

Section Six

Recording the Existence of a New File

6. Recording the Existence of a New File

6.1 Establishing Control over New Files

When a new file has been created, its existence must be comprehensively recorded so that it can be managed, tracked and produced whenever it is required.

There are three basic control mechanisms that are required to document each file. If any one of these is omitted, then the Records Office will not be able to keep track of files and this will prevent action officers from carrying out their work efficiently. The control mechanisms are the file diary, the file transit sheet and the file index.

6.2 File Dairy

When a new file is opened it must be recorded in the file diary. The following details should be included:

- A sequential number (the next number available in a single sequence)
- The file reference number (generated by consulting the file classification scheme to determine the series/sub-series in which the file should be placed, and the code numbers)
- The date of opening of the file
- The full file title
- Any previous file number.

(See Chapter 12: Forms- Fig. 7)

6.3 File Index

Next, the file must be indexed. The index is the key to rapid retrieval of files and the efficiency of the Records Office. Great care must be taken in preparing and using the index. It is the basic tool of the Records Office, but it can also be consulted by action officers under the close supervision of the Records Office. The index must be stored securely by the records staff at the end of the day.

The 'subject' terms used to index files must be taken from the keyword list or controlled vocabulary, otherwise files on the same topic may be indexed under different terms and it will no longer serve as reliable retrieval tool. Rules for indexing names or 'proper nouns' must always be followed.

To index a file, the two most important subjects of the file must be identified and the appropriate words selected from the controlled vocabulary. If an appropriate term does not exist, a new one may need to be created. A decision to create a new term is taken by the Head of the Records Office. Occasionally, it may be necessary to index a file number three or even four times.

6.4 File Plan or File List

A detailed listing of all the individual files within the classification scheme enhances efficiency in the Records Office.



Labelling is Important