch. It keeps all cabinet papers received from the General Office of the ministry. In addition, it keeps references pertaining to queries and questions raised in Parliament on the performance of the ministry and the institutions under it. It refers relevant extracts of the parliamentary debates to the ministry or to the appropriate institution under the ministry and obtains replies from the institutions for the information of the minister. This unit also distributes cabinet papers to the relevant divisions of the Treasury for their observations and passes their observations on to the Cabinet Office.

The Publicity Division publicises the activities of the ministry and the institutions under it. A senior assistant secretary heads it and the media consultant assists him.

The Insurance Section functioned under the Ministry of Trade and Shipping until May 1989. Thereafter, it was transferred to the Ministry of Finance. It is headed by a senior assistant secretary, who is also the controller of insurance and is assisted by the deputy controller and administrative officer. This division controls insurance brokers and three private companies namely, STC Eagle Insurance Company, the Union Assurance Company and the Ceylinco Insurance Company. The two state owned insurance
corporations send their progress reports to this division.

**The Treasury**

The General Treasury formulates the fiscal and budgetary policy of the country. It liaises with other financial institutions in the formulation and execution of the national budget and on other appropriation measures. The Treasury maintains centralised control and supervision of the raising and collection of revenue and of other governmental charges and dues and it has general oversight of financial operations. Moreover, it supervises and controls the Consolidated Fund and other funds and accounts of Government organisations. Its mandate also includes the channelling of external resources to the ministries and the preparation of the annual Capital Budget on the basis of country's development priorities.\(^{15}\)

The Treasury has nine divisions, namely the Fiscal Policy and Revenue Division, Public Enterprises Division, Economic Affairs Division, External Resources Division, Investigation and Internal Audit Division, Accounts and Payments Division, Finance Division, Budget Division and Commercialisation of Public Enterprises Division. Each carries out specialised functions and is headed by a director.

The deputy secretary of the Treasury, assisted by two additional deputy secretaries, co-ordinates activities and supervises the specialised functions of the various divisions.

The Central Administration Branch, headed by a senior assistant secretary, provides services in the areas of work maintenance, staff and equipment to sections of the ministry and specialised divisions of the Treasury.

The Fiscal Policy Division regularly reviews the budgetary position and formulates fiscal policy for the financial year. The division is divided into three units, with responsibility for policy, fiscal performance and duty rebate. The director is in charge of the overall supervision and general administration. An additional director, an adviser and five deputy directors assist the director in administrative matters and other functions. The deputy directors are responsible for the internal administration of their own units in addition to professional work. For example, the deputy director of the Duty Rebate Unit is responsible for matters pertaining to duty rebate, duty waivers, exemptions and refunds of revenue, bank guarantees and other schemes.

The Public Enterprises Division carries out analytical surveys of the short and long term prospects of public enterprises and evaluates their performance and progress. Each deputy director and some senior assistant directors are responsible for particular subjects, for example pricing policy for corporations, social overheads and
economic overheads. They handle the administration of their areas of responsibility on the instructions of the director.

The Economic Affairs Division is involved in the formulation, appraisal and execution of the macro-economic policies of the government in collaboration with other government institutions. It co-operates with the Central Bank on monetary, banking, financial and interest rate policies. The division also provides advice to multilateral institutions on policy matters and maintains relationships with them as a member of various international and regional financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

The director is responsible for the overall supervision of the division's work. The deputy director deals with all matters relating to monetary, banking, financial and exchange control policy, Sri Lanka's membership in multilateral institutions and matters pertaining to foreign loans to the Sri Lankan government. Four assistant directors and the deputy director assist the director in performing these functions.

The main functions of the External Resources Division are the negotiation of foreign aid, credit agreements with donor agencies and countries, technical assistance and the utilisation of such assistance. The work of the division is divided up according to relations with individual funding agencies and foreign countries. The director is assisted by two additional directors who are responsible for the
administration and professional aspects of the department. Nine deputy directors and two assistant directors carry-out duties relating to two main functional areas of the division, namely Technical Aid and Capital Aid Programmes.

The Investigation and Internal Audit Division performs the auditing and investigation functions of the Treasury. The administrative officer assists the director to perform the division's work.

The Accounts and Payments Division maintains centralised accounts of government departments. It is divided into five units, each of which is headed by a deputy director. The deputy directors of two of these units, the Accounts Unit and the Payments Unit, have assistant directors.

The Finance Division functions as a watchdog for accounting matters in public institutions in the country. It takes steps to keep financial and accounting systems consistent with the development needs of the country. It handles matters pertaining to contracts, tenders, waivers and write-offs. The division gives instructions to public institutions on the maintenance of accounting systems and chases up public institutions to respond to audit queries. It comments on the financial aspects of new legislation and amendments and issues Treasury minutes. The four deputy directors and five assistant directors who cover these functions are directly responsible to the director.

The Budget Division examines draft estimates relating to ministries and government departments, prepares budget
estimates and authorises expenditure. The director is in charge of overall supervision of the division and oversees all the activities in the preparation of budget. He is assisted by two additional directors, nine deputy directors and eight assistant directors. One deputy director attends to administrative and establishment matters assisted by an assistant director and an administrative officer. The work in the division is distributed among the deputy directors who are responsible for work relating to different ministries. They, in turn, are supported by the eight assistant directors.

The main function of the Commercialisation of Public Enterprises Division is to explore the possibilities for the commercialisation of public enterprises. Two deputy directors and a statistical officer assist the director in performing professional work, while one deputy director helps the director in administrative matters.

6.4 RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEMS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING AND THE GENERAL TREASURY

6.4.1 Overview

The aim of this section is to analyse the record-keeping systems in the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the General Treasury. This analysis illustrates how far the record-keeping systems presently in use are failing to support these institutions' functions. Attention is also given to the way in which these systems could be developed in order to contribute to efficient administration.
6.4.2 Mail Handling in the Ministry and the Treasury

There is no standard system for mail handling in the ministry or in the Treasury, despite the key role such a system should play in supporting efficient administration. There is no mail room to receive and distribute mail and no regular means of controlling or supervising mail distribution or despatch. Moreover, little attention is given to filing standards. File titles tend to be vague, and papers which should be filed together are often placed on different files at random. These weaknesses in file management cause long delays in retrieving information.

The Ministry

Mail coming into the ministry from the Treasury, the public, other ministries, departments and statutory bodies totals about 200 letters per day. Letters are delivered to the General Office. The administrative officer of the General Office opens official letters addressed to the secretary of the ministry (who is also secretary of the Treasury), to senior assistant secretaries and to assistant secretaries. Thereafter, registered and unregistered letters and letters delivered by hand are distributed to the administrative officers or chief clerks of the relevant sections of the ministry. Important and registered letters are entered in registers before their distribution to the sections.

As the administrative officer of the General Office also has other functions, he is not in a position to ensure
that the mail is distributed efficiently and delays are experienced. A mail room with registration clerks could be introduced to provide tighter control over the receipt of mail and its distribution.

The receipt and distribution of mail within the divisions and sections also needs to be streamlined. Here, the administrative officer or chief clerk receives the mail. Although procedures vary somewhat from section to section, he normally opens the letters and passes them to the head of the section in a mail folder. The head of the section minutes the necessary instructions and circulates the mail folder to senior officers. When the file returns to the administrative officer or chief clerk, he distributes the mail among the clerical officers, who are known as subject clerks. In most divisions and sections each subject clerk keeps files pertaining to areas with which he is concerned, and these may cover a range of unrelated subjects. The clerks normally keep the files in running number order.

The Treasury

The chief clerk of the Central Administration Branch in the Treasury receives approximately 300 letters daily which come in to the branch mainly from public institutions. He opens the letters addressed to the secretary of the Treasury and to the deputy secretary of the Treasury, sorts them in subject order and distributes them to the divisions of the Treasury. Cheques and money
orders are entered in a register and sent to the Currency Branch.

Although most of the divisions in the Treasury have their own ways of handling correspondence, broadly they are similar from division to division. Normally, each subject clerk in the Central Administration Branch is given a duty list and a case register or file list. On this basis letters are distributed among the subject clerks for filing. The files then are forwarded to staff officers for instructions.

Within this broad pattern there are various procedural areas which require study and improvement. In some divisions all incoming letters are registered, while in others only important letters and registered letters are registered. In some divisions all mail is forwarded to the director, while in others mail goes direct to the officers in charge of the sections. There are also various systems for handling outward mail. Some divisions send their letters to the Central Administration Branch for despatch and others send them direct. Important and urgent letters pertaining to all divisions tend to be sent directly to the relevant institution or party. There is a need in each of these areas to study the procedures in use and to determine whether the variations need to be maintained to satisfy the internal administrative requirements of the divisions or whether more efficient systems can be designed.
6.4.3 File Management in the Ministry and the Treasury

A whole range of classification systems is in use in the ministry and the Treasury. This is the result of various attempts either by administrators or clerical staff to improve the system without reference to the institution's information needs. They have not been designed to convey the basic information which should be represented in a file number, namely the file series and the subject area. In fact, most of the classification codes are meaningless and represent nothing more than the simplest control device. These systems have not succeeded in overcoming the deficiencies of previous systems but have tended to lead to confusion among the users.

Meaningful filing systems can only be constructed after a thorough analysis of the functions and working patterns of the office. The organisation of files by series based on these functions as well as on document types would enable the administrators to assign files relating to a particular series to a given clerical officer and to use files relating to a given function more easily. However there is a lack of understanding of the use of series as a control tool. At present clerks are assigned number or letter codes. It would be much more helpful to assign a code to the series.

There are numerous other problems in the area of file management. The failure to organise the records logically to reflect the functions of the administrative divisions is compounded by the lack of indexes. File indexes were
introduced as part of Turner's system but have now broken down. Little attention has been given to meaningful file titles. In addition, there are no systematic procedures for file tracking or file closure.

File Numbering in the Ministry

In the General Office of the ministry the administrative officer or the staff officers decide when a new file should be opened. These files are given alphanumeric classification numbers. For instance, in the reference AE/1/15, 'AE' represents the Administration and Establishment Branch, '1' the subject clerk responsible and '15' the file, which in this case is the 'Audit Queries'. The file series is not represented because the files have not been arranged in series. Rather a clerk may handle files relating to a wide range of subjects. For example, AE/1/11 is 'Housing Committee Meetings', AE/1/12 is 'Elections' and AE/1/21 is 'Questions in Parliament'. Thus the file numbering system does not demonstrate anything about the functions of the office.

Sub-series could be developed for each of the subject areas given in the above examples. For instance, AE1 for Election Activities, AE2 for Housing Committee Meetings, and AE3 for Parliamentary Affairs. A code to represent an index term could be given as the next element in the file reference and the final element could be the serial file number. Thus, for example, a file reference in the sub-series on election activities could be AE1/2/01 where '2'
represents 'party broadcasts'.

In the State Secretary's Office the files are numbered alphanumerically, but the elements in the reference number are not consistent. In some cases a code is included to indicate the agency to which the file relates. For instance, in the code SMF/PS/1/90, 'SMF' indicates the State Minister of Finance, 'PS' identifies the agency concerned (in this case the Presidential Secretariat), '1' is the serial file number (in this instance circulars from the Presidential Secretariat) and 90 is the year the file was opened. These files are annually closed, and there is a sensible practice of including the year of creation in the reference number. Yet the reference numbers for another file pertaining to another agency in the same office does not indicate the year. For example, in the reference SMF/DC/01, 'DC' identifies the agency (here the District Councils) and '01' is the file number for the District Council meetings. In another file number in the same office instead of using a letter code to represent the institution a number is used. For example, in the reference SMF/15/1, '15' represents the institution (here Mobile Services) and '1' is the file number.

Another problem is the use of excessively complicated file reference numbers. In the Insurance Division, for instance, in the reference CON/INS/A/40, 'CON' represents controller of insurance (the head of the division) 'INS' denotes insurance, 'A' the subject clerk and '40' the consecutive file number for the file. Here the first two
letter codes denote the division (or its head) whereas only one is needed. In this reference, rather that indicating the series and the subject, as would be most helpful, the reference identifies the officers who deal with the files.

**File Numbering System in the Treasury**

The file numbering systems in the divisions of the Treasury start with code letters denoting the branch or division. For example, 'CB' represents the Central Administration Branch and 'FP' the Fiscal Policy Division. Yet the other elements vary from division to division.

It is normally the subject clerks who assign numbers to the files. They keep them in serial number order and each clerk adds a letter code to indicate who is responsible for the series. For example, the reference of a file kept by the mail clerk is CB/TP/01. Here 'CB' represents for Central Administration Branch, 'TP' represents *tappal* (the local word for mail) and '01' the first file in his series.

In some cases clerks have attempted to develop series. For instance, the establishment clerk uses 'ESA' to stand for establishment and administration. He divides his subjects into series on staffing matters, for instance '01' 'appointments', '02' 'transfers', '03' 'retirements' and '04' 'pensions' of staff grade officers. Under the series '01' 'appointments' there are a number of subjects, such as 'executive officers' and 'clerical officers'. The clerk keeps one or more files for each subject, although this is
However, often no attention is given to creating series. For instance, the subject clerk in the Central Administration Branch looks after 'general' files; his letter code is 'G'. Most of the files he handles could be part of functional series, but little thought has been given to the nature of the functional area the files are intended to support. For example, the file list includes such files as 'repairs of office equipment' which could be part of a series on office equipment.

In some divisions code numbers are assigned to subjects. For instance, in the Fiscal Policy Division, in the reference FP 18/01, '18' represents 'Tariffs' and '01' is the first file relating to this subject, in this case 'Customs Ordinance and Tariff Charges'. The title of the second file on this subject is 'Presidential Tariff Commission', and the reference is 'FP 18/02'. While this system works satisfactorily, there is no provision for a second subject code, which would provide another point of access to the file. For instance, the file on the 'Presidential Tariff Commission' could also be indexed under commissions.

In some divisions there have been frequent changes in file numbering systems which have made retrieval difficult. In the External Resources Division different units of the division follow various complicated file numbering systems which are confusing to staff and users alike. In the Technical Aid Branch, for instance, project files are
assigned a five part classification. In the reference TA/SRL/84/025/H, 'TA' indicates technical aid, 'SRL' represents Sri Lanka, '84' denotes the year the file was opened, '025' is the number allocated for the project and 'H' identifies the subject clerk responsible for the subject. Here, the element 'SRL' in the file coding system serves no useful purpose whatsoever, as all letters leave the office under a Sri Lankan Government letter head.

Other branches of the same division organise their file series differently. The Technical Assistance Programme files are mostly arranged by country, but this is not consistent. For instance, in the reference TA2/1/2/89(F), 'TA' represents Technical Assistance and '2' the British Council, '1' fellowships, '2' the ministry from which candidates are nominated for the fellowship, '89' the year the file was opened and 'F' the subject clerk's identification number. The file code does not indicate the file number and there is nothing to indicate subject areas of the courses for which the fellowships are awarded. By contrast, files pertaining to technical assistance from Japan are maintained according to the training courses offered. For example, in the reference TA5/1/15, '5' represents Japan, '1' 'Fellowships' and '15' 'Crime Prevention'. Here the sequential file number is not indicated. Although the training courses are indicated, the institutions which nominate the candidates are not.

The Capital Aid Branch adopts yet another numbering procedure for project files. Here, files are kept by
project and country. In the reference CA9/9/73B, 'CA9' represents 'Capital Aid United States', '9' represents 'projects', '73' 'Development and Training Project', and 'B' the subject clerk's identification letter. There is no sequential file number.

The Finance Division uses a complex combination of block serial numbers rather than alpha-numeric references. Subject numbering starts at '1001' and goes up to '1099'. For example, in the reference, FIN-1096-193-1693(2269), 'FIN' represents the 'Finance Division', '1096' the subject (here it is tenders) and '193' the 'department'; '1693' is the Case Register Number and '2269' the Tender Schedule Number. The block numbering system creates problems when more file numbers need to be add to the assigned blocks. It is not often used in modern offices for subject files for this reason.

Opening New Files

Little attention has been given to the question of developing meaningful file titles. Titles tend to be assigned by untrained clerical officers with very little education and to be vague and misleading.

Two major problems were observed in the ministry and the Treasury as a result of this situation. Firstly, files tend to be opened on very broad subjects, so that correspondence on a range of issues, which should warrant separate files, is grouped together. Secondly, at the other end of the spectrum, many files are opened for very narrow
subject areas with no attention to how they will grow. Such files often contain no more than one or two letters. They tend to remain in the system indefinitely because they never grow 'bulky', and as a result they are not closed even if they remain inactive for many years.

File Tracking

At present, there is no means of tracking files in the ministry and the Treasury; their location is dependent upon the file clerk's memory. Some subject clerks note file movement in their diaries, but this is not a consistent practice. Therefore, frequently it is difficult to locate files even within the division. The majority of the files never leave the division where they are created, but if they do there is no systematic means of knowing where they have gone.

This causes serious difficulties, particularly for the General Office of the ministry and for the Central Administration Branch, which serves all sections, divisions and branches of the Treasury. The officer in charge of the General Office of the ministry has no knowledge of where files are at any given time. He faces real difficulties when asked by his superiors to trace files and to provide information if the appropriate subject clerk is absent, cannot remember where the file was sent or is unwilling to locate a file. The problems are compounded when one officer passes a file to another.

In most of the divisions subject clerks handle files
for one or more staff officers. The administrators tend to feel that this arrangement is an efficient use of staff resources. However, in practice it causes delays. If the subject clerk is busy with the work of one officer he is unable to attend to other officers' needs even when the files are needed urgently, particularly as the various queries raised by the staff officers concern different subjects. As the clerks have very little education it is difficult for them to carry out complex searches. It would at least be helpful if a subject clerk could be assigned inter-related subjects rather than a variety of unrelated subjects.

Yet the problems is not just one of inefficiency. It is not uncommon for clerks to avoid locating files for personal reasons, and this gives them enormous hidden power.

When a file cannot be found, a temporary file must be opened. This situation creates difficulties in decision making and breaks the continuity of policy on the subject. Queries from other public institutions or from the public cannot be answered, so action is delayed. In many instances the original file reappears after a few days or a few weeks, but by then valuable working time has been lost and the efficiency of the organisation has been affected.

A file tracking system would have significant benefits even if no other improvements were made. It would make it possible for the clerks or their supervisors to monitor the location of all files at any given time.
Custody of Files and the Closure

In most sections and divisions of the ministry there are no rules for file closure, and files are simply closed when they become 'bulky'. In the General Office and the Insurance Division files are closed when they are approximately three centimetres thick. However, there is no procedure for closing them after a specified period of time. As a result these files can remain in the system indefinitely. When files are closed a new volume is opened and the next volume running number is allocated.

A central record room is maintained in the Treasury building to accommodate non-current records of the ministry and the Treasury. Some divisions for example, the Finance and External Resources Divisions, maintain mini-record rooms for their records. Records held in these record rooms are eventually transferred to the central record room.

The central record room and mini-record rooms are not properly organised. Records are kept in a haphazard way, partly due to the inadequate space available. In such crowded conditions it is difficult to trace files. There are no file indexes and therefore the record-keeper's memory is the only means of retrieval.

There is no standard practice for file closure in most of the Treasury divisions. In the Central Administration Branch files pertaining to subjects which are no longer active, such as those relating to general elections, are closed and transferred to the central record room. All other current and semi-current files are kept in the
In the Fiscal Policy and Revenue Division the procedure for closing files is inconsistent. Files normally run for three to four years and the director decides when to transfer non-current files to the central record room. There is a proposal to appoint a committee to select records for transfer to the record room, but so far nothing has been done to implement it.

In the Capital Aid Branch of the External Resources Division, when a project is completed the ministry concerned informs the division. The relevant subject clerk, with the approval of the staff officers, closes all files pertaining to the project. A list is then prepared indicating the file numbers, and the files are sent to the record room. If a file is closed in under five years from when it was opened, it is kept in the branch until the five years have elapsed.

As discussed in Chapter Five, some records of the ministry and the Treasury were appraised in 1980s, and records of archival value were transferred to the Archives between 1986 to 1988. However, little attention has been
paid to the appraisal of records or to the introduction of retention schedules in order to avoid record accumulations in the administrative areas and the record rooms in future.

6.5 THE NEED FOR A RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury, as in other public institutions, there is no overall records management policy and no system designed to meet the needs of administrators by accurately documenting their organisational activities. Instead, a number of inefficient systems provide an inadequate service. These systems are managed by untrained and unsupervised subject clerks. This situation does nothing to promote the corporate use of information in meeting organisational objectives.

One of the key problem areas is the lack of supervisors and middle managers with clear line management responsibilities. In most sections and divisions of the ministry and Treasury the subject clerks report direct to the staff officers responsible for particular subjects. Middle managers, such as, administrative officers, chief clerks and section heads, have practically no involvement in the subject clerks' work. Moreover, although the opening of new files and assigning of file numbers should be carried out on the instructions of the staff officers, in most instances subject clerks do it alone. This situation leads to the creation of illogical and meaningless file coding systems.
Without indexes, officers from different sections of the same department are unable to make use of the information others have created. Information often is regarded as belonging to the action officer and the subject clerk rather than to the organisation. As a result, it is not disseminated effectively and tends to be duplicated in different branches of the ministry. This is a costly system to maintain.

This situation could be rectified by the introduction of a centrally controlled records management system through a Records Management Unit for the ministry and the Treasury. Such a unit could ensure physical and intellectual control of records.

Since the sections of the ministry and the divisions of the Treasury are interspersed on the four floors of the building it would not be practical to develop one central registry for the ministry and one for the Treasury. Records therefore could continue to be kept in the sections and the divisions, and one officer from each section and division could be assigned responsibility for its files. He could consult directly with the Records Management Unit on records management issues. Confidential files could be kept in secure registries at convenient points.

Even before the systems were fully developed the unit could introduce a system to monitor file movement within the two institutions by systematically recording information each time a file moved from a clerk and from one officer to another.
A Records Management Unit, if established, should be under the supervision of a records manager. He should be assisted by two record officers, one for the ministry and the other for the Treasury. They should set standards for mail handling, including the receipt of mail, its distribution to the sections and divisions and the despatch of outward mail. They should monitor and advise on the circulation of mail folders. A central mail room could be organised under the unit for the ministry and the Treasury.

The unit should prepare a manual indicating guidelines for mail management and for file opening, assigning file numbers, file classification, indexing, file tracking, file closure and the appraisal. The records staff should be trained in the use of these procedures.

This unit also should work in consultation with the administrators of the ministry and the Treasury towards the restructuring of file classification systems to serve organisational needs. File series relating to the functions of each division or section should be developed and logical numbering systems introduced. For example, the Fiscal Policy Division of the Treasury, which regularly reviews the budgetary position and formulates fiscal policy for the financial year, is divided into three units to carry out work on policy, fiscal performance and duty rebate issues. A separate file series could be set up for files relating each of these functions and could be identified by either a meaningful or an unmeaningful letter code. Sub-series also could be developed if appropriate. The file reference
would include a code for each of these elements, a code (s) for one or two index terms and a serial file number.

The Records Management Unit should provide a link between the sections and divisions for information sharing. For example, the Budget Division might need information from the Economic Affairs Division, Fiscal Policy Division and Finance Division for the preparation of annual budget. If the Records Management Unit could provide information about the files held in the various divisions, the necessary information could be located quickly and a great deal of time could be saved.

Finally, the unit should establish specific guidelines to ensure that files are closed regularly after they reach a specific size or have been open for a specified length of time, that they are removed from expensive office areas to record rooms and that they are kept no longer than necessary. The unit should supervise the reorganisation of the record rooms according to the administrative structure of the sections and divisions as this will facilitate retrieval.

Retention criteria need to be developed and applied. Since none of the sections and divisions of the ministry and the Treasury has followed the existing regulations for disposal, it is essential to carry out a review of the closed files in order to eliminate ephemera and to transfer important records to the Archives. Retention schedules should be agreed and gazetted in order to ensure that a backlog does not build up again.
The recruitment and training of personnel to staff the Records Management Unit and to perform records management functions needs special consideration. There is little expertise in this area in Sri Lanka and initially officers may need to be sent abroad for training until training courses can be developed by the National Archives and the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration.

This system could be linked to a larger system for the entire public administration in the country.
7 \textbf{CONCLUSION}

In Sri Lanka, as in other democratic welfare states, official records record the state's involvement in meeting the requirements of the public in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres. These records are public property and will be required by present and future generations for a wide range of purposes. It is the responsibility of the state, therefore, to ensure that they are kept securely and are readily accessible to those who have legitimate reason to use them, whether they are current, semi-current or non-current. This can only be achieved through a continuous process of consultation and co-operation between administrators, as creators, and record staff and archivists, as managers and custodians of the records. This is not the situation in Sri Lanka today.

The record-keeping systems which were introduced during the period of British colonial administration were not designed to address the issues involved in managing the entire life cycle of records. For most of the period the focus was on current records, and it was only in this century that attention was given to archives. Very little thought has ever been given to semi-current records. Although ad hoc measures were taken over the years to improve current record-keeping procedures, these never led to the efficiency which the administrators required.

After independence, administrative reform commissions reviewed record-keeping practices and special studies on office systems were carried out in public institutions from
time to time. However, they did not lead to efficient records management systems. In the post independence period the growth of bureaucracy led to the creation of a much greater volume of documents requiring closer management.

The failure to develop records management systems caused problems for public administration, problems which grew so gradually that they were not recognised immediately. Had the administration clearly understood the importance of managing the records, it would have promoted the introduction of systems to control the creation of records and their handling through the life-cycle.

As yet there is no programme to address these problems. The prevailing archives legislation is concerned only with semi-current and non-current records, and the Archives has been unable to meet even the limited provisions set out under the law due to the lack of well trained staff and efficient work programmes.

Sri Lankan archivists, like archivists in most other developing countries, have made no attempt to study systems for managing current records nor have they understood the consequences of the lack of such systems for their ability to provide archival services. They have no plans to become involved in the creation of records or their management in their current phase, nor do they have expertise in this area. As a result, they are unable to assist in streamlining record-keeping systems as a means of improving administrative efficiency in public institutions and of ensuring that records of ongoing national value reach the
Archives.

Thus the creation of records and their management during the current and semi-current phases continues to be the responsibility of administrators who tend to leave it in the hands of clerical officers. The importance of introducing an effective overall management structure and professional management systems needs to be explained to administrators and archivists alike.

The role of the clerical officers in the management of records is crucial and needs urgent attention. They are directly responsible for the management of records, yet they are poorly paid, overburdened and under qualified. At the same time they are blamed for many of the shortcomings and the faults of the administrative machinery. The poor image of work in this area is to a large measure responsible for the deplorable state of record management in Sri Lanka and other developing countries.

To date nothing has been done to improve the clerical officers' position. From time to time, the question has been raised by public administrators as to whether the clerical service is used as effectively as it could be, and whether practices introduced during the colonial period should be abandoned. Until this question receives serious attention and major changes are made, it will not be possible to reform record services.

During the period of British colonial administration the ad hoc weeding of official records was a common practice. Today there is a greater emphasis on retention
scheduling but weeding still occurs. This practice is not only inefficient, but dangerous. In an attempt to satisfy immediate space requirements, the value of the files as legal or historical evidence can easily be overlooked. Moreover, weeding is a slow and laborious process. The growth of modern files can only be controlled through systematic policies whereby file series are clearly established in relation to the retention value of the material on the files.

The absence of guidelines on file closure has resulted in files being kept open for unnecessarily long periods. If files were closed regularly and semi-current records were regularly transferred to record rooms, administrators would have much more space for current records. Procedures should be established to ensure that files are closed at regular intervals and sent to the record rooms with transfer lists.

There also is a need for more efficient systems to ensure that non-current records selected as archives are transferred, arranged, described and made available to the public. This will involve reorganising the Archives staff into functional divisions and establishing clear work programmes.

The work of the Historical Manuscripts Commission should be carried out under the Archives rather than operating as a separate institution. It should promote the participation of historians and scholars of local languages. There is also a need to develop oral history projects in areas where there are gaps in written records.
Moreover, records of eminent personalities in the political, social and cultural spheres need to be considered.

The administrative structure of the Archives will need considerable strengthening if the Archives is to be able to contribute effectively to the management of the record cycle. The discrepancies in the existing recruitment schemes from director downwards need to be resolved, and the staffing structure needs to be expanded to enable the Archives to manage the nation's semi-current and non-current records. Ideally it should take responsibility for setting standards in this area.

To overcome the problems outlined above, a plan is needed for the management of official records in Sri Lanka. The discussion which follows reviews the long term legal and organisational changes needed to provide efficient record services in Sri Lanka. A short term action programme is also considered.

Efficient record services must be founded upon a firm legal and organisational framework. A new records law is required and a new organisational structure for record staff, both within the Archives and in the record creating agencies is necessary. These two components of a restructuring programme are closely related and must be developed together.
The existing legislation does not assign specific responsibilities for current and semi-current records to any government institution and is out of date in many other respects. There is a need for new legislation to signal a fresh direction and to authorise the creation of a new National Records Administration to give effect to other urgently needed changes. The new law should provide a comprehensive legal framework for the management of public records throughout their life cycle.

The law should create a National Records Administration under the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs and Provincial Councils rather than under the Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs where the National Archives is presently located. Records services are an inter-sectoral function which is closely linked to the management of the public administration.

The law should provide for the appointment of a director-general of the National Records Administration and should establish his responsibility for its day-to-day management. It should make provision for the inspection by the director-general and his staff of classified and secret records.

In addition, the law should establish a records class within the public administration and define responsibility for the management of the class. The class should cover both the staff of the headquarters of the National Records Administration and the staff in creating departments which are primarily concerned with providing record services.
This should provide a basis for ensuring a uniform system of care for records throughout their life-cycle. The law should define the respective responsibilities of the heads of public institutions and of the director-general of the National Records Administration for the management of current and of semi-current records.

Record staff at all grades working in the ministries, departments and other public institutions should liaise directly with the Current Record Division of the National Record Administration but should be under the budgetary and disciplinary control of the employing organisation and should be regarded as part of the staff of that organisation. The head of that organisation should be responsible for organising, directing, monitoring and controlling staff in the most efficient way to achieve the organisation's objectives. The director-general, as head of the Record class should have overall responsibility for their professional training and development.

The law should establish an advisory council to advise and support the director-general on the general policy for the management of public records. The council should include officials in the areas of financial and legal policy, the director of the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration as the person in charge of training for the public administration and an historian. Specialists in the areas of technical and scientific records should be seconded as necessary.
Under the new organisational structure the National Archives should become a division of the National Records Administration and a Current Records Division should be created as shown in Figure 3. The National Archives Division should be responsible for the management of semi-current and non-current records.

The Current Records Division should prepare a registry manual, based on modern records management principles, in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration, the Treasury and the Establishment Division of the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs and Provincial Councils. The manual should lay down procedures for mail handling, file management and the application of review procedures. It should be introduced gradually throughout the public administration.

The staff of the division should liaise with records staff and administrators in public service institutions to introduce efficient filing systems and at the same time to develop retention criteria for each file series. They should monitor these systems and ensure that records are moved from the offices to safe custody or destroyed when they are no longer active.

An intermediate record centre should be set up as a part of the proposed programme to house these records. This should be placed under the National Archives Division, and records pertaining to central government institutions which are no longer in active use but which have on going administrative, legal or financial value should be
transferred there. The conditions of deposit should be clearly defined from the outset in order to ensure that the record centre is not used as a dumping ground for large quantities of redundant house-keeping records. The creating agencies should be able to retrieve their records from the record centre as necessary.

Records in the record centre should be reviewed regularly according to the specified retention dates and those identified as having permanent value to the nation should be transferred to the National Archives repository.

The concept of a record centre is new for Sri Lanka, as in most developing Commonwealth countries. However record centres are widely in use in Britain, North America, Australia and elsewhere. The purpose and benefits of record centres should be explained to administrators and archivists.

Sri Lanka does not have staff trained in the area of records management. In order to implement the programme outlined above it will be necessary to ensure that there is an adequate number of well trained staff within the National Records Administration in the ministries. As training in records management is not available at local universities or academic institutions, it will be necessary to send some staff abroad for professional training, but at the same time training facilities must be developed in Sri Lanka.

Training programmes should be developed co-operatively between the Sri Lanka Institute of Development
Administration, the main training institute for administrative officers and other public servants, and the National Records Administration. A Training Division should be established within the National Records Administration to study the problems of managing records and to help to develop appropriate training courses for professional, managerial and support staff. These courses should become part of the curriculum of the Institute of Development Administration.

Clearly such a comprehensive programme will take time to introduce. Ad hoc programmes have not worked in the past, and it will be important to ensure that a strong structure, capable of supporting change is firmly in place before introducing far-reaching changes.

However, there are measures which can be taken in the short term to lay the foundations for improvement. The National Archives could identify one ministry where modern systems could be introduced in stages. The Ministry of Finance and Planning, including the Treasury, could provide an excellent base for such a programme and collaboration between the National Archives and the senior administration in the ministry could be explored.

Such a programme would involve developing a Records Management Unit within the ministry which could gradually take on the functions described in Chapter Six. The staff of the unit, working as a team with National Archives staff, could build upon the findings of this thesis to analyse in detail the organisational structure, functions
and information needs of the ministry and to develop record series, sub-series and retention periods. Retention schedules should be developed and gazetted.

At the same time this team should identify records in the system which are no longer in active use and process them for disposition. Some records will be due for destruction and others will be due for transfer to the National Archives. The remainder should be stored in the record rooms of the ministry and the Treasury. Once a record centre is established the need for these record rooms will cease.

Even this limited programme will involve a whole range of new skills and it may be necessary to draw on outside assistance. The Association of Commonwealth Archives and Records Managers (ACARM) have developed a field workshop programme to address the problems of managing records in all phases of the record cycle, and training manuals are being prepared. It is possible that ACARM could organise a workshop in Sri Lanka and that the manuals could be used to provide follow-up training. Malaysia has already been highly successful in introducing the workshop concept, and it may be that Malaysian consultants could be involved in the reform process.

The model system in the ministry and the Treasury will have to be monitored closely, and great care should be taken to ensure that the changes introduced there do not disrupt office work. Once the systems are working well they can be extended gradually to the rest of the public.
administration in a carefully thought out manner.

The proposed long term and short term changes would have major consequences for the efficiency of Sri Lanka's Public Administration and would result in substantial cost savings. Efficient record-keeping systems would facilitate information retrieval, make it possible to share information between institutions and provide an improved basis for continuity in administrative decision making. The removal of large quantity of records from office areas and record rooms to the record centre and the National Archive repository would release much needed office space and ensure secure storage for records of ongoing national importance. The new staffing structure would enable more efficient use of staff.

Without such a programme, Sri Lanka's information problems will continue to escalate. With it, Sri Lanka will be on a path toward gaining control of its own information as a basis for economic and social development, now and in the future.
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Preservation of Official Documents: Letter from Assistant Government Agent at Kalutara to Government Agent at Colombo, 22.9.1914, SLNA 33/227

Appendix II: Lord Harcourt’s Circular Despatch on Preservation of Official Documents in the Colonies and Protectorates: 9.3.1914, SLNA 4/421

Appendix III: Destruction of Useless Documents: Colonial Secretary’s Circular No.26 of 13.7.1916, SLNA 33/227


Appendix V: W.O.Gore’s Circular Despatch on Preservation of Colonial Records of Historical Interest, 16.10.1936, SLNA 4/675

Appendix VI: Government Agent’s Circular on Rules Regulating Correspondence, 14.7.1887, SLNA 33/195

Appendix VII: National Archives Law No 48 of 1973

Appendix VIII: National Archives (Amendment) Act No 30 of 1981

Appendix IX: J.R.Jayewardane Centre Act No 77 of 1988

Appendix X: Regulations made under Section 16 (1) (a) and (h) of the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973 for the Periodical Disposal of facilitative (house-keeping) records in public offices of Sri Lanka: Govt. Gazette No. 313 of 31.8.1984, pp 585-591

Appendix XI: Regulations made under Section 16 (1) (a) and (h) of the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973 for the permanent preservation of records of the government Agent’s Offices (kachcheris) of Sri Lanka, Govt. Gazette No.59 of 25.7.1980, pp 584-585, 626-627

Appendix XII: Sample for a schedule which separated record classes to be destroyed and not
Appendix XIII: Regulations made under Section 16 (1) (a) and (h) of the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973 for the permanent preservation of Court Records of Sri Lanka: Govt. Gazette No 21 of 26.1.1979

Appendix XIV: List of Public Officers Interviewed
APPENDIX I

No. 708
The Kachcheri
Kalutara, 22 September 1914

PRESERVATION OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Sir,

With reference to your letter No. 567 of 10th instant, I have the honour to report that as far as I can ascertain at present there are the following old records in this kachcheri.

(1) A number of commutation registers and registers of redemption of grain tax
(2) A number of files of lists of paddy fields with details of owners, names, extent etc.
(3) Duplicates of certificates of sales for non payment of grain tax
(4) Counterfoils of redemption receipts
(5) A number of files on various subjects chiefly with regard to land and irrigation going back to about 1884
(6) Land sale registers and other such records some of which may be valuable

2. Of these (1) are under lock and key in my room, (2), (3) and (4) are in two almirahs in the Kachcheri and in some confusion (5) are listed and in a separate almirah in charge of the Record Keeper, (6) are in the record room but are not arranged or listed.

3. I am taking steps at once to have (2) (3) and (4) carefully sorted, arranged and listed after which they will be kept under lock and key, (6) will also be arranged and listed so that anything valuable can be carefully kept.

4. As soon as these documents have been put in order I propose a systematic rearrangement of all the existing records in the course of which any other old or valuable records which may be unearthed can be noted and their safekeeping provided for.

I am, Sir
Yours obedient servant

Asst: Govt: Agent.

[Assistant Government Agent]

The Hon’ble [Honourable]
The Government Agent, W.P. [Western Province]
COLOMBO

SLNA 33/227

248
CIRCULAR

Downing Street,
9th March, 1914.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that a Royal commission on Public records has for some time been enquiring into the state of the records in the United Kingdom and their accessibility to persons engaged in historical research.

2. Their enquiry has aroused the general interest of historical students; and they have extended it so far as to allude to the preservation of official documents in the Colonies and Protectorates.

3. This last question has more than once attracted attention in the Colonial Office, and it has been found that in some instances the public records of a Colony were inadequately, housed while in many cases no suitable provision was made for their permanent preservation. In connexion with some recent arbitrations, documents of the greatest historical value were only saved just in time to give them a home in this country, where they would be immune from the ravages of insects and climatic.

4. I shall be glad if you will furnish me with a brief report as to the existing arrangements for the custody and preservation of the older official records of the Government which you administer. I imagine that every care is already taken of those which are more or less recent and therefore required for official reference. But I would suggest that the whole subject receive your attention, and that if the present arrangements are, in your opinion, inadequate or unsatisfactory, steps should be taken to secure that effective provision is made for the safe keeping and preservation of the documents in question.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

L. HARCOURT.

SLNA 4/421
COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
COLOMBO, JULY 13, 1916.

Destruction of Useless Documents in Government Offices.

SIR,

I am directed to state that with a view to preventing the overcrowding of record rooms and other rooms in Government offices by the accumulation of unnecessary documents, it has been decided to lay down rules for the destruction of useless papers.

2. I am accordingly to forward herewith a draft of rules which it has been proposed should be introduced, and to invite you to submit any observations which you may wish to make from the point of view of your Department.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

The

20.7.16

Colonial Secretary.
Destruction of Useless Documents in Government Offices,

1. Documents should be destroyed only under the supervision of the Head of the Department, or of one of his Assistants.

2. A Register should be kept of the classes and years of the documents destroyed.

3. The following documents should not be destroyed:—
   (a) Documents prior to 1833.
   (b) Correspondence with the Colonial Secretary's Office.
   (c) Registers and other documents required by law to be preserved, unless the law provides for destruction.
   (d) Documents of historical or other interest, including those relating to the history, constitution, administration, &c., of the Department, appointments of officers, &c.
   (e) Documents relating to lands, especially Crown lands, chinas, forests, &c.
   (f) Special files, unless the papers have become useless.
   
4. With the above exceptions correspondence may be destroyed on the orders of the Head of the Department (or of his Assistant), after 5 years, when in his opinion the documents are no longer required for reference.

5. Account books — (Colonial Auditor and Treasurer should advise on these).

6. Registers — (Departments to advise on these).

7. Censalibawa cases — See Rule, dated 20.12.1808. There are already rules about these.

8. Cattle vouchers — See Rule, dated 20.12.1808. (Cattle Defd to advise on these).

Draft Rules referred to.
APPENDIX IV

CIRCULAR

Downing Street
2nd January, 1929

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the late Lord Harcourt’s Circular despatch of the 9th of March, 1914, relating to the preservation of official documents in the Colonies and Protectorates, and to state that I shall be glad if you will furnish me with detailed information, under the following heads, in regard to the whole of the records of the Government under your administration:

1. General condition
2. Whether bound or unbound
3. Whether registers or other summaries have been kept
4. Whether the records are housed collectively or otherwise and in what type of building.
5. Whether the Record Office are:
   a. Fireproof.
   b. Weather proof and
   c. Insect proof.

2. It has recently been represented to me that Colonial Official records of historical value are in some instances in a bad state of preservation and that owing to climatic and other causes, their disintegration would appear to be simply a matter of time and preventable only by removal to a temperate climate.

3. I consider that the proper depository for all such records is normally the territory to which they appertain, but at the same time I regard it as most desirable that where their retention locally involves an unavoidable risk of serious deterioration they should be removed to this country with a view to their preservation.

4. The Master of the Rolls, who concurs in this view, will endeavour to find accommodation for such records, if complementary to those at present in his custody. The space available, however, is very limited, and it will only be possible for documents of a comparatively early date to be accepted.

5. If there are any early official records in your custody, which it is considered essential to remove in order to ensure their preservation, I shall be glad if you will furnishe with detailed particulars, including the lineal space which they would occupy. In the case of the older Colonies, documents of a date anterior to that of the early part of the 19th century might be considered in the first instance, but in the case of territories more
recently acquired, the end of 1878 might form a convenient division, as records up to that date are generally open to public inspection.

6. It must be clearly understood that in no circumstances will the Public Record Office undertake the custody of records which are not in a good state of preservation unless the local Government concerned is prepared to pay the entire cost of their restoration in such manner as will ensure their being available for consultation as required.

I have the honour to be,

Sir

Your most obedient, humble servant,

L.S. AMERY

SLNA 4/591
APPENDIX V

CIRCULAR

Downing Street,
16 October, 1936

Sir,

I have the honour to address you on the question of the preservation of Colonial records of historical interest. In practically all Dependencies, I believe, examination of records with a view to the destruction of out-of-date documents takes place from time to time. The procedure varies with different territories. In Ceylon, for example, it is laid down some detail in the Government Manual of Procedure, which provides that every head of a Department should prepare and revise from time to time a list of documents which should be periodically destroyed, and that these lists should be submitted through the proper channel for the approval of the Governor before any documents are destroyed in accordance with the lists. The Manual also provides for a list of documents which should not be destroyed, which includes "documents of historical or other interest, including those relating to the history, constitution, administration, etc., of the Department, appointment of officers, etc." In Mauritius there is a Standing Committee for the examination of records to be destroyed, whose decision requires the approval of the Governor. In other territories, however, the procedure does not appear to be so closely defined, and although in the majority of territories the destruction of records requires the authority of the Governor or the Colonial Secretary, it would appear that in some cases only a general approval is required, and that details of the documents to be destroyed are not always submitted to the authority in question. One case has been brought to my notice where someone specially employed by a Colonial Government for the purpose was apparently allowed to undertake the wholesale elimination of old Colonial records without adequate supervision on the part of a responsible authority, with the result, it is feared, that records, of considerable historical interest may have been destroyed.

2. I appreciate that it may be neither desirable nor possible to lay down hard and fast rules as to the procedure which should be followed in all Colonial Dependencies in this matter. I wish, however, to remind Colonial Governments of the importance of taking steps to secure that, when consideration is being given to the elimination of out-of-date records, careful regard should be had not only to their official utility but to their actual or potential historic interest. It appears to me to follow that the destruction of records should require the approval of some responsible authority to which details of the documents to be destroyed should first be submitted, and that in this connection the procedure adopted in Ceylon and Mauritius are to be commended.
3. I take this opportunity of reverting also to the question of protection of records against the ravages of climate, insects, etc., referred to in Mr. Amery's circular despatch of the 2nd January, 1929, and preceding circular despatches. The preservation of its records in a satisfactory state must be regarded as one of the first duties of a Colonial Government, a duty which derives greater urgency from the fact that delay in the institution of suitable protective measures may and does lead to the inevitable loss of documents of value. I consider it important that every Colonial Government should satisfy itself that its arrangements in this respect are adequate, and that where they are not, immediate steps should be taken to remedy the position, both by way of renovation of records in a bad state of repair and by measures for the suitable housing and preservation of these documents in future. It may be that the best measures that are practicable locally for the preservation of records cannot in some cases, on account of climatic conditions, etc., be otherwise than inadequate; in that case, consideration should be given to the question of transferring some of these records to the Public Record Office in this country so far as this course may be possible in the light of the principles set out in the circular despatch of 2nd January, 1929. I should be glad if you would give this matter your early attention.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

W. ORMSBY GORE
APPENDIX VI

GOVERNMENT AGENT’S CIRCULAR ON RULES
REGULATING CORRESPONDENCE

a. Each letter, report or memo (draft and original) should have as a heading the subject on which it treats briefly noted.

b. Should have the paragraphs numbered and if the letter covers more than a sheet, the sheet should be numbered.

c. Should treat on and be confined to a single subject.

d. When it is not possible to obtain the GA’s signature to letters to heads of departments, clerks in submitting such letters for the signature of the AGA should on getting them back see that the name of the GA is inserted by the AGA in its proper place adding signed before it, and the AGA has signed on the left hand side of the letter as per specimen subjoined.

(signed) F.R. Saunders.

Office Assistant.

No letter signed by AGA should be despatched unless so treated.

e. Letters, especially those to the Colonial Secretary should embody all necessary information and copies of letters should not be annexed, unless under special orders.

f. A letter should be replied to within twenty four (24) hours of its receipt by a clerk whenever practicable unless such document is sent AA or GA for orders.

g. Should any clerk fail to observe these instructions he will on the first occasion be fined (50cts.) on the second Rupees one (1) and on the third reported to government for disobedience of orders.

(signed) F.R. Saunders.

Office Assistant.

The Kachcheri,
Colombo, 14.07.1887.

Govt. Agent.
APPENDIX VII

NATIONAL ARCHIVES LAW,
No. 48 OF 1973
OF
THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY

[Certified on 11th December, 1973]

Printed on the Orders of Government

PRINTED AT THE DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT PRINTING, SRI LANKA (CEYLON)
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257
National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973

L. D—O. 3/70.

A Law to provide for the establishment of a Department of National Archives; to provide for the transfer of public records to the National Archives; to make better provision for the custody and preservation of public archives and public records; and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.

BE it enacted by the National State Assembly of the Republic of Sri Lanka as follows:—

1. This Law may be cited as the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973.

2. This Law shall come into operation on such date as the Minister may appoint by Order published in the Gazette.

3. A Department known as the Department of National Archives is hereby established.

4. (1) There shall be appointed—

(a) a person by name or by office to be or to act as the Director of National Archives; and

(b) such other officers and servants as may be necessary for the purposes of this Law.

(2) Every person holding any office in the Department of National Archives on the day immediately preceding the date on which this Law comes into operation shall as from the date on which this Law comes into operation be deemed to hold the same office in the Department of National Archives established under this Law.

(3) All officers and servants appointed for the purposes of this Law shall be deemed to be state officers within the meaning and for the purposes of the Penal Code.

5. (1) There shall be an official seal of the National Archives of a design approved by the Minister and such seal shall be judicially noticed.

(2) The seal of the National Archives shall be kept in the custody of the Director and may be used by him or by any officer authorized by him in that behalf for the purposes of the National Archives.
6. (1) There shall be established a Council to be called the National Archives Advisory Council (hereinafter referred to as the "Advisory Council") which shall consist of the Director as an ex officio member and not less than five or more than seven other persons appointed by the Minister as members thereof.

(2) The Director shall be the Chairman of the Advisory Council and any officer nominated by the Minister shall function as secretary thereof.

(3) Every member of the Advisory Council other than the Director shall, unless he earlier vacates office or is removed by the Minister, hold office for a period of three years from the date of his appointment. Any member vacating office by effluxion of time shall be eligible for reappointment.

(4) The Minister may remove any member from office, other than the Chairman, without assigning any reason therefor.

(5) Meetings of the Advisory Council shall be summoned by the Director whenever he may deem it necessary, so however that a meeting of the Advisory Council shall be summoned by him, once at least in each period of three months or whenever he is required so to do by the Minister.

(6) Any member of the Advisory Council who, without leave of the Council first obtained, fails to attend any three consecutive meetings of the Council shall be deemed to have vacated the office of member.

7. The functions of the Advisory Council shall be to advise the Minister on all matters relating to the location, preservation and the use of public archives, the custody and transfer of public records, inspection and preservation of documents and manuscripts of historical or cultural or literary value in private possession, inspection by members of the public of public archives, editing and publishing of public archives and private manuscripts.

8. (1) Subject to the direction and control of the Minister, the Director shall have charge of the National Archives and of the public archives deposited therein and in addition to the specific functions conferred or imposed on him by this Law, he shall take all such measures as are necessary for the conservation of public archives.
(2) Subject to the provisions of this Law and any regulations made thereunder, the Director or any other officer of the National Archives authorized by him, shall have the power to do all such things as appear to him to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of the efficient administration of this Law and may, in particular—

(a) make available and publish lists, indices, guides, inventories, calendars, texts, translations and such other things as may be necessary as aids to the public archives in his custody;

(b) subject to such terms and conditions, if any, on which any records or manuscripts are transferred to or acquired by the National Archives, produce, edit, print or make any other public use of any public archives in his custody;

(c) provide for the restoration and conservation of public archives in a suitable manner and make photographic reproductions or duplicate copies of any public archives where necessary;

(d) produce or cause to be produced for inspection by any individual, any public archives open to public inspection;

(e) acquire by purchase, donation, bequest, contract, or otherwise or take on loan, any record, manuscript or document or any other material which, in his opinion, should be deposited in the National Archives for permanent preservation;

(f) examine any record or any other manuscript or document containing references to Sri Lanka or which had its origin in Sri Lanka but lying outside Sri Lanka, with a view to securing either on loan or by purchase, the original or any copy thereof;

(g) examine any collection of records or printed material in private possession for purposes of listing and recording and render such
paragraphs of the document.
Provided, however, that the transfer of any public records to the National Archives may be temporarily deferred and such records retained in the office of origin for administrative or other purposes for such period as may be agreed upon by the responsible officer of such public office and the Director, and in every such case a list of the records so retained shall be transmitted to the Director by the responsible officer:

Provided further that the responsible officer transferring any public records which he may consider to be of a confidential or secret nature or which contain any other information which should not be divulged to the public may specify conditions subject to which such records shall be kept in the National Archives or shall be made available for public inspection, and it shall be the duty of the Director to comply with such conditions.

10. Where any public office is due to be closed down or wound up, the responsible officer of such public office shall transmit to the Director a complete list of all public records in that office and shall make arrangements to deposit in the National Archives such records as the Director may select or require for permanent preservation in the National Archives.

11. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of any Commission of Inquiry appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act or any Committee of Inquiry appointed by a Minister to deposit all records relating to such Commission or Committee, as the case may be, at the National Archives within three months of the rendering of the final report of such Commission or Committee.

12. (1) Any private individual or the chief executive officer of any institution in possession of any manuscript or document over fifty years old, being a manuscript or document of historical, cultural or literary value may notify the Director of the existence of such document or manuscript.

(2) Such individual or executive officer shall afford the Director all facilities to inspect such manuscript or document.
(3) Such individual or executive officer shall if agreed upon by the Director, deposit at the National Archives such manuscript or document either on a permanent or temporary basis, and may specify the conditions subject to which such manuscript or document shall be made available for public inspection or extracts or copies therefrom shall be taken for publication or for any other purpose.

13. (1) It shall be the duty of—

(a) the responsible officer of any public office to transmit to the Director a copy of every annual report, statement of accounts and any other publication issued by such office, within thirty days of such issue;

(b) the Postmaster-General to transmit to the Director a specimen of each new postage stamp, first-day cover, postal order form, money order form, aerogramme and post card issued by the Postmaster-General, within thirty days of such issue;

(c) the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka to transmit to the Director a cancelled specimen of every new denomination of currency note and a specimen of every new coin issued by the Central Bank, within thirty days of such issue;

(d) the Surveyor-General to transmit to the Director a copy of every map, plan, chart or other publication issued by the Surveyor-General for sale to the public, within thirty days of such issue; and

(e) the candidate for any election or by-election of a member of the National State Assembly or of any local authority to transmit to the Director a copy of any election literature issued by or on behalf of such candidate for public circulation, within thirty days of such issue.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) "election literature" means any statement of policy, handbill, notice, placard, poster, leaflet, book, picture, photograph, map, drawing or sketch, handwritten,
National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973

printed, cyclostyled or produced in any other way on paper or in any other material by or on behalf of a candidate.

14. (1) No person shall except on the authority of a licence issued in that behalf by the Director, export out of Sri Lanka any public record, document or manuscript or any other printed matter, being a public record, document, manuscript or printed matter which is over fifty years old and which is of a historical or cultural or literary value.

(2) The Director may in his discretion refuse to issue a licence if he considers that such record, document or manuscript is of such historical, cultural or literary value that its export will not be in the national interest.

(3) Any person aggrieved by the refusal of the Director to issue any licence under this section may appeal against such refusal to the Minister within fourteen days of the communication of such refusal and the decision of the Minister thereon shall be final and conclusive.

15. A copy of or an extract from any public archives or any private document or manuscript deposited in the National Archives purporting to be duly certified as true and authenticated by the Director or any other officer authorized by him in writing for the purpose and having impressed thereon the official seal of the National Archives, shall be admissible in evidence in any proceeding in any court in like manner and to the like extent as the original document or manuscript would have been admissible.

16. The Minister may make regulations for any one or more of the purposes hereinafter prescribed:

(a) selection of public records and private documents and manuscripts for permanent preservation, their transfer to and deposit in the National Archives and the measures to be taken for their effective preservation in the National Archives;

(b) temporary deposit of any specified class or description of public records at places other than the National Archives pending their transfer to the National Archives;
National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973

(c) care and custody of public records in Government Departments and other institutions;

(d) public access to the public archives and the terms and conditions subject to which public archives or any specified class or description of public archives are open to inspection by the members of the public;

(e) prohibition or restriction of the disclosure of information obtained by the public from public archives;

(f) maintenance of secrecy by officers of the National Archives in respect of any class or description of public archives in respect of which secrecy is required to be maintained by or under any written law;

(g) purchase from private individuals or organizations of manuscripts and documents and other printed matter of historical or cultural or literary value for permanent preservation in the National Archives;

(h) destruction of valueless records and documents in public offices and preparation of schedules therefor;

(i) holding of exhibitions and expositions of public archives.

(2) No regulation made by the Minister under sub-section (1) shall have effect until it has been approved by the National State Assembly and notification of such approval is published in the Gazette.

17. (1) Any person who knowingly defaces, marks on, mutilates, or causes damage to any record, manuscript or document deposited in the National Archives or who destroys any public record otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of this Law or any regulation made thereunder or who contravenes any provision of this Law or any regulation made thereunder shall, on conviction, be liable to rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to a fine not exceeding one thousand rupees or to both such imprisonment and fine.
(2) Any offence under this section shall be triable by a Magistrate's Court notwithstanding the limitation of its ordinary jurisdiction.

18. When a public record or document required to be maintained under any written law is transferred to or deposited in the National Archives for permanent preservation under the provisions of this Law, such record or document shall be deemed to be maintained in the National Archives under the provisions of the first-mentioned written law, and accordingly, the provisions of that written law shall apply to and in relation to such document or manuscript.

19. Nothing in the preceding provisions of this Law shall be deemed to affect any public record which is less than one hundred years old and which is maintained under any enactment specified in the First Schedule hereto.

20. Nothing in this Law shall be deemed to affect the operation of the National Museums Ordinance.

21. (1) The Printing Presses Ordinance is hereby amended in section 8 thereof, by the substitution, for the definition of "Registrar", of the following new definition:

"Registrar" means the Director of the Department of National Archives and includes an Assistant Director of the Department of National Archives.

(2) The Printers and Publishers Ordinance is hereby amended in section 13 thereof, by the substitution, for the definition of "Registrar", of the following new definition:

"Registrar" means the Director of the Department of National Archives and includes an Assistant Director of the Department of National Archives.
(3) The Newspapers Ordinance is hereby amended in section 9 thereof, by the substitution, for sub-section (2) of that section, of the following new sub-section:

"(2) In this Ordinance "Registrar of Books and Newspapers" means the Director of the Department of National Archives and includes an Assistant Director of the Department of National Archives."

(4) One copy of every book which has been delivered to the Registrar under section 2 of the Printers and Publishers Ordinance and the copy of every newspaper which has been delivered under section 7 of the Newspapers Ordinance to the Registrar, during any period prior to the date on which this Law comes into operation, shall be deemed for all purposes to be a copy deposited at the National Archives for permanent preservation. Where, on and after the date on which this Law comes into operation, copies of any book are delivered under section 2 of the Printers and Publishers Ordinance and the copy of a newspaper is delivered under section 7 of the Newspapers Ordinance to the Registrar, one copy of such book and the copy of such newspaper so delivered shall forthwith be deposited by the Registrar at the National Archives for permanent preservation.

22. All public and private records received for permanent preservation by the Director shall be deposited in the repositories of the National Archives.

23. Except as hereinafter provided public archives shall not be removed from the National Archives to any other place for any purpose whatsoever:

Provided however that where any public office which transmitted to the National Archives any record, document, manuscript or other thing requires the same for inspection by such office, such record, manuscript, document or thing may be forwarded to such office by the Director for inspection and return within such period as may be specified by the Director.
24. In this Law, unless the context otherwise requires—

"Director" means the Director of National Archives and includes an Assistant Director of National Archives;

"local authority" means any Municipal Council, Urban Council, Town Council, or Village Council;

"manuscript" means any handwritten document made of paper, ola, copper, silver, gold, or other material except granite;

"National Archives" means the Department of National Archives established under this Law;

"public archives" means all public records and any other manuscript, document or printed matter kept or deposited at the National Archives for permanent preservation;

"public office" means any office specified in the Second Schedule hereto;

"public record" or "record" means any original or copy of any manuscript, paper, letter, register, report, book, magazine, map, chart, plan, drawing, picture, photograph or any other record or part thereof either handwritten, drawn, printed or produced in any other way on paper or on any other material except granite and officially received or produced or prepared in any public office in the course of its official functions and includes any cinematograph, film, recording, tape, disc or production in any other media received in any public office;

"printed matter" means any book, magazine, leaflet, newspaper, or any other paper containing information printed by any mechanical or by any other process;

"responsible officer" with reference to any public office, means the head of that office or the officer for the time being discharging the duties and functions of the head of that office.
FIRST SCHEDULE (Section 19)

Adoption of Children Ordinance (Cap. 61).
Births and Deaths Registration Act (Cap. 110)
Marriage Registration Ordinance (Cap. 112).
Kandyan Marriage and Divorce Act (Cap. 113).
Kandyan Succession Ordinance (Cap. 114).
Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act (Cap. 115).
Foreign Marriage Ordinance (Cap. 116).
Registration of Documents Ordinance (Cap. 117).
Sannases and Old Deeds Ordinance (Cap. 118).
Registration of Old Deeds and Instruments Ordinance (Cap. 119).
Land Registers (Reconstructed Folios) Ordinance (Cap. 120).
Registrars' Proceedings Validation Ordinance (Cap. 121).
Powers of Attorney Ordinance (Cap. 122).

SECOND SCHEDULE (Section 24)

Public Office

Office of the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka.
Office of the Cabinet of Ministers.
Office of the National State Assembly.
Office of any Minister of the Cabinet.
Office of any Government Department.
Office of any court of law.
Office of the Army, Navy or Air Force.
Office of any Ambassador, High Commissioner or any other Diplomatic Representative of Sri Lanka and situated outside Sri Lanka.
Office of any Local Authority.
Office of the University of Sri Lanka.
Office of any Public Corporation established under any enactment, being a corporation whose capital is partly or wholly provided by the Government.
APPENDIX VIII

PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF
SRI LANKA

NATIONAL ARCHIVES (AMENDMENT)
ACT. No. 30 OF 1981

[Certified on 15th May, 1981]

Printed on the Orders of the Government

Published as a Supplement to Part II of the Gazette of the Democratic
Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka of May 21, 1981

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Postage: 50 cents
National Archives (Amendment) Act, No. 30 of 1981

[Certified on 15th May, 1981]

L. D.—O. 37/73.

AN ACT TO AMEND THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES LAW.

BE it enacted by the Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as follows:—

1. This Act may be cited as the National Archives (Amendment) Act, No. 30 of 1981.

2. Section 6 of the National Archives Law, No. 40 of 1973 (hereinafter referred to as the “principal enactment”) is hereby amended in subsection (5) of that section, by the substitution for the words “once at least in each period of three months”, of the words “once at least in every calendar year”.

3. Section 9 of the principal enactment is hereby amended in subsection (2) of that section by the substitution, for paragraph (d) of that subsection, of the following new paragraph:—

“(d) to transfer any record, being a record not less than twenty-five years from the date of its creation, as is required by the Director to be transferred to the National Archives for permanent preservation;”.

4. The following new section is hereby inserted immediately after section 9, and shall have effect as section 9A, of the principal enactment:—

9A. Notwithstanding anything in any other provision of this Law—

(a) it shall be the duty of the Secretary to the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka, to transfer to the National Archives at the expiration of the term of office of a President, all public records and any other printed matter, in the office of the President of Sri Lanka.

(b) it shall be the duty of the Director—

(i) to deposit in the Presidential Archives Division—

(a) all public records and printed matter transferred to the National Archives, under paragraph (a); and
National Archives (Amendment)  
Act, No. 30 of 1981  

(b) all such papers and documents, news items, magnetic tapes, discs, photographs or any other materials relating to any event in the official or personal life of a President or past President of the Republic as are received, by donation or otherwise, by the National Archives; and

(ii) to establish a reference service utilizing the public records, printed matter, documents and materials referred to in sub-paragraph (i); and

(iii) to submit to the President reports based on any such public records, printed matter, documents and materials as are referred to in sub-paragraph (i), when required to do so by the President.

5. Section 12 of the principal enactment is hereby amended by the repeal of subsection (1) of that section, and the substitution therefor, of the following new subsection:—

"(1) A private individual or the Chief Executive Officer of any institution in possession of any manuscript or document, over fifty years old, being a manuscript or document, of historical, cultural, literary, economic, or scientific value or which is otherwise of national importance shall notify the Director of the existence of such document or manuscript, and in the event of a change of ownership or possession of such document or manuscript shall notify the Director, within a period of three months of such change of ownership or possession, the name and address of the new owner or possessor thereof."

272
6. Section 13 of the principal enactment is hereby amended in subsection (1) of that section, by the substitution for paragraph (a) of that subsection, of the following new paragraph:

"(a) the responsible officer of any public office to transmit to the Director a copy of every annual report, statement of accounts or any other publication, whether printed or otherwise, and whether intended for sale or distribution to the public or intended for circulation in secret or for circulation only amongst officials, issued by such office, within thirty days of such issue;".

7. Section 14 of the principal enactment is hereby amended as follows:

"(1) in subsection (1) of that section, by the substitution, for the words "literary value.", of the words "literary or economic or scientific value or is otherwise of national importance."; and

(2) in subsection (2) of that section, by the substitution, for the words "cultural or literary value", of the words "cultural, literary, economic or scientific value or is otherwise of national importance".

8. Section 16 of the principal enactment is hereby amended as follows:

(1) in subsection (1) of that section in paragraph (g) thereof, by the substitution for the words "literary value.", of the words "literary or economic or scientific value or which are otherwise of national importance ";

(2) by the repeal of subsection (2) of that section and the substitution therefor of the following new subsection:

"(2) Every regulation made by the Minister shall be published in the Gazette and shall come into operation on the date of such publication or on such later date as may be specified in the regulation."; and

(3) by the insertion immediately after subsection (2) thereof, of the following new subsections:

"(3) Every regulation made by the Minister shall, as soon as convenient after its publication in the Gazette, be brought before Parliament for approval. Any regulation which is not so approved.
shall be deemed to be rescinded as from the date of disapproval but without prejudice to anything previously done thereunder.

(4) Notification of the date on which any regulation made by the Minister is so deemed to be rescinded shall be published in the Gazette."

9. Section 17 of the principal enactment is hereby amended by the repeal of subsection (1) of that section, and the substitution thereof, of the following new subsection:—

"(1) Any person who knowingly defaces, marks on, mutilates, or causes damage to any record, manuscript or document deposited in the National Archives or removes without authority, any such record, manuscript or document or who destroys any public record otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of this Law or any regulation made thereunder or who contravenes any provision of this Law or any regulations made thereunder shall on conviction, be liable to rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to a fine not exceeding one thousand rupees or to both such imprisonment and fine.".

10. Section 21 of the principal enactment is hereby amended by the substitution in subsections (1), (2) and (3) of that section, for the words "an Assistant Director", wherever those words appear in those subsections of the words "any Deputy Director".

11. Section 24 of the principal enactment is hereby amended as follows:—

(1) by the substitution for the definition of "Director" of the following definition:—

"Director" means the Director of National Archives and includes any Deputy Director of National Archives; and

(2) by the insertion immediately after the definition "National Archives" of the following definition:—

"Presidential Archives Division" means a branch office and repository of the National Archives referred to in section 9A.

274
PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

J. R. JAYEWARDENE CENTRE

ACT, No. 77 OF 1988

[Certified on 13th December, 1988]

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VO BE PURCHASED AT THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS BUREAU, COLOMBO

Price: 60 cents. Postage: 75 cents.
AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARCHIVAL DEPOSITORY CALLED THE J. R. JAYEWARDENE CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH, ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY; AND FOR MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH OR INCIDENTAL THERETO.

BE it enacted by the Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the J. R. Jayewardene Centre Act, No. 7 of 1988.

2. (1) There shall be established a depository to be called the "J. R. Jayewardene Centre for historical research, archives and library" (hereinafter referred to as "the Centre.").

(2) The Centre shall be housed in premises bearing assessment Nos. 101/1-5, 1/1 and 1/2, Dharmapala Mawatha situated at Turret Road (now called Dharmapala Mawatha) in the Cinnamon Gardens' Ward (No. 36) within the Municipality and district of Colombo, purchased by the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka from the People's Republic of China, by Deed No. 5761 dated February 8, 1988, and attested by N. Sambandan, Attorney-at-Law and Notary Public, Colombo.

(3) All moneys lying with the Public Trustee, on the day preceding the date of commencement of this Act, to be used for the Centre shall stand transferred, with effect from the date of commencement of this Act, to the Fund established by section 9 and may be used for the maintenance of the Centre and the enhancement of its amenities.

(4) The Centre shall, by the name assigned to it by subsection (1) be a body corporate, and shall have perpetual succession and a common seal and may sue and be sued in such name.

3. (1) The administration, management and control of the Centre shall be vested in a Board of Governors constituted as hereinafter provided.

(2) The cost of administration and management of the Centre shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund, through provision to be made annually under the Votes of the Department of National Archives.

(3) The Board of Governors of the Centre (hereinafter referred to as "the Board") shall consist of—

(a) the President of the Republic;
(b) all living past Presidents;
(c) the Prime Minister;
(d) the Speaker;
(e) the Leader of the Opposition;
(f) the Secretary to the President;
(g) the Public Trustee;
(h) the Director, National Archives; and
(i) two other members appointed by the President, each of whom shall, subject to the provisions of subsections (4) and (5), hold office for such periods as may be specified in the letter of appointment issued to him by the President.

(4) The President may, in his absolute discretion, revoke the appointment of any member appointed by him under paragraph (i) of subsection (3).

(5) Any member of the Board appointed under paragraph (i) of subsection (3) may at any time resign from the Board by a letter in that behalf addressed to the President.

(6) The Board may regulate the procedure in regard to its meetings and the transaction of business at such meetings.

(7) No act or proceeding of the Board shall be deemed to be invalid by reason only of the existence of a vacancy among its members or any defect in the appointment of a member thereof.

(8) The President shall be the Chairman of the Board.

Powers of the Board.

4. (1) The Board shall, in the name of the Centre, have the power to—

(a) hold all public records and printed matter transferred to the National Archives at the expiration of the term of office of His Excellency J. R. Jayewardene, the first elected Executive President of Sri Lanka 1978-88; under section 9A of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973;

(b) accept for deposit, books, papers, files, photographs, motion picture films and discs, audiotape and videotape recordings, family heirlooms and memorabilia of the childhood and youth of the said J. R. Jayewardene, items created and collected by him out of personal interest, memorabilia relating to election campaigns, official portraits and awards, medals and gifts received by him;
(c) accept for deposit, material relating to the said J. R. Jayewardene, donated by political party associates, family and personal friends and others;

(d) take all necessary steps to protect and preserve the material referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c);

(e) provide a reference service on such material;

(f) present exhibitions of such material;

(g) hold scholarly meetings;

(h) hold oral history programmes;

(i) solicit and accept, donations, gifts and bequests of money or other property, for the purpose of maintaining, operating, protecting or improving the Centre;

(j) acquire, hold or manage property, whether movable or immovable;

(k) sell, mortgage, exchange or otherwise dispose of, or deal with any property, except those described in paragraphs (a) and (b) and (c), whether movable or immovable, to which the Board may become entitled;

(l) enter into and perform, all such contracts and agreements as may be necessary to the exercise and discharge of its powers and functions;

(m) perform all such acts or things as may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of this Act.

(2) Nothing in paragraph (b) of section 9A of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973, shall apply in respect of the material referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of subsection (1).

5. Any moneys belonging to the Centre may be invested by the Board in such manner as the Board may determine.

6. The Board shall have the power—

(a) to appoint such officers and servants of the Centre as may be necessary to carry out particular projects of the Centre; and

(b) to determine the remuneration payable to the officers and servants so appointed.
Audit.

7. (1) The Board shall cause proper accounts to be kept of the income and expenditure of the Centre.

(2) Article 154 of the Constitution shall apply to the audit of the accounts of the Centre.

Annual report.

8. The Board shall, as soon as practicable after the thirty-first day of December of each year, prepare a report on the administration of the affairs of the Centre during that year together with a statement of the income and expenditure of the Centre, and of the investment of the moneys belonging to the Centre during that year. The Board shall transmit such report and statement to the Minister who shall cause them to be placed before Parliament.

Fund of the Centre.

9. (1) The Centre shall have its own Fund.

(2) There shall be paid into such Fund—

(a) all sums appropriated annually for the purposes of the Centre;

(b) all sums received by it, as donations;

(c) all sums received as income from investments made by it; and

(d) all sums transferred to the Fund by reason of the operation of section 2 (3).

(3) There shall be paid out of the Fund, all sums required to defray any expenditure incurred by the Centre in the exercise of its powers and the discharge of its functions.

Rules.

10. The Board may make such rules as it may consider necessary in relation to any matter affecting or connected with, or incidental to, the exercise, discharge and performance of its powers, functions and duties.
APPENDIX X

1. Nissanka Wijeyaratne, Minister of Justice, by virtue of the powers vested in me by Section 35(3) of the Prisons Ordinance (Chapter 54) do hereby cancel with effect from 14. 07. 1034 the appointment of Mr. Harris Wickramatunga as a member of the Prisons Visiting Committee.

Ministry of Justice, NISSANKA WIJEYARATNE, Minister of Justice.
Colombo 12, 3rd July, 1034. 8-561/2—Gazette No. 313 of 31.08.84

PRISONS ORDINANCE

Notice under Section 35(1)
I, Nissanka Parakkrama Wijeyeratne, Minister of Justice, by virtue of the powers vested in me by Section 35(1) of the Prisons Ordinance (Chapter 54) do hereby appoint K. Surepavara Nayaka Thero, Messrs. Justin Malagoda, Tissa K. Bandaranayake, Wimaladasa Weeraratne to be members of the Local Visiting Committee, Remand Prison, Bogambara, Kandy for a period of one year with effect from 15th of July, 1034.

Nissanka Wijeyaratne, Minister of Justice.
Colombo 12, 7th August, 1034. 8-561/3—Gazette No. 313 of 31.08.84

PRISONS ORDINANCE

Notice under Section 35(1)
I, Nissanka Parakkrama Wijeyeratne, Minister of Justice, by virtue of the powers vested in me by Section 35(1) of the Prisons Ordinance (Chapter 54) do hereby appoint Messrs. Ajantha Wijesinha, J. W. Maphakurage, Ilandula Gunasekera and S. M. S. Rajabdeen to be members of the Local Visiting Committee for the Remand Prison, Colombo for a period of one year commencing on 15th June, 1034.

Nissanka Wijeyaratne, Minister of Justice.
Transworks House, Ministry of Justice, Colombo 1, 7th August, 1034. 8-561/4—Gazette No. 313 of 31.08.84

NATIONAL ARCHIVES LAW, No. 48 OF 1973

Regulations made under Sections 16 (1) (a) and 16 (1) (b) of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973

Colombo, 10th July, 1034.

E. L. B. Hurulu, Minister of Cultural Affairs.

Regulations made under Sections 16(1)(a) and (b) of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973 for the Periodical Disposal of Facilitative (Housekeeping) Records in Public Offices of Sri Lanka

Schedule containing a list or particulars of class or series of facilitative (housekeeping) records in public offices for periodic disposal

**Abbreviation:**
- D/1 = Destroy [in]umber of years after the record is closed
- D/1 = Destroy one year after the record is closed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class or Series of Records</th>
<th>Disposal Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Abatements Register, W &amp; O.I.</td>
<td>D/1 after the award is made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Abstract Statement of Deposits</td>
<td>D/1 after passed in Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Account, Leave and Pay</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Accounts, Acknowledgment slip</td>
<td>D/2 after closed in Audit or after 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Accounts, Bank Pass Books</td>
<td>D/2 after closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Accounts, closing of documents no.</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Accounts, corresponding no. name of copies</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Accounts, General Correspondence on</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Accounts, Miscellaneous Inquiries</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Accounts, Memos and letters forwarding</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Accounts, Memos forwarding under receipts to be attached to payment vouchers</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Acknowledgment ships</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Acting Pay, Applications for Authority to pay</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Administration Reports, Applications for</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Administration Reports, Correspondence no.</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Administration Reports, Departmental or institutional, Annual (Published)</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A copy of the published report to be sent to the National Archives within 30 days of such issue. Vide section 15 (1)(a) of the N.A.L. 48 of 1973

280
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class or Series of Records</th>
<th>Disposal Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Administration Reports, Departmental or Institutional (Manuscript)</td>
<td>D/2 after the publication of report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Administration Reports, Divisional (Manuscript or typewritten)</td>
<td>Not to be destroyed. Transfer to the National Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Advance Accounts, Divisional (Manuscript or typewritten)</td>
<td>D/Before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Advance Accounts, Lodger</td>
<td>D/5 after passed in Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Advance, Correspondence</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Advances of salary, Allocations and Charges</td>
<td>D/2 after passed in Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Advances of salary, Applications for Cheques</td>
<td>D/1 after passed in Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Advances to Public Officers for travelling expenses, Applications</td>
<td>D/1 after the appointment of the next Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Advances, Purchases of Transport, Bonds and Agreements</td>
<td>To be returned to officers after settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Advisory Boards, Correspondence re Appointment</td>
<td>D/1 after the appointment of the next board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Agreements, Routine Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 after the agreements are discharged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Allocation of Veto's, Documents re.</td>
<td>D/3 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Allocations, Register of</td>
<td>D/2 after passed in Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Allowances, Authority for payment of</td>
<td>D/5 after passed in Audit or after 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Allowances, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/Before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Annual verification of Stores, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Appointments, Applications, rejected</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Appointments, Applications, schedule of</td>
<td>D/1 year after selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Appropriation Accounts</td>
<td>D/5 after passed in Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Appropriation, monthly</td>
<td>D/After passed in Audit or after 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Attendance, Register of</td>
<td>D/After the register is closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Audit Queris, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/3 years after the audit inquiry is settled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Audit Queris, Quarterly Return</td>
<td>D/Before going to record room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Audit Queris, Register of</td>
<td>D/2 years after all the queries in the register have been settled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Bank, Acknowledgment</td>
<td>D/5 years after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Bank, Advances from or to and routine correspondence</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Bank, Deposit Book</td>
<td>D/2 after the agreements are discharged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Bank, Reconciliation Book</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Bank, Statements of Receipts and payments, Notes</td>
<td>D/10 after passed in audit; If a query is pending D/1 after completion of the inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Bills, Register of and correspondence re, Board of Survey, cash</td>
<td>D/2 after settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Boards of Survey, cash</td>
<td>D/2 after the action has been taken on the recommendations of the report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Books, indent for</td>
<td>D/2 after the agreement of the register is closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Books, indent for</td>
<td>D/5 after the register is closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Buildings on rent, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 years after completion of tenancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Building construction, Proposals</td>
<td>D/5 after the register is closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Buildings Requisitioned</td>
<td>D/2 years after settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Calendar, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/Before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Cheques, Money Orders, received, Register of</td>
<td>D/2 after passed in audit or if audit queries are pending, D/1 after the inquiries are over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Circuit Programme</td>
<td>D/Before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Circulat passend, Departmental</td>
<td>D/duplicate copies not required for current administrative work, before sending to the Record Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Circulat passend, Treasury, Accounting</td>
<td>D/2 years after the inquiry is settled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Civil lists, Revision of</td>
<td>D/5 after completion of the inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Classification Books</td>
<td>D/After civil list is published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Clerical Staff, Inspection Reports of</td>
<td>D/6 years after Audit Report has been issued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Car Mileage, Register of</td>
<td>D/2 after inspection is completed or D/1 after inquiry is completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Case Registers</td>
<td>D/5 after the register is closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Cash Book—Treasury and Kaschekhres</td>
<td>D/10 after the date of its closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Cash Book Others</td>
<td>D/After the date of its closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Cash Book—Potto</td>
<td>D/5 after the date of its closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Cash Book—Shroff</td>
<td>D/5 after the date of its closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Cash sent to Bank Register of</td>
<td>D/2 after passed in Audit or after 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Celebrations, Papers relating to National or institutional</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Cheques, Counterfoils of</td>
<td>D/5 after passed in Audit of after 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Cheques, Diahonoured, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/5 after the settlement is made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Cheques, Register of</td>
<td>D/After passed in Audit or after 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Civil status declaration form</td>
<td>D/40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Clerks, Cadre of</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Clerks Correspondence re. transfers</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Clerks, Release of, to other Departments</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial No.</td>
<td>Class or Series of Records</td>
<td>Disposal Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Clerks, Relief arrangements</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room after the conclusion of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Clerks (Temporary), Applications for posts of, selection and appointments</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Clerks, resignation and Discontinuance of</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Complaints against officers where allegations are not substantiated</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Conferences, Notes of, (Departmental) Routine meetings</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Conferences, Reports of Departmental International (held with the collaboration of the Department)</td>
<td>To be preserved and transferred to the National Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Conferences, Correspondence organizational work, Departmental or International (held with the collaboration of the Department)</td>
<td>D/3 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Consignment, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Consignment Notes from Government Stores for goods supplied on requisitions</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of file register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Consumable stores, monthly returns of</td>
<td>D/2 after receiving the up-to-date list of defaulting contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Contractors, defaulting</td>
<td>D/1 before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Contractors, Enquiries by other Ministers and officers</td>
<td>D/5 books which do not contain cancelled stamps and after any refund due has been made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Copies of documents, application for</td>
<td>D/5 books containing pending investigations after completion of the investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Counterfoil Books register of</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Counterfoil Books (used)</td>
<td>D/5 after the completion of the inquiry. If an appeal or inquiry is pending D/1 after the final settlement or the completion of the inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Counterfoil Books (used) not obtained from Treasury (other than those required by law to be preserved)</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit after 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Currency notes, damaged, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Debit notes from other Government Depots</td>
<td>D/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Deductions from salaries of employees (Correspondence records, pertaining to various salary deductions)</td>
<td>D/5 where no queries are pending; where queries are pending D/1 after completion and settlement of the inquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Delivery books, letters</td>
<td>D/1 year after the closure of the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Deposits, abstract Statements of</td>
<td>D/5 after clearing all deposits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Deposits ledger (miscellaneous)</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit after 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Deposits, Miscellaneous correspondence</td>
<td>D/1 after the current year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Diaries, Call-up</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Diaries, Revision of</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Directors, Revision of</td>
<td>To be filed in Personal File.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Disabled Officers, employment of</td>
<td>D/after clearing the list, when the list is up-dated or the new list is published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Disciplinary inquiry case files</td>
<td>D/5 after the completion of the inquiry. If an appeal or inquiry is pending D/1 after the final settlement or the completion of the inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Duty Rosters</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit after 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Electricity, Additions and Improvements (Correspondence)</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Electricity, Bills, Registers of</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Employees, Additional Temporary</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Employment Statistics</td>
<td>D/1 before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Employment, Queries, i.e. replies to Treasury Circulars, and etc.</td>
<td>D/5 after the completion of the inquiry. If an appeal or inquiry is pending D/1 after the final settlement or the completion of the inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Estimates, Annual, of Revenue &amp; Expenditure</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Estimates, Annual, of stores, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 after the estimates are printed and published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Estimates, Draft</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Estimates, Supplementary Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Expenditure, Commitment, monthly statements of</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of record.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Expenditure, monthly, summaries of</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the case/file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Family remittances, documents re.</td>
<td>D/5 after remittances are settled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Family remittances, ledger</td>
<td>D/10 after the closure of the ledger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Fees, Register of copying</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit after 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Forms, obsolete departmental forms</td>
<td>D/after sending to the Record Room (could use the reverse side if writings do not appear).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Forms, printed, correspondence with G.P. and Printing Committee</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial No.</td>
<td>Class or Series of Records</td>
<td>Disposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Forms, notarized and others, Applications for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Forms, Printed, Indentures for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Payroll, Balance Sheet, Correspondence re</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Forwarding memos</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>F.R. 66, 64 or 65—Applications</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>Gazette, Government</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>Gazettes, Correspondence re</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Government Employees, Return showing wage groups, etc.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Government Stores, Vouchers, settlement of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Government Ledger, Journals and, etc., information supplied to</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Gratuity papers</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>Half-pay, Returns of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>History sheets of officers including temporary officers</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>History sheets of officers who have died.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>History sheets of officers who have retired</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Holiday pay, Authority for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Holidays, Arrangements for office work on</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>Holiday warrants, Applications for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Hospital, Applications for treatment in</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Hospital Bills, Recovery of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Hospital charges, Register of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Imprest, Allocation and Removal and settlement of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Incremental credit for war or voluntary army service</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Increment, Memorials re.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Increment sheets</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>Indents and invoices, Crown Agents</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Indents Government stores</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Inventory Book (Stores)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Investment and Mortgages by Public Officers</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>Issue Order Books</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>Journal, (annual accounts)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>Journals and Publications purchased correspondence re.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Surveys, Correspondence re lists of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>Lady Lecture Loan Fund, Accounting Documents</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>Land Acquisition by Public Officers</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>Land, Acquisition of, for public purposes Encumbered Documents</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Land, Acquisition of, Departmental</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>Land, Printing and Distribution of (correspondence files)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Leave, Accident, and Pay</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>Leave, Applications for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>Leave, Lapsal, Applications for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Leave out of the Island, Applications for</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Leave Registers</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Leave, Loan (Application forms)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Leave, Loan (Registers)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>Ledger Advance, Deposit, Expenditure, Fines,</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund Imprest, Pensions, Summary, votes.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>Loan Applications, varia</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Ledger, Personal Funds</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>Letter Registers (Ordinary mail)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>Letter Registers (Registered mail)</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Loans to Public Officers, Returns re.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>Local Loans and Development Fund recovery—</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Losses of Public Money, Stamps, Stores &amp; etc.</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Leaves, Register of</td>
<td>Disposal as for personal files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial No.</td>
<td>Class or Series of Records</td>
<td>Disposal Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 177</td>
<td>Medical Attendance, applications for free</td>
<td>D/2 before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Medical Certificates</td>
<td>To be filed in Personal Files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>Minor Employees, Applications for employment</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file or case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>Minor Employees, Relief Arrangements for</td>
<td>D/2 after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Minor Employees, Selection and appointment of</td>
<td>D/6 after closure of the file. If an appeal or inquiry is pending one year after settlement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Minor Employees, Transfers of</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>Minor Employees, Unproved complaints provided no structures are passed on the officer.</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184</td>
<td>Money Orders, Official, Application for</td>
<td>D/before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td>Money Orders, register</td>
<td>D/5 after audit inspection. If audit query is pending, one year after inquiry is completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N 186</td>
<td>Non-Ceylonese, Recruitment of</td>
<td>D/2 after the completion of contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O 187</td>
<td>Office equipment and furniture, correspondence</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>Over time, authority to pay</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td>Over time, Claims, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>Over time, (and less), Register of</td>
<td>D/10 after closure of the register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>Over time, claim forms (applications)</td>
<td>D/6 after passed in Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>Over time, Chums, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 193</td>
<td>Parliament, Motions and Questions in</td>
<td>D/5 after appearing in the Handbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>Pay details issued on request by the employees (copies)</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195</td>
<td>Pay sheets (General)</td>
<td>D/40, where details required by the Pensions Dept. have been submitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>Payment Registers (other than salaries registers)</td>
<td>D/10 after audit inspection; where queries are pending one year after the such queries are completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>Payment Vouchers</td>
<td>D/6 after audit inspection; where queries are pending D/1 after the completion of such queries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>Payment papers (Departmental)</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file or case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>Personal Files and Personal Record Files of Dismissed Officers</td>
<td>D/10 after death. Personal files of officers who have rendered meritorious service either to the institution or the country to be preserved and transferred to the National Archives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Personal Files and Personal Record Files of officers retired on reaching age limit</td>
<td>D/25 after dismissal or closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>Personal Files and Personal Record Files of Retired officers</td>
<td>D/10 after retirement. Personal files of officers who have rendered meritorious service either to the institution or the country to be preserved and transferred to the National Archives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Personal Files and Personal Record Files of Retired officers</td>
<td>D/25 after retirement or after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Personal Files of officers retired for inefficiency</td>
<td>D/25 after retirement or after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>Personal Files, casual (Temporary) Employees.</td>
<td>D/10 after employment is terminated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>Petitions, (unsanctioned) of importance</td>
<td>To be preserved and transferred to the National Archives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td>Petitions, Miscellaneous (of no importance)</td>
<td>D/before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>Petty cash book</td>
<td>If after passed in Audit or if audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>Posters and Pamphlets, Printing and Distribution of correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/before going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>Printed forms, Imprints and correspondence with Trustees</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>Printed forms, Registers of</td>
<td>D/5 after the register is closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>Programmes of officers during field work</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>Promotions, promotions re.</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the case or file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213</td>
<td>Provident Fund, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 years after award.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>Provident Fund, contributions</td>
<td>D/5 after award.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>P.S.M.P.S. documents re deductions</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td>Publications, Government, Spare and unwanted copies</td>
<td>Sale by auction after 5 years or handover to National Library Services Board for distribution among the libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217</td>
<td>Publications, (Newspapers)</td>
<td>Sale by auction once in three months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>Promotions under P.S.C. Rules, papers re.</td>
<td>To be filed in personal file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 219</td>
<td>Quarters, Government, Routine Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file or case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial No.</td>
<td>Class or Series of Records</td>
<td>Disposal Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td>Railway warrants, Applications for</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit and if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>Railway Warrants, (Duty) Applications for</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case or file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222</td>
<td>Railway warrants, countersheets of</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case or file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223</td>
<td>Railway warrants, Register of (Holiday)</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case or file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>Receipt Books (Gen. 172)</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case or file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225</td>
<td>Receipt Books (used)</td>
<td>D/after going to Record Room or one year after the closure of the case or file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226</td>
<td>Receipt order Books</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>227</td>
<td>Reconciliation Register</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>228</td>
<td>Recoveries, Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>229</td>
<td>Recruitment, Schemes of</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>Recruitment, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231</td>
<td>Refund—Applications for, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232</td>
<td>Refunds, Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit and if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>233</td>
<td>Refunds Security Deposits, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit and if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>Reimbursement of Legal and Travelling expenses</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit and if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235</td>
<td>Requisitions, Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit and if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>236</td>
<td>Rent, Government quarters, monthly statements</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237</td>
<td>Rent, Routine correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238</td>
<td>Repairs to Buildings and Furniture</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>Repairable articles, Returns of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>Imports, programs or other (statistical or other manuscript or typescript)</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>241</td>
<td>Requisitions, Government Stores.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242</td>
<td>Requisitions sent to Government Stores Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>Returns of Petty pay and No-pay leave</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>244</td>
<td>Revenue accounts</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>245</td>
<td>Revenue Statements, monthly</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246</td>
<td>Rewards, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247</td>
<td>Safety, Iron, Receipt correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248</td>
<td>Salary conversion, papers re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>249</td>
<td>Salary payments and money balances</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>Salary Registers</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>251</td>
<td>Salary Scales</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>252</td>
<td>Season ticket, application for and correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253</td>
<td>Security furnished by officers, correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254</td>
<td>Security Deposits, Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255</td>
<td>Security Return, of officers who have furnished</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>256</td>
<td>Shorthand Note Books</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257</td>
<td>Sick leave, (Long period)</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>258</td>
<td>Staff, Addresses of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>259</td>
<td>Stamp Revenue, Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>Statements of Debit and credit notes from other Departments</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261</td>
<td>Stationery and Stores, Annual Estimates of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>262</td>
<td>Stationery and Stores, Applications for supply of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>263</td>
<td>Statistics, periodical returns</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>264</td>
<td>Stores, Authority for special and emergency purchases</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265</td>
<td>Stores, Consignment Notes and Invoices</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>266</td>
<td>Stores, Correspondence re.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>267</td>
<td>Stores Despatched, Register of</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial No.</td>
<td>Class or Series of Records</td>
<td>Disposal Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>268</td>
<td>Stores, Drawn, Register of</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>269</td>
<td>Stores, Ledger, consumable</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td>Stationary issue forms</td>
<td>D/5 at the end of the year; if queries are pending one year after inquiry is completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>271</td>
<td>Stationery, Requisition register</td>
<td>D/1 after closure of the register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>272</td>
<td>Substitutes, Employment, Pay and etc.</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>273</td>
<td>Summaries of Expenditure and Receipts</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>274</td>
<td>Surcharge[s], Register of</td>
<td>D/3 after closure of the register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>275</td>
<td>Telephones, Bills</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>Telephones, Correspondence</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>277</td>
<td>Telephones, Rentals, Message, Fees etc.</td>
<td>D/after passed in audit or if an audit query is pending one year after the completion of the audit inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>278</td>
<td>Telephones, Register of Calls</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>279</td>
<td>Telephones, Register of Trunk Calls</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>280</td>
<td>Temporary employees, Authority for employment</td>
<td>D/2 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>281</td>
<td>Tenders, Agreements relating to</td>
<td>D/5 after expiration of the agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>282</td>
<td>Tender Board Meetings, Minutes of</td>
<td>D/5 after the closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>283</td>
<td>Tenders, Filing, containing tender notices, Schedules &amp;c.</td>
<td>D/after passed in Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>284</td>
<td>Tenders, (originals)</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285</td>
<td>Tender Deposits, Register of</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286</td>
<td>Tenders, Register of</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287</td>
<td>Tenders, Miscellaneous correspondence re</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288</td>
<td>Transfer orders (copies)</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289</td>
<td>Transfers, Papers</td>
<td>D/5 if the original copy of the transfer order be filed in the respective personal files, and no query or appeal is pending, where queries or appeals are pending one year after the settlement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
<td>Transport, charges</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291</td>
<td>Travelling claim forms—(General 177)</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file or register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292</td>
<td>Uniforms of Staff, correspondence re</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293</td>
<td>Vehicle Records regarding Maintenance, use, allocation, etc.</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294</td>
<td>Votes Ledgers</td>
<td>D/5 after passed in audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295</td>
<td>Vouchers, paid</td>
<td>D/5 after audit inspection, where no audit or any other query is pending D/1 after final completion of the audit query.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>296</td>
<td>Voucher Schedules</td>
<td>D/5 after closure of the file or register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>297</td>
<td>Wage Group(s), Returns showing employees according to</td>
<td>D/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>298</td>
<td>Watchers, Duty Roster</td>
<td>D/5 after roster becomes obsolete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>299</td>
<td>W &amp; O. P. Scheme, Register of abatements</td>
<td>D/1 after the award is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Waivers, correspondence re</td>
<td>D/10 after the closure of the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301</td>
<td>Write-offs of losses (F.R. 102 &amp; F.R. 149)</td>
<td>D/10 after the date in which the write-off was effected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class or series of records bearing serial No. 1—301 settled as above.

Sgd. W. JAYAMARAName: W. JAYAMARA
Ministry of Public Administration 07.04.83

Sgd. C. V. USAMBOOGEName: C. V. USAMBOOWENew: Auditors General's Department 1984.03.23

Sgd. I. V. SURASENAName: I. V. SURASENADirector, National Archives 07.04.1933

7-433—Gazette No. 313 of 30.08.84
APPENDIX XI

SCHEDULE I

Regulations made under section 16 (1) (a) of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973, for the permanent preservation of records of the Government Agent’s Office (Kachichorias) of Sri Lanka.

Schedule containing a list and particulars of inactive records for permanent preservation to be transferred to the National Archives (Vide Section 9 (3) (d) of National Archives Law.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description of Records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Correspondence—Government Agent and Ministries</td>
<td>Inward and Outward letters &lt;br&gt; (a) Regarding special subjects &lt;br&gt; (b) Regarding General subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reports of discussions</td>
<td>Reports of Staff meetings, Advisory Committee meetings, District Authority meetings, District Co-ordinating Committees, Government Agent’s Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provincial meetings</td>
<td>Records relating to Reports of Agricultural committee meetings, Community centre meetings, R.O./Aest. Govt. Agent’s meetings, Rehabilitation meetings, Reports of Provincial development Councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Village Headman Reports and Grama Sevaka Diaries</td>
<td>(one diary from an each wasana belonging to a Grama Sevaka should be transferred once in every five years.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Records relating to establishment of Bank branches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Records of D.K.O.’s and changes in Grama Sevaka wasana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reports of state celebrations</td>
<td>Records of Janarajaya celebrations and visits of Royal and distinguished guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Records relating to special religious and cultural affairs</td>
<td>Files regarding policy and related discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Positions sent to Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Administration Report of Government Agent</td>
<td>Should transfer within 30 days of issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Records relating to excise matters</td>
<td>Files regarding opening and closing of Taverns, special inspection reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Records relating to inspection reports of excise revenue, not paid in time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Reports of Temple and Devale Tenures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Regulations, Orders and circulars issued under the Policy file only</td>
<td>Land Development Ordinance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Land distribution documents</td>
<td>Land leased under lands ordinance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Documents relating to Lease of lands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Records relating to Land Tenures, and Inheritance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lands leased annually and long-term under the Lands Ordinance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LAND AcQUISITION BrANCH

- 20. Policy files pertaining to land acquisition
- 21. Records pertaining to land encroachment
- 22. Court case records relating to land acquisition

### AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD

- 23. Policy records relating to the development of Paddy fields
- 24. Records pertaining to cash food crops, Target Programmes, constitutions and orders, cultivation matters, relief measures, regulations
- 25. Records relating to the establishment of District administrative authority and its policies and decisions
- 26. Agricultural statistics
- 27. Agricultural Planning
- 28. Agricultural development schemes and implementation plans
- 29. Minor irrigation works

### FOOD CONTROL BrANCH

- 30. Records relating to general policies of food control
- 31. Records relating to organisation of co-operative societies

### PLANNING BrANCH

- 32. Correspondence relating to planning activities
- 33. Records relating to proposed new development schemes

### FISHERIES

- 34. Records relating to Policies and development activities

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For Schedules II & III see pages 828 & 827

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G. P. S. H. de Silva,
Deputy Registrar of National Archives,
26th April 1979.

[Note: Canida No. 99 of 80.07.25]
## Schedule II

Regulations made under sections 16(a) and 16(h) of the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1978, for review at the end of every five years, for either permanent preservation or destruction, of the records of the Government Agent's Offices (Kachcheries) of Sri Lanka.

Schedule containing a list and particulars of inactive records to be reviewed at the end of every five years, for either permanent keeping or destruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description of records</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Orders made by the Government Agent's on General Administration</td>
<td>Administration Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Files relating to administrative matters</td>
<td>Planning Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Files relating to Administrative matters</td>
<td>Fisheries Branch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. P. S. H. de Silva, for the Department of National Archives, 21st May, 1979.

Settled as above, D. Wijesinghe, for the Government Agent's Office (Kachcheries)
### SCHEDULE III

**Class 'G'**
Regulations made under section 16(1)(h) of the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1978, for the destruction of records of the Government Agent's Offices (Kachchhoris) of Sri Lanka.

Schedule containing a list and particulars of inactive records for destruction

**Abbreviation.** —D/2—Destroy 2 years mentioned.

#### Administration Branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special disciplinary inquiries</td>
<td>Files pertaining to disciplinary and other important inquiries</td>
<td>D/2 years after completion of disciplinary inquiries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Finance Branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Monthly statements relating to Budget</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>D/2 years after audit inspection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Agricultural Development Branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rural Agricultural Scheme</td>
<td>Contracts of Public Works</td>
<td>D/2 years after the expiry of contract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Revenue Branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Toll Rents, Excise Rents</td>
<td>Rent Registers</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Guns &amp; Opium licences</td>
<td>Files relating to issue of licences</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Licences for explosives</td>
<td>Files relating to issuing of licences</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Permission to remove sand</td>
<td>Licences to remove sand</td>
<td>D/5 after audit inspection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Land Branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Class of Records</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Permit licences for chena cultivation in villages</td>
<td>Permit licences for chena cultivation</td>
<td>D/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Crown Grants—Correspondence</td>
<td>Correspondence between Chief Headmen and settlers on land</td>
<td>D/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Petitions &amp; letters sent on miscellaneous land matters except regarding permanent land ownership or rights</td>
<td>Routine correspondence regarding lands</td>
<td>D/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Land Leases—notices</td>
<td>Records relating to Public notices of state land leases</td>
<td>D/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Land applications</td>
<td>Land applications where surveys are not conducted and applications are rejected</td>
<td>D/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DESTRUCTION OF VALUELESS DOCUMENTS.

APPENDIX XII

Form IV.

REGISTER OF CRIMINAL CASES DESTROYED IN THE —— COURT OF ———.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Case.</th>
<th>When instituted</th>
<th>Name and address of Complainant</th>
<th>Name and Address of Accused</th>
<th>Crime or Offence charged</th>
<th>Date of Judgment</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>Judgment in appeal</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I hereby certify that this is a correct register of the destroyed criminal cases filed in Court from the ——— day of ———, 19—, to the ——— day of ———, 19—.

(Signed) ———.

SECOND SCHEDULE.

PART A.

CLASSES OF DOCUMENTS NOT TO BE DESTROYED.

[Section 1.]

1. Land cases.
2. Testamentary cases.
3. Matrimonial cases.
4. Regular guardianship cases, as distinguished from those in which applications for a guardian ad litem only have been allowed.
5. Insolvency cases.
6. Lunacy cases in which a person has been adjudged insane.
7. Cases which have been decided in appeal.
8. Other cases of public interest.
9. Money cases in which—
   (a) mortgage decrees have been entered;
   (b) unclaimed sailors' monies are lying in deposit;
   (c) satisfaction of judgment-decrees or order has not been recorded;
   (d) judgment being revived or writ issued, ten years have not elapsed.
10. Cases prior to 1835, and a few cases later than 1835 as specimen of procedure.
11. Calendars, registers, or lists of cases made under the authority of any law or any order of the Government.
12. Notarial and other documents which may be useful as evidence of civil rights.

774
DESTRUCTION OF VALUELESS DOCUMENTS.

PART I.

CLASSES OF DOCUMENTS WHICH MAY BE DESTROYED,
SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 5.

1. Money cases, save those excepted as in Part A under heads 9, 10, 11, and 12.
2. Lunacy cases over five years old, save those in which an adjudication of lunacy has been recorded.
3. All Justice of the Peace cases.
4. All inquest proceedings prior to 1884.
5. Non-summary inquiry cases over five years old.
6. District Court criminal cases over five years old.
7. Petitions, reports, cattle vouchers, &c., over five years old.
8. Summary criminal cases over five years old.
9. Inquest proceedings of 1884 and subsequent years, which are over five years old, except those in which a finding is recorded that the death was caused by some person who has not been found:

Provided that notarial and other documents which may be found in the foregoing classes of records, and which may be useful as evidence of civil rights, shall be removed from such records and not destroyed.
**APPENDIX XIII**

I. Contents: (1) Appendix—gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka—1979.01.26

**PART I: Sec.(I)—GAZETTE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA—1979.01.26**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Government Department, Corporation or Statutory Board not enumerated under the above categories I and II will purchase all stores in metric quantities and dimensions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

| 24) Railway |
| 25) Civil Aviation Department |
| 26) National Milk Board |
| 27) Air Ports |
| 28) Prisons |
| 29) Department of Prisons |
| 30) Dept. of Health |

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES LAW, No. 48 OF 1973**

Regulations under Sections 16 (a) and 16 (b) of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973, for the Preservation, periodical review and destruction of Court records of Sri Lanka and approved by Parliament.

Columbo, 10th January, 1979.

E. L. B. HEBULLE,
Minister of Cultural Affairs.

**CLASS A**

**SCHEDULE I**

Regulations made under Section 16 (a) of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973, for the Permanent Preservation of Court Records of Sri Lanka.

CUMULATED SCHEDULE CONTAINING A LIST & PARTICULARS OF INACTIVE RECORDS FOR PERMANENT PRESERVATION TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE ARCHIVES, VIDE SECTION 9 (2) (4) OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES LAW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Supreme Court</th>
<th>High Court</th>
<th>District &amp; Magistrate Courts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Casemalittings of the Supreme Court</td>
<td>Corr. with the Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>Appeal Register, Civil Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Orders of the Supreme Court</td>
<td>Fines register and records of fines register</td>
<td>Appeal, Registrar, Criminal Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Citizenship appeals</td>
<td>Institution register</td>
<td>Circulars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cor. with Attorney General</td>
<td>Naval cases (Judgement only to be ruled)</td>
<td>Copies of certificates of sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>*Corr. with the judge of the Supreme Court</td>
<td>Register of Admiralty</td>
<td>Corr. with the Ministry of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>*Corr. with the Judges</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Fiscal accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>*Corr. with the Minister</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Institution Register, Civil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>*Corr. with the Ministry of Justice</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Institution Register, Criminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>*Corr. with the Police</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inventories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>*Council of Legal Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hand cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Criminal appeals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hand Acquisition cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Draft minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Money cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Enrolment of Attorney’s at Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Partition cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Judges meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quarterly returns of Criminal and Civil cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Petitions sent to Supreme Court</td>
<td>Register of cases destroyed</td>
<td>Register of warrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Register of appeals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Special Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Relevant applications Register</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Parliamentary cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rules made under Law, No. 44 of 1973</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>*Files pertaining to policy matters only.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Settled as above:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sgd. S. Y. B. M. P. B. HIRAT,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M. V. B. KUMARAKAMILINGE,</td>
</tr>
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<td>for the District &amp; Magistrate Courts of Sri Lanka.</td>
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**CLASS B**

**SCHEDULE II**

Regulations made under Sections 16 (1) (c) and 16 (b) of the National Archives Law, No. 48 of 1973, for review at the end of every five years, for either permanent preservation or destruction of Court records of Sri Lanka.

CUMULATED SCHEDULE CONTAINING A LIST & PARTICULARS OF INACTIVE RECORDS TO BE REVISED AT THE END OF EVERY FIVE YEARS, FOR EITHER PERMANENT KEEPING OR DESTRUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Supreme Court</th>
<th>High Court</th>
<th>District &amp; Magistrate Courts</th>
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<td>Corr. with the other Ministries</td>
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<td>Corr. with Director of Supply and Cadre</td>
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<td>Applications for transfer</td>
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<td>Register of payment of Advances</td>
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**Schedule III**

*Regulations made under Section 16(1) (k) of the National Archives Law No. 48 of 1973, for the Destruction of Court Records of Sri Lanka*

**CUMULATED SCHEDULE CONTAINING A LIST AND PARTICULARS OF INACTIVE RECORDS FOR DESTRUCTION**

**Abbrication:**

- D/2 — Destroyed period mentioned.
- D/1 — Destroyed after 1 year from the date of the order.
- D/3 — Destroyed after 2 years from the date of the order.
- D/5 — Destroyed after 2 years from the date of the order.
- D/6 — Destroyed after 3 years from the date of the order.
- D/10 — Destroyed after 10 years from the date of the order.
- D/20 — Destroyed after 20 years from the date of the order.
- D/25 — Destroyed after 25 years from the date of the order.
- D/30 — Destroyed after 30 years from the date of the order.
- D/50 — Destroyed after 50 years from the date of the order.

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**CLASS 'C'**

**26th November, 1976.**

A. DEWANAY, for the Department of National Archives.
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<th>Serial No.</th>
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Settled as above.

S. Y. D. M. P. B. Hyat,
for the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.

M. V. B. KUMARACHAURUH,
for the District and Magistrate Court of Sri Lanka.
APPENDIX XIV

List of Officers Interviewed

Ministry of Finance and Planning and the General Treasury

H.B. Dissanayake, Additional Secretary/Deputy Secretary to Treasury

G. Hewagama, Senior Assistant Secretary

P. Manawasinghe, Senior Assistant Secretary

General Office

H.M.C. Gunathilake, Administrative Officer

State Secretary’s Office

S. Samson, Assistant Director

Parliamentary Affairs Unit

D.G. Amaradasa, Head Clerk

Central Administration Branch

M.W. Siripala, Administrative Officer

M.L.P. Gunathilake, Chief Clerk

S.M.D. Piyadasa, Record Keeper

Fiscal Policy and Revenue Division

B.A.W. Marasinghe, Deputy Director

S. Abesinghe, Assistant Director

N.M. Dayarathna, Assistant Director

T.D.C. Perera, Administrative Officer

Public Enterprises Division

P. Ranasinghe, Accountant/Deputy Director

S. Sivalingapillai, Accountant/Deputy Director

Budget Division

P. Rajapura, Deputy Director

H.D.T. Perera, Administrative Officer
Finance Division
W.T. Peiris, Acting Director
S. Kanagasabapathy, Assistant Director
E. Vidhanapathirana, Administrative Officer
S.A. Samarawickrema, Chief Clerk

Economic Affairs Division
Mrs. H.R.H. Ranaweera, Administrative Officer

External Resources Division
Miss N. Madhanayake, Deputy Director
B.G. Boteju, Head, Technical Aid Branch
A. Perera, Head, Capital Aid Branch
R.A. Karunadasa, Head, Establishment Branch

Investigation & Internal Audit Division
M.K. Kulathilake, Administrative Officer

Accounts & Payments Division
W.T. Peiris, Deputy Director
S. Thyagaraja, Deputy Director
M.K.A. de Silva, Administrative Officer

Insurance Division
T.H. Sally, Deputy Controller

Commercialisation Division
D.S.I. Ariyadasa, Deputy Director
M.G. Sugathadasa, Chief Clerk

Registrar General's Department
J. Weerasuriya, Registrar General
K.A. Gunaratne, Deputy Registrar General
J.V. Vipulaguna, Deputy Registrar General
M. Rathnayake, Assistant Registrar General
Figure 1
ORGANISATION CHART OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND PLANNING AND THE GENERAL TREASURY

Secretary

State Secretary/Additional Secretary (Ministry)

Deputy Secretary (Treasury)/Additional Secretary (Ministry)

Treaury

Ministry

Senior Assistant Secretary Statutory Bodies
Senior Assistant Secretary Departments
Senior Assistant Secretary Administration
Senior Assistant Secretary Information
Senior Assistant Secretary Parliamentary Affairs

Senior Assistant Secretary Fiscal Policy
Director Public Enterprises
Director Economic Affairs
Director External Resources
Director Internal Audit
Director Accounts & Payments
Director Finance
Director Budget
Director Commercialisation of Public Enterprises

Figure 2
PROPOSED NATIONAL RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
AND ITS RELATION TO RECORD CREATING AGENCIES

Minister

Advisory Council

Director General

Director Current Records Division

Administration

Training

Director National Archives Division

Record Centre
Repositories
Technical Services
Public Relations
Search Rooms
Research & Publications
Registrar of Books & Newspapers
Branch Offices
Historical Manuscripts Commission

Ministry Records Manager

Departments
Registry Supervisor

Corporations
Boards
Kachcheris
Courts

Figure 3
MAP I

CEYLON
KANDYAN KINGDOM, 1815

KANDYAN KINGDOM
THE CONCEPT OF THE RECORD LIFE CYCLE AND ITS MANAGEMENT

Sarath Wickramanayake
DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIFE CYCLE CONCEPT

For centuries governments and businesses have been dependent upon records documenting how decisions were made and executed. From the beginning of the 20th century, when very large quantities of paper records began to accumulate, it became increasingly apparent that controlling the creation and retention of these records could save money and time. This situation was aggravated in western countries during and after the two world wars when the quantity of records created increased due to the rapid expansion of bureaucracy and the growth of the public service.1 By the end of the Second World War millions of records were stored in warehouses. When this warehousing became costly in terms of administration and storage facilities governments began to pay greater attention to the management of their records. The need for capable professionals to develop records management programmes was increasingly felt and recognised.2

In 1941, the National Archives of the United States established a planned programme of records disposal aimed at eliminating records of an ephemeral nature and selecting records of archival value.3 This approach was an important first step toward managing the records of modern government institutions, but it did not go far enough. As the volume of records created by modern bureaucracies grew, so too did the need to maintain control of the information they created at every stage of its use. Subsequently, the total life cycle concept has been developed as a logical basis for the for the management of records.

DEFINITION

According to the life cycle concept, a record has a life cycle similar to that of a biological organism. It is born, it lives and it dies. In other words, it is created, maintained, used and destroyed or transferred to an archive. The theory identifies three principal phases of a record's life cycle: current, semi-current and non-current. Current records are defined as records used regularly for conducting the current business of an agency which must be maintained in their place of origin. Semi-current records are those which are required infrequently in the conduct of current business and which can be transferred to a low cost storage area, commonly known as a record centre, pending their ultimate disposal. Non-current records are records which are not needed for current administrative requirements.


Introducing another interpretation of this theory, Jay Atherton, a Canadian, has identified eight distinct stages in the life of a record under two separate phases, namely the records management phase and the archival phase. He specifies functions at each stage and highlights the inseparable connection between the phases which form one continuum.

During the first phase information is created or received in the form of records, and these records are classified in some logical system. The records are then maintained and used until their disposition through destruction or transfer to an archive.

During the second phase records are selected or received by an archival institution. They are described in inventories and other finding aids and are preserved for reference and use by researchers and scholars.

According to Atherton's argument, semi-current records cannot be managed in isolation from current and non-current records. He holds the view that the semi-current phase should not be the separating point between records management and archival functions. Rather, an outgoing management process is required from the creation of a record to its ultimate disposal.

MANAGEMENT OF CURRENT RECORDS

In the life cycle concept, a record is born when it is created or received by an institution. This occurs in many ways, for instance when a letter is written, a job application form is received or there is a request for a birth certificate or a passport. The records thus created need to be managed efficiently from their inception through their active use. Not only will they then be easier to retrieve and use, but they will create fewer problems when transferred to an intermediate storage or to an archive.

The life cycle concept thus advocates a planned programme for the creation of records and their movement within the administrative, legal and financial framework of an office. This involves designing a logical system for the creation and filing of records based on a thorough understanding of the functions of the institution and a system for storing information in a cost effective manner. The system should be designed to identify records of an ephemeral nature and provide for their periodical destruction.

MANAGEMENT OF SEMI-CURRENT RECORDS

Records which are over five years old are normally considered semi-current and should be closed and transferred from expensive office areas to a low cost storage area. Ideally this area will be managed as a record centre which can provide

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administrators with records as necessary and apply retention criteria to ensure that records are kept no longer than necessary.

This arrangement ensures that records which are not required for day-to-day administrative work but which continue to have ongoing legal, financial, administrative or historical value do not occupy space which can be put to better use and are managed by the minimum number of staff. Therefore, the identification of retention values is a crucial component of a records management programme.

The concept of retention schedules has been developed as a management tool to ensure a logical retention and disposition programme. Such schedules are documents agreed between a creating agency and an archives. They list the record series created by the organisation and indicate the length of time they should be kept and where, for instance in a department’s registry, in a record centre or in an archive. The development and application of retention schedules can make a dramatic difference to administrative efficiency and help to ensure the optimum use of office space. At the same time it will provide a mechanism whereby records of archival value can be systematically transferred to an archive for permanent preservation.

Many records series created in government offices can be scheduled on a common basis across a range of offices. The application of such schedules can dramatically reduce the volume of paper, especially financial and personnel records, with no danger to the security and accountability of the state. Schedules covering records specific to the functions of individual agencies are also required. They should be developed in consultation between the archives and the institution concerned with a view to identifying records of value to the future administrative and legal requirements of the record-creating institution as well as of historical value.

MANAGEMENT OF NON-CURRENT RECORDS

Non-current public records are those which are no longer needed for current business. If they have permanent value, because they provide evidence which protects the accountability of the state organisation or because they provide historical evidence of value to the nation or organisation, they are preserved as archives and should be made available for research and legal purposes. In the event of a dispute, public or private institutions may be required to present their records in court. The admissibility of a record will depend on the manner in which its authenticity and integrity have been maintained.

5 In some countries the views of legal and financial authorities, such as the auditor general, accountant general and attorney general are sought.

6 A series comprises items or documents arranged in accordance with a filing plan/system or maintained as a unit because they relate to a particular function or subject, result from the same activity, have a particular form or are linked by some other relationship arising out of the circumstances of their creation or use.
The arrangement of non-current records is an intellectual activity. It is based on the principles of provenance\textsuperscript{7} and registry order\textsuperscript{8} and should reflect the administrative structure and of the originating agency. If it is not possible to determine the provenance or the registry order, then an arrangement based upon other criteria, such as the physical type or form or content of the documents or an alphabetical, chronological, geographical or subject order can be adopted. The records should be arranged at various levels, namely, repository/archive group, class or series, item or document. The records should then be boxed numbered and stored in a logical manner.

ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR, RECORDS MANAGER AND ARCHIVIST

Another aspect of the life cycle concept is its implications for the roles of the various parties involved in the process of managing records. It emphasises the need to manage records by providing proper controls at the point of creation and during the subsequent stages of maintenance, distribution, classification, retrieval, storage and disposal. At each point of this process responsibilities need to be identified and defined in order to provide the services required.

In the current phase administrators, as the creators and users of records, are responsible for their management. They tend to determine retention periods according to their own requirements, often without taking into account the needs of the organisation as a whole. However, retention criteria should be defined on the basis of present and future needs. The input of the records manager and the archivist, who have an overview of these needs, is thus crucial. Their involvement is necessary to ensure not only the safe keeping of information which has outgoing value but also the maintenance of the organisation's accountability to the public or to its directors. It is essential that administrators should co-operate with record managers and archivists to manage information, not only to ensure the efficiency of administration but to provide for the future needs of the public.

The life cycle concept is frequently interpreted to mean that the records manager should be responsible for the management of records in their current phase. In this case he is responsible for the intellectual management and physical care of the organisation's records, while the administrators, as the creators, are responsible for the content of the records and the way in which they are used. Traditionally the archivist takes over the responsibility for historically valuable records selected for permanent preservation.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{7} Provenance is defined as:  
(1) The agency, institution, organisation or individual that created, accumulated and maintained records/archives in the conduct of its business prior to their transfer to a record centre/archives.  
(2) In manuscript terminology, any source from which personal papers or manuscripts are acquired.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{8} Registry order is the principle that archives of a single provenance should retain the arrangement established by the creating agency, institution or organisation in order to preserve existing relationships and reference numbers}
There is little argument within the professional community about the need for the involvement of both records managers and archivists in managing the life cycle. However, there is less clarity as to who should have the overall responsibility for the management of records. There is no easy or straightforward answer.

The archivist’s role has evolved over centuries. Initially it was not isolated from the process of creating records, but over the last two centuries, archivists’ roles have tended to be more narrowly defined. This has led to archivists becoming more remote from the creators of the records. In North America, the professions of records manager and archivist, having begun as one, have tended to divide into two branches linked in an uneasy alliance in which each side attempts to emphasise role and responsibilities. In some organisations records managers are beginning to be seen as overall record systems managers and archivists report to them.

It is not unusual for a gap to occur between these roles and for the provision for the management of semi-current records to be left unclear. In this case the management process is incomplete and problems are experienced in the current and non-current phases. It is important, therefore, that there should be no break in the responsibilities between records management and in archival functions. Rather, there should be an ongoing management process.

While Atherton describes the role of records managers and archivists in the different phases of the life cycle, he also makes it clear that their objectives are the same. Together they perform relevant functions for the effective management of recorded information at all stages of the continuum. He stresses that the intellectual training and historical perspective of the archivist will enrich the practical and immediate concerns of the records manager. Moreover, the records manager’s knowledge of his institution as well as his concern for efficiency, practicality and immediate service will help the archivist to perform his responsibilities well. Working as a team within the record management/archives continuum, they will ensure their ultimate goals, administrative efficiency and cultural enrichment.

This highlights the need the archivist to remain involved with the creators of records. Records are resources which should be available to users at whatever stage they have reached on the continuum, and whatever happens to a record at one stage affects what happens to it in the next. Any attempt to manage these stages in isolation from each other is artificial.

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTRONIC RECORDS

The management of electronic records has raised a number of issues which have already begun to cause professionals to reconsider their approach to the management of paper records, particularly in terms of the importance of strategic planning at all phases of the life cycle.

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9 Atherton, Jay, Op cit, p 51
The use of computers in information handling activities dates back to the 1950's. The processing speed, manipulation power and compact storage of large quantities of information have made the computer a very attractive tool for modern organisations. At the same time the introduction of electronic media has proved an important catalyst in transforming relatively stable bureaucracies into more dynamic organisations. It has reduced the length and complexity of communications and accelerated the speed at which information is gathered and decisions taken.

The nature of electronic records generated has changed dramatically over the last several centuries. Today's electronic records are no longer simple numerical files as was the case initially. Instead, they are sophisticated, complex and compound, sometimes now comprising text, voice, video graphics, images and data. According to Kandur, the main characteristics of electronic information are:

- It is compact, alleviating the storage problems normally faced with paper records. Massive amounts of information can be stored on a single magnetic or optical storage media, ie 500,000 pages of information can be stored on one magnetic tape.

- It is readily accessible, provided that information systems offer free-text searching, enabling the user access to the information quickly.

- It can be easily manipulated to enable reanalysis and reaggregation. Thus it offers more effective research use.

- It can easily be duplicated. Copying electronic information is a matter of seconding, which provided the potential of wider distribution.

Despite the advantages of electronically generated information mentioned above, there are also many problems. Firstly, electronic information is a series of impulses or signals and is system dependent. It has no meaning to human senses without first being transformed through technology into human-readable forms. Therefore, unlike paper records, electronic information is dependent upon specific types of hardware and software.

Secondly electronic information resides on a very fragile medium. Paper records can survive without attention for a long period of time under optimum environmental conditions but electronic information requires immediate and constant attention soon after it is created. The life expectancy of a magnetic tape is 10-12 years, and that is under correct environmental conditions. Magnetic tape is used widely by the archival community and is accepted as the most reliable storage medium available at the present time. Another alternative is the optical disk, which, it is claimed, can have a life up to 100 years. However, there are those who believe that this is overly optimistic.

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It is essential that governments and businesses should be able to retrieve electronic records in the future and to do so in a cost effective manner. Unless these records are managed from the point of creation, the cost and technical difficulties of establishing control at a later stage will be prohibitive if not impossible. Not only do the constant changes in software and hardware make it impossible to read the information unless it is transferred to new media, but if the nature and content of the information are not well documented initially they cannot later be identified.

The Canadians have taken the lead in developing programmes for managing electronic records from the point of creation, and it is likely that Canada's considerable success in achieving a balance of working relationships between creators, record managers and archivists has had an important effect on the way in which electronic records are managed and vice versa. Ultimately, as the Canadian experience demonstrates, the use and preservation of electronic records will help the profession to define its management techniques more explicitly.

CONCLUSION

The importance of the life cycle concept as a basis for managing the records of modern organisations and meeting the needs of users of all types cannot be overemphasised. It forms the basis for designing an unbroken management continuum which will ensure that information is retained no longer than necessary and can be retrieved and stored efficiently. As records professionals confront the challenge of managing the records created by the modern bureaucracies on modern media, the life cycle concept will provide a fundamental organising principle. Without it societies and organisations would lose control of one of their most important resources - information.