

CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM NO. 32

FROM: State Secretary

TO: All Permanent Secretaries.
All Residents.
All Heads of State
Departments.
All District Officers.

SUBJECT: Departmental Records
Officer

REF: 55/CMO/1261

DATE: 5th October, 1974.

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The present system of storage, maintenance and disposal of official records including files in Government offices is not satisfactory. All Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Government Departments are requested to examine and where necessary make improvement to the system. The main purpose of the exercise is to save unnecessary use of office space and filing cabinets and cupboards and to ensure that valuable records or records which have historical significance will be properly preserved as they should be.

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2. All Permanent Secretaries, Residents and Heads of Departments are requested to appoint a Departmental Records Officer for their Ministry or Department. The officer to be appointed should as far as possible be a Senior Government Officer preferably a Division I Officer. The duties and functions of the Departmental Records Officer include those as in the Instruction attached. He should also travel to other areas and check the records of his departmental branches and other offices from time to time to ensure that the instructions are complied with.

3. All Departmental Records Officers should also be asked to make a review on the present financial records and forms used by their departments. Where necessary, action should be taken to up-date them or dispose of them. The procedure laid down in T.I. 150, T.I. 299 and G.O. 348 should continue to be followed in their dealings with the Government records.

4. ^{This} ~~These~~ office will be keeping a register of all Departmental Records Officers. I should be grateful if you would let me know of the name and designation of the officer appointed by you to be your Departmental Records Officer. Please also notify this office of any changes to the appointment in future.



(Peter Chung)
for State Secretary.

Departmental Records Officer

Terms of Reference:

A Departmental Records Officer should be appointed by post designation for each Government Department. He should not be lower than the Executive and Sub-Professional Group in the public service. He shall be responsible for the care of the department's records from the time when they are created or received until they are disposed of, either by destruction or by transfer to the State Archives.

A guide for Departmental Records Officers

I. Definition of Public Records

The National Archives Act defines "public records" as:

"papers, documents, registers, printed materials, books, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, micro-films, cinematograph films and sound recordings of any kind whatsoever, officially received or produced by any public office for the conduct of its affairs or by any employee of the public office in the course of his official duties."

As such, public records are all kinds of record materials made or received by any office of the Government or by any of its employees in the course of carrying out his official duties, regardless of its contents.

II. Non-Current Records

Non-current records are those records which are not needed by the office constantly or continually for its day-to-day functioning. As a rule they are those not referred to more than twice in a 12 month period.

Such records would take up unnecessary office space and staff time if allowed to remain with current records.; They should therefore be separated and removed annually to a non-current records storage area i.e. record store pending review.

III. Storage and Preservation of Records

1. Maintenance of Records

Departmental Records Officers should see that all records are properly cared for and maintained and that no damage is sustained by them.

2. Record Store

The record store should be free from flooding and direct sunlight. Care should be taken to see that the storage walls, floor and ceiling have no holes or crevices. Unsatisfactory storage conditions will result in rapid deterioration of the records.

3. Storing Records

Non-current records should be neatly arranged as when they were in current use on shelves or cabinets in the store to permit rapid retrieval and not strewn all over the floor. Records should not as far as possible be packed tightly on shelves or into compartments smaller than their sizes.

4. Inspection of Record Store

Once every six months or more frequently the record store as well as the whole of the office premises should be thoroughly inspected for insect infestation.

5. Cleaning

The record store and the records kept there should be cleaned regularly, at least once a week. Dusting and sweeping with feather dusters will not effectively remove the dust but merely transfer it.

6. Insecticides

The record store should be regularly sprayed with insecticides and sprayed on walls, ceilings, woodwork and particularly into cracks or crevices where insects may hide. Care should be taken that records are not sprayed with these insecticides. In addition naphthalene balls should be placed at closed intervals on the shelves. .

7. Prohibition of Foodstuff

Consumption of foodstuff should be strictly prohibited in and near the storage area.

8. Fire Precautions

Smoking or carrying a naked flame should be strictly prohibited in the storage area which should be provided with adequate fire fighting equipment. Carbon dioxide fire extinguishers are suitable for record stores and should be placed at convenient places.

9. Minor Repairs

Torn paper should never be repaired with gum or cellulose-tape as these will disintegrate and stain the paper. It is also difficult to remove cellulose-tape from documents without damaging the paper and print. Torn pages should be repaired by pasting with paper of the same type and quality using flour or starch paste.

10. Advice and Assistance

The State Archives at the Sarawak Museum is always ready to give advice and assistance to departments if and when required. It should be noted that the above are merely to be used as a guide for records officers in the preservation of records in their departments.
