

## **Section Ten**

# **Storing Files**

## 10. Storing Files

### 10.1 File Storage Methods

There are three basic ways of storing files: lateral, vertical and stacking. Lateral filing is done in four-drawer filing cabinets, with the files held upright on their long narrow edge, often within a 'hanging folder'. Vertical filing, where files are held upright on their short narrow edge with their 'spines' facing outwards, is done in cupboards (which may or may not be enclosed) or on racking or shelves. The stacking method stores files flats, one on top of the other, with the spines of the files facing out.

There are advantages and disadvantages to all three methods. Lateral filing in cabinets, using hanging folders, is the least economical but provides easy access. Storage on open shelves is economical, but is unsuitable for confidential materials. The stacking method can be the cheapest and most convenient, but may cause difficulties of retrieval unless the stacks are small. Files stored vertically on open shelves may slip down unless the shelves have movable dividers that can support the files and keep them upright. However, vertical storage is suitable for records with rigid covers or binders, such as files held in ring binders. If open racking is used, shelves and files must be dusted regularly, particularly during the dry season.

### 10.2 Storing Current Files

Records Offices should be located conveniently for the action officers they serve. They should be separate from other administrative functions such as typing and should be of sufficient size to house the records staff who work in them and the records for which they are responsible. The accommodation must be secured and well maintained (*See Section 11*) and must be of strong enough construction to bear the weight of the files.

Sufficient and appropriate equipment should be provided for the safe handling and secure storage of records within the Records Office. Where appropriate, supports should be provided to prevent files from slipping

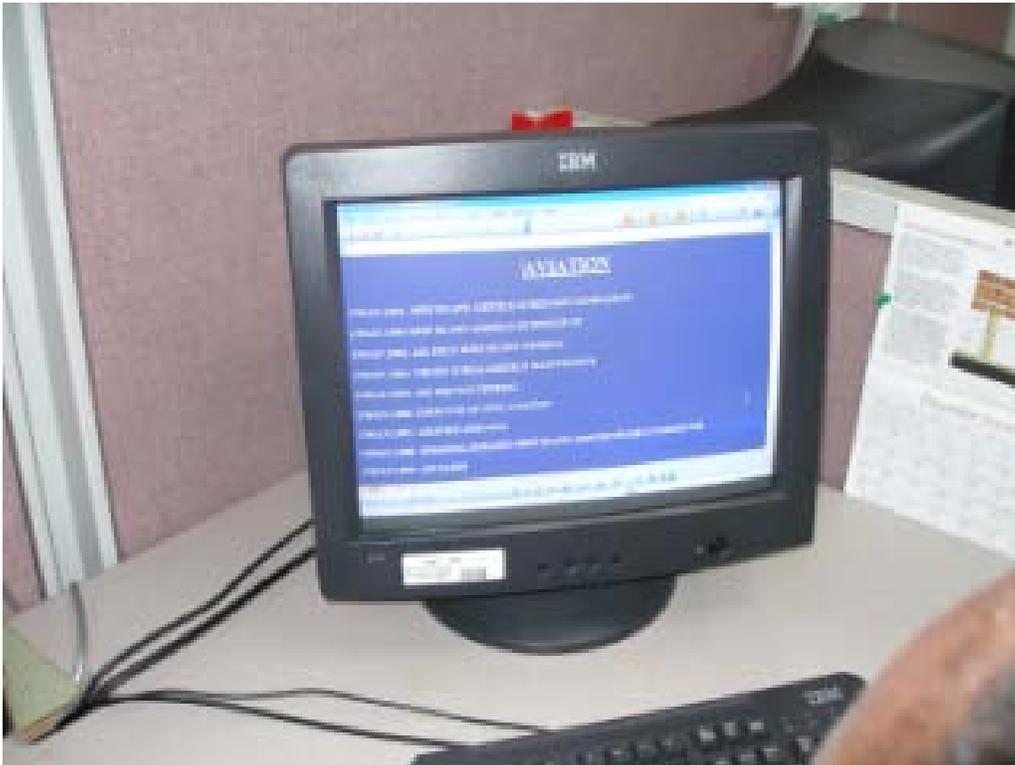
down. Shelves and cabinet drawers which hold current records should be clearly labelled to indicate the file number ranges. Adequate space should be left on shelves or in drawers to allow for easy withdrawal and replacement of files. As more new files are opened, the contents of shelves and drawers may need to be arranged to allow for the expansion. When this is done, labels will need to be changed.

An adequate stock of file covers, forms, registers for control documentation and other stationery should be maintained.

### **10.3 Storing Closed Files**

Files which have recently been closed may continue to be stored in the Records Office for an appropriate period so that they are readily available when required. However, closed files should always be stored separately, preferably in different cupboards or cabinets or on separate shelves, to avoid confusion of closed with current files. Again, shelves and cabinet drawers should be clearly labelled and labelling must be kept up-to-date.

*(Arrangements for transferring files to the Records Centre are described in Section 9).*



Electronic Listing of Files