

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
RECORDS SCHEDULING IN NORTH AMERICA

by

JENNIFER ALEXANDRA MOHAN

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School
Department of Library, Archival & Information Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This thesis begins by tracing the development of the practice of records scheduling in the federal governments of United States and Canada, from the initial concern with records disposal in the late eighteenth hundreds, to the implementation of formal records schedules in the 1940s in the United States and the late 1950s in Canada. These federal initiatives provided a model for later developments at the state and provincial level. However, changes in scheduling methods have lately become necessary to meet the demands of the increasing volume of records, organizational complexity and change, and the widespread use of new media, particularly electronic records.

Many of these changes have occurred at the provincial and state level, where the limited size of government has allowed the agencies responsible for scheduling to be more responsive and innovative. For this reason, analysis of current records scheduling practices in the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario, and the states of Washington and New York were conducted. These studies reveal schedules which are both flexible in their use and adaptable over time because they attempt to accommodate both records in all media and organizational change. Among the scheduling techniques examined are the addition of media specific elements, the use of functional schedule arrangement, the integration of schedules with other management tools, like classification, and the expanded use of general schedules for records common to more

than one organization. These techniques are capable of dealing with the volume, complexity and variety of records which are being created in government today. Despite the changes demonstrated, the studies show that records scheduling remains a viable practice to control the life cycle of all records, from creation until disposal.

Throughout this investigation, the role of archivists is discussed. Archivists' involvement in scheduling began with the earliest developments and continues still today. Archivists have been central to the initiation, development and adaptation of records scheduling in government. With the development of new information technologies, archivists' role is even more important, for they must intervene into the process of records creation if they want to maintain the ability to identify records of enduring value to society, and to ensure that their integrity is maintained throughout administrative procedures and use.

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INTRODUCTION

By the turn of this century, governments in North America recognized the need to control the records created in their offices. Despite the best intentions, several decades passed before the widespread implementation of proper management methods. Records scheduling was one of the management practices developed to solve records problems. In the United States, the federal government nurtured and promoted the general application of records scheduling. Archivists became involved in records scheduling because of the potential of the method to regulate destruction of large volumes of worthless records and preservation of valuable records. Following the example of the United States, the Canadian federal government also adopted the practice. Over time, other government jurisdictions and private business began to schedule their records. Today, records scheduling is used by most organizations which create records in a variety of media.

A records schedule identifies records and provides a timetable which manages their life cycle. The basic elements of a records schedule are simple. Records are usually identified by record series name. A retention period, divided into sections corresponding to the phases of the records' life, is provided for each entry in the schedule. Thus, retention periods stipulate the length of time the records in question remain in active use in the office, and the length of time they remain in semi-active use in storage. A schedule also includes the final

disposition of each series listed, which is usually noted as either destruction or transfer to archives. Additional elements may be included to provide further information about the records series, or to promote more efficient implementation; however, the essential elements are those discussed above.

The idea that records have a life cycle composed of sequential stages is central to the concept of the records schedule. The stages of the records' life cycle have been variously identified. The simplest life cycle consists of two stages: the active and the inactive.¹ A three stage life cycle, instead, progresses from creation or receipt, to use, and then disposition.² The first two stages of this progression correspond to the active portion of the life of the record, and the third stage to the inactive one. A similar interpretation describes the life cycle as composed of an active, a semi-active and an inactive stage. These views of the life cycle differ from one another in matters of detail, but all of them identify the stages of the life cycle on the basis of the amount of administrative use associated with the records. The use of the records begins with creation or receipt, grows during the active period, tapers off during the semi-active period, and finally

¹Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "A Records Management Guideline: Records Management Concepts," ([Toronto]: Advisory Committee on Records Management, September, 1976), 2.

²"Completing the Life Cycle," Government Records Bulletin 6, no. 4 (November 1991): 3-4.

ceases in the inactive period. The term "life cycle" adequately reflects the rise and fall of activity which occurs during the "lifetime of the record." The effectiveness of records schedules depends on archivists' and records managers' ability to understand the different phases of the records life cycle and to recognize that the length of each phase varies for different types of records. For example, the active phase of a cheque's life cycle is only a few months, while the active phase of an organizational chart may be many years.

The stages of the life cycle have also been identified on the basis of the specific activities which are associated with the records over time. These stages, even if still linked to the active, semi-active and inactive use by the creator, focus on the records managers' and archivists' involvement with the records. The records' life cycle as traditionally conceived is examined in Jay Atherton's "From Life Cycle to Continuum" and described as two management phases comprising a records management phase and an archival management phase. The first phase includes:

- creation or receipt of information in the form of records
- classification of the records or their information in some logical system
- maintenance and use of the records
- disposition through destruction or transfer to an archives

The second phase includes:

- selection or acquisition of the records by an archives
- description of the records in inventories, finding aids, and the like

-preservation of the record, or perhaps the information in the record, and
 -reference and use of the information by researchers and scholars.³

Atherton points out that these stages of the life cycle are regarded as a "series of related but separate functions and responsibilities."⁴ It is assumed that only records managers will be involved in the first four stages and that only archivists will be involved in the last four stages.

Atherton is critical of this sequential presentation of the stages of management of records. He argues that the idea of the life cycle should be replaced by a four stage continuum made up of:

Creation or receipt of the records and its classification within some predetermined systems ... scheduling of the information, joined with the presumed later application of the schedules ... maintenance and use of the information - whether it be maintained in the creating office, an inactive storage area, or an archives.⁵

Archivists and records managers may be involved at any of the four stages. The benefit of the records continuum concept is that it requires records managers and archivists to cooperate in order to achieve the effective management of records. This model

³Jay Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum: Some Thoughts on the Records Management - Archives Relationship," Archivaria, 21 (Winter 1985-1986): 44.

⁴United States, National Archives and Records Services, Fiscal Year 1983, Report to Congress on the Records Disposition Activities of the Federal Government, (Washington, 1984), 1, quoted in, Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 44.

⁵Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 48.

is particularly useful with electronic records because of the absence of distinct stages in their life cycle, with them, "creation is an ongoing process rather than an event in time."⁶

In "My Very Act and Deed", Hugh Taylor supports Atherton's call for a more integrated approach, and he observes that "the life cycle theory of record retention and destruction is no longer appropriate in its original form."⁷ He argues that the old linear approach denies archivists' a role in the early stages of a record's life. The archivists's early participation in the management of records is essential for the preservation of electronic records, for which retention decisions must be built into the electronic system even before the records are created.⁸ Thus, the traditional characterization of the life cycle of the records, related to the sequence of activities associated with their management, has been modified to reflect the changing nature of records management.

Despite the simplicity of the individual elements of records schedules, the decisions necessary to arrive at the establishment of final timetables are complex. Retention periods reflect decisions about the time spans for which records will be active and semi-active, and about the moment when they will become inactive. Final disposition instructions are based on the

⁶Ibid., 47.

⁷Hugh Taylor, "'My Very Act and Deed': Some Reflections on the Role of Textual Records in the Conduct of Affairs," American Archivist, 51, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 467.

⁸Ibid.

appraisal of the potential value of the records after they become inactive. All these decisions require a great deal of knowledge about records and their use in the organization.

In the past, both records managers and archivists have been involved in the decision-making associated with records scheduling. Records scheduling is inextricably linked with every records management activity. For example, filing practices and filing classification systems have a dramatic impact on schedule design and implementation. Generally, records managers become involved because of their knowledge of active records. They contribute valuable information about how records are used within an organization, and are often responsible for the determination of retention periods, for the active and semi-active phases of records' life. Archivists became involved in the determination of the final disposition of records because of their knowledge of records appraisal and their experience in judging historical and research values. Today, archivists' understanding of the interrelationships between records provides the most valuable contribution to the scheduling process. For example, in the case of electronic records, archivists' experience assists decision makers to identify the record versus other kinds of information in the system.

The two professions have distinct objectives for records scheduling. The primary purpose of records managers involvement in records scheduling is that it reduces progressively the amount of records, and therefore results in greater efficiency

and economy in retrieval and storage; reduces the opportunity for legal action arising from the mishandling of records, and has a positive impact on both the quantity and quality of records maintained by an organization.⁹

The primary purpose of archivists is the establishment of a regular flow of valuable records to the archives. Schedules offer archivists the opportunity to intervene actively to preserve records and prevent the accidental destruction of valuable material, and at the same time facilitate the arrangement and description process.

Archives and archivists' involvement in the development of records scheduling is the focus of this thesis. While records managers have played an important role in records scheduling, it is archivists who have consistently promoted and supported the practice in conjunction with their traditional functions. Government regulations and legislation over the years have reinforced archives' involvement in records management and records scheduling. In most jurisdictions, archivists play a large role in the development and/or approval of schedules.

This thesis traces the origin and evolution of records

⁹Derek Charman, Records Surveys and Schedules: A RAMP Study with Guidelines, (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), (PGI-84/WS/26), 22; Jean Ciura and Marjorie Thomas Payne, The Retention Book: Retention and Preservation of Records with Destruction Schedules, (Addison Ill: Records Controls Inc, 1984), 1; William Ray, A Records Management Manual for State and Local Government Agencies, (Richmond, Virginia: Virginia State Library, 1985), iii; David Stephens, "Making Records Retention Decisions: Practical and Theoretical Considerations." Records Management Quarterly 22, no. 1 (January 1988): 3-4.

scheduling in North America. It presents developments at the federal government level in both the United States and Canada on the grounds of the facts that federal governments have played a central role in records scheduling due to their concern for the volume of records created and their need for public accountability, and that their activities in this area have been imitated by other government jurisdictions and private organizations.

Analysis of current records scheduling practices at the state/provincial level provides a clearer view of how scheduling practices have evolved. This level of government was selected for examination for several reasons. First, the influence of federal government records scheduling practice is easily established. Second, after the establishment of schedules, developments proceed quickly because of the smaller size and greater flexibility of government at the state/provincial level. Third, current records scheduling practices at the state/provincial level provide a model for applications and developments in private organizations. Thus, valuable suppositions about the evolution of scheduling may be drawn from this broader analysis.

Thus, chapter one will discuss the development of records scheduling, including current practice, at the federal level in the United States. Chapter two will address the development of scheduling, including current practice, at the federal level in Canada. Chapter three consists of a brief overview of the

development of provincial and state scheduling and includes case studies of current scheduling practice in British Columbia, Ontario, New York and Washington. Chapter four provides an analysis of current scheduling practices and identifies the implications of these practices for archivists.

CHAPTER ONE

Origins of Records Scheduling in the United States

The United States government has not always been concerned with the storage, preservation and disposal of its records. Until 1889, United States law prohibited the destruction of any government records.¹ Two factors, a lack of storage space and the fear of fire, prompted government to explore the problems of records disposal and storage.² A number of methods for dealing with records were developed, that is, special authorizations, disposal lists, and records schedules. These choices may be attributed to foreign influences, to United States departmental practices, and to the experience and practices of the National Archives. Ultimately, records scheduling emerged as the preferred solution because it provided for the storage, preservation and disposal of records in a timely fashion.

Prior to 1889, the only legal method of disposal was by special authorizations, which were granted to a limited number of departments and agencies. For example, in 1881, the Postmaster-General was authorized to:

Sell as waste paper, or to otherwise dispose of, the files of papers which have accumulated, or may hereafter accumulate in the Post-Office Department that are not needed in the transaction of current

¹Harold Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Records Keeping, 1887-1906," American Archivist 21, no. 2 (April 1958): 164.

²Henry Beers, "Historical Development of the Records Disposal Policy of the Federal Government Prior to 1934," American Archivist 7, no. 3 (July 1944): 182, 183.

business and have no permanent value or historical interest.³

This disposal method was a precursor of the records schedules used in the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, special authorizations, like records schedules, provided departments with the authority to destroy their records, and this disposal authority, which concerned records already created and those yet to be created, had a continuing nature.

Here the similarity between the practices of records scheduling and special authorizations ends. There were a number of significant drawbacks associated with special authorizations. First, the determination of record value was left entirely to the creating department or legitimate successor, which did not receive any assistance from other departments or from professionals with knowledge or expertise in records appraisal. Second, there was no means for anyone outside the department to control which records were destroyed.⁴ Finally, special authorizations applied only to the department to which they were granted.⁵ Other departments lacked the legal authority to

³Ibid., 184.

⁴Emmett J. Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," American Archivist 3, no. 1 (January 1940): 28; Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Record Keeping," 165.

⁵Over the years, special authorizations were given to a number of departments including: Navy, Treasury, and State Departments, and the United States District Courts. Kenneth J. House, "The Development of Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation at the United States National Archives, 1939-1945." MA thesis, Western Washington University, 1990: 34.

destroy their records. Thus, alternative measures were required to allow the government to dispose effectively of its records.

The United States government was aware of the records problems that it faced. In 1887, the Cockrell Committee was formed to examine the administrative methods used in the Executive departments of government. The committee found that

An impediment to transacting public business ... was the practice in several departments of preserving great quantities of records that were not needed in handling current business and had no permanent value or historical interest.⁶

The Committee's findings recognized the inefficiency of the continuous accumulation of records. Legislation to allow records disposal resulted from these findings. In 1889, the first law for the destruction of records of all executive departments was promulgated. The Act to Authorize and Provide for the Disposition of Useless Papers in the Executive Departments stated:

Whenever there should accumulate in an executive department papers no longer needed in the transaction of current business and of no permanent value or historical interest, the head of the department should report the fact to Congress, submitting a concise statement ... then be examined by a special congressional committee ... and if this committee reported to Congress that the records described, or any part of them, were not needed in the current business ... and had no permanent value or historical interest, the head of the department should sell them as waste paper or otherwise

⁶Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Record Keeping," 167.

dispose of them.⁷

This act was significantly different from the special authorizations which preceded it. First, the act gave disposal authority equally to all executive departments, which had to prepare disposal lists of their records. Second, it established the examination of the records descriptions by a Congress committee for the purposes of records evaluation. This procedure was in contrast with the uncontrolled disposal caused by the special authorizations, because departments could no longer make disposal decisions without outside assistance and approval.

One author has pointed out that the Congressional review of the disposal statements and recommendations did not constitute an "effective appraisal procedure."⁸ This is a valid criticism, because clear evaluation guidelines did not exist and there were no experienced individuals to conduct records appraisal. The onus was on the department to submit its recommendations for disposal, and only the recommendations were reviewed, not the records included in them, and even less those not included in them. Despite these limitations, the procedure had potential, which came to fruition when the Library of Congress first, and the National Archives later, became involved in the evaluation procedure established by the Act. Therefore, regardless of its immediate effectiveness, the Act established the foundations for

⁷ Ibid., 168.

⁸House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 26.

systematic records disposal by recognizing the need for an externally controlled evaluation, and initiating a procedure which continued almost unchanged until 1943.

The United States government remained interested in the subject of records disposal even after issuing the 1889 Act. The Treasury Department was particularly concerned with the elimination of useless records and increasingly urged departments to list records for disposal.⁹ In 1893, the Dockery Commission examined the organization and administration of executive departments. Its recommendations included a bill for the destruction of certain types of postal records which were more than ten years old, such as money orders, postal notes and other related materials.¹⁰ This bill focused on record type, and established time periods for which categories of records must be retained. However, the bill did not make provisions for records of continuing value, but dealt only with the destruction of valueless records. The most important difference between the mechanism proposed by this bill and future records schedules was the failure of the bill to differentiate between the treatment of active, semiactive and inactive records.¹¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States government had not yet approached consistently, systematically, and globally its

⁹Beers, "Historical Development," 187.

¹⁰Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Record Keeping," 173, 177.

¹¹The concept of the life cycle had not been formulated yet.

records problems.

In 1905, investigations into government operations, which included records disposal, continued with the appointment of the Keep Committee. The Committee discussed "whether the records disposal act of 1889 should be amended to give 'general authority for the destruction of certain classes of papers under certain conditions'." ¹² These discussions did not result in the creation of new legislation. However, the idea would resurface and enter the law in 1945 with the development of general schedules.

On March 12, 1912, Executive Order 1499 provided an amendment to the 1889 Disposition Act. This order established a precedent for the examination of records in view of their historical value. The disposal lists had to be submitted to the Library of Congress where the Librarian, or his representative, would consider the records' historical interest. The Library of Congress continued to examine and make recommendations on disposal lists until 1935, when the National Archives assumed that role. ¹³ This evolution was at the origin of the development of records schedules because the sometimes frustrating evaluation experience led the evaluators to search for a more efficient method of records disposal.

By 1940, the ideas which were essential to the development

¹²Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Record Keeping," 187.

¹³House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 30, 31.

of records schedules had been expressed in legislation, executive orders, and commissions' recommendations.¹⁴ These ideas were strictly linked to the United States administrative and legal context; however, the influence of foreign developments should not be undervalued. In Great Britain, the 1877 Public Record Act had provided for the preparation of disposition lists to be reviewed by a committee; these lists included the retention period of the records, continuing disposition authority and method of disposition, that is, much of the information which would later be incorporated into American records schedules.¹⁵ The Act also allowed the Master of the Rolls to prepare schedules for records.¹⁶ In 1898, another British act altered the disposal procedure and established the practice of departmental scheduling. These schedules, unlike the American disposal lists created during the same period, provided continuing disposal authority.¹⁷ It is difficult to judge the

¹⁴One more example of these ideas can be found in the suggestions of the Interdepartmental Board of Simplified Office Procedure, established in 1924, according to which each department had to form a committee to decide on the disposition, retention periods and the means of destruction of the records of the department. The committee's plan would then become part of departmental policy. However, these recommendations were never adopted. Beers, "Historical Development," 192-194, 196.

¹⁵House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 184, 185.

¹⁶T.R. Schellenberg, Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques, Midway Reprint, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956, 1975), 99.

¹⁷E.E. Burke, "Some Archival Legislation of the British Commonwealth," American Archivist 22, no. 3 (July 1959): 279.

extent of the impact of European practice on the development of American schedules; however, it is certain that individuals involved in records scheduling in the United States were aware of foreign developments.

In 1940, Emmett Leahy discussed mechanisms for the reduction of public records in a number of foreign countries in an article published in the American Archivist. He described the British scheduling process to his American readers, and praised the use of schedules:

One of the outstanding elements of planned programs is that referred to as continuing authorizations which consist of approved lists of not only past accumulations of valueless records but also future accumulations of the same type of records.¹⁸

The article concluded with the suggestion that British practice could serve as a model for records disposition in the United States:

Not only can provisions for continuing authorizations be included, but also a well planned program involving a selection and description of the records that should be retained, transferred to the central archives, or transferred to a designated depository.¹⁹

There were already existent American models that could also be used in the development of systematic and comprehensive scheduling in the federal government. These models were the result of the initiative of individual departments, and were not

¹⁸Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," 19.

¹⁹Ibid., 36.

centrally administered. For example, in 1917, the United States Coast Guard divided its records into three disposal categories: permanent retention, temporary retention, and immediate destruction. This practice was the equivalent of records scheduling, because the department identified the disposition of records while they were still in use.²⁰ In another example, in 1907, the Department of Agriculture was granted a special authorization to dispose of all records that were not permanent.²¹ The Forest Service, one of its branches, developed schedules in an attempt to systematize the disposition procedure; these schedules were the first in the federal government.²²

From 1912 to 1916, the Forest Service investigated the problem of records accumulation and, in 1917, produced a successful proposal. The Acting Forester, on the recommendation of the Inspector of Records, requested

authority to destroy after retention periods of two and three years, certain classes of records having 'no permanent or historical value.' The destruction of these records ... would permit a complete examination of the noncurrent files, rearrangement of those worthy of preservation, and reduction of the cost of storage. It was therefore regarded as essential in the interest of 'business

²⁰Beers, "Historical Development," 199.

²¹Ibid., 189.

²²Ibid., 200; House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 191; Harold Pinkett, "Forest Service, Trail Blazer in Record Keeping Methods," American Archivist 22, no. 4 (October 1959): 424, 426.

economy and efficiency'.²³

The Secretary of Agriculture subsequently granted the authority and scheduling commenced. No other branches in the Department implemented schedules. In 1918, the Forest Service Branch extended records schedules to include the records of field offices. The schedules were organized by subject, and records were identified for segregation, preservation, destruction, or concentration. The fact that these schedules provided for both the preservation and destruction of records shows how they differed from the disposal lists, which provided only for the destruction of records.²⁴ The Forest Services Branch maintained its involvement in records scheduling because it provided a good management tool, and by 1930, the Branch had produced schedules for all of its records.²⁵

Another influence on the development of scheduling in the American federal government was the establishment of records

²³Pinkett, "Forest Service," 425.

²⁴Ibid., 424-426.

²⁵The success of the Forest Services Branch may be directly linked to the spreading of the use of records schedules throughout the federal government. In 1938, T.R. Schellenberg conducted an appraisal of the records of the Department of Agriculture and recommended the creation of scheduling for the entire Department of Agriculture by the National Archives. The first schedules developed by the National Archives were for the Department of Agriculture and the Forestry Services branch. Thus, the experience of the Forest Service branch was both an excellent example and a starting point for future developments by the National Archives. Beers, "Historical Development," 200; House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 194, 195.

scheduling in private companies, such as the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in 1929, and the National Fire Protection Association in 1935.²⁶

Thus, the stage was set for the widespread implementation and use of schedules in the federal government. The events of the 1930s and 1940s would serve to speed up the acceptance of the process of scheduling.

1.1 Involvement of the National Archives of the United States

The establishment of the National Archives in 1934 had a dramatic impact on the development of records scheduling in the United States. Archivists employed by the National Archives became involved in the existing records disposal process, and this participation evolved into the introduction and promotion of records scheduling in federal agencies. Assistant Archivist of the United States, Robert Bahmer, in his review of the accomplishments of the National Archives, stated that:

The idea of scheduling records evolved out of necessity in the National Archives without reference at first either to the practice of those American firms that already used schedules or to the example of the British Public Records Office, where scheduling was the rule for a generation before our National Archives was established.²⁷

²⁶House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 188.

²⁷Robert H. Bahmer, "The National Archives After 20 Years," American Archivist, 18, no. 3 (July 1955): 201.

While Bahmer should not be regarded as an unbiased observer, his interpretation should be seriously considered because of his participation in the events. Despite the existence of outside influences, the importance of the evolutionary process of records scheduling within the National Archives should not be underestimated.

The National Archives Act of 1934 allowed for the disposition of federal records without permanent value or historical interest. Previously, the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress had the responsibility of ensuring that records of historical interest were not destroyed. The National Archives had a similar purpose, but the 1934 Act failed to clearly outline its role in the disposition procedure. Despite the vagueness of its legal authority, the National Archives decided to assume a role in the appraisal of disposal lists, and in time replaced the Library of Congress in the evaluation of records for disposal.²⁸

To accomplish the appraisal task, the National Archives established a unit of Special Examiners, among whom were Emmett Leahy, Philip Brooks, and T.R. Schellenberg.²⁹ Kenneth House, in his work on records disposition at the National Archives, has explored the role of the Special Examiners. He provides insight

²⁸House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 50, 53.

²⁹Ibid., 79; Rodney Ross, "The National Archives: The Formative Years, 1934-1949," in Guardian of Heritage: Essays on the History of the National Archives, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1985), 38.

into how the activities of the special examiners contributed to the development of records scheduling:

Examiners became advocates of active and early involvement of the National Archives in the initial phases of the life of records ... They quickly saw the need to assist agencies in preparation of ... lists.³⁰

This early involvement brought archivists into the realm of records administration, and entailed a shift in the perceived role of the archivist: the archivist assumed an active role by participating in the management of records before they were transferred to the archives. This new role allowed archivists to influence decisions about records retention, records disposal and other aspects of records administration. The Special Examiners, and other archivists, believed that their contribution to records administration would improve disposal practices.³¹

The Special Examiners' contribution was the creation and implementation of records schedules. House states in his discussion that,

More importantly, the archivists realized the need to have authority to make continuing disposition or appraisal decisions ... the archivists wanted to make one appraisal decision and apply that decision automatically each time the same type of records was considered ... The Special Examiners became leading advocates

³⁰House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 41.

³¹H.G. Jones, The Records of a Nation: Their Management, Preservation and Use, (New York: Athenaeum, 1969), 25, 27.

of legislation granting continuing disposition authority. This, in turn, would lead directly to the development and use of records retention scheduling.³²

In their daily appraisal tasks, the Special Examiners recognized the need for greater efficiency. With the existing disposal practices, each department created its own records disposal lists, and disposal authority was granted on a one time basis. When departments wanted to dispose of additional records, another disposal list had to be submitted and approved, even if disposal had previously been granted for records of the same type. The archivists' appraisal of disposal lists revealed that there was much repetition among the disposal lists submitted by a department year after year and among lists generated by different departments. In an effort to promote efficiency, the Special Examiners created appraisal aids from the experiences of past appraisal decisions. These informal schedules would become a model for the development of formal ones.³³ As early as September 1935, Emmett Leahy wrote:

With comparatively little difficulty the Special Examiners in the National Archives could establish definite and regulated policies embracing the destruction of all useless papers accumulating in various departments ... After an initial survey of papers of this nature the Special Examiners could approve for disposition .. at regular

³²House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 42.

³³Ibid., 101, 105.

intervals on the basis of the first report.³⁴

The scheduling practice proposed by Leahy would soon be implemented by the Special Examiners. Over the course of three years, the examiners gained a great deal of knowledge and experience about records retention and disposition, which assisted the National Archives and the federal government in the creation of records schedules.

In 1938, the National Archives eliminated the position of Special Examiner.³⁵ Other divisions of the National Archives assumed responsibility for the appraisal of disposal lists. However, many of the same individuals continued their involvement in the appraisal process, and the ideas of the Special Examiners lingered on despite the reorganization.

1.2 Act to Provide for the Disposition of Certain Records, 1939

In August 1939, the passage of the Records Disposal Act consolidated the appraisal role of the National Archives. The Act encouraged departments to dispose of their records:

Whenever any agency of the United States Government has in its custody an accumulation of records that are not needed by it in the transaction of its current business and that appear to it to have no permanent value or historical interest, the head of such agency shall submit a written report thereon to the archivist of the United States in which he shall state the

³⁴Ibid., 113.

³⁵Ibid., 119.

location and describe the character of such records so as to enable the Archivist to identify them ... and shall be accompanied by samples of the several kinds of records listed.³⁶

The Act also allowed the National Archives to assist federal departments and agencies with records disposition.³⁷ The National Archives had to forward its reports with recommendations to a joint committee of Senate and Congress.³⁸ When the committee's approval was reported to the Senate and the House of Representatives, the records could be destroyed.³⁹ If the committee failed to make a recommendation before the end of the session, then the National Archivist had the authority to approve disposal.⁴⁰ Unlike the 1934 Act, the 1939 Act established the role of the National Archives in the records disposition procedure.

Another significant element of the Act was its provision for the National Archivist to grant disposition authority when

³⁶United States, Act to Provide for the Disposition of Certain Records of the United States Government, Statutes at Large, 480, sec. 1, (1939).

³⁷Donald McCoy, The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents 1934-1968, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 46.

³⁸United States, Act to provide for the disposition of certain records of the United States Government, Statutes at Large, 480, sec. 4, (1939).

³⁹Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," 30.

⁴⁰United States, Act to provide for the disposition of certain records of the United States Government, Statutes at Large, 480, sec. 5, (1939).

Congress was not in session. Section five outlined the conditions for his authority:

If it shall appear to the Archivist that any records reported to him ... while Congress is not in session, have no permanent value or historical interest and have the same form numbers or form letters or are of the same specific kind as other records of the same agency previously authorized for disposition by Congress, he may empower said agency to make disposition of said similar records by any methods prescribed in this section.⁴¹

This section clearly limited the instances in which the National Archivist could act. However, it allowed previous disposal decisions to serve as a precedent for future decisions on the same types of records, and therefore formally recognized that appraisal did not need to be repeated each time a series was proposed for destruction. This was the first step to the creation of the continuing disposal authority used in records schedules.⁴²

By 1940, the idea and practice of records scheduling was well known to the archivists of the National Archives. The Annual Report of the National Archives stated that, "a number of federal agencies were either developing schedules or other, similar, programs to improve records disposition and retention procedures."⁴³

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 133.

⁴³Ibid., 200.

1.3 Act Concerning the Disposal of Records, 1943

The Second World War compounded the records problems of federal departments, and the National Archives feared that it would have difficulty acquiring records of value.⁴⁴ In the words of National Archivist Solon Buck, legislation was needed to "simplify, speed up, and decrease the expenses involved in the disposition of noncurrent records that do not have sufficient value to warrant their further preservation by the government."⁴⁵ Records scheduling provided the most effective means to accomplish the records disposal task which faced all government departments.⁴⁶ In 1943, the Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records expanded the practice of records scheduling.⁴⁷

There were two significant differences between the Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain records and previous disposal legislation. The first was that the appraisal criteria were more clearly articulated in the 1943 Act. The Act eliminated references to "permanent value" or "historical

⁴⁴McCoy, National Archives, 148.

⁴⁵House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 252.

⁴⁶Jones, Records of a Nation, 35; Robert Krauskopf, "The Hoover Commission and Federal Records Keeping," American Archivist 21, no. 4 (October 1958): 373; McCoy, National Archives, 193.

⁴⁷United States, Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records of the United States Government, Statutes at Large, 192, (1943).

interest" as the bases for continuing preservation.⁴⁸ Instead, it mentioned the lack of "sufficient administrative, legal, research or other value" as the criteria for destruction.⁴⁹ The second difference was that the Act expressly promoted the use of records schedules. In section two, the National Archives Council was given the responsibility for establishing "procedures for the compiling and submitting to the Archivist of the United States of lists and schedules of records proposed for disposal."⁵⁰ The Act also required federal agencies to prepare:

Schedules proposing the disposal after the lapse of specified periods of time of records of a specified form or character that either have accumulated in the custody of the agency or that may accumulate therein at any time after the submission of such schedules.⁵¹

Unlike disposal lists, once a schedule received approval, the department could use it as the authority for future disposals. The Act provided continuing disposition authority, which reduced the repetition of effort occurring with disposal lists.⁵²

⁴⁸James Gregory Bradsher, "An Administrative History of the Disposal of Federal Records, 1739-1949," Provenance 3, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 12.

⁴⁹United States, Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records of the United States Government, Statutes at Large, 192, s. 3,4,5, (1943).

⁵⁰Ibid., s. 2,.

⁵¹Ibid., s. 3, p. 3,.

⁵²Philip C. Brooks, "Archives in the United States During World War II, 1939-1945," Library Quarterly. 17, no. 4 (October 1947): 275; Phillip C. Brooks, "Archival Procedures for Planned Records Retirement," American Archivist 11, no. 4 (October

Disposal lists could still be created; however, the production of schedules was mandatory.

Apart from these significant differences embedded in the legislation, the disposal process continued as it had in the past. The National Archives maintained its evaluation role, but it now evaluated schedules as well as lists. It then submitted the approved schedules and lists to a joint committee which, if in accord, would recommend disposal to the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Despite the new legislation, agencies were slow to submit schedules. In 1944, only 26 agencies had scheduled their records.⁵³ The legislation failed to make the disposal process as efficient as expected.⁵⁴ In an attempt to improve the process, members of the National Archives proposed amendments to the Act. A number of archivists, including Solon Buck and Philip Brooks, were involved in creating new legislation which would allow for the use of general schedules.⁵⁵

1.4 Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records of the United States Government, 1945

1948): 309; House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 5; Jones, Records of a Nation, 86.

⁵³Isadore Perlman, "General Schedules and Federal Records," American Archivist 15, no. 1 (January 1952): 27.

⁵⁴House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 5.

⁵⁵Ibid., 305, 309, 311; McCoy, National Archives, 157.

Unlike the development of specific schedules, that of general schedules has been credited solely to the National Archives. In 1938, Philip Brooks first entertained the idea of general schedules when he recognized that housekeeping records were duplicated in many agencies.⁵⁶ In "The Selection of Records for Preservation", Brooks suggested that agencies be studied to identify common functions that result in similar types of records.⁵⁷ These studies would form the basis for the development of general schedules. Other members of the National Archives staff shared Brooks views. Solon Buck regarded general schedules as both a "cost saving measure" and "as a means to help identify and isolate permanently valuable records through the efficient destruction of the useless."⁵⁸

The National Archives arguments for general schedules were successful. In 1945, the Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records was amended to permit the use of general schedules. The amendment gave the National Archives the authority to submit

Schedules proposing the disposal, after the lapse of specified periods of time, of records of a specified form or character common to several or all agencies that either have accumulated or may accumulate in

⁵⁶House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 305.

⁵⁷Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation," American Archivist 3, no. 4 (October 1940): 230.

⁵⁸House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 309.

such agencies and that apparently will not, after the lapse of the periods specified, have sufficient administrative, legal, research or other value to warrant their further preservation by the United States government.⁵⁹

This section provided for a couple of significant changes. First, it gave the National Archives the authority to initiate records schedules and provide assistance to federal agencies.⁶⁰ Previously, the Archives could only make recommendations on schedules that were received from agencies. This process slowed the implementation of schedules, because agencies did not always dedicate the necessary time or resources to their development. Second, the amendment mentioned that the National Archives' schedules covered records "common to several or all agencies." This statement was the basis of general schedules. General schedules were created because most federal agencies, as the result of housekeeping functions, produced records with similar characteristics.⁶¹ The use of general schedules reduced the repetition that occurred when different agencies created schedules for similar records.⁶² In March 1946, the first

⁵⁹United States, Act to amend the Act entitled an Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records of the United States Government, Statutes at Large, 273, s. 4, (1945).

⁶⁰Brooks, "Archival Procedures," 310; House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 313.

⁶¹Perlman, "General Schedules and Federal Records," 28.

⁶²Brooks, "Archival Procedures," 310; House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 313.

general schedule, covering personnel records, was produced.⁶³ Soon general schedules would cover a wide spectrum of records, including civilian personnel, federal employees, information services, postal, financial, accounting, bankruptcy and personnel health records.⁶⁴ General schedules entailed greater control of the disposal process by the National Archives and a reduction in the number of schedules. The change promised greater efficiency.

1.5 Federal Records Act of 1950

The close tie between the National Archives and the records scheduling procedure meant that their fortunes were interconnected. In 1949, the National Archives became part of the General Services Administration. In 1950, a Federal Records Act was drafted to accommodate the reorganization. The Act focused on the role of the General Services Administration and included the National Archives and federal agencies within its records management function. One section of the Federal Records Act is of particular interest to this discussion.

Section 505 outlined the requirements of the Administrator of the General Services Administration. The Administrator was to "make provisions for the economical and efficient management of

⁶³House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 328.

⁶⁴Perlman, "General Schedules and Federal Records," 28.

records of federal agencies."⁶⁵ This gave the Administrator greater authority than had previously existed for participation in all areas of records creation and disposal.⁶⁶ The Section continued to describe how the Administrator could affect the management of agency records:

By analysing, developing, promoting and coordinating standards, procedures, and techniques designed to improve the management of records, to insure the maintenance and security of records deemed appropriate for preservation, and to facilitate the segregation and disposal of records of temporary value.⁶⁷

The Administrator could subsequently delegate these duties to the National Archives. While the section does not specifically mention records scheduling, the practice was commonly accepted as a records management tool. As the section stated that both permanent and temporary records must be controlled, the implication for records scheduling was that schedules would be used to manage both the destruction and the preservation of records.⁶⁸

Thus, by 1950, records scheduling was entrenched in the

⁶⁵United States, Federal Records Act of 1950 Statutes at Large, 849, s. 505, (1950).

⁶⁶Bradsher, "Administrative History," 15; McCoy, National Archives, 237.

⁶⁷United States, Federal Records Act of 1950 Statutes at Large, 849, s. 505, p. a(1), (1950).

⁶⁸Elizabeth Drewry, "Records Disposition in the Federal Government," Public Administration Review 15, no. 3 (Summer 1955): 219.

records management practices throughout the United States government. The National Archives guided scheduling efforts through its advisory role and the evaluation of departments' schedules. The preparation of general schedules also gave the National Archives a large role in the scheduling process.

1.6 American Literature on Scheduling 1940-1956

The National Archives staff was particularly interested in records disposition and scheduling because of its legislated disposition role, and during the decade of schedule establishment, some of its members published a variety of writings which discussed records scheduling. From these discussions, four archivists may be singled out for their interest in the development of records scheduling in the United States: Emmett Leahy, Philip Brooks, Robert Bahmer and T.R. Schellenberg.

Between 1940 and 1949, Emmett Leahy produced a number of articles on records disposition and records management. His first article, entitled "Reduction of Public Records", appeared in the January 1940 issue of the American Archivist.⁶⁹ It surveyed the records disposition procedures of other countries and concluded with a list of recommendations for developments in the United States. One of them was that a "comprehensive plan can be developed for temporary or permanent retention of more or

⁶⁹Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," 13-38.

less valuable documents and prompt elimination of valueless papers after appropriate lapses of time."⁷⁰ This recommendation went beyond the current practice of the United States, which was based on the appraisal of disposal lists. Leahy explained the difference between disposal lists and his plan: "changing the time element from specified dates describing each class of records to a simple indication of the lapse of time, from the origin of such records, after which they may be destroyed."⁷¹ This corresponded to retention periods in records schedules. Thus, Leahy clearly advocated the adoption of continuing records disposal authorities through the use of records schedules.

In 1942, Military Affairs published Leahy's article "Records Administration and the War", in which it was stated:

There must be planned elimination, regularly and promptly, of voluminous records of countless types which have out-lived their usefulness. This can best be accomplished by an inventory of papers received, scheduling therein those categories which should be eliminated there-from at specified intervals of time, and those which should be retired at regular intervals to an archival institution.⁷²

Here, schedules were seen as providing continuing disposition authority for both the preservation and destruction of records. However, in a subsequent article, "Modern Records Management",

⁷⁰Ibid., 35.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Emmett J. Leahy, "Records Administration and the War," Military Affairs 6 (Summer 1942): 100.

published in 1949, Leahy focused solely on scheduling as means for destruction. He wrote that "management is also undertaking widespread measures to destroy or schedule the earliest possible destruction of records which must accumulate in the regular course of business."⁷³ By this time, Leahy had left the National Archives and concentrated his efforts on greater efficiency in government. He regarded destruction, through schedules, as a primary means to promote efficiency, and this became a popular view of the purpose of records scheduling, particularly among records managers.

Also, Leahy's later articles presented records scheduling as an element of the larger area of records management. In "Records Administration and the War", discussing micrographics, mail management and other management tools, Leahy claimed: "After valuable non-current records have been retired to an archival agency, valueless records eliminated or scheduled for disposal and suitable records microfilmed, a records program worthy of the name is by no means consummated."⁷⁴ He later advised the Hoover commission that the authority for records management, including records scheduling, should be given to a new records management agency.⁷⁵ Thus, while he supported the use of records schedules, Leahy denied the archivist a central

⁷³Emmett Leahy, "Modern Records Management," American Archivist 12, no. 3 (July 1949): 233.

⁷⁴Leahy, "Records Administration and the War," 103.

⁷⁵Jones, Records of a Nation, 43.

role in scheduling. His primary concern was the implementation of effective records management.

Philip Brooks was also interested in the subject of records scheduling, and published several articles in the American Archivist on the subject.⁷⁶ In the first of those articles, "The Selection of Records for Preservation", Brooks discussed the appraisal criteria that should be used to identify records for transfer to the archives. He raised the important point that appraisal must occur early in the life cycle in order to ensure that records are transferred to archives in an efficient manner.⁷⁷ To accomplish early intervention, he suggested a program which would include some type of scheduling:

Suppose that a careful program has been arranged for the periodic transfer of certain files to the archival depository and for the periodic disposal of certain others. This ideal program provides for occasional cut-off dates so that transfers to archival agencies can be made in orderly fashion every few year.⁷⁸

In 1943, Brooks published "The Archivists Concern in Records Administration", where he discussed the National Archives role in facilitating the destruction and transfer of

⁷⁶Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation," 221-234.; Phillip Brooks, "The Archivists Concern in Records Administration," American Archivist 6, no. 3 (July 1943): 158-163; Brooks, "Archival Procedures," 308-315.

⁷⁷House, "Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 125; R.McCoy, National Archives, 110.

⁷⁸Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation, " 225.

records with records schedules and other practices.⁷⁹ Such a role included "studies of such general subjects of the evaluation of common types of records ... direct cooperation with the several agencies ... cooperation is manifest in surveys, preparation of retention and disposal schedules and consultation."⁸⁰ Brooks pointed to the archivists' contribution in records disposal process:

The most obvious point of liaison between the archivist and the maker of the archives is the retirement of records from current use. Good current records administration produces regular schedules for periodic disposals and periodic breaks in files for transfer of records to archival custody.⁸¹

Brooks again focused on the need for early intervention. In contrast to Leahy, he placed a large emphasis on the use of records schedules to ensure effective transfer of records to the National Archives, and highlighted the archivists' role. In "Archival Procedures for Planned Records Retirement", published in 1948, Brooks discussed the disposal procedures adopted by the United States government. Once again, he emphasized the archivists' role in the disposal process: "the Archives

⁷⁹This essay was first presented at the 1942 annual SAA conference, it also appeared in Current Aspects of Records Administration, published by the National Archives in February 1943. Brooks, "Archivist's Concern in Records Administration," 160; United States, National Archives, Current Aspects of Records Administration, Records Administration Circular. No. 2 (February 1943) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1943).

⁸⁰Brooks, "Archivists Concern in Records Administration," 161.

⁸¹Ibid., 162.

representatives were involved in analysing present and future operations, rather than in studying the 'musty old papers'.⁸² He also discussed the wide variety of schedules under development, including single agency schedules, comprehensive schedules, and general schedules.⁸³

In 1943, Robert Bahmer published "Scheduling the Disposition of Records," stressing the need for a planned approach to address records problems.⁸⁴ Bahmer pointed out that the increasing volume of records made difficult the selection among them of the small quantity destined to continuing preservation. His planned approach included the use of disposition schedules.⁸⁵

In 1949, Schellenberg's The Disposition of Federal Records was published by the National Archives. This work demonstrated the ideas prevalent at the National Archives as much as Schellenberg's own thoughts.⁸⁶ In chapter one, schedules were

⁸²Brooks, "Archival Procedures," 311.

⁸³Ibid., 308.

⁸⁴This essay was presented at the 1942 annual meeting of the SAA and also appeared in February 1943 in Current Aspects of Records Administration, published by the National Archives. Bahmer, Robert. "Scheduling the Disposition of Records" American Archivist. 6, 3 (July 1943): 169-175; United States, National Archives, Current Aspects of Records Administration, Records Administration Circular. No. 2 (February 1943) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1943).

⁸⁵Bahmer, "Scheduling the Disposition of Records," 170.

⁸⁶United States, National Archives, Disposition of Federal Records: How to Develop and Effective Program for the Preservation and the Disposal of Federal Records, [prepared by

identified as the "key instruments in a continuing program for disposing of records of an agency."⁸⁷ Schellenberg also discussed the importance of records disposal practices in the control of records and, like Leahy, recognized the need for destruction to achieve administrative efficiency:

The expeditious and systematic disposal of useless records is of utmost importance to the economical and efficient management of current records.

However, he continued:

It is important even to the preservation of permanently valuable records, for only by the elimination of the useless and ephemeral can the ever-increasing accumulations of Government records be brought under control for research and other uses.⁸⁸

Thus, Schellenberg, like Brooks and Bahmer, closely related the timely disposal of useless records to the proper and effective preservation of those of continuing value. His major personal contributions on the subject of disposal came later with the publication of Modern Archives in which Schellenberg outlined the development of records schedules in the United States and identified his own role in the development: "When I first proposed the scheduling procedure ... I stated that schedules 'should pertain to records which are recurrent and routine and

Records, (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1949).

⁸⁷Ibid., 25.

⁸⁸Ibid., 24.

not to records which are unique'." ⁸⁹ He also emphasized that, despite limitations, schedules provided an important management tool, because they allowed the removal of large quantities of records from current files. ⁹⁰

Leahy, Brooks, Bahmer and Schellenberg brought records scheduling to the attention of all American archivists. Their articles also demonstrated the growing interest in records scheduling at the time in which they were written. These authors did not always agree about the primary purpose of records schedules; however, they all demonstrated acceptance, if not enthusiasm, for the practice.

The disposal practices advocated and practised by the National Archives archivists have remained relatively unaltered since their establishment. Scheduling continues to the present day in the United States where it is used and accepted by both government and business. Aspects of current American federal records scheduling practices will be discussed in the following section.

1.7 National Archives and Records Administration: Current Scheduling Practices

The previous discussion of the development of records scheduling in the United States revealed that agency schedules

⁸⁹Schellenberg, Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques, 100, 101.

⁹⁰Ibid., 103.

and general schedules were the primary means of disposition. In the 1970s, the National Archives recognized that there were problems with the implementation of scheduling. As a result, there have been adjustments, and changes allowing records scheduling to include electronic records. However, the practice of records scheduling continues relatively unchanged today.

The task of records scheduling remains the joint responsibility of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and federal agencies. NARA initiates and approves all General Records Schedules.⁹¹ Agencies or NARA may initiate agency schedules and recommend retention periods, but NARA is responsible for the approval of both the retention periods and the final disposition of records.⁹²

Since the initiation of General Retention Schedules (GRS) with a single schedule, in 1945, the practice has expanded to include twenty-three schedules.⁹³ GRSs now cover one-third of all government records created, and include records related to, "civilian personnel, fiscal accounting, procurement, communications, printing, and other common functions; and

⁹¹United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Records Management Handbook: Disposition of Federal Records, (Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, 1992), A-7.

⁹²Ibid., I-4, I-5, IV-4, V-1; United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Managing Electronic Records, Instructional Guide Series, (Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, 1990), 12.

⁹³United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, B-6.

certain non-textual records."⁹⁴ The implementation of GRSs has been mandatory since 1978.⁹⁵ Their primary purpose remains unchanged, to provide "disposition authority for records common to several or all federal agencies" that support housekeeping or administrative functions.⁹⁶ One significant modification is that GRSs now apply only to temporary records; previously, in some cases, GRSs could apply to permanent records.⁹⁷ GRSs consist of a general description of the records included in and excluded from the schedule, file descriptions and numbers, authorized disposition and, if necessary, notes. Each schedule applies to a group of related records series, while each description corresponds to a single records series.⁹⁸ Agencies are carefully instructed to use GRSs only when they apply to the agency's records. There are two ways in which agencies may use GRSs; first, they may be attached to the existing agency records schedule as an appendix, or they may be incorporated into the

⁹⁴United States, National Archives and Records Administration, "General Records Schedules Transmittal, No. 2 30 October 1989," (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1990, 259-844/20194), 1.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶United States. National Archives and Records Administration, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, IV-9.

⁹⁷Ibid., IV-10; United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Managing Electronic Records, 18; United States, National Archives and Records Administration, "General Records Schedules Transmittal," 2.

⁹⁸United States, National Archives and Records Administration, "General Records Schedules Transmittal," [GRS 1, 1].

existing agency records schedule. In the second case, the area for disposition authority would indicate the appropriate GRS number, but the description might be altered.⁹⁹ For example, the title of the item description may be changed to correspond with the name used in the agency. If agencies use GRSs as the disposition authority for some of their records series, then they do not have to apply to NARA for disposition authority for the same series. While GRSs do not, and never will, account for all government records, they continue to contribute to the efficiency of records scheduling. Thus, the purpose and implementation of general records scheduling remains virtually unchanged in the United States.

As previously mentioned, agency records schedules initiated by an individual agency and approved by the National Archives played a primary role in the records disposition program. Today, in the United States, agency records schedules are still in use. The current federal records disposition program is comprehensive, that is, agencies are required to schedule all records in all media, and of both temporary and permanent value.¹⁰⁰ The current practice is based on the preparation of a Standard Form, Request for Records Disposition Authority, which then becomes the formal disposition authority for the records

⁹⁹Ibid., 1; United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, IV-10, IV-12.

¹⁰⁰United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, iii, B-4.

series. There are variety of ways in which an agency may schedule its records with the Standard Form. A single form may be prepared for an entire agency, or a variety of forms may be prepared for the central office, field offices and other branches within an agency. The number of forms is not important as long as all agency's records are scheduled.¹⁰¹ Like the GRSs, the Standard Forms provide descriptions of records series and final dispositions. To assist the National Archives' decision-making, additional information is included about the organization name, office of responsibility, contact person, authorization and, if applicable, GRS or previous schedule authority.¹⁰²

A variety of schedule arrangements are acceptable in an attempt to best suit the needs of individual agencies. The first type of schedule arrangement is by organization, an arrangement which has been used since schedules were first developed. Schedules focus on organizational units, and provide a list of records series under each unit within an agency.¹⁰³ While the organizational arrangement continues today, alternative schedule arrangements are also acceptable. This demonstrates a shift from the original scheduling practice. The second schedule arrangement is by function, an approach which lists together

¹⁰¹Ibid., V-1, V-11.

¹⁰²Ibid., V-2.

¹⁰³Ibid., V-12.

"series or systems serving the same purpose."¹⁰⁴ This arrangement currently has strong support from the records management community. For example, Donald Skupsky believes that the development of functional records schedules will make it easier to assign retention periods when like records series are automatically grouped together.¹⁰⁵ The benefit of this type of schedule is its flexibility. It not necessary to alter the schedule when organizational change occurs. Additions and deletions are only made when there is a shift in the agency's functions, a less common occurrence. The functional schedule also reduces the number of items listed, because the series created by different units within an organization will be listed together rather than repeated under each organizational level.¹⁰⁶

Apart from these primary schedule arrangements, organizational and functional, there are alternative methods which include arrangement by records commonly held by an agency, and arrangement by coordination with the filing system. The second of these arrangements corresponds to the practice in

¹⁰⁴Ibid. This approach was also suggested in the 1978 edition and promoted as the preferred method. United States, Office of Federal Records Centres, Disposition of Federal Records. Records Management Handbook, (Washington, DC.: National Archives and Records Service (dist. by Superintendent of Documents), 1978), 36.

¹⁰⁵Donald Skupsky, "The Functional Records Retention Schedule ... An Alternative that Works," Records Management Quarterly 23, no. 4 (October 1989): 37; Donald Skupsky, "User Requirements for Records Retention Programs," Records Management Quarterly 24, no. 1 (January 1990): 33.

¹⁰⁶Skupsky, "Functional Records Retention Schedule," 38, 40.

British Columbia where the classification and scheduling functions have been integrated. This approach is an option for any American federal agency. To accomplish it the agency would provide a file description on the Standard Form which corresponds to an element from the classification system.¹⁰⁷ On the schedule, each item is linked to a proposed retention period, and therefore the classification system and the schedule would also be linked.

A distinct departure from previous records scheduling practice occurred when the National Archives began scheduling electronic records. In the development of records management for electronic records, the National Archives provided a model for other jurisdictions, like the Canadian federal government, and state and provincial governments.¹⁰⁸ The basic difference in electronic records scheduling is that records systems rather than records series are scheduled. A records system, also referred to as an information system, may be composed of a number of distinct series in a variety of media. The elements of an information system which must be described and scheduled include inputs, information on electronic media, outputs,

¹⁰⁷United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, V-12, V-14.

¹⁰⁸The Ontario government's use of a similar approach is described in detail in chapter three.

indexes, and documentation.¹⁰⁹ For the preparation of agency schedules, the same Standard Form is required despite the use of a different scheduling technique. Two general schedules which apply to electronic records have also been developed, schedules 20 and 23, "Electronic Records" and "Records Common to Most Offices within Agencies." These schedules cover electronic records created to support housekeeping functions and the provision of Automated Data Processing services, and electronic records created in "office automation applications."¹¹⁰ Like agency schedules developed for electronic records, the general schedules apply to entire systems as opposed to records series. The scheduled records include both paper and electronic records.¹¹¹ The inclusion of electronic records in the normal scheduling practice demonstrates the commitment to a comprehensive scheduling program which includes all media.

Regardless of the scheduling technique used or the schedule which provides authorization, the Comprehensive Schedule is the final tool for the implementation of schedules in federal agencies. This is a printed schedule which includes all the disposition authorities for an agency, refers to both records

¹⁰⁹United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, III-3, V-7; United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Managing Electronic Records, 20.

¹¹⁰United States, National Archives and Records Administration, Managing Electronic Records, 18.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, B-1 - B-13.

and non-record materials, and cites GRSs and Standard Forms authorizations. The comprehensive schedule is "the heart of a record disposition program."¹¹²

¹¹²United States, National Archives and Records Service, Disposition of Federal Records, 1992, II-7, B-7.

CHAPTER TWO

Origins of Records Scheduling in Canada

In Canada, the development of records scheduling proceeded along much the same lines as in the United States. Canada only became concerned with the storage, preservation and disposal of records when the state of government records threatened the efficiency and safety of Canadian government operations. A number of commissions investigated the state of Canada's records problems. However, the pace of the development was significantly slower in Canada than in the United States. There were attempts to implement records disposal procedures, but the widespread use of scheduling did not begin until the 1960s.

The first use of records schedules preceded the government-wide concern for records. In 1889, the Post Office requested Cabinet authorization for the disposal of certain documents after a period of five years. This request was accepted with the amendment that valuable documents would be retained for a longer period.¹ This event provides an interesting parallel to developments in the United States where, in 1881, the Post Office also applied for a special disposal authorization. Other departments failed to follow the initiative of the Post Office, and there were no subsequent requests for the development of

¹Eldon Frost, "A Weak Link in the Chain: Records Scheduling as a Source of Archival Acquisition," Archivaria 33 (Winter 1991-1992): 78; Jay Atherton, "The Origins of the Public Archives Records Centre, 1897-1956," Archivaria 8 (Summer 1979): 38.

records schedules.

However, at about the same time, the Canadian government recognized its records problems and identified possible solutions. Following a fire in the West Block of the Parliament Buildings, the government appointed a commission to investigate. In March 1897, Order in Council 486 formed a Departmental Commission to examine the state of government records, "with a view to the periodical destruction of such papers and vouchers as may be deemed useless, and which are merely encumbering the vaults."² The Commission's recommendations included:

1. A board of inspection should be appointed to recommend records for immediate destruction and periodic disposal in the future, the decision on recommendation to be taken by cabinet. 2. A standard ten year retention period should be adopted for routine financial documentation.³

The recommendations shared two characteristics with record schedules, namely, the identification of retention periods and the evaluation of records in view of their final disposition. However, they did not lead directly to the implementation of records schedules.

In 1912, a second commission was appointed to investigate the state of federal records,

With a view of ascertaining the nature and extent of the records; their state of preservation; the use made of them in

²Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, (Ottawa: Public Archives Canada, 1977), 1.

³Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 40.

conducting public business; the state of the building and places wherein they occupy; the facilities of access ...; and of the control exercised over the said records.⁴

The diverse findings of the Commission reflected its broad mandate. The creation of a Public Records Office was the Commission's primary recommendation, but several of the findings related to records disposal.

Finding number eight discussed the "fixing of a time limit for the retention of documents in the various departments of Government." The Commission suggested that departments should only retain records for twenty five years, after which, the records should be transferred to a Public Records Office.⁵ This recommendation recognized that departments had little use for records after a certain period of time had passed. Once at the Public Records Office, records would be reviewed to determine if they should be transferred to the archives for permanent preservation.⁶ The Commission did not discuss the evaluation of current records, but believed that appraisal of non-current records would have to occur.

Finding number nine addressed "the question of the periodical destruction of such records as may prove of no value after a lapse of years," and recommended that records with no

⁴Canada, Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire to the State of the Records of the Public Departments, Report, (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1914), 17.

⁵Ibid., 21.

⁶Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 45.

further value be periodically destroyed.⁷ It was also recommended that the Treasury Board authorize the destruction of "useless" records.⁸ The Commission did not state that records schedules be used; however, it called for "some organized system of ridding the public offices of much useless material with which they are now encumbered."⁹ It pointed to the example of Departments, like the Post Office, which destroyed classes of documents after a fixed period. It also stated that records disposal "should be guided by rules similar to those governing the destruction of Public Records in England."¹⁰ Thus, indirectly, the Commission's suggestions supported the use of records schedules, because both the Post Office and the Public Records Office used them.

Another recommendation was that a permanent commission be formed to determine which records should be destroyed.¹¹ This suggestion echoed the recommendation of the 1897 Commission for the establishment of a board of inspection; however, the recommendation was not implemented until 1945.

In the same year 1912, The Public Archives Act came into

⁷Canada, Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire to the State of the Records of the Public Departments, Report, 22.

⁸Ibid., 23, 27; Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, 1.

⁹Canada, Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire to the State of the Records of the Public Departments, Report, 23.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

force. The Act made no reference to the procedure for records disposal or records scheduling. It allowed the Governor in Council to order records to be transferred from the departments to the Public Archives of Canada (PAC). Section eight stated:

The Governor in Council may order and direct that any public records, documents or other historical material of any kind, nature or description shall be taken from the custody of any department of the Government having control thereof and removed to the Archives Building ... and placed under the care, custody and control of the Dominion Archivist.¹²

This authority firmly established the right of the Public Archives to house inactive government records. However, as Lewis Thomas stated, the Act did not "explicitly ensure the preservation of public records in offices of origin, nor did it provide for their orderly disposal under the supervision of archives staff."¹³ PAC would not become involved in records disposal and records scheduling until 1936. The use and disposal of government records was primarily the concern of the Treasury Board.¹⁴

2.1 Treasury Board Involvement, 1933-1944

In 1933, the Treasury Board took significant steps to address the question of records disposal. It requested all

¹²Public Archives Act, S.C. 2 George V, c. 4, s. 8.

¹³Lewis Thomas, "Archival Legislation in Canada," Canadian Historical Association Report 1962: 104.

¹⁴Burke, "Archival Legislation," 287.

departments for their views on the matter and asked them to "identify records that might be destroyed after lapses of five and ten years, and those that should be retained permanently."¹⁵ The result of these enquiries was Treasury Board minute 160481, which authorized the destruction of certain classes of records by departments. This minute covered a limited number of record types. Other records still required Treasury Board approval for destruction.¹⁶

The minute was subsequently amended. The 1944 amendment stated:

'Documents of general historical value shall be retained indefinitely. With the object of ascertaining such value, the Dominion Archivist shall be notified by the Department concerned of the intention to destroy certain classes of documents and unless he submits a written objection ... the Department may proceed to destroy such classes of documents.'¹⁷

This amendment meant that the Dominion Archivist was responsible for the identification of records of value to be transferred to the Public Archives. The Archives Act had recognized only the need to transfer records, but had failed to establish a mechanism for their identification. The amendment allowed PAC to prevent the destruction of valuable records by their transfer to

¹⁵Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 48.

¹⁶Canada, Report, Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951, (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1951), 336.

¹⁷Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, 1.

the archives for preservation. It also gave PAC its first official role in the process of records disposal.

The Treasury Board minute and its amendment created a records disposal procedure which was quite similar to the procedure in the United States. The Dominion Archivist, like the National Archivist, had the right to object to the destruction of a department's records. The Treasury Board, like Congress, retained the authority to dispose of records.¹⁸ Departments in both Canada and the United States were required to take the initiative to dispose of their records. The major difference between the two disposal procedures was that the Canadian minute authorized continuing disposal of entire classes of records, while contemporary American legislation required departments to produce disposal lists of individual records each time they wished to destroy them.¹⁹

The disposal issue assumed increasing importance as World War II continued and records disposition problems became apparent. At the request of the Prime Minister, in 1942, an informal advisory committee was formed to investigate the problem of war records. In particular, the committee looked at "methods for providing adequate conservation of the public

¹⁸Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 49.

¹⁹George Simpson, "Archives in Canada," American Archivist 11, no. 4 (October 1948): 365.

records."²⁰ Its report made several important recommendations which were later implemented: the establishment of a permanent Public Records Committee, departmental responsibility for records, the appointment of a senior records officer in each department, and the investigation of possible development of a Public Records Office.²¹ The establishment of the Public Records Committee followed three years later by an Order in Council that incorporated the recommendations.

2.2 Public Records Committee, 1945

On 20 September 1945, Order in Council 6175 established the Committee on Public Records. The membership of the Committee included representatives from PAC, the Ministries of National Defense, Public Works, Finance, Munitions and Supply, Labour and the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Two historians acted as advisors to the Committee. Section two of the Order in Council outlined the Committee's broad mandate:

The duties of the Committee shall be to keep under constant review the state of the public records and to consider, advise and concert with departments and agencies of government on the organization, care,

²⁰Order in Council Establishing the Committee on Public Records, P.C. 6175, September 20, 1945, quoted in Canada, Report Royal Commission 1949-1951, 491.

²¹W.E.D. Halliday, "The Public Records of Canada: Recent Developments in Control and Management," American Archivist 13, no. 2 (April 1950): 105.

housing and destruction of public records.²²

Specific duties assigned to the Committee included the examination of the wartime reports of departments, and the analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of the 1912 Commission regarding the establishment of the Public Records Office.²³

The Order also outlined departments' responsibility for records preservation and disposition. Section six stated:

The primary responsibility for the care and maintenance of records and for seeing that the policies of government in respect to disposition of public records be carried out so as to ensure that material of permanent value be not unwittingly destroyed will rest with departments and agencies.²⁴

To ensure that departments met their responsibilities, each department had to appoint a records officer. The records officers' duties included the periodical review and reclassification of records "with a view to disposal or transfer of those of permanent value but not current required to the Public Archives...or by some form of destruction under existing regulations."²⁵ The Public Records Committee would then approve the records recommended for disposal by the records officer.

²²Order in Council Establishing the Committee on Public Records, P.C. 6175, September 20, 1945, quoted in Canada, Report Royal Commission 1949-1951, 491.

²³Ibid., 491, 492.

²⁴Ibid., 492.

²⁵Ibid.

The Order in Council demonstrated the Canadian government's interest in both records preservation and records destruction. The appointment of the Public Records Committee, with its advisory role, and the assignment of a departmental records officer to each department improved the disposal mechanism and mitigated against the destruction of records of value.²⁶ Departments were given the responsibility for, but denied autonomy in, decisions about records disposal. In the future, with the government's recognition of the departments' need for expert advice in both preservation and destruction PAC would assume this advisory role.

The role of the Public Records Committee may easily be compared to the role of the National Archives of the United States at the same time. Both bodies advised departments and examined records for disposal. The Public Records Committee evaluated records from disposal lists prepared by the departments.²⁷ However, the Committee lacked the power of the National Archives because it was not involved in records scheduling. By 1945, the Americans had developed general records schedules which were created and administered by the National Archives. This gave the National Archives a more influential role in records disposal.

²⁶Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 51; Canada, Report Royal Commission 1949-1951, 113.

²⁷Public Records Committee Circular No. 2, quoted in Canada, Report Royal Commission 1949-1951, 493.

2.3 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951

In 1949, the Canadian government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate national developments in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. One aspect of the Commission's inquiry was the investigation of public records and the Public Records Committee. Historian C.P. Stacey prepared a submission to the Commission which focused on the Public Archives and public records.²⁸ Stacey pointed out that, although the Public Archives' assistance to government departments was one of the smallest functions of the Archives, it would "grow in time with the development of a records policy."²⁹ Stacey highlighted the Canadian Historical Association's belief that the administration of public records required "greater attention ... to the systematic transfer of records from the various departments of the Government to the Archives."³⁰ He also identified the necessity of developing the Public Records Office aspect of the Public Archives.³¹ This was not the first time that Canadians had looked to the British example for the care of public

²⁸C.P. Stacey, "Canadian Archives," in Royal Commission Studies: A Selection of Essays Prepared for the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), 231.

²⁹Ibid., 232.

³⁰Ibid., 234.

³¹Ibid., 238.

records.³² However, Stacey believed that the Public Records Office should be developed within the Public Archives. His findings included a negative assessment of present conditions:

Canada still has no really effective public records policy though the need for one, and the form it should take, were explained by an able Royal Commission thirty-six years ago.

Stacey also included recommendations for further developments:

What is required basically, is a plan which will provide for and enforce the constant and systematic screening of the obsolete records of the government - those of no historical value being destroyed and those worthy of preservation being transferred to the Public Archives.³³

Although Stacey did not recommend the adoption of records scheduling, he recognized the need for a systematic approach to disposal. In contrast to contemporary American writings, his work demonstrated that his primary concern was for the preservation of valuable records. This focus is not surprising because he was a professional historian.

The report of the Royal Commission looked at the performance of the Public Records Committee, which was central to public records policy. Like Stacey, the Commission was unsatisfied with the Committee's activities and more generally

³²The Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the State of Records in the Public Departments in 1912 also recommended the British example.

³³C.P. Stacey, "Canadian Archives," in Royal Commission Studies, 248.

with the public records policy. Its report stated: "we are, however, not convinced that either the Privy Council Order establishing the Public Records Committee, or the consequent administrative instruction, are sufficiently well defined or applied in practice to fulfil their purpose."³⁴ Some of the problems identified by the Commission were the lack of established time periods for the regular review of departmental records, and a lack of assistance for the Public Records Committee's review. The Commission did not recommend any new duties for the Committee, but it expressed the belief that it should not be relieved of any of its existing duties. Rather it suggested that its responsibilities be clarified and strengthened.

The Commission briefly discussed the state of public records in the provinces, and concluded: "an unsatisfactory situation is now showing some signs of improvement. In three provinces (Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan) the archivist must by law be consulted, and must give his consent before public records are destroyed."³⁵ There was no other discussion of provincial records matters.

The Commission's recommendations echoed the words of Stacey's submission. They suggested "that provision be made for the systematic and continuous transfer of inactive records from

³⁴Canada, Report Royal Commission 1949-1951, 335.

³⁵Ibid., 120.

all departments and agencies of government to the archives."³⁶ There was agreement that the Canadian government required a systematic disposal practice. Like the submission, the report focused on the preservation of records; they both criticized the existing Canadian policy for its inability to protect records rather than to dispose of them. This is different from the American focus on destruction for greater efficiency, tempered only mildly by a concern for preservation. Also, the argument used by the American National Archives, that destruction of valueless records is an excellent means to ensure that records of value are preserved, was not advanced by either Stacey or the Commission.

By 1950, records disposal developments in Canada lagged far behind the developments in the United States. Previously, Canada had recognized and investigated its records disposal problems, and had met the need for the systematic disposal of records with the 1936 Treasury Board minute. However, the minute did not result in the sophisticated or comprehensive scheduling which was being used by the United States as early as 1943. The minute did not provide for the establishment of retention time spans related to activity, semiactivity and inactivity of the records. It only covered the classes of records destined for disposal. Thus, Canada began looking to the United States as a model for

³⁶Ibid., 336,337.

its public records policy.³⁷ Canadian interest in the field of records management, of which one element was records scheduling, was encouraged by the popularity and success of records management in the United States.

2.4 Records Management and Records Scheduling, 1952-1966

In 1952, a Records Management Association was formed in Ottawa. One of the aims of the Association was "to stimulate the retention of records."³⁸ This association would later produce the first general records schedules for the federal government.³⁹

The Civil Service Commission recognized federal interest in records management and records disposal and, in 1954, held a Records Management Conference for public servants. Presentations were heard on several subjects, including the role of records management in government, and the problems of retention, accumulation and disposal.⁴⁰ In his presentation on records management, D.M. Watter discussed the need for a records plan which included: "(c) a wise selection for retention and disposal

³⁷McCoy, National Archives, 177.

³⁸A.M. Willms, "The Role of the Public Archives Records Centre in Federal Records Management," Canadian Historical Association Report 1960: 107.

³⁹Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, 2.

⁴⁰D.M. Watter, "The Importance of the Role of Records Management in Government Administration," In Records Management Conference 1954, by the Staff Training Branch, (Ottawa: Civil Service Commission, [1954]), 1-6; W.K. Lamb, "The Problem of Retention, Accumulation, and Disposal of Records," Ibid., 1-4.

of records, (d) a plan or program for retiring by transfer to intermediate storage, and (e) ultimate disposal or transfer to the archives."⁴¹ While he did not mention records scheduling, his description fits closely with the practice. Both the plan and records schedules identify how records will be stored and disposed of, from the active stage through to the inactive stage.

One other contribution of the Conference was the formulation of recommendations for public records:

The rapid accumulation of government records poses a serious problem both as to space and manpower requirements ... it is essential that effective action be taken to a) Ensure that unnecessary material is not sent to files ... (b) Select well qualified personnel ... (c) Screen existing files to destroy any no longer required, and transfer to the Public Archives any records of historical value.⁴²

These recommendations showed that the Conference participants were aware of the need to dispose systematically of government records. They also recognized the need to adopt the basic elements of records management to control records creation, use and disposal. The recommendations included that

Provision be made for close liaison between departmental records management committees, the Public Records Committee, the Dominion Archivist, and other existing authorities, for the purpose of classifying the records

⁴¹Watter, "Records Management in Government Administration," Ibid., 3.

⁴²"Recommendations for the Improvement of Records Management in Government Departments and Agencies of Government," Ibid., 1.

of each department and establishing procedural manuals or other authorities for the orderly disposal of inactive records on a continuous basis.⁴³

There was no explicit mention of records scheduling, but the recommendation pointed to the need for records classification and for continuing disposal authority, and both elements are central to records scheduling. It is impossible to judge the impact of the recommendations of a single conference: however, they adequately demonstrated the ideas which were present at that juncture.⁴⁴

2.4.1 Public Archives Records Centre⁴⁵

The Public Archives of Canada assumed a more substantial role in records management and records scheduling after the completion of its first Records Centre, in April 1956. The primary role of the Records Centre was to receive the dormant records of government. This role involved both the archivists and the departments in the selection of records for permanent

⁴³Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴Another records management conference held just four years later was more specifically concerned with records scheduling. This change points to the increasing popularity and acceptance of the practice of records scheduling in Canada. see: A. Gray, "Scheduling of Records," in Records Management Conference March 24-26, 1958, by the Staff Training Branch, (Ottawa: Civil Service Commission, [1958]: 11-15.

⁴⁵The Public Archives Records Centre would subsequently be renamed the Federal Records Centre.

preservation from records already transferred to the Centre.⁴⁶ The Records Centre also assumed a second role, "the development of methods for planned disposal of obsolete records and the preparation and approval of records schedules."⁴⁷ The purpose was to control the transfers to the Centre. To accomplish this role, a Disposal and Scheduling section was created in PAC in 1960. This section assisted departments in the preparation of records schedules, and prepared the general retention schedules published in 1963.⁴⁸ Thus, the establishment of the Records Centre under the control of the Public Archives gave archivists a clear mandate to become involved in records scheduling.

The creation of the Records Centre also contributed indirectly to the use of records schedules in the government, for several other reasons. First, the establishment of a storage area for semiactive records was a prerequisite for the implementation of effective scheduling because schedules required that records be removed from primary office space to low cost storage space. Second, the presence of the Records Centre made the removal of unneeded departmental records easy, and departments found themselves in a better position to

⁴⁶Canada, Public Archives, Report of the Public Archives for the Years, 1955-1958, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1959), 8.

⁴⁷Canada, Public Archives, Public Archives of Canada Report, 1959-1969, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), 1; William Ormsby, "The Public Archives of Canada 1948-1968," Archivaria 15 (Winter 1982-1983): 42.

⁴⁸Canada, Public Archives, Public Archives of Canada Report, 1959-1969, 1.

evaluate and schedule their current records.⁴⁹ Finally, in 1964, the Records Centre refused to accept records which were unscheduled, a tactic which provided a significant incentive for departments to adopt records scheduling.⁵⁰

2.4.2 General Records Schedules, 1957

In 1956, the Records Management Association of Ottawa formed a special committee to consider the development of records schedules that departments could share.⁵¹ One year later, the Committee produced the Schedule of Records Common to Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government: Suggested Periods of Retention, published by the Public Archives of Canada. This was the first general records schedule produced for the Canadian government. The schedule referred to records related to the following subjects: general administrative, personnel, financial, building and property, and equipment and supply.⁵² This schedule did not grant departments the authority to dispose of records, but it was recommended as a guide, "for

⁴⁹Willms, "Records Centre in Federal Records Management," 112.

⁵⁰Canada, Public Archives, Public Archives of Canada Report, 1959-1969, 10; Ormsby, "Public Archives of Canada," 42.

⁵¹Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, 2.

⁵²Canada, Public Archives, Schedule of Records Common to Department and Agencies of the Federal Government: Suggested Periods of Retention, (Ottawa: Public Archives, 1957), 4, 7, 8, 9, 10.

organizing disposal programmes."⁵³ The authority for records disposal remained with the Public Records Committee and the Treasury Board. However, the Treasury Board Office, the Comptroller of the Treasury and the Auditor General endorsed the document, which became the basis for future developments in general records scheduling in Canada.⁵⁴

2.4.3 Records Management Survey Committee, 1959-1960

In January 1959, the Public Records Committee appointed a Records Management Survey Committee. The report that it produced in 1960 described the Committee's mandate in detail:

To ascertain from departments and agencies of Government certain data that seem essential for the long term planning of a records management programme and to make recommendations thereon to the Public Records Committee.⁵⁵

The inquiry into records disposal practices was an essential element of the Committee's investigation. The Committee's terms of reference stated:

(b) To ascertain the systems and methods used by departments in the handling and disposal of departmental records, and obtain other relevant information. (c) To make

⁵³Ibid., 2.

⁵⁴Ibid.; Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, 2; Canada, Records Management Survey Committee, "Report of the Records Management Survey Committee 1959 on Records of the Public Departments and Agencies in the Government of Canada," (Ottawa, 1960), 11; Willms, "Records Centre in Federal Records Management," 108.

⁵⁵Canada, Records Management Survey Committee, "Report," ii.

recommendations to aid in planning of a records programme which will include some departmental control on the formation of records; a reduction in the bulk of dead and dormant records by systematic disposal and transfer of records from active working areas, and the safeguarding of permanent records.⁵⁶

The Committee discussed the use of records scheduling and other methods for the control and disposal of records.

Its findings revealed a lack of systematic records disposal in government:

Although departments indicated on their returns to this committee that the majority of them have scheduled their records or are now in the process of doing this, we found this is not true ... Only a very few departments and agencies have proper records schedules which provide for both continuous transfer to dormant storage and destruction⁵⁷

The Committee also commented that the 1936 Treasury Board minute and its 1944 amendment were out of date, and yet they remained the basis for many departments disposal programmes. Most records were still disposed of in a haphazard and unorganized fashion.⁵⁸

These findings clearly demonstrated that developments in Canada trailed behind those in the United States. The reason for this disparity included "the inadequacies of the over-all control mechanism ... the Committee on Public Records."⁵⁹ This

⁵⁶Ibid., 1.

⁵⁷Ibid., 36.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., 562.

was not a new conclusion; previous commissions had already pointed to the need to strengthen the role of the Public Records Committee and other bodies to assist in the development, implementation and authorization of records disposal programs. This Survey Committee attributed the problems to the failure of government to implement the recommendations of previous commissions.⁶⁰

The Committee's findings were not all negative. It was perceived that "there is ... a stirring and a striving for advancement in this field." The change was linked to the "cumulative effect of past denunciations by fact finding bodies" and "the very great advancement in records management in the United States."⁶¹

The Committee's recommendations reflected the work of past commissions and also drew on the experience of records scheduling in the United States. The first recommendation concerned the role of the Public Records Committee. It stated that "the exact responsibilities of the Public Records Committee be more clearly defined." Recommendation two called for the appointment of a full time secretary to ensure that the Committee dealt with disposal matters in a timely fashion. These recommendations reflected those of the Massey Commission and were designed to clarify and strengthen the Committee's role in

⁶⁰Ibid., 5, 9, 15.

⁶¹Ibid., 12.

records disposal.⁶²

The Committee also made several recommendations regarding the practice of records disposal. Recommendation fifteen concerned records scheduling and stated that

Departments be encouraged to schedule their records. The Public Records Committee should set out the basic requirements of these schedules; ... they must cover all records including those to be retained permanently or indefinitely so that the Committee can get a complete picture of the departments records retention and disposal.⁶³

This recommendation also advised that the Treasury Board Minutes of 1936 and 1944 be replaced by departments own schedules within three years, and showed the Committee's recognition that records schedules were the preferred disposal method. Another important element of this recommendation was the committee's expressed suggestion that schedules be comprehensive and include both records for destruction and those for preservation. This focus demonstrated a balanced view between the use of schedules for efficiency and their use for protection of valuable records.

Recommendations number sixteen and seventeen discussed the Public Archives' advisory role in records disposal. Recommendation sixteen proposed

That a central body be designated to advise and help departments with scheduling. We recommend that the Public Archives Records

⁶²The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951, is often referred to as the Massey Commission.

⁶³Canada, Records Management Survey Committee, "Report," 41.

Centre be this body. It must have staff trained in dormant records procedures who would be free to spend weeks or perhaps months in a department to assist in the details of scheduling.

Recommendation seventeen advised

That the Dominion Archivist be vested with the authority to investigate departmental records holdings and to make recommendations concerning their disposition to the departments and to the Public Records Committee. We further recommend that the staff of the Public Archives Records Centre be designated as the body to make these investigations.⁶⁴

These recommendations were based on the Committee's finding that departments were interested in the use of records schedules, but lacked the knowledge, experience, and time to implement programs.⁶⁵ Archivists in the United States had recognized a similar problem. The implementation of the recommendations would create a situation similar to that of the United States, where the archives assumed a central role. In Canada, PAC, like the National Archives, would investigate, advise and recommend on records disposition practices.⁶⁶

2.4.4 Order in Council 212, February 1961

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., 37.

⁶⁶Following the Committee's report, PAC created a Disposal and Scheduling section to support its advisory role; this section replaced the Accessions and Disposal section. In 1966, the section was renamed the Advisory Services Division. Canada, Public Archives, Public Archives of Canada Report, 1959-1969, 15.

Unlike previous commissions, the Records Management Survey Committee was successful, and changes resulted from its report. In February 1961, an Order in Council reaffirmed the position of the Public Records Committee. The duties of the Committee were unchanged, and the relevant section echoed the 1945 Order in Council which had established the committee. The Committee continued to review records and offer advice to departments regarding "care, housing and destruction."⁶⁷ The role of departments also remained similar. However, the wording of the section changed slightly to emphasize departments' obligations: "each department and agency shall take adequate steps to meet its responsibility for the care, maintenance and retirement of its records."⁶⁸

There were also several differences between the 1945 and the 1961 Orders. One of the significant changes was that the Dominion Archivist was appointed as the Committee's secretariat. The duties of the Secretariat included "the preliminary examination of, and recommendations concerning, all departmental records scheduling and disposal proposals and ... presenting these findings and recommendations to the Public Records Committee."⁶⁹ This change enhanced the Archivist's position

⁶⁷Order in Council, 1961-212, February 16, 1961, quoted in Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, (Ottawa: Public Archives, 1963), 34.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Canada, Public Archives, Public Archives of Canada Report, 1959-1969, 15.

because previously the Archivist was only a general member. Another significant change was that the Treasury Board issued directives on behalf of the Public Records Committee.⁷⁰ This increased the authority of the Committee, because the recommendations were more effective when issued by Treasury Board. The final relevant change was the addition of the clause that "departments and agencies should, where practicable, schedule their records for retirement and eventual destruction or long-term retention. All such schedules must be approved by the Committee and the Treasury Board."⁷¹ This was the first time that the Canadian government formally acknowledged the need for departments to adopt the practice of records scheduling. Previous orders and minutes had only emphasized the need to dispose of records in an orderly fashion, but had not identified records scheduling as the best means to do so. With this official endorsement, PAC and the Public Records Committee could expand their efforts to promote the use of schedules in federal departments.

2.4.5 Royal Commission on Government Organization, 1962

The investigation of the Royal Commission on Government

⁷⁰Canada, Royal Commission on Government Organization, Management of the Public Service, Vol. 1, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), 563.

⁷¹Order in Council, 1961-212, February 16, 1961, quoted in Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, (1963), 35.

Organization showed the government's continued interest in the issue of records disposal. Its findings regarded the current state of records disposal, and revealed the attitudes toward the practice of records scheduling. Despite changes brought about by the 1961 Order in Council, the Commission agreed with past investigations in its negative evaluation of the Public Records Committee. It commented that the Order was not strong enough and therefore would fail to have the desired impact on departments. One suggested solution was the creation of legislation to establish rules for the disposal of government records, and to provide "leadership" for departmental records programs.⁷²

One of the many topics investigated by the Commission was the practice of records scheduling. The Commission found that "departments variously report that from fifty to ninety percent of their records are being disposed of on a regular schedule. These figures are exaggerated."⁷³ These findings paralleled those of the Records Management Survey Committee. The lack of qualified personnel was among the primary reasons identified for the weakness of records scheduling. However, the Commission expressed its belief that effective records scheduling was a "prerequisite for an effective disposal program": and that "the disposal and custody of public records should be securely founded on clearly formulated programs for records scheduling

⁷²Canada, Royal Commission on Government Organization, Management of the Public Service, 494, 516, 563.

⁷³Ibid., 493.

and records appraisal."⁷⁴

The Commission also recommended a larger role for PAC in records disposal, particularly in the records appraisal process:

In the process of selective disposal, the responsibility of the Public Archives must be paramount. It is fundamentally an archival and not a managerial responsibility ... Departmental schedules should be scrutinized by the Public Archives, with the right of examination of the records preserved. All requests for permission to destroy records should be approved by the Public Archives and its decisions should prevail.⁷⁵

This statement showed concern for the preservation of records through the disposal process and the recognition of the need for a central role of PAC in records disposal.

2.4.6 General Retention Schedules, September 1963

In September 1963, the Treasury Board authorized the General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada. The Dominion Archivist, acting as the Secretariat of the Public Records Committee, prepared the general retention schedules. The schedules drew heavily on the work of the Records Management Association, the experience of the Public Records Committee, and the experience of PAC.⁷⁶ Unlike the previous general schedules,

⁷⁴Ibid., 562, 567.

⁷⁵Ibid., 562, 571.

⁷⁶Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, 1963, 1; Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, 2d edition, (Ottawa: Public Archives, 1968), 3; Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and

these gave departments the authority to dispose of the records without reference to the Public Records Committee or the Treasury Board. The schedules also replaced all disposal authorities prior to 1945.⁷⁷

The introduction to the general schedules clearly stated their purpose: "[to] authorize departments and agencies to reduce the volume of their active and dormant records and to eliminate dead records holdings in certain large common fields of administrative services."⁷⁸ Like the American ones, the Canadian general schedules focused on the elimination of housekeeping records without value. The schedules included six groups of records, divided according to administrative subjects: general administrative services, buildings, lands and properties, equipment and supplies, financial operation, information services and personnel.⁷⁹

The publication of the general schedules provided several benefits. First, it solidified the Public Archives role in records scheduling and records appraisal as suggested by the Royal Commission on Government Organization. Second, the general schedules introduced many federal departments to the concept of

Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Scheduling and Disposal, 3.

⁷⁷Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, 1968, 5.

⁷⁸Ibid., 3.

⁷⁹Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, 1963, 2, 6.

records scheduling.⁸⁰ Finally, they encouraged future developments in scheduling, because implementation gave departments greater familiarity with the process.

2.4.7 Order in Council 1749 (Public Records Order), 1966

In 1966, PAC assumed a full role in the practice of records scheduling with the implementation of the Public Records Order, P.C. 1749. The Order established that the Public Archives must:

(d) Issue general schedules regarding the retention and disposal of records common to most departments (ie. housekeeping records); and (e) establish standards to assist departments to schedule the retention and disposal of their operational records, and approve or refuse to approve such schedules.⁸¹

These provisions established both the participation of the Archives in scheduling and the use of records schedules for records disposal. The Order also contained a clause which stated that all operational records - those not covered by general schedules were to be scheduled by May 1969.⁸² Departments retained the responsibility for their records, and therefore

⁸⁰Canada, Public Archives, Public Archives of Canada Report, 1959-1969, 10.

⁸¹Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, 1968, 88.

⁸²Ibid.; Bryan Corbett and Eldon Frost, "The Acquisition of Federal Government Records: A Report on Records Management and Archival Practice," Archivaria 17 (Winter 1983-1984): 202

they had to prepare the schedules of operational records.⁸³ The Order also replaced the Public Records Committee, which had been a primary but usually ineffective factor in records disposal, with an Advisory Council on Public Records.⁸⁴

The Order reflected the numerous recommendations for the development of clear and authoritative guidelines for records disposal, and was based on the assumption that compulsory records scheduling was the only means for government to ensure that departments met their records responsibilities. The Order reflected also the influence of the Royal Commission on Government Organization, which advocated a central role for the Public Archives.

Despite rather shaky beginnings, the practice of records scheduling was now firmly entrenched in the disposal activities of the federal government. The popularity and extent of records scheduling in Canada at the end of the 1960s was comparable to that of scheduling in the United States. Both governments promoted the use of general records schedules to assist departments with records preservation and administrative efficiency, and both the National Archives of the United States and PAC shared the central responsibility for their development, implementation and maintenance. The practice of records scheduling, with minor modifications, has continued in both

⁸³Canada, Records Management Branch, Records Organization and Operations, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960), 2.

⁸⁴"News in Brief," Canadian Archivist 1, no. 4 (1966): 13

governments until the present day.

2.5 National Archives of Canada: Current Scheduling Practices

By 1966, PAC had embraced records scheduling as a means to control records disposal and the transfer of records of permanent value to the archives. The Public Records Order gave PAC the responsibility for creating, developing standards for, and approving schedules.⁸⁵ In 1987, the National Archives Act entrenched these administrative responsibilities in Canadian state law. Despite its authority and the enthusiasm it generated, there were several barriers to effective implementation. An examination of records scheduling developments at the now National Archives of Canada (NAC), from the late 1980s until today, reveals attempts to adapt scheduling practices to avoid the limitations of past practice.⁸⁶

The National Archives of Canada Act enshrined in law the authorities already granted to it by the Public Records Order. The Act clearly outlined the prime functions of NAC, one of which was: "to facilitate the management of records of

⁸⁵Canada, Public Archives, General Records Disposal Schedules of the Government of Canada, 1968, 88.

⁸⁶In 1987, the National Archives Act changed the name of the Public Archives of Canada to the National Archives of Canada. All subsequent references in this section will be to the National Archives of Canada because the discussion focuses on events after 1987.

government institutions and of ministerial records."⁸⁷ The Act also listed the powers of the National Archivist, which included to "advise government institutions concerning the standards and procedures pertaining to the management of records."⁸⁸ This advisory role was similar to that stated in the Public Records Order. The Act gave NAC responsibility for records management, a development which paralleled earlier American developments.⁸⁹ Included in the records management function was a role in records scheduling. Another important element of the Act was that it gave NAC control over the disposition of government and ministerial records, which could not be destroyed without the Archivist's consent.⁹⁰ This provision was lacking in the 1912 Public Archives Act.⁹¹ Section six, concerning the transfer of records to NAC, mentioned specifically the use of schedules, "the records of government institutions and ministerial records ... shall be transferred to the care and control of the Archivist in accordance with such schedules or other agreements

⁸⁷National Archives of Canada Act, S.C. 35-36 Elizabeth II, c. 1, s. 4(1).

⁸⁸Ibid., s. 4 (2f).

⁸⁹The Federal Records Act of 1950 discussed the GSA's responsibility for the management of the records of federal agencies. United States, Federal Records Act of 1950 Statutes at Large, 849.

⁹⁰National Archives of Canada Act, S.C. 35-36 Elizabeth II, c. 1, s. 5(1).

⁹¹Public Archives Act, S.C. 2 George V, c. 4.

for the transfer of records."⁹² This section provided the authority for the Archivist's approval of schedules which govern the disposal of government records. The Act codified existing practice and provided both the authority for and support of scheduling at the NAC.

However, the scheduling practice was imperfect. Even before the National Archives Act entrenched the responsibility for records management and scheduling, archivists recognized difficulties with records scheduling. This recognition was the prerequisite for changes in scheduling at NAC. In 1979, Eldon Frost and Bryan Corbett, in "Public Records Division: Acquisition Methods" had drawn attention to the barriers to records scheduling and proposed solutions.⁹³ Their report suggested that records scheduling failed to ensure the preservation of records of continuing value in the archives.⁹⁴ To improve the effectiveness of schedules, the report urged archivists to take a more active role in the creation and implementation of records schedules.⁹⁵ The Frost-Corbett report also recommended that the government implement a more

⁹²National Archives of Canada Act, S.C. 35-36 Elizabeth II, c. 1, s. 6(1).

⁹³Their report was later published in Archivaria under the title "The Acquisition of Federal Government Records: A Report on Records Management and Archival Practice" see: Corbett and Frost, "Acquisition of Federal Government Records," 201-232.

⁹⁴Ibid., 202, 212, 217.

⁹⁵Ibid., 222, 224.

comprehensive scheduling program.

In 1984, the "Report to Treasury Board on the State of Records Management in the Government of Canada" identified similar problems and repeated the recommendations of the Frost-Corbett report. However, the report also recognized the archives' current involvement in activities designed to assist departments with scheduling.⁹⁶ Yet, the report pointed to a lack of comprehensive scheduling within the federal government. One suggested solution was the encouragement of the immediate adoption of scheduling for all government departments.⁹⁷

In a later article, Eldon Frost summarized the problems which had faced NAC in previous decades. In particular, he pointed to the arrival of the information age, the volume of records, and the use of electronic records.⁹⁸ Frost clearly identified the weaknesses of previous records scheduling practices:

While the scheduling system has worked reasonably well at providing timetables and authority for disposing large quantities of paper case files, it has not permitted archivists to identify and preserve important archival records ... It is not clear whether records scheduling has aided records creators in identifying documents

⁹⁶Smith, Wilfred I, "Report to Treasury Board on the State of Records Management in the Government of Canada," ([Ottawa]: Public Archives of Canada, June 1984), 5.

⁹⁷Ibid., 1.

⁹⁸Frost, "Weak Link in the Chain," 79, 80.

important to serve 'corporate' needs.⁹⁹

Frost's writing demonstrates NAC's awareness of records scheduling problems.

In 1987, the implementation of the National Archives of Canada Act forced the Archives to address these problems. The Act reinforced the idea that records scheduling was the preferred means to acquire records for NAC. It also consolidated the Archives role and responsibility for records scheduling. Thus, in response to these reports, the National Archives Act, and past experiences, steps were taken to improve acquisition and appraisal practices which included records scheduling. In the late 1980s, a plan was developed which became known as the Government Wide Plan for the Disposition of Records (GWP).

In 1988, Cynthia Durance prepared a Strategic Planning Framework: Study for the Disposition of Government Records, which outlined many of the elements that would be incorporated into the GWP. The purpose of the study was to "set a framework for the creation and approval of disposition authorities for government records and for monitoring their implementation."¹⁰⁰ The study repeatedly called for a more active role by NAC to increase the effectiveness of records scheduling.¹⁰¹ Durance

⁹⁹Ibid., 80.

¹⁰⁰Cynthia Durance, Strategic Planning Framework: Study for the Disposition of Government Records, (Ottawa: [National Archives of Canada], 1988), i.

¹⁰¹Ibid., ii, 15, 21.

envisioned a comprehensive approach to records disposition which included all government departments and used one time transfer agreements, disposition schedules, disposition agreements for electronic records and General Retention and Disposal Schedules.¹⁰² However, she recognized the limitations of NAC to implement such a program. The study's recommendations included that departments assume responsibility for disposition authorities, and NAC focus on its "advisory, training, reviewing, coordinating, assessing, approving and monitoring roles."¹⁰³ NAC should concentrate its attention on records of permanent value, while departments should be responsible for identifying the retention periods for records of short-term value.¹⁰⁴

In 1990, the GWP was approved after consultation with the various branches of NAC. The priorities of the plan are: the identification and transfer of records, orderly disposition of records in Records Centres, retention of decision-making records, and the reduction of space occupied by records.¹⁰⁵ The GWP provides a means to deal with shortages of resources by focusing available resources on records worthy of preservation.

¹⁰²Ibid., 18-20.

¹⁰³Ibid., vi, 44.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁵Canada, Government Records Branch, Disposition of the Records of the Government of Canada: A Planned Approach, (Ottawa: National Archives of Canada, 1990), 3, 4.

It is also an active approach.¹⁰⁶ The GWP does not significantly alter the practice of records scheduling itself, but rather provides a planned framework in which scheduling will occur. However, the GWP has dramatic implications for records appraisal, because it is institutions and functions and not records which are appraised in the framework.

The plan consists of two distinct elements. First, the GWP "establishes the priority order in which government institutions shall obtain the authority of the National Archivist to dispose of their records."¹⁰⁷ To accomplish this, NAC prepares a ranked list of agencies based on which organizations are most likely to produce records of high value.¹⁰⁸ Agencies are divided into four separate categories. The first includes agencies anticipated to have a large number of valuable records because of the importance of their functions to government. The second category includes smaller agencies, which are however representative of a broad range of activities in Canadian society. Agencies with a narrower focus or a supportive role in government make up the third category. Finally, the fourth category is comprised of marginal agencies with specialized functions.¹⁰⁹ Multi-Year

¹⁰⁶[Canada, National Archives,] "Government-Wide Plan for the Disposition of Records, 1991-1996," ([Ottawa: National Archives, 1990],) 2.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 6.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 9-10, 12-13.

Disposition plans will be established for the agencies according to the order on the list.¹¹⁰ Plans will be prepared for category one in the first year of implementation, for category two during years two and three, for category three within five years and for category four when resources become available.¹¹¹ This approach allows NAC to maintain control over the number and timing of disposition submissions and is envisioned as an active role.¹¹²

Second, the GWP attempts to streamline disposition practices for agencies with similar functions, mandates or structures.¹¹³ The GWP considers a variety of related agencies, but not necessarily all government agencies. The GWP suggests several instances where a cross-institutional approach should be adopted. These include: "common institutions by function", "hierarchical levels of series within institutions" for institutions of low priority, "electronic records GRDS", "central information institutions" and "shared interinstitutional information."¹¹⁴ This second element of the GWP is modeled on NAC's experience with General Retention and

¹¹⁰Ibid., 3.

¹¹¹Ibid., 9-10, 12-13.

¹¹²Ibid., 2.

¹¹³Ibid., 3, 14.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 15, 16.

Disposal Schedules (GRDS).¹¹⁵ However, the focus of the cross-institutional approaches is the development of improved appraisal criteria, and not of schedules. This practice is designed to support the development of the Multi-Year Disposition Plan which is developed on an agency by agency basis.

Both of these elements, the ranking and the cross-institutional development, are meant to provide a framework for the efficient implementation of records schedules and other disposition techniques. Ultimately, this plan should allow the continued use of records scheduling to effectively preserve the records of the government of Canada.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 15.

CHAPTER THREE

Canadian Provincial and U.S. State Scheduling Practices

Records scheduling, having gained widespread acceptance by North American governments in the 1950s and 1960s, continues to enjoy support in both Canada and the United States. Scheduling has spread from the upper levels of government to the lower ones, at state or provincial, regional or county, city and municipal levels. Private companies have also incorporated the practice into their records management programs. The extensive use of scheduling precludes an in depth examination of its development throughout North America. However, a case study approach can provide some insights into current trends. The jurisdictions selected for the analysis of scheduling practices are the Canadian provincial governments of British Columbia and Ontario, and the American state governments of Washington and New York. A brief examination of general historical developments at the state/provincial level provides a background to these case studies.

3.1 Overview of the Development of Provincial Records Scheduling

In Canada, the scope of provincial records disposal problems was minor compared to the federal one, because fewer records were created by provincial governments. Generally, provincial developments in the area followed the example of federal developments after a delay. During the 1920s, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Alberta and New Brunswick adopted

legislation similar to the Public Archives Act, which allowed for the transfer of public records to the archives.¹ The establishment of Public Records Committees also emulated federal practice. Saskatchewan established the first provincial Public Records Committee in 1951. British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Alberta followed suit in the decade that followed.² Provincial developments in records scheduling also followed the federal example after a period of time had elapsed. However, at the provincial level, scheduling was adapted to meet specific provincial needs. Thus, federal developments in records disposal and records scheduling had a significant impact on future provincial developments.

3.2 Overview of the Development of State Records Scheduling

A similar trend occurred in the United States, where the example of federal records disposal practices influenced developments at the state level. Ernst Posner, in his in depth examination of state archives, points out that the 1943 Act to

¹In the New Brunswick act there was no mention of an archives; however, measures were to be taken for both continuing preservation of and access to records. The Preservation of Public Documents Act, S.S. 1970, c. 17, s. 4; Ontario Archive Act, R.S.O. 1970, c. 28; The Preservation of Public Documents Act, S.A. 1924, chapter 31, s. 143; Act Respecting Public Records, S.N.B. 19 George V, c. 54, s.6.

²Act to amend the Archives Act, 1945, S.S. 1951, c. 101, s. 5(1); Public Documents Disposal Act Amendment Act, 1953, S.B.C., c. 27, s. 3; The Public Records Act, S.M. 1955, c. 57, s. 4(1); Public Records Disposal Act, S.N.S. 7 Eliz. II, c. 12, s. 4(1); The Provincial Archives Act, S.A. 1966, c. 73, s. 6.

Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records "prompted many states to adopt the concept of the schedules and ... in general to effect disposal legislation."³ However, developments in records disposition practices lagged significantly behind federal developments. Posner states that "records management in the early 1940s became a concern of the National Archives and somewhat later of the states."⁴ In 1944, an examination of the records disposition practices of twenty-seven states revealed that twenty-one of them had no laws regarding "legal disposal procedures."⁵ Thus, it was several decades before records disposition became a common practice among the states. Posner notes that some states,

Following the example of the federal government ... began to initiate programs for the management of current records or semi current records. As a result, in some states there are now combined archives and records management agencies with responsibilities comparable to those of the National Archives and Records Service.⁶

In 1961, an examination of state records programs found that "there appears to be an increasing interest in records

³Ernst Posner, American State Archives, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 32.

⁴Ibid., 337.

⁵Christopher Crittenden and Nell Hines, "The Disposal of Useless State Archives," American Archivist, 7, no. 3 (July 1944): 166.

⁶Ernst Posner, American State Archives, 2.

management on the part of state and local government."⁷ Even as late as 1964, Posner included a recommendation that state governments establish records retention and disposal schedules "to supersede the use of disposal lists."⁸ Thus, two decades after the implementation of records scheduling at the federal level some states had not yet embraced the practice of records scheduling.

It is also to be noted that disposition practices varied between states. These differences stemmed from the different historical developments that led to the existing state organizational structure, which determined the responsibility for records disposition and scheduling. State legislation also had an impact on differences in the establishment, nature, and effectiveness of records disposition programs.⁹ One example of this variation is the eight different disposition mechanisms in use by state governments described by Posner at the time of his survey.¹⁰ Despite the initial delay and these differences, the states gradually moved to adopt records scheduling. Once scheduling programs were in place, the relatively smaller size of state and provincial governments allowed more flexible and

⁷Rex Beach and John Caton, "State and Local Government Records Programs," American Archivist, 24, no. 3 (July 1961): 289.

⁸Posner, American State Archives, 367.

⁹Ibid., 2.

¹⁰Ibid., 327.

responsive developments.

3.3 British Columbia: British Columbia Archives and Records Service (BCARS)

Like other provinces, British Columbia followed the initiative of the federal government of Canada in records disposition. In 1953, with the Public Documents Disposal Amendment Act, the province established a Public Documents Committee to make recommendations about the destruction of records. The members of this committee were named by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and included the Provincial Archivist. The Lieutenant-Governor also made recommendations about the destruction or transfer of records to the Provincial Archives. The Legislative Assembly had to approve the destruction of any government records.¹¹ The elements of this Act were in keeping with developments in other provinces during the same period. The Act also reflected previous legislation enacted at the federal level. Subsequent amendments to the Act assigned more specifically destruction authority, and outlined the reasons for disposition, the required period of time (seven years) before destruction, and exceptions to the seven year limitation. The Act, as amended in 1979, also required the retention of written approvals if the documents destroyed were

¹¹Public Documents Disposal Amendment Act, 1953, S.B.C., c. 27, s.3.

from a court records office.¹² Although it did not mention scheduling, the Act provided a legal basis for the practice in the province. In 1983, a new amendment to the Disposal Act included a definition of a record schedule:

A prescribed timetable that
 (a)describes a document's lifespan from
 the date on which it was created to the date
 of its final disposition ... and
 (b)provides instruction as to the
 manner and time of disposition of a document
 under this Act.¹³

The amendment added that records destroyed according to approved records schedules were exempt from the seven year limitation.¹⁴ With this last amendment, the British Columbia government formally recognized and promoted the use of records schedules.

The province quickly identified the need for a more controlled approach to records scheduling. In 1987, after four years of developments, retention schedules were approved which were integrated with the government-wide records classification. The Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) applies to records which "pertain to general administrative matters and internal housekeeping functions."¹⁵ It provides a "government-

¹²Document Disposal Act, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 95, s. 2, 3, 6.

¹³Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 1983, S.B.C. 1983, c. 20, s. 8.

¹⁴Ibid., s. 9.

¹⁵Subsequent references will use the acronym ARCS. Walter J. Meyer Zu Erpen, "The British Columbia Records Management Program's Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling System," [Edmonton, Al.: Association of Records Managers and Administrators], 1989, H-332-2; Walter J Meyer Zu Erpen, "Report

wide standard for the classification, filing, and scheduling of administrative records."¹⁶ The complimentary to ARCS is the Operational Records Classification System (ORCS), developed at the agency level.¹⁷ ORCS applies to records which "relate to the operations and services provided by a government agency in carrying out the functions for which it is responsible according to statute, mandate or policy."¹⁸ Both ARCS and ORCS are integrated classification and scheduling systems, and have become essential to the efficient management of provincial records, particularly since the issuing of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation, in 1992.

3.3.1 Administrative Records Classification System

ARCS replaces general retention and disposal schedules, like those implemented at the federal level in both the United States and Canada. It includes a classification scheme which applies to all administrative records of departments and agencies. The classification component of the integrated system

of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Records Management Council on Records Retention and Disposition Scheduling," ([Victoria B.C.: Federal-Provincial Territorial Records Management Council, 1989]), 8.

¹⁶British Columbia, Administrative Records Classification System, (Victoria, B.C.: Government of British Columbia, 1988, 1989), 3.

¹⁷Subsequent references will use the acronym ORCS. Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-5.

¹⁸Meyer Zu Erpen, "Report on Records Scheduling," 8.

stemmed from the federal government's Subject Classification Guide which was altered slightly to suit the needs of the provincial government.¹⁹ It is a block numeric system in which the administrative subject areas of government housekeeping functions are assigned a unique block of numbers. Those areas include: administration, buildings and properties, equipment and supplies, finance, personnel and electronic data processing systems. Within each administrative area, functions or subjects are identified, and assigned primary numbers. Then, within each function or subject, groups of activities, often corresponding to the types of resulting records are identified and assigned secondary numbers. Types of secondaries include: policy, general, subject and case files.²⁰ Central to the effectiveness of the government-wide classification is the standardization of both numbers and headings within the system.

The classification system forms the basic structure to which the records schedules are attached. Alongside the records classification, at the secondary level, are a records retention and disposal schedule, and a key. These provide the user with information about the time span of records' active and semi-active life and the final disposition. Separate schedules are drawn for the office of primary responsibility and for the other

¹⁹Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-2; British Columbia, Administrative Records Classification System, 11.

²⁰British Columbia, Administrative Records Classification System, 11, 13, 17.

offices when necessary.²¹ This provision allows for the same records, if retained by different offices, to have different retention periods. The linkage between the records schedule and classification is unique to ARCS and ORCS. A standard format is used throughout to ensure "consistency of recognition and understanding."²² The page format clearly shows the linkages between the records classification and the schedule.

ARCS also provides for the inclusion of new secondaries and tertiaries if required by an agency. This practice ensures that all of an agency's administrative records will be included in the classification system according to the agency's needs, and provides the basis for updating the system.²³

ARCS provides for the control of records in all media, even if within the classification system, a special section exists for electronic information systems.²⁴ This is not an exception to the general rule that records in different media must be classified and scheduled together if they are the residue of the same activity. In fact, the specific group of records the section in question refers to comprise the ephemeral products of

²¹Ibid., 16, 17.

²²Meyer Zu Erpen, "Report on Records Scheduling," 10; Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-13.

²³British Columbia, Administrative Records Classification System, 23.

²⁴Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-3.

electronic systems, such as audit trail and processing records.²⁵

There are advantages to ARCS which are not inherent to the practice of records scheduling alone. First, the integrated system provides an excellent tool for the total management of all administrative records.²⁶ In fact, while it accommodates both the destruction and the preservation of records and, thus serves the dual role of all records schedules, it also provides for the control of the "organization, retrieval, [and] storage" of records, and is a tool for records managers, users, and archivists alike.²⁷ Second, ARCS provides an unbreakable linkage between a record's classification and its retention, and between records context and purpose and their final disposition. This allows for consistent provenancial appraisal, and also eliminates one of the primary problems of general schedules, the lack of correspondence between the categories identified for disposal in the schedules and the aggregations in the various filing systems of the records creators. In fact, users do not always recognize which records in the general schedule correspond to the records in the office because of both the lack of standard terminology and the spread among many filing units of similar types of records. In ARCS, the linkage between classification and the schedule occurs at the secondary level

²⁵Ibid., H-332-8.

²⁶British Columbia, Administrative Records Classification System, 7.

²⁷Ibid., 3.

and ensures consistency in implementation because there is little or no need for interpretation.²⁸ Another advantage of ARCS is that the appraisal decisions are documented on the ARCS form with the inclusion of brief notes and even appraisal reports.²⁹ This practice reduces the need for archivists' intervention after the system has been established.³⁰ It also reduces the time required for the examination of the records by archivists after transfer to the archives. Finally, ARCS provides several other practical advantages: it constitutes a single records management manual easy to use and update; it allows for the creation of cross references from the records classification to the accession numbers used for semi-active and inactive records; it provides for more efficient transfers; and improves the physical control of records.³¹ Thus, an integrated classification and scheduling system provides a variety of advantages which overcome many of the problems which impair the effectiveness of administrative records scheduling.

²⁸Meyer, Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-3; Meyer Zu Erpen, "Report on Records Scheduling," 11.

²⁹Walter Meyer Zu Erpen, "British Columbia's Integrated System of Records Classification, Records Scheduling and Archival Appraisal," Banff, Alberta: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1991, 1, 9; Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-6.

³⁰Meyer Zu Erpen, "British Columbia's System of Classification, Scheduling and Appraisal," 2.

³¹Ibid., 2, 3; Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-6; Meyer Zu Erpen, "Report on Records Scheduling," 10.

3.3.2 Organizational Records Classification System

ORCS parallels agency schedules used by other governments; however, it ensures agency-wide consistency because of the linkage of classification and retention scheduling within each department. The development of ORCS proceeds along the same lines as that of ARCS, but each agency develops a system to deal with its unique operational records.³² Implementation also occurs on an agency by agency basis.³³ Each agency's specific focus allows for improvements not easy to realize with ARCS. For example, ORCS may incorporate "standardized secondaries", "ongoing numbers used for transferring and accessioning", and "documentation of record operations" which should be used to manage specific records series.³⁴ The advantages of ARCS also apply to ORCS, because of the similarities between the two systems. With the implementation of both ARCS and ORCS, the British Columbia government has an excellent set of tools for the management of all government records throughout their life cycle. The British Columbia Archives and Records Service is involved in the process of implementation and updating the two systems and provides advice on the development the integrated systems.

³²Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-3, H-332-4.

³³Meyer Zu Erpen, "Report on Records Scheduling," 9.

³⁴Meyer Zu Erpen, "Integrated Records Classification and Scheduling," H-332-5.

3.4 Ontario: Archives of Ontario

In the 1960s, Ontario, like other provinces, followed the federal example and became involved in scheduling. The reasons for the development in Ontario were not unlike those of other governments: scheduling was a means to protect valuable records, destroy the valueless ones, promote economy and efficiency, and identify and manage the life cycle of the record.³⁵ The promise of efficiency offered by records management contributed to the formation of the Records Management Committee of the Treasury Board in 1965. The Committee's purpose was

To evaluate and approve or reject departmental records retention schedules, to generally co-ordinate the implementation and maintenance of the records management programme and to make appropriate policy recommendations to Treasury Board.³⁶

Thus, the evaluation of schedules was the responsibility of the Committee and not the provincial archives. However, at the same time, within the Department of Public Records and Archives, a Records Services Branch was established. The Branch's primary concern was the introduction of records scheduling in the provincial government.³⁷ In 1968, a directive formally consolidated the Branch's and therefore the Archives' role. It

³⁵Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "A Records Management Guideline: Records Inventory and Scheduling," ([Toronto]: Advisory Committee on Records Management, [1979]), 14.

³⁶Barbara Craig, "Records Management and the Ontario Archives, 1950-1976," Archivaria 8 (Summer 1979): 17.

³⁷Ibid., 17, 19.

stated that the Branch was "the central body designated to advise and help departments with filing methods, records scheduling and records retention procedures."³⁸ Over the decade, the province made major accomplishments in the implementation of scheduling, from a single schedule in 1965 to over two thousand schedules in 1969.³⁹ The desire to promote government-wide scheduling led to the creation of a 1971 deadline for the implementation of scheduling in all departments. While this deadline was ultimately abandoned, records scheduling remained of central importance to the Ontario government.⁴⁰

The 1970 Archives Act and its amendments in 1972 were similar to other acts implemented in Canada at both the federal and provincial levels.⁴¹ The Act allowed the Lieutenant-Governor to make regulations for the destruction and transfer of specific records and classes of records, and prevented the destruction of government records without the approval of the Archivist.⁴² While the Act did not provide a clear endorsement for the

³⁸Ibid., 23.

³⁹"News in Brief," Canadian Archivist 2, no. 1 (1970): 76; Craig, "Records Management," 20.

⁴⁰Craig, "Records Management," 24, 25.

⁴¹Archives Act 1970, c. 28; 1972, c. 1 quoted in Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "A Records Management Guideline: Role of the Archives of Ontario," ([Toronto]: Advisory Committee on Records Management, June 1980), [Appendix B].

⁴²Archives Act 1970, c. 28, s. 6, 8; 1972 c. 1, s. 14 (2) quoted in Ibid.

practice of records scheduling, as in the later British Columbia example, it did allow for the continued involvement of the Archives in records scheduling.

Following the Act, the records management function within the Ontario government was reorganized. In 1975, the Advisory Committee on Records Management (ACORM) replaced the Records Management Committee of the Treasury Board.⁴³ Among the members of the new Committee was the Archivist of Ontario.⁴⁴ One year later, the Records Services Branch was closed. One author characterized this shift as the means to separate the "records management function from the Archives."⁴⁵ However, records management and scheduling were not completely removed from the Archives responsibilities.

In 1976, a directive from the Management Board of Cabinet outlined the Archives' role. Records scheduling was among the records management services discussed in the directive. The protection and preservation of valuable records and the preparation of file classification systems were also included in the definition of records management services.⁴⁶ The directive

⁴³Craig, "Records Management," 28.

⁴⁴Ontario Manual of Administration, Directive 55-4, Information Systems-Technology-Records Management quoted in Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Management Concepts," [Appendix A, 13].

⁴⁵Craig, "Records Management," 29, 31.

⁴⁶Ontario Manual of Administration, Directive 55-4, Information Systems-Technology-Records Management quoted in Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records

included a statement of the Records Management Policy in Ontario, as a commitment to

Provide efficient and prompt disposal of records when their administrative, legal and fiscal value has ceased, while preserving those records of enduring value to the province.⁴⁷

In order to accomplish this objective, the Archives was given responsibility for the identification of records of permanent value. The ACORM's responsibility for schedule assessment was delegated to the Archives. In addition, the Archives, in conjunction with the Management Board of Secretariat and Records Services Managers, participated in the development and delivery of training programs.⁴⁸ It was recommended that departments discuss their draft schedules with archivists before submission of the completed schedules.⁴⁹ However, records schedules were developed by the agencies and departments themselves. This directive provided a framework for record scheduling developments in Ontario from 1976 until 1992.

From the formation of the ACORM, in 1975, until its dissolution, in 1992, a substantial scheduling programme was developed for the province. During this time, records scheduling was guided by the ACORM, but the records schedules themselves

Management Concepts," [Appendix A, 12].

⁴⁷Ibid., [Appendix A, 13].

⁴⁸Ibid., [Appendix A, 13, 14].

⁴⁹Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Role of the Archives of Ontario," 8.

were evaluated by the Archives of Ontario. The result was a cooperative effort. A series of different types of schedules and a body of scheduling techniques were developed to accommodate the variety of records encountered throughout government. For example, schedules catered to head and branch office records, electronic records, and housekeeping records.

3.4.1 Standard Records Schedules

In Ontario, the Standard Records Schedule is the primary tool for the management of records. The schedule contains information similar to that found on any agency schedule. The form includes: records series title and number, responsible office, physical form, file system and cutoff dates, index system, records series description and purpose (operational or housekeeping), retention requirements, access restrictions, date range and volume, annual accumulation, final disposition and required approvals.⁵⁰ The Standard Schedule is closely tied to the Records Schedule Worksheet on which the information is collected during the inventory of the records in the department.⁵¹ The schedule may be used for all records series and is the basis for the other scheduling techniques developed by

⁵⁰This analysis is based on a 1990 revision of the standard schedule (form 7540-1093).

⁵¹Analysis based on form 7540-1074 (Rev. 10/81).

the province.⁵²

3.4.2 General Records Schedules

The Ontario government also uses general schedules. However, it uses a two tier system, which consists of two different types of general schedules, Ministry Common and Government Common. Ministry Common schedules are proposed within each Ministry, and apply only to Branches within that Ministry.⁵³ These schedules are developed to deal with housekeeping records that lack continuing value, but may also be used for operational records without value.⁵⁴ Unlike the federal example, these schedules are not created by the Archives and are not applicable government-wide. Government Common Schedules parallel the federal example because they are applicable government-wide. However, they are not created by the Archives either, but by a subcommittee of ACORM. Ministries may suggest records series to the Subcommittee for the development of general schedules.⁵⁵ In contrast to the federal example, Government Common Schedules do not receive final approval until information about the location and volume of records has been collected on a draft schedule. In

⁵²Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Inventory and Scheduling," 48.

⁵³Victor Jones, interview by author, 13 May 1993, Toronto.

⁵⁴Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Inventory and Scheduling," 59.

⁵⁵Ibid., 74.

Ontario, both Standard Records Schedules and general schedules are closely tied to records inventory information. This practice allows the government to effectively plan for the future disposition of records at record centres and in the Archives.

3.4.3 Master/Sub Schedules

The Master/Sub Schedule is a scheduling technique designed to accommodate the repetition of records series that occurs when both the head and branch offices retain the same records series.⁵⁶ As the name indicates, the technique results in two or more separate schedules: the Master Schedule, and one or more Sub Schedules. The Master Schedule takes the same form as the Standard Schedule, however, complete information is not required. The Master Schedule simply provides a description of the records series, final disposition and the retention period. This information is then used to create the Sub Schedules, one schedule for each branch which holds the records series described on the Master Schedule. Information about the volume, location and inclusive dates of the records series is listed on the Sub Schedule.⁵⁷ The Master Schedule differs from general schedules because it does not provide the destruction authority for the records. Destruction may only occur when the Sub Schedules receive approval. The Sub Schedule may also contain

⁵⁶Craig, "Records Management," 24.

⁵⁷Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Inventory and Scheduling," 50.

retention periods, in the branch and records centre, which differ from those of the Master Schedule. However, the final disposition is the same on both the Master and Sub Schedule.⁵⁸

The need for greater efficiency led to a variation on the Master/Sub Scheduling technique, that is, to the Master/Sub Alternative. After the completion of the Master Schedule, an Alternative Schedule is prepared to accompany the initial schedule. Unlike the Sub Schedule, which schedules a records series in a single branch, the Alternative Schedule includes on a single document the same records series in all branches.⁵⁹ On the Alternative Schedule each location is identified and given a location code; opposite to this information, the volume, inclusive dates, retention period and final disposition are recorded. This technique streamlines the approval process by reducing the number of Schedules which must be approved.⁶⁰

There are a number of advantages to the use of Master/Sub Schedules and Master/Sub Alternative Schedules. The first benefit is that information about the volume and location of records is readily available. The second advantage is that the technique promotes the use of common retention periods; yet, it retains the flexibility to offer different retention periods for

⁵⁸Ibid., 50.

⁵⁹Analysis based on form 20-202 (08/92).

⁶⁰Victor Jones, interview by author, 13 May 1993, Toronto; Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Inventory and Scheduling," 54.

some branches where necessary.⁶¹ For example, the Archives may decide that it will selectively preserve a records series by preserving the series of a single branch while the same records series in all other branches may be destroyed after the appropriate retention period.⁶² General schedules lack this flexibility. These scheduling techniques are unlike the federal examples examined here.

3.4.4 Systems Schedules

Another initiative of the Ontario government is the Systems Schedule.⁶³ This scheduling technique is designed to accommodate the complexity of electronic information systems; however, it does not schedule electronic records alone. Instead, it provides a single schedule for all elements of an information system, regardless of the records' media, in an attempt to reveal the interrelationships between the records associated with the system.⁶⁴ The Systems Schedule may include one or more records series. The Standard Schedule is the basis of the Systems Schedule; however, additional documentation is required to

⁶¹Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Inventory and Scheduling," 54, 55.

⁶²Victor Jones, interview by author, 13 May 1993, Toronto.

⁶³The National Archives of the United States and the National Archives of Canada have spent considerable time and resources on the development of techniques to preserve and protect electronic records. Their work has been an example for developments in other jurisdictions.

⁶⁴Victor Jones, interview by author, 13 May 1993, Toronto.

prepare an effective schedule. A Records Schedule Analysis Sheet and system flow chart is attached to the standard form.⁶⁵ The Records Schedule Analysis Sheet collects detailed information about the system, and each of its records series components, including system title and schedule number, records series descriptions, file system and file type (manual, microcomputer, mainframe, minicomputer, combination), and volume. Additional information gathered for each records series includes the status of the transmission of the records (original or copy), the medium, record type (input, output, generated), run frequency, audit requirements, records nature (personal, sensitive, critical), cutoff dates, inclusive dates, retention requirements, access restrictions, and final disposition.⁶⁶ The Analysis Sheet compiles, for each records series which makes up the system, the information which is normally captured on the Standard Schedule. The Analysis Sheet provides a single authority for the disposition of all elements of the system, thereby reducing the number of authorities that would have been granted using Standard Schedules. The Analysis Sheet also captures additional information which would not appear on the Standard Schedule and is relevant to records series which are recorded on electronic media. Since 1988, at the initiative of

⁶⁵Ontario, Advisory Committee on Records Management, "Records Inventory and Scheduling," 65.

⁶⁶Analysis based on form entitled: "Records Schedule Analysis Sheet."

the Archives of Ontario, Systems Schedules have also included a Records Schedule Addendum.⁶⁷ This form provides a descriptive overview of the system, lists available systems documentation and provides data/systems flow descriptions.⁶⁸ The benefit of the Addendum is that it "provides a standard format for systems documentation that the records schedule form was not designed to provide."⁶⁹

The development of this scheduling technique demonstrates the need to accommodate the complex variety of records created today. Systems scheduling is currently under revision because it was developed to deal with large mainframe installations. Now archivists and records managers must consider the implications of the widespread use of Personal Computers and Local Area Networks throughout government, and adapt scheduling techniques accordingly.⁷⁰

3.4.5 Directive 7-5, 1992

While scheduling in Ontario has remained virtually unchanged since the late 1970s, future developments may create fundamental changes. In June 1992, Directive 7-5 replaced the 1976 Records Management Directive. This directive strengthens

⁶⁷[Ontario, Archives,] "Guide to Systems Scheduling," ([Toronto: Archives of Ontario], November 1988), [1].

⁶⁸Analysis based on form 20-293 (08/92).

⁶⁹[Ontario, Archives,] "Guide to Systems Scheduling," [5].

⁷⁰Victor Jones, interview by author, 13 May 1993, Toronto.

the role of the Archives in records management and scheduling by stating that "the Archivist of Ontario has government-wide responsibility to ensure the proper management of recorded information."⁷¹ The requirements of the Directive include:

The Archives of Ontario must develop the government-wide operational directives, standards and guidelines required by this directive for the identification, description, storage, transfer and preservation or disposal of all recorded information, in consultation with ministries, agencies, and professional information-systems and records-management communities.⁷²

This statement transfers the responsibilities held by the ACORM to the Archives. Among them, the most significant are the development of policies, directives and guidelines for records scheduling, and ensuring departmental compliance with schedules.⁷³ The Directive maintains the Archives current responsibility for approvals and expands its training role.⁷⁴ Ministries retain their responsibility for the development of schedules. The Directive clearly outlines the nature and extent of these records schedules, whose purpose is "to govern the retention and disposal of: all existing records information under their [ministry] control; all recorded information as it

⁷¹[Ontario,] "Management of Recorded Information," ([Toronto: Government of Ontario], June 1992), 7-5-2.

⁷²Ibid., 7-5-3.

⁷³Ibid., 7-5-5.

⁷⁴Ibid.

is created in whatever form."⁷⁵ At the present time the Archives of Ontario is exploring its expanded records management role. New guidelines are under development and should be ready for implementation in 1994.⁷⁶

3.5 New York State Archives and Records Administration

In 1911, New York State became aware of the importance of its records after fire destroyed a large number of them housed in the State Library. Subsequent legislation provided for the preservation of valuable records with the creation of the Division of Public Records and the Division of History within the Department of Education.⁷⁷ These two divisions had responsibility for state records and local records respectively.⁷⁸ The 1913 law prescribed that the Divisions take "all necessary measures for the proper inscription, the retrieval, the care and preservation of all public records in

⁷⁵Ibid., 7-5-3.

⁷⁶Victor Jones, interview by author, 13 May 1993, Toronto.

⁷⁷Laws of New York, 1911, chapter 380; Laws of New York, 1913, chapter 424. Howard Crocker, "The Local Records Program in New York State" American Archivist, 13, no. 1 (January 1950): 4; Howard Crocker, "The New York State Local Record Program," American Archivist, 20, no. 1 (January 1957): 33; Larry Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs: New York as a Case Study," American Archivist, 55, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 579; Edward Rouse, "The Archives of New York," American Archivist, 4 no. 4 (October 1941): 271.

⁷⁸References to local government records includes the records of counties, towns, villages and other public districts, for example, law enforcement, health, education. Crocker, "The Local Records Program in New York State" 3.

various political divisions of the state."⁷⁹ Although the primary focus was on the preservation of records, it would gradually shift to the destruction of unwanted records.⁸⁰ The 1913 Law also stated that state and local agencies should obtain the consent of the Commissioner of Education before they disposed of any records.⁸¹

A 1944 survey of records disposal practices, characterized New York State as "a leader in this field" and stated that "the supervisor of public records in that state has made some interesting experiments."⁸² Despite this positive characterization and the existing legislative framework, the Commissioner's authority for records disposition was not well established. In 1945, the Attorney General questioned the validity of the law which required the "consent" of the Commissioner. He believed that the existing law failed to clearly outline the Commissioner's responsibility for destruction authorization.⁸³ This concern would lead to future amendments.

In 1950, records management responsibilities for state

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., 4.

⁸¹Laws of New York, 1913, c. 424. Crittenden and Hines, "The Disposal of Useless State Archives," 194; Posner, American State Archives, 194.

⁸²Crittenden and Hines, "The Disposal of Useless State Archives," 171.

⁸³Crocker, "The Local Records Program in New York State," 7.

records were transferred to the Division of Budget.⁸⁴ The State Finance Law gave

To the Director of the Bureau of the Budget power to authorize or require the disposal of state records ... to inquire into, and require reports on 'the condition, character, amount and methods of keeping such records' and to promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to that effect.⁸⁵

Records management responsibilities for local government records remained under the direction of the Department of Education. A contemporary observer, Howard Crocker, pointed to the Department's new emphasis on assisting local agencies with "records problems."⁸⁶ The separation between state and local records management activities remained until 1987.

Over the ten years following the 1950 law, a variety of events contributed to the improvement of the management of records at both the state and local level. State agencies were required to appoint record officers. The Bureau of Budget undertook an inventory of all state records in an attempt to "identify those major records holdings that were not yet scheduled for disposition or retention."⁸⁷ Local governments generated records disposal lists for approval by the

⁸⁴"News Notes: New York," American Archivist, 13, no. 3 (July 1950): 410; Vernon Santen, "The New York State Inventory Project," American Archivist, 20, no. 4 (October 1957): 357.

⁸⁵Posner, American State Archives, 197.

⁸⁶Crocker, "The Local Records Program in New York State," 3.

⁸⁷Santen, "The New York State Inventory Project," 358.

Commissioner of Education. The Division of Archives and History, within the Department of Education, compiled these lists and reissued them to provide guidelines for records disposition. However, these lists were "permissive and not mandatory."⁸⁸ In 1951, amendments to the Public Officers Law clarified local governments' authority to destroy records after obtaining the consent of the Commissioner of Education.⁸⁹ This amendment also resulted in the regular disposition of local records according to authorized retention periods. By 1957, two thousand "kinds of records" had been assigned retention periods.⁹⁰ The use of disposal lists for local records continued into the 1960s.⁹¹ In 1961, responsibility for state records management was transferred to the Office of General Services. State agency's disposal requests now required the approval of the Director of Budget, the Comptroller, the Commissioner of Education and the Commissioner of General Services.⁹² Ernst Posner observed that, "it was estimated that, by the spring of 1963, 80 percent of the

⁸⁸Crocker, "The Local Records Program in New York State," 8, 11.

⁸⁹Laws of New York, 1951, chapter 724. "News Notes: New York," American Archivist. 14, no. 4 (October 1951): 379; Crocker, "The New York State Local Record Program," 35; Posner, American State Archives, 199.

⁹⁰Crocker, "The New York State Local Record Program," 35.

⁹¹Posner, American State Archives, 200, 201.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 195, 198.

state's records were scheduled for retention or disposal."⁹³ The developments in New York State paralleled the federal preoccupation with record management and records scheduling during the same period.

New York State's use of disposal lists and schedules predated the establishment of the State Archives. After 1950, the management of state records was the concern of the Division of Budget and the Office of General Services, both offices which lacked connections with historians. In contrast, from its establishment, the management of local records was associated with the concerns of historians through its placement in the Department of Education. It would be several years before the State Archives assumed records management responsibilities because of the program's late development.

In 1971, the New York State Archives was formed as a division in the Department of Education.⁹⁴ Four years later the first State Archivist was appointed. In 1976, the Office of State History, responsible for the preservation and management of local records was transferred to the State Archives. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the office was involved in archives projects and the assessment of local government records. One result of these activities was the development of over two dozen

⁹³Ibid., 198.

⁹⁴Laws of New York, 1971, chapter 869, §142.

general records schedules for use by local government.⁹⁵ In 1979, an amendment to the Education Law clearly established the Archives responsibility for records management:

It shall be the function of the state archives to ... advise and recommend to officials in those public offices having custody or control over the records and information storage devices hereinbefore described as to making, managing, reproducing, preserving or disposing of those records and devices in their custody or control.⁹⁶

In 1987, the Archives expanded its records management role when it assumed responsibility for the management of state records, previously under the Office of General Services.⁹⁷ The Law was amended to reflect the Commissioner's new responsibilities

(d) To review plans submitted by state agencies for management of their records and to make recommendations thereupon to the head of the state agency and the director of the division of the budget.

(e) To inquire into the condition, character, amount and method of keeping such records.

(f) To develop and implement a comprehensive and ongoing training program in records management ...

(g) To provide technical assistance in records management.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs," 579, 585.

⁹⁶Laws of New York, 1979, chapter 566, §2.

⁹⁷The transfer came about because an investigation of records management of state records revealed a deterioration of services in the 1970's and 1980's under the Office of General Services. Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs," 583.

⁹⁸Laws of New York, 1987, chapter 42, §57.05.

While it did not make specific references to records retention schedules, the law implied their use with the reference to plans for management of records. The law revealed the expectation that government agencies would effectively manage their records with the assistance of the State Archives and the Records Administration (SARA) acting for the Commissioner. Subdivision 11 guaranteed archivists involvement in the records disposition process.

In the same year, the implementation of a Local Records Law also strengthened the Archives mandate for the management of records. Article 57-A stated

The Commissioner of education shall .. determine the minimum length of time that records need to be retained. Such commissioner is authorized to develop, adopt by regulation, issue and distribute to local governments records retention and disposition schedules establishing minimum legal retention periods.⁹⁹

As a result of this new law, the Local Government Bureau "concentrated its efforts first on updating and streamlining state disposition schedules."¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the recently added State Bureau began to reevaluate existing records schedules developed by the Office of General Services. Under General

⁹⁹Laws of New York, 1987, chapter 737, §57.25, quoted in New York Local Government Records Advisory Council, The Quiet Revolution: Managing New York's Local Government Records in the Information Age, (Albany, N.Y.: [State Archives and Records Administration], 1988), 24.

¹⁰⁰Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs," 587.

Services, scheduling developments were limited and records schedules were quite simple, each schedule including only a single records series. The Office had not developed any general records schedules.¹⁰¹

In 1992, the Code of Rules and Regulations was updated to reflect the responsibilities of both SARA and government agencies in records management and records scheduling. The regulation's definitions included records management, records retention scheduling and retention periods.¹⁰² It outlined SARA's responsibility to establish,

A system for the review of agency records management plans and programs to determine agency compliance ... to identify opportunities for improving agency records management programs and practices, to propose plans for SARA records management assistance and advice.¹⁰³

Agency responsibilities included:

Promulgating records retention and disposition policies and ensuring compliance by all agency staff. (2) Ensuring that agency records are maintained and disposed in compliance with applicable sections.¹⁰⁴

The regulations also provided for the appointment of agency records management officers who were responsible for the

¹⁰¹Thomas Norris, interview by author, 29 June 1993, Kingston.

¹⁰²Code, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, part 188.2, November 6 1992.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, part 188.3.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

preparation, submission and implementation of schedules.¹⁰⁵ Agencies prepare their own agency schedules which are subsequently approved by SARA, the Attorney General and the State Comptroller.¹⁰⁶ The preparation of General Schedules which apply to records "common to some or all agencies" is SARA's responsibility. General Schedules must also receive the approval of the Attorney General and the State Comptroller.¹⁰⁷ After both types of schedules receive the appropriate approvals, it is the agency's responsibility to adopt and implement them.

This comprehensive approach to records management, which includes state and local records, is in contrast to the practice in Ontario and British Columbia. In both provinces, the archives' involvement in records scheduling is limited to the operations of the provincial government. Lower levels of government and provincially funded organizations do not receive direct assistance in the development of records schedules. Only recently, have other levels of Canadian government become involved in records scheduling, because of the implementation of Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation. In New York State, SARA's involvement in records scheduling extends to include state and local government, educational institutions,

¹⁰⁵Ibid., part 188.5.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., part 188.7.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., part 188.10.

and other public bodies associated with local government.¹⁰⁸ This characteristic is shared by many states.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the scope of records management and records scheduling under the direction of state archives is much larger than in the Canadian provinces. This is of course a consequence of the different juridical systems in which provincial and state governments respectively operate.

At SARA today two divisions have a role in records scheduling. First, the State Government Division, through the Bureau of Records Analysis and Disposition (BRAD), prepares general schedules for distribution and advises on the preparation of agency schedules. Second, the Local Government Division, through Local Government Records Services (LGRS), handles general records scheduling for local government and other public agencies. Despite the fact that SARA now has the responsibility for both state and local records scheduling, the activities remain quite separate. Thus, there are differences between the schedules issued by the two divisions.

3.5.1 Scheduling in Local Government Agencies

The LGRS distributes general schedules which are issued as

¹⁰⁸There are some exception to the SARA's responsibility for records scheduling and these include large jurisdictions, like New York City, and other organizations like the State University at New York (SUNY).

¹⁰⁹For a discussion of the development of state and local record scheduling see: Posner, American State Archives.

regulations. The LGRS is not directly involved in the preparation of agency schedules. Currently, it has developed four general Records Retention and Disposition Schedules. These schedules include one for use by counties, one for use by educational districts and institutions, one for use by local government, and one for use by municipalities.¹¹⁰ The Service regularly updates or removes schedules as warranted. General schedule implementation occurs when the local governing body issues a resolution to adopt the schedule. The Local Government Records Management Officer manages schedule implementation.¹¹¹ The Officer prepares an "office schedule", derived from the general schedule, which reflects the records created in the office and is arranged in a convenient manner to facilitate efficient disposition.¹¹²

Each schedule is arranged by function and not by office of origin. For example, sections in the county schedule include Personnel/Civil Service, Human Rights/Economic Opportunity, Taxation and Assessment. Within each functional section, records series are listed alphabetically. The schedules are very simple and include a limited amount of information. Each records series

¹¹⁰These schedules are the result of the revision and consolidation of the initial schedules designed for local records by the Division as previously discussed.

¹¹¹New York, Local Government Records Services, Using Records Retention and Disposition Schedules, No. 41, Local Government Records and Technical Information Series, (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1993), 1-3.

¹¹²Ibid., 4.

in the schedule has a consecutive item number, unique identifying number, and description and retention period. The record series description focuses on the purpose or function of the series rather than its form.¹¹³ In some cases different retention periods are indicated for different records within a series. For example, for the records series "Toxic substance exposure records", material safety data sheets on toxic substances are retained "one year after substance no longer present at workplace", while summary records of toxic substance training are retained permanently.¹¹⁴ The use of broad functional records descriptions eases the implementation of these schedules by local governments. The schedules clearly indicate that it is the users responsibility to "match the records in their offices with the generalized descriptions on the Schedule."¹¹⁵

The Archives expects that schedules will be applied to all records regardless of form. The Code of Rules and Regulation includes specific references to the scheduling of electronic records. Section 188.20 states,

¹¹³This provides a distinct contrast to the general schedules developed in Washington State which will be discussed later. New York, Local Government Records Services, Using Records Retention and Disposition Schedules, No. 41, 3; New York, Local Government Records Services, Records Retention and Disposition Schedule CO-2 for use by Counties, rev. ed, (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1993), 2-3.

¹¹⁴New York, Local Government Records Services, Records Retention and Disposition Schedule CO-2, 67.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 3.

An agency shall ensure that records retention requirements are incorporated into any plan and process for design, redesign, or substantial enhancement of any information system that uses electronic data processing or electronic optical imaging technologies to maintain or store electronic records.¹¹⁶

This regulation demonstrates the belief that electronic records will be scheduled like other government records. It is the responsibility of the agency to ensure that the records media will last as long as the retention period specified for that series.¹¹⁷

The schedules prepared by LGRS only apply to official records. Copies or duplicates of them have a single retention period, "destroy when no longer required."¹¹⁸ The distinction between official and unofficial records is a common element on many schedules. In British Columbia retention periods for both the Office of Primary Responsibility, which has the official record, and the offices which hold copies are designated for each records series.

3.5.2 Scheduling in State Government Agencies

The Bureau of Records Analysis and Disposition is presently involved in the preparation of both agency and general records

¹¹⁶Code, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, part 188.20, November 6 1992.

¹¹⁷New York, Local Government Records Services, Records Retention and Disposition Schedule CO-2, 3.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 8.

schedules for state government.¹¹⁹ Usually, it is the responsibility of state agencies to develop their own agency schedules; however, the Bureau will intervene if necessary.¹²⁰ Since 1988, agencies have used the Records Disposition Request Form to request the establishment or revision of an agency schedule. A separate form is submitted for each program unit. A proposed Retention and Disposition Schedule and a Records Series Description for each listed series must accompany the Records Disposition Request Form.¹²¹ The schedule, like the LGRS schedule, is fairly simple and consists of the, agency number, disposition authorization number (when received), series title and recommended retention and disposition. However, unlike the LGRS schedule, this schedule is linked to records inventory information through the accompanying Records Series Description Form. This form provides BRAD with a summary of the information needed to evaluate the agency's request for schedule authorization. The form includes: agency and program unit, records series title, series description, inclusive dates, volume and form, annual growth, events which cause record to be

¹¹⁹Thomas Norris, interview by author, 29 June 1993, Kingston.

¹²⁰In cases of offices of a limited size or with valuable or controversial records the State Government Division will intercede, and prepare agency records schedules for the office. Thomas Norris, interview by author, 29 June 1993, Kingston.

¹²¹New York, State Archives and Records Administration, "Interim Instructions for Records Analysis, Retention and Disposition Scheduling," (Albany, N.Y.: State Education Department, 1988), 1-2.

inactive, management activities on files, proposed retention and reasons for proposal.¹²² If BRAD's review of the schedule is favourable, and it receives the approval of the Attorney General and the State Comptroller, the completed forms are returned to the agency and the schedule becomes effective.

The Bureau is also involved in the preparation of General Schedules for use in state government.¹²³ The General Schedules are issued as guidelines for records retention and are authorized by the Attorney General and the State Comptroller.¹²⁴ In contrast to Local Government Records Schedules, State General Schedules are issued only as recommendations and not as regulations. An agency must formally notify SARA of its intention to adopt a schedule, and only then will the schedule

¹²²Discussion based on an analysis of the forms Records Series Description (Rec-5), Records Retention and Disposition Schedule (Rec-4) and Records Disposition Request (Rec-3).

¹²³The following analysis is based upon the examination of three General Schedules, Personnel, Payroll and Training Records, Fiscal Records, and Administrative Records. New York, State Archives and Records Administration, General Retention and Disposition Schedule Administrative Records: For Use by New York State Government Agencies, (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1993); New York, State Archives and Records Administration, General Retention and Disposition Schedule Fiscal Records for use by New York State Government Agencies, (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1990); New York, State Archives and Records Administration, General Retention and Disposition Schedule Personnel, Payroll and Training Records for use by New York State Government Agencies, (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1989).

¹²⁴New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Administrative Records, ix; New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Fiscal Records, i; New York State, Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Personnel, Payroll and Training Records, i.

provide the legal authority for the destruction of the records. If an agency adopts a General Schedule, then it needs only produce agency schedules for records not included on the General Schedule. BRAD's production of General Schedules eases the burden of schedule preparation for agencies.

The General Schedules focus on records which have "destruction" as their final disposition. The schedules include only a limited number of records series designated as "archival" because most of the series result from administrative functions and are of a housekeeping nature.¹²⁵ This is a characteristic common to general records schedules because of the difficulty of incorporating in a single schedule the diversity of series generated from program functions.¹²⁶

Like the schedules prepared by the LGRS, BRAD's General Schedules apply to all records forms and include both official records and duplicate records.¹²⁷ In some cases, different retention periods are specified for duplicate records. For

¹²⁵New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Administrative Records, xix.

¹²⁶One exception is the general schedules prepared by LGRS, which include both "archival" and "non-archival" records. LGRS has successfully incorporated both types because each schedules addresses the needs of a different levels of local government. Thus, agencies using a particular LGRS general have similar administrative and program functions, for example, all counties will have agencies responsible for public works functions.

¹²⁷New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Administrative Records, xv, xvi; New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Fiscal Records, ii; New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Personnel, Payroll and Training Records, ii.

example, in the Personnel, Payroll and Training Records Schedule the official records, maintained by personnel offices, and duplicate records, maintained by program units, are listed separately and have different retention periods.¹²⁸ This practice is similar to the British Columbia example. However, the primary focus of New York's General Schedules is the retention periods of the official records. The Administrative Records Schedule includes a section for series related to the Electronic Data Processing function. This section is not intended to provide retention periods for the electronic records generated by state agencies. Rather it provides "agencies with uniform guidelines for the retention and disposition of common EDP unit records in both hard copy and electronic form", that is, of the records which arise from the management of electronic records.¹²⁹ If agencies possess other electronic records, related to either administrative or program functions, they fall under the appropriate general or agency schedule. The inclusive nature of the general schedules produced by New York State parallels developments at the Canadian provincial level. New York State archivists recognize the pervasiveness of electronic records and the need to manage them through inclusion in the scheduling process.

¹²⁸In the two other general schedules reviewed, retention periods for duplicate copies were noted within the same entry as the official copy.

¹²⁹New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Administrative Records, xvii.

The General Schedules, like their LGRS counterparts, are arranged on a functional basis.¹³⁰ However, the General Schedules issued by BRAD include more detailed information about the listed records series. Each schedule includes a large number of records series; for example, the Administrative Records Schedule includes authorizations for 157 series.¹³¹ Due to the complexity of the schedules, a summary schedule which includes only the records disposition authorization number (RDA), series title and approved retention and disposition prefaces the complete schedule. The actual schedule includes: the RDA number, series title and description, authorized retention period and disposition, justification for the retention and disposition and types of records not covered by the schedule. If necessary explanatory notes are included.

While this is not an integrated record scheduling and classification system, the designers have recognized the need to integrate the records schedules with other management activities. Notes are used to discuss appropriate filing

¹³⁰The exception to this is the Personnel, Payroll and Training Records Schedule, where the records series are arranged into two distinct group to allow for the scheduling of official and duplicate copies. In this case, the first group corresponds to "records maintained by agency personnel/payroll/training offices", while the second group corresponds to "records maintained by program units other than personnel/payroll/training offices." However, under each of these sections there is a functional arrangement, for example Personnel Administration, Civil Service Administration, Payroll and Training.

¹³¹New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Administrative Records, x.

practices and related management techniques to promote the effective use of records schedules.¹³² These notes also allow agencies to identify the disposition authorizations which correspond to the records held in their office. Thus, New York State, like British Columbia, recognizes the need to produce schedules which may be integrated into the records management activities of the office.

General schedules, designed for ease of use, offer New York State and other jurisdictions involved in records scheduling effective use of limited resources and the potential for successful scheduling. SARA, through the LGRS and BRAD, is involved in the promotion and preparation of a comprehensive records scheduling program designed to effectively manage the records produced by all levels of state government. Despite differences, both Divisions promote the use of general schedules as the most efficient method to schedule the large volume of records produced. State laws and regulations reveal a commitment to records management, including records scheduling, at all levels and ensure that scheduling practice receives the direction and support of government, agencies, and the Archives.

3.6 Washington: Division of Archives and Records Management

Washington State developed its archives and records

¹³²Ibid., xiv, xv 34, 67, 73; New York, State Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Fiscal Records, v; New York State, Archives and Records Administration, Schedule Personnel, Payroll and Training Records, iii.

management program much later than most other states. However, this late start did not impede steady progress in the development of archives services and the provision of records retention schedules for all levels of government. Like many other jurisdictions, Washington recognized the need for archives just after the turn of the century. However, archival and records management activities did not achieve significance before the 1950s.

In 1909, Session Law Chapter 38 created a Public Archives Commission. The membership of the Commission included the Governor, Secretary of State, State Auditor and the custodian of the archives, who was the State Librarian. The Commission had no direct role in records destruction. State records were the only concern of the Commission, which was not responsible for the protection of local government records. In 1929, the Commission was abolished, and the Department of Finance, Budget, and Business assumed responsibility for archives.¹³³

The next significant development was the passage of Session Law 1941 Chapter 109, which established a committee to oversee the destruction of "obsolete records."¹³⁴ This committee included the Supervisor of the Division of Budget, the State Auditor, the Secretary General and the Attorney General. Although the

¹³³"News Notes: Washington, " American Archivist. 20, no. 3 (July 1957): 286; Robert Nesbit, "The State Archives of Washington," Pacific Northwest Quarterly. 48, no. 2 (April 1957): 44; Posner, American State Archives, 286.

¹³⁴Nesbit, "The State Archives of Washington," 44.

committee had the final word on which records could be destroyed, it received advice about the historical value of records from an advisory committee made up of the State Librarian and two historians.¹³⁵ However, the committee failed to fulfil its records disposition duties. In 1951, the legislation was amended to include the definition of "public record." The law also included the provision for a minimum ten year retention period for all public records. These elements helped to clarify the responsibilities of public record keepers, managers, and the records committee, because they provided clear guidelines with regard to records retention and destruction. The amended law also provided for a new records committee composed of six elective and appointed officials, among whom was the state archivist.¹³⁶

Legislation aside, in 1951, the appointment of the first professional archivist, Robert Nesbit, had a dramatic impact on future developments in archives and records management in the state of Washington. Nesbit acted as the Secretary for the new records committee, and in this role promoted records disposal as it had never been done before.¹³⁷ Nesbit is credited with the introduction of a new archives and records management bill "that

¹³⁵"News Notes: Washington," American Archivist, 4, no. 4 (October 1941): 304.

¹³⁶Nesbit, "The State Archives of Washington," 45; Posner, American State Archives, 286.

¹³⁷Posner, American State Archives, 286.

embodied the most advanced thinking in the field"¹³⁸ In 1957, the bill became reality and Washington took its place among the governments involved in modern records management techniques and scheduling.

Session Law 1957, Chapter 246, provided an expanded role for the State Archives in both archives and records management. Among the Archivist's responsibilities was:

(3) To inspect, inventory, catalog and arrange retention and transfer schedules on all record files of all state departments and other agencies of state government; ...

also,

(6) To gather and disseminate to interested agencies information on all phases of records management and current practices, methods, procedures and devices for efficient and economical management of records; ...

and finally,

(8) To maintain necessary facilities for the review of records approved for destruction ... directly to supervise such destruction of public records as shall be authorized by the terms of the act.¹³⁹

Not only did this law legitimize the State Archives' participation in a variety of record management activities, but it specifically stated that the Archives would play a role in the records scheduling process. The Washington law reflected recent developments in both federal and state governments where

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Nesbit, "The State Archives of Washington," 46.

records management and records scheduling in particular had gained wide acceptance.¹⁴⁰ Like the federal example, archivists in Washington State could now actively take part in making recommendations for records preservation and destruction through records schedules. Chapter 246 also provided for a smaller and potentially more effective records committee. Committee members included the State Archivist, and appointees of the State Auditor and Attorney-General. The State Archivist was also a member of another committee established to review the destruction of local records, along with the Chief Examiner of the Division of Municipal Corporations of the State Auditor's office and an appointee of the Attorney-General.¹⁴¹ While the existence of a legislative framework does not guarantee success, in this case the State Archives effectively carried out its assigned mandate for record scheduling.

In 1961, a survey of state and local record programs found the program in Washington State to be well established. Both the archives and agencies assumed responsibility for records schedule creation. The State Records Committee held the final approval for the destruction of all public records. Legislation required a minimum ten year retention period for all public

¹⁴⁰For example, in 1943 the National Archives successfully introduced the use of schedules to the Federal Government and continued to expand schedule use and refine schedule development between the years 1943 and 1950.

¹⁴¹Nesbit, "The State Archives of Washington," 46; Posner, American State Archives, 287, 290.

records, except office files and memos which could be kept from one to seven years. The survey identified records management programs at all three levels of government, state, county and local.¹⁴²

Published just three years later, Ernst Posner's American State Archives also provided a positive view of developments in Washington State, showing an emphasis on "inventorying and records scheduling."¹⁴³ Posner also saw the opportunity for the Archives to expand into other areas of records management once the program became more established. Posner discussed record management developments at the local level, where the archives, if staffing permitted, would assist larger centres with the implementation of "comprehensive records programs" and the submission of lists and records schedules.¹⁴⁴ The records committee played a large role in records disposition, as Posner described, it "approves, modifies, or disapproves transfer and retention schedules prepared by the State Archives in co-operation with agency record officers and acts upon requests to destroy public records."¹⁴⁵ Ironically, Posner identified the ten year minimum retention period as a drawback which prevented the

¹⁴²Beach and Caton, "State and Local Government Records Programs," 292.

¹⁴³Posner, American State Archives, 289.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

Committee from recommending shorter retention periods.¹⁴⁶ However, in light of the previous inability of the Committee to execute its responsibilities, the legislation was necessary to provide general guidelines and disposition authorization for records destruction. Subsequent amendments to the law reduced the minimum retention period for public records to only six years.¹⁴⁷ This change allowed the Records Committee to approve destruction of records more than six year old without obtaining additional authorizations, and therefore it increased the committee's effectiveness.

In the 1970s, reports on the Washington State records program described similar activities. The 1977 Report of the Society of American Archivists State and Local Records Committee recounted that the Records Committee maintained its responsibility for records destruction. It also showed that records schedules had been developed at the state, county and local government levels.¹⁴⁸ An update on state activities in the American Archivist attributed the success of the archives involvement in records destruction to the "strong public records

¹⁴⁶The law provided that the ten year period could be exempted but only if the permission of the Director of Budget, State Auditor and Attorney-General agreed to the action in the particular case. Ibid., 289-290.

¹⁴⁷Washington Revised Code §40.14.050 (1989 Ed.)

¹⁴⁸David Levine, "The Management and Preservation of Local Public Records Report of the State and Local Records Committee," American Archivist, 40, no. 2 (April 1977): 198.

law."¹⁴⁹ The law in question, Session Law 1957, chapter 246, and its subsequent amendments, gave the State Archives control over records management functions, including records scheduling.¹⁵⁰

As the public records law stands today, it provides for the archivist's authority in records scheduling, records management, and training; the appointment of agency record officers to recommend retention periods and review records schedules; and the authority of state and local records committees to evaluate and approve records schedules and lists.¹⁵¹ Thus, the Washington State Archives has a solid legal framework to support its involvement in records scheduling. This has had a positive impact on its ability to develop both agency schedules and general schedules for different levels of government.

3.6.1 Scheduling in State Government Agencies

The Archives and Records Division of the Secretary of State's Office provides records scheduling forms and reviews completed agency schedules before they are sent to the State

¹⁴⁹"News Notes: Washington," American Archivist. 42, no. 3 (July 1979): 396.

¹⁵⁰Amendments to Session Laws 1957 Chapter 246 include: 1971 ex.s. c 10; 1973 c 54; 1975-76 2nd ex.s. c 34; 1979 c 151; 1981 c 32; 115, 1982 c 36; 1983 c 3, 84; 1985 c 57; 192, 1986 c 275. Washington Revised Code §40.14.020 (1989 Ed.).

¹⁵¹The most recent amendments to the public records law were in 1986. Washington Revised Code §40.14 (1989 Ed.).

Records Committee for approval.¹⁵² While the Archives and Records Division serves only an advisory role in agency schedule creation, it controls the elements of these records schedules by the use of a standard record schedule form.¹⁵³ There are some slight differences between the elements of the Washington State agency record schedules and the elements of agency record schedules outlined in the introduction and in the three previous examples. Similar elements include: record series number, record series title and statement of function or purpose (description), retention period (divided into office, records centre and total retention). Other common elements include: agency, office, records coordinator and date of submittal, record series number, and disposition authority number, that is housekeeping elements designed to identify the application of the schedule and promote implementation.

The classification of each records series as either Office Files & Memoranda (OFM) or Official Public Records (OPR) is unique to Washington State records schedules. These two classifications are linked to the Public Records Law which includes a minimum retention of six years for all Official

¹⁵²Washington (State), Division of Archives and Records Management, Records Management Handbook No. 2: Records Inventory, Evaluation and Disposition, rev. ed. ([Olympia], WA: Office of Secretary of State, 1991), 8, 10.

¹⁵³This is also the case in New York State. The following discussion is based on an analysis of the elements of Form SSA-53B and the description of these elements in: Ibid., 15, 17-19.

Public Records, while Office Files and Memoranda may be disposed of before six years. Official Public Records are classified as "any records series which serves legal or official proof of an action, transaction, or agreement."¹⁵⁴ For example, the Official Public Records classification would apply to original vouchers, contracts, claims, and fidelity and performance bonds. In contrast, Office Files and Memoranda are "records not classified as public documents" which includes "all secondary copies of official public records; all documents and reports made for the internal administration of an agency."¹⁵⁵ Records classified as OFM may include original records and can be designated as "archival." For example, the Right of Way Maps Series, in the Department of Transportation Schedule, is classified as OFM; however, the retention period and remarks column indicate that the series is transferred to the State Archives when no longer required by the office.¹⁵⁶

Another unique element of Washington State's schedules is the indication of the series cutoff, the point at which the retention period begins. Acceptable cut off designations include: action or claim resolved, calendar year, expiration of register, last piece of equipment removed from inventory,

¹⁵⁴Sid McAlpin, Mary Oletzke and Kathleen Waugh, Records Management Manual and General Records Retention Schedules for Hospital Districts, (Olympia: Secretary of State, 1986), A-10.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Form SSA-53B, Department of Transportation (115), Program Development Division Real Property Office (430).

termination of contract, termination or cancellation of policy, termination of employment, and until superseded.¹⁵⁷ The choice depends on the arrangement and use of the records and therefore is directly linked to information gathered in the records inventory.

The inclusion of the "location of additional copies" is similar to the provision for Office of Primary Responsibility and Office of Non-Primary Responsibility in British Columbia's ARCS and ORCS. However, in the Washington State example, offices with copies are specifically identified by name or identification number. An important element of this practice is the identification of the office with the most important copy, which corresponds directly to British Columbia's Office of Primary Responsibility. The identification of the most important copy applies to both records classified as OPR and OFM.¹⁵⁸

The instructions for the preparation of retention schedules provide insight into some additional differences in the schedules of Washington State. For example, the instructions point out that a group of original records should be listed as a series, while additional copies of the same series should be listed underneath as subseries. This means that records in different media may have different retention periods and will be

¹⁵⁷Form SSA-53B Records Retention Schedule (R/11/88) Page 2 of 2.

¹⁵⁸Washington (State), Division of Archives and Records Management, Records Inventory, Evaluation and Disposition, 18.

listed as subseries. The disposition authority number assigned to each series or subseries indicates the media of the records, for example, 90-PA-1123 refers to a series of paper records while, 90-MM-1123 refers to the same series recorded on magnetic media.¹⁵⁹ This distinction results in very detailed schedules. It also ensures that selected retention periods are compatible with the media of records series.¹⁶⁰

State agencies may also dispose of their records by using General Records Retention Schedules which are approved by the State Records Committee.¹⁶¹ The general schedules group series related to specific functions of state agencies together in a single schedule; for example, "Records Common to Personnel/Payroll Systems Forms" and "Standard Accounting Documents." Washington State's general schedules, like those in other jurisdictions, focus on records which will be destroyed rather than transferred to archives.¹⁶²

The individual elements of the General Records Retention Schedules are almost identical to the agency records retention schedules. The "Location of Other Copies" is called

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 15.

¹⁶⁰For example, records series with a permanent retention should not be recorded on magnetic media because of the high upkeep cost associated with long term retention on magnetic media.

¹⁶¹The following is based on an analysis of Form SAA-50.

¹⁶²Discussion is based on an analysis of "General Records Retention Schedules" numbers 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 16.

"Distribution" on the general schedule, but it includes essentially the same information. The "Remarks" column is replaced by a "Disposition" column, which includes the disposition remarks found in the agency records retention schedule. It is in this column that reference is made to transfer to the records centre or archives. In the case of General Records Retention Schedules, the records centre, like the archives, is considered a final location for retention. One difference between the two schedule types is the inclusion of a form number and a part number. This section allows agencies to readily identify, by form and part number, which of its records correspond to the series on the General Records Retention Schedule. For records series which include forms, the distribution of each part is also identified, for example, "Part 1 Vendor", "Part 2 Agency Accounting", "Part 3 Agency Receiving Unit", "Part 4 Agency Accounting (filed with Duplicate Invoice)", "Part 5 Agency-Copy" and "Part 6 Purchasing Division."¹⁶³ This creates a very detailed schedule, but reduces the chances that the agency will incorrectly apply the schedule. Another difference is that the "Retention Period" on General Records Retention Schedules is not divided into "office, records centre, and total." The "Retention Period" merely indicates the period for which records must remain in the office.

¹⁶³Form GAA-50, "Schedule 1, Standard Accounting Documents, Series "A" and "SE", 1 July 1982."

3.6.2 Scheduling in Local Government Agencies

Local agencies also use both agency schedules, known as Public Records Retention Schedules, and general schedules, known as General Records Retention Schedules.¹⁶⁴ Like the state schedules, local schedules are created or issued on forms designed by the Archives and Records Management Division.¹⁶⁵ It is expected that both the agency schedules and the applicable records series from the general schedules will be incorporated into a "internal working schedule."¹⁶⁶ This practice is not unusual and exists in other jurisdictions because it is an effective way to access relevant schedules and promote implementation.¹⁶⁷

Public Records Retention Schedules, or local agency schedules, have elements in common with state agency schedules, including: agency name, office of records, responsible officer, date of submittal, records series title, number, and description, classification (OPR/OFM), location of other copies

¹⁶⁴This definition includes all levels of government below the state level and state funded services like law enforcement and health care.

¹⁶⁵Local agency records schedules must use form SSA-24 or SSA-24A, "Public Records Retention Schedule and Destruction Authorization" and local general schedules must use form SSA-44B, "General Records Retention Schedule and Destruction Authorization."

¹⁶⁶Sid McAlpin, Mary Oletzke and Kathleen Waugh, Hospital Districts, A-12.

¹⁶⁷A similar practice was discussed with reference to New York State scheduling practice.

and remarks. However, some elements differ, including "inclusive dates" and "volume of records." Both of these elements are closely linked to the inventory information and assist the Local Records Committee to make decisions about the records series listed.¹⁶⁸ Two different forms have been designed to meet the needs of local agencies. One of them is used when the agency does not intend to transfer records to storage before destruction or transfer to archives. The "Retention Period" on this form consists of a single column. However, agencies which intend to utilize record storage use the other form which breaks down the retention period into "office", "storage", and "total retention."¹⁶⁹ In this way, schedule use is tailored to the specific needs of local offices. The element "Public Access" is also included to identify the level of public access which applies to records series. Its use is optional. Classifications include: open public record, open with deletion of personal information, and delay response (determined on a case by case basis).¹⁷⁰ This allows local records schedules to serve a dual function, by serving administrative requirements of the Public Disclosure Act which governs public access to information and

¹⁶⁸It is common for agency schedules to include more descriptive information about the records series listed because external examiners must make retention decisions based on this information alone.

¹⁶⁹Sid McAlpin, Mary Oletzke and Kathleen Waugh, Hospital Districts, C-15.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., C-12.

protection of privacy, while still managing the life cycle of the record.¹⁷¹

General Records Retention Schedules and Disposal Authorizations for local agencies are issued by the Local Records Committee.¹⁷² If an agency creates additional records, not included on the general schedule, it is the agency's responsibility to submit one of the forms discussed above.¹⁷³ Like the other general schedules examined, Washington State's general schedules identify only a limited number of records series for transfer to archives.¹⁷⁴

In Washington State, there are also similarities between the general schedules used at the local level and those used at the state level. The schedules share the following elements: schedule title, effective date, item number, records series description, classification, and disposition. However, general schedules for local agencies do not include references to form or part numbers. In local general schedules, "distribution and retention period" columns are combined under the heading

¹⁷¹R.C.W. 42.17; quoted in Washington (State), Division of Archives and Records Management, Records Management Manual and General Records Retention Schedule for Law Enforcement, (Olympia & Bellingham, WA: Office of Secretary of State, 1990), 72-74.

¹⁷²Form SSA-44B.

¹⁷³Sid McAlpin, Mary Oletzke and Kathleen Waugh, Hospital Districts, A-12.

¹⁷⁴Based on an analysis of General Records Retention Schedules applicable to Law Enforcement Agencies. Washington (State), Division of Archives and Records Management, Law Enforcement, 31-53.

"Location and Retention Period", which includes "Primary Copy" and "Secondary Copies." Additional columns have also been added to indicate archival records and records to be microfilmed.

The Archives and Records Management Division, by providing records schedule forms at the state and local level has controlled the scheduling procedure in the state. Although the elements vary slightly among the four types of schedules used, there are similarities throughout. In each case elements are added where necessary to ensure that the schedule is effective. All of Washington State's schedules are characterized by a high level of specificity. Close attention is paid to the description of the records series. The records series title refers to both the record's type and function, for example, "Firearms Transaction Records A. Concealed Weapons Permits."¹⁷⁵ Thus, the firm legislative base established by the Public Records Law, has allowed the Division of Archives and Records Management to develop a comprehensive scheduling program in the State of Washington.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 52; (Washington State), Division of Archives and Records Management, Records Inventory, Evaluation and Disposition, 17.

CHAPTER FOUR

Implications of Current Scheduling Practices

The basic elements of scheduling outlined in the first chapter still exist today. In all jurisdictions, scheduling remains a timetable which governs the life cycle of the record and includes a decision about final disposition. However over the past four decades, there have been some developments. Practices have been altered, either marginally or significantly, to meet the needs of specific and new situations. Archivists, records managers and government employees are faced with an ever increasing volume of records which are kept in complex filing systems. The form of these records has changed with the development and use of new information technologies. In the current economic climate, governments are faced with dwindling resources with which to implement and maintain records scheduling programs. The most recent changes have forced governments to reconsider the scheduling process and adapt the initial practices to allow for effective implementation under these circumstances.

In Canada, at the federal level, the National Archives has recognized the primacy of the commitment to preservation of records of permanent value, and has adopted a plan which focuses record scheduling efforts on them. In British Columbia, scheduling is integrated with other records management practices to increase the ease of implementation and the overall effectiveness of records management. In Ontario, a variety of

scheduling techniques, have been developed to meet the needs of new media and complex administrative structures. In the United States, alterations in the arrangement and elements of schedules were made to accommodate electronic media and constant organizational changes within government. In New York and Washington States, the use of functionally organized general schedules has allowed the widespread use of scheduling despite the limited amount of resources. In Washington State in particular, highly detailed schedules, which identify all records in different media and all copies by location, provide for the coordination of retention periods. The adaptations of records scheduling practice reveals a willingness to respond to the challenges presented by new media, diminishing resources, and a fluid organizational environment. Records scheduling has become more flexible and sophisticated.

4.1 Expanded Scope of Records Scheduling

Governments have realized that, in order for scheduling to be effective, it is necessary that it addresses all the records created within an organization in an integrated way. This ensures the regular and legal disposition of all records. It also provides for a better understanding of the interrelationship of records within an organization, and thus, for a better identification of records retention periods. In the past, a number of obstacles prevented governments from taking a comprehensive approach to scheduling. Among them, a lack of

knowledge of the nature and characteristics of records, and a lack of experience. However, as scheduling has become accepted at all levels of government and in private organizations, information about methods and techniques has become readily available and there is greater familiarity with the process. A more specific obstacle was a lack of involvement with or understanding of electronic records by the individuals responsible for scheduling. As a result, the scheduling of electronic records has been ignored for a long time. Today, archivists and records managers have taken steps to understand electronic records through continuing education efforts and cooperation with information systems professionals. This shift has produced two different scheduling techniques designed to promote comprehensive scheduling.

The first technique is designed to deal with large scale computer applications that lack an equivalent paper based application, and consists of specific systems schedules, which capture additional information about the records in order to prepare useable schedules. For example, detailed equipment and software requirements are elements that will have a determinant impact on how long the records are accessible. A systems records schedule must reconcile the retention period with the expected lifespan of the medium, and the availability of the equipment and the software. Most systems schedules require copies of relevant documentation so that records can be properly understood. More importantly systems schedules require that all

related series be listed on the schedule. For example, a systems schedule lists both paper and electronic series involved in the input, processing and output phases of the system. In fact, it is important to know the use of each element of an automated system. This information allows important decisions to be made about the value of records to an organization. For example, a series of input records would have a short term retention if it was known that the series of related electronic processing records were verified and stored on a stable medium for the required retention period.

The second approach designed to incorporate electronic records into the scheduling process does not require the creation of a unique scheduling format. It simply reflects a shift in attitudes, with the recognition that schedules apply to a series regardless of the medium of the records it contains. This approach does not capture the same level of technical information about the electronic records series as the previous one. It is useful for electronic records series which are the equivalent of paper records, and is particularly suited to the types of series generated by personal computer applications, for example, office correspondence generated using wordprocessing software, or electronic mail. In both cases, the electronic records have similar characteristics and uses to paper records, result from the same activities and serve the same purposes. Therefore, it is logical to apply schedules to these series regardless of the media on which they exist. This second

approach is particularly useful for general schedules, which have more inclusive records series descriptions. This broad view of the application of scheduling has been accompanied by the recognition that new records series are generated by the activities related to the management of electronic records. Additional schedules have been created to deal with these records series, which may be either electronic or paper based.

Thus, scheduling techniques have been adapted and expanded to deal with the products of new technologies. The particular approach depends upon the individual circumstances in an institution. Regardless of which approach is taken, the result is schedules which account for all records created within an institution.

4.2 Integration of Records Scheduling with other Records Management Activities

Despite the widespread nature of records scheduling, the method is often criticized.¹ There are many situations which hamper the implementation of records scheduling, and advocates of scheduling have addressed these weakness and tried to increase its effectiveness. Today, one method promises a more effective use of records schedules, the integration of records scheduling with other records management activities, in particular records classification. The integration of records

¹For a critical look at records scheduling see: Frost, "Weak Link in the Chain," 78-86.

classification, with records scheduling has been adopted within selected departments of the United States government and the provincial government of British Columbia.² This integration is a logical step based on the understanding of the records management continuum, which demonstrates the interconnected nature of all records management activities throughout the life cycle of the record.³ A variety of advantages may be derived from this linkage of classification and scheduling practices.⁴ The primary advantage is that the schedule information is directly tied to the classification and therefore users can easily and correctly identify which retention periods apply to which records. Particularly in the case of general records schedules, the ability to match records series descriptions with records created in a particular office is often problematic and time consuming. The integration overcomes this barrier. Another advantage is that the classification and scheduling systems can be designed to complement one another, so that series are

²An integrated system was also proposed for state and local governments in, Stanley Gordon, "A Functional Filing System for State and Local Government," Records Management Quarterly, (April 1972): 18.

³As discussed in the introduction, the records management continuum identifies a series of interconnected stages in which the record is managed. Each stage is related to or has an impact on the other stages. For example, the implementation of mail management techniques help to control the flow of records throughout the office and ultimately affects their use or action taken.

⁴For a more indepth discussion of the integration of records scheduling and classification see Chapter Three.

arranged in a manner which is conducive to regular separation and transfer. When this does not occur, offices are often obliged to carry out time consuming weeding and file separation before transferring records according to schedules.

Increasingly, schedules reflect an awareness of other management functions. In the case of Washington State, several schedule elements demonstrate a sensitivity to the potential impact of scheduling on other records management activities. For example, agency schedules include a "Public Access" element which allows the agency to state the access requirement for a particular series. Clearly, the inclusion of this element is not necessary for the creation of the schedule. However, it becomes useful later in the records life cycle, when records have been transferred to a records centre or archives and personnel from outside the office of creation must oversee records access and use. Another element used on Washington State schedules is the indication of file-cut-off dates. This element is designed to instruct the schedule user how a series must be filed to promote the efficient transfer of records. For example, a calendar year cut-off facilitates the transfer of records which have a retention of two years. If no file cut-off had been indicated, and the records were filed alphabetically, a great deal of sorting would be necessary before the last two years could be transferred. Thus, in a variety of ways, records managers and archivists are recognizing the potential benefits of integrating records scheduling with other management activities.

4.3 Distinction between Original Files and Duplicate

The modern office is characterized by the proliferation in the number of records created. Despite arguments that the implementation of office automation would bring about the paperless office, this has not come to pass. In fact, the arrival of the photocopy machine and the printer has contributed to the rising number of paper records distributed in an office. Those involved in records schedule preparation have realized that the same types of records do not have the same value in all situations. For example, a central personnel office has a personnel records series made up of the original files related to employees of government; however, many offices of the same organization also maintain personnel records series, which contain duplicates of the records sent to the personnel office. Clearly these series have different values which the retention periods assigned in a records schedule should reflect. Thus, the distinction between original files and duplicate files is essential for effective schedule use. This problem has been addressed in a number of ways. In the case of British Columbia, the "Office of Primary Responsibility" is identified, which holds the official files, those containing the originals of the records received, and the drafts and/or copies of those sent. "Offices of Non-Primary Responsibility" are also identified, which hold copies of the original files. This distinction allows records schedules to plan short retention periods for duplicate materials and allows longer or permanent retention of original

files. Washington State follows British Columbia's example by identifying all the locations of the records, and indicating the location of the official copy. Other jurisdictions have also considered the separation between the original files and their reproductions. In New York State, records schedules have only been developed for official records, which by definition must be original files, therefore all other records are to be destroyed as soon as their usefulness expires. This approach allows the state to focus its limited resources on scheduling the records of primary importance to government. The adaptation of schedules to include elements related to the status of the record has allowed schedules to deal more effectively with the volume of records which threatens to overburden today's office.

4.4 General Records Schedules and Functional Arrangement

Since the earliest developments in scheduling, the time consuming nature of identifying records for destruction or transfer was evident. Even when destruction lists were the only tool for the management of records disposal, in New York State, compiled lists were circulated in an attempt to provide examples to assist other departments in the identification of records for disposal. At the federal level in the United States, the enormous task of preparing schedules for individual agencies led to the creation of general schedules. The recognition that there are common functions that create similar records series throughout an organization was the key concept.

Today, the shortage of resources and the past success of general schedules contributes to their continued use and popularity. In some jurisdictions, scheduling is limited to the use of general schedules. However, often these schedules provide only a basic framework, while agencies remain responsible for scheduling all records not included in them. General schedules are based on a functional arrangement rather than an organizational arrangement, because they relate to functions common to various organizations or agencies. The benefit of a functional arrangement is that the schedules are not directly tied to an administrative structure or hierarchy, therefore they do not need to be recreated every time that administrative change occurs, and the functions of a specific body are changed.

Usually general schedules are limited to records resulting from housekeeping or routine administrative functions; however, this is not always the case. In the United States, at the state level general records schedules have been developed to schedule the records of organizations with common operational functions. For example, general schedules have been developed for county and municipal governments, law enforcement agencies, and school districts. Through the use of general schedules, some governments have almost eliminated the need for the preparation of agency schedules. Not all jurisdictions can develop this type of schedule, because their departments have distinct operational functions; for example, there is only one agency responsible for the correctional services function in the federal government of

Canada. Thus, general schedules cannot completely replace the use of agency schedules, but, as scheduling techniques become more sophisticated there is potential for more effective and widespread use of general schedules.⁵

The appearance and use of general schedules has also had an impact on current agency scheduling techniques as archivists and records managers strive to create more effective schedules. A shift to a functional arrangement of agency schedules, rather than arrangement by administrative unit, has been advocated by some in the records management field.⁶ This arrangement minimizes schedule revisions when organizational change occurs within the agency. However, the emphasis on function has a limited application for agency schedules. Additions or deletions to agency schedules are still necessary if an agency acquires a new function or loses an existing function.

4.5 Archivists' Role in Records Scheduling

Prior to their involvement in records scheduling, archivists were passive recipients of records transferred to the archives.⁷ The selection of records to be preserved took place

⁵The best example is British Columbia's Administrative Records Classification System.

⁶For example see Donald S. Skupsky, "Functional Records Retention Schedule," 37-44.

⁷Leon Schkolnik, "The Role of the Archive in the Corporate Structure." Records Management Quarterly 24, no. 4 (October 1990): 23.

only after the records were transferred. However, scheduling requires an active role of archivists. Appraisal and selection activities shift from the archives to the office of the records creator. In 1949, Wayne Grover, United States archivist, identified this interconnection: "all phases of management of current records vitally affect the job of preserving and controlling noncurrent records."⁸ Involvement early in the life cycle, through records scheduling, had the potential to improve archival acquisitions.⁹ Philip Brooks also advocated early involvement in his articles: "the idea is that the earlier in the life history of the documents the selection process begins the better for all concerned."¹⁰ In the case of electronic records, early intervention is an absolute necessity because of the fragility of the medium and the obsolescence of hardware and software.¹¹ Thus, it is in the interest of archivists to

⁸Wayne Grover, Annual Report, 1949, quoted in Jones. H.G. The Records of a Nation, 62.

⁹Victoria Bryans, "Canadian Provincial and Territorial Archival Legislation: A Case Study of the Disjunction Between Theory and Law," MAS thesis, University of British Columbia, 1989, 92; House, "Development of Records Disposition Procedures and Legislation," 335; Schkolnik, "Role of the Archive," 23.

¹⁰Brooks, "Selection of Records for Preservation," 226; Brooks, "Archivists Concern in Records Administration," 160; Philip Brooks, What Records Shall We Preserve? Paper presented at the Society of American Archivists luncheon, Washington, D.C., 13 April 1940; reprint, Staff Information Paper 9. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1971), 5.

¹¹Margaret L. Hedstrom, Archives and Manuscripts: Machine-Readable Records, (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984), 45.

participate early in the life cycle of the records through records scheduling.

Record managers and archivists share an understanding of the life cycle of the record. Both professions recognize that the management of any stage in the life cycle also benefits all other stages. An American National Archivist and a Canadian Dominion Archivist clearly stated their support for this concept in a joint article: Rhoads wrote that "it is through this principle of the total record management cycle that we bring together the closely allied professional skill of the archivist and the records manager," and Smith added that "we are committed to the 'cradle to the grave' principle of an integrated records management and archives system."¹² Rhodes reiterated this belief in a later article: "records management and archival management are not only compatible but inseparable. What has been termed the systems approach to records management - or the life-cycle concept ... is not just hollow verbiage."¹³ All those involved recognize that records scheduling is only one of many activities which controls records from their creation until their final disposition. However, it is an essential activity because of the interrelated nature of all stages of a record's life cycle.

¹²James Rhoads and Wilfred Smith, "Why Records Management is Important," Records Management Quarterly 10, no. 1 (January 1976): 5, 6, 8.

¹³James Rhoads, "Records Management and the Federal Paperwork Commission," Records Management Quarterly 12, no. 4 (October 1978): 46.

The implications of archivists involvement in records scheduling, in particular in the scheduling of electronic records, are enormous. The abandonment of their passive role requires archivists to consider the extent to which they influence records creation. In fact, while they would have little impact on the content of the records created, there is a potential for their impact on the arrangement of records, and on the choice of the physical media on which records are created. In the case of electronic systems, archivists' involvement is necessary to ensure that the proper safeguards are built into the system to allow for the records to be preserved for the projected retention period. Not only does this shift the timing of appraisal decisions to the point of schedule creation, but it requires archivists to cooperate not only with records managers, but also with systems designers, and information systems managers in order to effectively create and implement records schedules. This cooperation will lead to a better understanding of records, their relationships and their management.

CONCLUSION

Since the identification of the problems posed by the steady accumulation of records in government offices, steps to promote records disposal have provided an avenue for the reduction of the volume of records. In the United States and Canada, the concern for records disposal eventually led to the creation of records schedules. However, the evolution was a slow process influenced by a number of external and internal factors. Notwithstanding the fact that archivists maintained an interest in and often had a direct impact on the schedule development, it was many decades before records schedules gained widespread acceptance as the primary tool for the management of records throughout their life cycle from creation to disposition.

In the United States, the volume of records prompted officials to consider potential disposal methods. The first methods developed included the use of disposal lists and the granting of special disposal authorizations at the request of specific agencies. The use of disposal lists allowed archivists a limited role in the protection of valuable records, because they reviewed the lists to guarantee records with historical value were not destroyed. However, for agencies with special authorizations, there was little control over how or what records were destroyed. When the National Archives assumed responsibility for the appraisal of disposal lists, its employees soon realized the inefficient nature of

a process in which new lists had to be created each time records were disposed of, regardless of the fact that the same types of records had previously received disposal authority. Thus, those archivists, drawing on their knowledge of foreign developments in records scheduling and the example of the successful use of scheduling in the Department of Forestry and in a limited number of private organizations, promoted the use of records schedules as a planned approach to records disposal. In 1943, an amendment to the Act to Provide for the Disposal of Certain Records formalized the use of records schedules by agencies in the Federal Government. Just two years later, on the recommendation of the National Archives, General Records Schedules were introduced in the Federal Government. These schedules included records series common to a number of agencies within the government, and were designed to reduce the duplication that occurred when different departments submitted schedules for similar types of records series. General Records Schedules dealt with the large scale disposition of administrative records without historical value with the minimum amount of effort and expense. Since 1943, records schedule use has grown throughout the federal government and it continues today as the accepted method for records disposal.

The Canadian federal government followed the lead of the American government in the development of scheduling, but it only began the practice formally almost two decades later.

Also plagued by the problem of records disposal the government had authorized the disposal of selected groups of records in 1889, for the Post Office, and in 1936, for other departments. As in the United States, the Public Archives was to be notified before records were disposed of, so it could prevent the destruction of records with historical value.

However, a systematic and continuous development of scheduling did not occur in Canada until the late 1950s and early 1960s. Like the United States, the activities of PAC, had an impact on this development. The establishment of the Public Archives Records Centre allowed the PAC to direct and disseminate information about records management and records scheduling. Professional developments at this time also generated an interest in the planned management of records through the use of schedules.

While in theory scheduling enjoyed support, in practice the use of schedules was not widespread, because it depended upon the initiative of individual departments. Several factors contributed to a subsequent rise in the use of scheduling. In 1957, the Records Management Association of Ottawa, proposed general schedules which were endorsed as guidelines for disposal. Six years, later the Treasury Board, based on the Association's previous effort, authorized general schedules as the disposal authority for federal government records. The arrival of general records scheduling gave departments greater familiarity with the scheduling process and eased the burden

of schedule preparation. In addition, in 1964, the Public Archives Records Centre established a policy to accept only scheduled records for storage; an action which forced departments to schedule their records if they wished to utilize the Centre's valuable resources. In 1966, the Public Records Order formalized the responsibility of PAC for the preparation of general schedules and for the establishment of government-wide standards for records scheduling. With this action, the federal government recognized both the central role of records scheduling, by endorsing the use of both general schedules and agency schedules, and the important contribution of PAC in this process.

Both Canadian provincial and American state governments followed the example of their respective federal governments, and adopted records scheduling to manage records disposal and preservation.

However, the increasing volume of records and the complexity of records scheduling hampered the effective use of schedules. A variety of techniques were developed in order to improve the process and make schedules more effective tools for the management of records. The scope of scheduling practice has expanded dramatically because of the belief that the entirety of an organization's records, in all media, should be scheduled. The inclusive nature of these new records schedules has resulted in variations on traditional schedules in order to accommodate all media types. For example, systems

schedules were developed to deal with the unique records created by large scale computer applications. Also, governments now realize that existing schedules may also be applied regardless of record medium.

Today's schedules demonstrate a great degree of flexibility. Their elements are altered to reflect the specific needs of organizations, or the demands of a particular medium. At the Canadian provincial level, there have been efforts to integrate records scheduling with other records management practices by linking schedules to classification and filing systems. Other techniques to ease implementation include the distinction between original files and duplicates, and the use or arrangement of schedules based on function rather than organizational hierarchy. Moreover, many jurisdictions compile the records schedules for their organization into a single office schedule, a practice which streamlines the use of schedules within the office.

While their effectiveness has been questioned by some, schedules continue to be the preferred tool for the management of records throughout their life cycle. Usually, it is a lack of resources, not the failure of records schedules themselves, which impairs their effectiveness.

Currently, scheduling has proved to be flexible enough to accommodate records in all media and at all stages in the life cycle. Without the control provided by records schedules, electronic records would not survive at all, or would not

survive in a useable form. It is essential that archivists and records managers alike recognize their duty to protect the integrity of and access to records for as long as needed. Records schedules provide the most effective tool to accomplish this task. At the same time, the practice of records scheduling provides an opportunity for archivists to share their expertise with other professionals. This changing role has brought archivists into the management of records earlier in the life cycle of the record. The consequence is the development of a broad, proactive role for archivists, which raises their profile and increases the value of their contribution to society.

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