



International Co-operative Alliance

Archives

a short guide to their selection,
presentation,
organisation and use.

ICA 01654

Co-operative Library Guide -2

ARCHIVES

ICA

**a short guide to their selection,
presentation, organisation and use.**

by Ludwig Schnabl

translated from Swedish by Anne Lamming

**International Co-operative Alliance
Working Party of Co-operative Librarians
& Documentation Officers
1980**

A SHORT GUIDE TO ARCHIVES

Preface

Co-operative activities are important elements in the economic structure in many parts of the world. The strength of the movement varies from country to country, but it is a fact that the co-operative forms of enterprise and the membership organisations behind them often are important factors in trade, commerce and industry. This is not least the case in those countries which have obtained their independence in the last thirty years or the economic development of which has, for various reasons, until now been slow to develop or has been curtailed.

The co-operative movement therefore has a considerable role in creating general welfare; this role also implies a great deal of responsibility. One of the co-operative responsibilities is to make sure that there is proper order in organizing and storing the records of various co-operative societies and organizations, to make them easily accessible; for instance when various committees, managers or research-workers want to become acquainted with the way in which a matter has been handled or how certain programmes and important decisions for the future have been made.

The main purpose of this guide is to create understanding for the way papers are handled within the movement. It is meant to be used in many countries and therefore the details may not necessarily take into account all considerations applying in all countries, nor further legislation and other rules which are appropriated in one or several countries. The international public for which the guide is meant and the restricted number of pages means that only a selection of general rules for archives are treated in this publication. The guide is, however, aimed at a fairly large and diverse number of persons; officials, elected members and staffs may find it of interest. It may not have anything new to give to the manager of National Archives or even to a head of department; however, they could very well read the

guide and discuss it with people responsible for the archives of co-operatives, such as commissioners, officers, officials, staffs at various levels, filing clerks and other people who have to deal with these practical problems.

We thank our colleagues within the Working Party of Co-operative Librarians and Documentation Officers who took the initiative in seeking the preparation of this guide. We also hope that the text in this guide will be of help in creating a firmer and more reliable structure for archives.

London and Stockholm 1979

The author and translator

ARCHIVES TODAY

WHO MAKES DECISIONS IN THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT?

In the centre of the legal framework within which the co-operative movement works today are the member organizations at the local, regional and national level. These have been created by us and in our capacity of producers, consumers and employees; together we keep these joint ventures going. The independence of the societies, as regards their decision-making processes, financial planning, administration, auditing etc., is, however, not unlimited. Every country has some form of legislation which the movement has to observe.

Since there is legislation, there are also various public authorities which to a lesser or greater degree exercise control over the economy of the country, in particular co-operative activities. In some countries special Co-operative departments have been created; these are normally part of the ministry that deals with co-operatives. In various parts of the country this department often has district officers, such as directors of co-operatives, regional co-operative officers and others; their job is to keep in touch with societies in their geographical area.

In many countries there are rules for the archives of public bodies. Where there are such rules, naturally the Co-operative Department will also follow them. Co-operative societies, however, are not as strictly bound to all the details of national archive rules. Their regular communications with governmental authorities imply, however, that these societies in practise still have to follow the most important administrative routines, laid down by the government for archives.

EVERYTHING MUST BE WRITTEN DOWN

The movement is composed of most branches of the economy: agriculture, handicrafts and industry, trade and distribution, various kinds of services, insurance, banking and credit, housing construction etc.

There is a large network of communications - between the various co-operative societies and unions, between the managements of these societies and with public authorities. The questions and answers, plans and decisions, requests, work plans, orders, certificates etc. which through various channels reach the managements of societies - officials, farmers, technicians, persons in charge of transportation and warehousing, buyers, accountants, book-keepers, auditors and others - are so numerous and so varied that it is not possible to keep them in order only by remembering things. Verbal agreements are not enough; there are therefore in most countries laws, regulations and rules for societies which determine that all projects and transactions must be written in order to have legal validity.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOCUMENTS AND ARCHIVES

Co-operative activities and the flow of paper which reflects it, can be divided into two main groups. On the one side there is the group concerning planning, discussion, and decision-making. On the other side there are the functions, which are mainly financial, of making calculations, setting prices, invoicing, reporting, and auditing. Both these groups have papers which are quite characteristic for them: minutes, memoranda, articles of association and other official documents, as well as correspondence belonging to the collections of each member organization (the Organization Archives); vouchers such as invoices, packing notes, book-keeping documents and other accounting documentation that comes within the purview of the chief accountant. This documentation must be kept in accordance with general national legislation for accountancy and book-keeping documentation (this is the accountancy archive). The rules for retention and storing

of this type of documentation tend to be different from and quite independent of the rules for storing the organization archives.

This division normally works well, providing there are not water-tight compartments between the organizational and the accounting archives. The accounting documentation ought to be available for the manager and his staff, if necessary, otherwise important research on which decision making has to be based may be hindered.

The relationship between organizational and accounting archives varies quite considerably. In some countries and in some organizations they come under different heads of departments; they may be located in different buildings and co-operation between them can sometimes be hindered by various restrictions. On the other hand there are examples of integration which go very far: both types of archives may quite simply be sections within a single archival unit and be located next door to each other.

However, integration must not go further than that. The rooms must be separate and equipped with different types of technical equipment which relates to the various types of documents stored in those rooms. The minutes and other documentation on which decisions are based are of a permanent character and must therefore be stored in such a way that they may be kept permanently; accounting documentation need normally only be kept for a prescribed number of years. The choice of the physical location of the two types of archives, packaging, and furnishings, will vary in each case.

HOW FILES ARE ORGANIZED

The internal organization of the two types of archives is usually quite different. One of the most common principles for the organization of archives is that the documents have to be ranged and kept in the sequence in which they originate on a given matter. In the majority of organizations this is done already at the stage when the matter is being dealt with. When a new project has been started a file is made from a suitable folder or

a pocket etc. normally made of stiff paper or cardboard, marked with the name of the project or matter in hand, and the correspondence put inside it. As the matter progresses, all notes, costings, technical and legal advice, incoming and outgoing letters, memoranda, extracts from minutes, reports and other papers are assembled in this file, normally in chronological order. Other files, under the same heading, may follow.

There are current and completed matters. When completed, this is where the responsibility of the archivist starts. It is his job to look after the files - at least those that deal with past matters. The role of the archivist regarding files varies from organization to organization.

Often the archivist or his filing clerk will have to look after the job of transportation of current files, and keep current and old files apart.

FILING SERIES BY TYPE

Files are collections of documents referring to one single matter at a time. A file can be compared to a serial story, published in instalments, which, as more and more papers and documents are added to it, tell the story of the decision making processes of an organization, its democratic control, its policies, etc. It should be noted that the documentation collected in files is heterogeneous; it consists of letters, memoranda, extracts from minutes, in no set order.

Management financial decisions and transactions will result in various vouchers, orders, packing notes, invoices, bills, and other statistical material. Together with cash-books, ledgers and journals, income tax returns, lists of wages and salaries, etc., these documents are the basis for the calculations of the financial position of a society or union. As has been stated already, accounting materials and documents have to be handled and stored according to a separate set of rules.

The documentation for accounts is normally not organized by subject or matter, but according to the role of this particular type of document in the accounting procedures of the organization. Paid invoices are not spread over a number of files; they are, instead, organized into homogeneous series. Orders and receipts are similarly organized, though in separate sequences.

In practice the larger archives contain both accounting archives organized by series, and files according to subject. Most archives therefore contain mixtures of materials. The accounting archives are dominated by series of documentation by type, whilst the organization archives in the main contain subject files and series of that kind.

HOW TO TURN A FILE INTO ARCHIVES

Files contain a wide variety of material - letters, memoranda, printed material such as prospectuses, drawings, maps and other materials. It may be very bulky and its contents may have to be substantially reduced.

The archivist and his superiors are always confronted by the question of whether files are to be kept completely untouched once a matter has been concluded, or whether they may remove items which have neither historical nor legal relevance.

In a well-organized office and archive system, the files are treated in a flexible way. It is up to the individual officer in charge of a matter to look after the file, add to it relevant papers that are necessary whilst the work is current. A number of files like this form a temporary personal archive; this is an initial step to the real archives.

The file may lack catalogues from manufacturers, travel brochures and similar bulky material which will be kept as a separate file of unnumbered, unclassified material, to be destroyed when it is no longer needed.

When a matter has been concluded and the file referring to this matter is to be sent to the archives there is an important decision to be made. In those countries where rules and regulations prohibit all regrouping or pruning of the contents of the file, there is no choice to be made and a large number of unnecessary documents will be kept in the archives for all future time. If the material can be re-arranged or disposed of, the files may be dealt with differently before transfer to the archives.

The first step is to take out of the file all the material, such as manufacturers' sales literature, brochures about tools or materials, catalogues from suppliers, etc., which contain information that has already become out of date. Information of this kind should normally be destroyed or, be sent to a suitable technical library. Duplicate copies of accounting documentation in the file should also be destroyed. The original documents will be available in the normal accounting files.

HOW TO FIND THE CORRECT FILE

The pruning of the files that has been described above, leaves the basic order of the files untouched, still in chronological order. When the archives need to be referred to, it is easy to retrieve the file which is marked with the subject.

International experiences have shown that researchers, committee members and managers of societies usually ask the archivist for help to get a vertical picture not on one particular matter but as a reflection of the whole situation of an organization, a society, or even with reference to a particular individual.

More than one file may need to be consulted. Suppliers, auditors, co-operative pioneers, other organizations and personalities are often mentioned in a number of files. In order to achieve the full picture we must look in a number of different files. The search should be made as easy as possible.

Each file should be provided with a short "internal minute" written at the time when the file is closed. The most important items contained in the file should be described, covering the main items of the matter, what the position was at the time when the file was closed and why the file was closed (for instance the matter may have been shelved, or a new file may have been opened, or the matter may have been concluded). This "internal minute" should be placed on top of the material contained in each file.

By keeping internal minutes we therefore do not have to go through the whole of each file. By reading through this top sheet we will have an impression of whether the object of the research is available in the file or not. In addition to the internal minute there could be a simple register of firms and persons who figure in the file. Next to the names should be noted the number of each document in which the names are mentioned.

A most important rationalization is to have a special list of all the individuals, suppliers and firms which the society or union deals with and which may therefore be found in various places in the archives. This list can be either in the form of a ledger with an alphabetical register or the form of a card catalogue, also arranged alphabetically. The ledger or card catalogue should contain notes of all the relevant files; the alphabetical listings in the files in turn, assist in finding the correct documents. A Catalogue or ledger simplifies taking out of the archives only the relevant files.

Some readers may consider the above advice absolutely self-evident. However, there are still large organizations where this type of methodical cataloguing has not even been started or where simplifications or proper catalogue cards are not yet sufficiently completed.

ARRANGEMENT BY ORIGIN

The catalogue is a tool which helps the archivist to find the various places in which archival material is available and where the material together adds up to a profile - either of an individual, an institution or some other object for research. There is still, however, an inconvenience in the system; the archivist will have to look in several or sometimes very many places without being able in advance to judge how important the documentation is for the purpose required. This can be illustrated by a fairly typical case. A well known co-operator is given promotion and is, for instance, made head of a department. A journalist is asked to write a quick article about this person for a daily paper, and comes to the archive to look for his source material. The catalogue may show that the name of the person figures in perhaps a hundred different files. By checking carefully, at least half of them only contain legal documents, invitation cards, confirmations of meetings, and similar documents bearing the name of the person in question. The various pieces of documentation may be of importance to somebody writing a detailed biography, but for the example in hand they are not of any real importance. The search will be greatly simplified if all the papers, or at least the correspondence, referring to this particular person, were collected in one place, as is normally the case with accounting materials.

Accounting documents are stored according to their function in a number of series by type. The principle behind each series is built up on the firms, organizations or other units which have issued or received the material. The various suppliers and customers are kept separated with the series in alphabetical order. Alphabetical guides within the files quickly refer the reader to a particular letter where the papers of the firm being stored are arranged in chronological order.

Can the same principle be applied even to correspondence files? In many countries this is the case. It is only whilst a file is still current that letters are treated in a different way.

Letters are mostly placed on arrival in the current file, but when the matter has been concluded, the question of whether letters should remain in the file or should form their own series arises. Correspondence, both that received and that sent out should not be separated.

THE ACCESSIONS METHOD

The last in the various methods of organization that should be mentioned is yet another way of organizing materials: according to chronological order of arrival. This method is used in those parts of regional or national archives, where documentation from various archival sources, such as affiliated societies, subsidiaries etc., are collected. Quite independently of each other, these various archival sources send in their documents to the central archives, still to be pruned and sorted.

If the principle of origin should be applied on unwieldy documents, each archival source, society or organization, would have to have its own section in the archives, though in providing for the future acquisitions from each source much valuable space would be wasted.

A better system, operated as the material arrives, is to sort out by archival source, by type of document etc. and list all the documents, with the years in which the documents arose and other relevant information. The material is then packed in suitable order in parcels weighing not more than 2Kg to 4Kg. Each package is numbered in sequence. When the material is packaged, the accessions number of the parcel is noted on the provisional list that is made, next to each document which is kept in the parcel. When the packages are placed directly next to each other and each package has been properly numbered the notes from the provisional list are transferred to the catalogue card referring to each archival source.

For bulky documents and material which arrives only sporadically follow the accessions method of archiving. Minute books and similar material from any given society or productive unit will therefore be placed in several different places.

In general it may be said that each type of document demands its own particular method of storage, depending on the function, size, legal importance, historical value, etc. Most final archives therefore work with a different set of methods for different types of documents.

"THE FILE IS LOST"

The mixed structure of modern archives therefore also means that the subject filing system is preserved to a certain extent. Matters referring to important structural changes, large work projects, important legal cases, etc., may have such historical importance for the organization that the papers referring to this matter should always be kept together. If this is the case the files are to be left alone once they have been pruned. Letters that are left in the files may be copied and placed in special files for the correspondence series.

The combination of several archiving methods has two main purposes. It helps the retrieval of various types of archives, and it diminishes the risk of single documents or of whole files being lost. It happens from time to time that a paper on arrival is mistakenly put in the wrong file. In those countries where strict subject filing is demanded there are no chances of ever finding the paper again. The same fate may even befall whole file volumes which are either improperly stored, wrongly labelled, or even are added to if the files are not securely tied up.

The possibilities of influencing these conditions are fairly limited for the archivist. The archivist is nearly always confronted with shelves that are overflowing with files. New files arrive daily and the archivist is not allowed to prune the contents of the files; the archivist then sometimes picks on

what he may think is the easiest way out: he will take the oldest, commercially least current files and destroy them entirely, not being aware of the value of the material that he is destroying. This material may include unique letters, agreements that have made history, legal petitions or judgements, changes in structure of historical importance to the movement, and other valuable documents.

In other cases one may read that "the file is lost". This sentence often comes into the law-reports of newspapers to show that a matter cannot be further considered because the basic documentation is no longer available. It is distressing that this can in some places be regarded as virtually unavoidable.

However, there are ways around this. If a varied number of archival methods are used, and the files are properly pruned the chances are that when the documents are regrouped and placed in archives, the papers that have been wrongly filed are found.

Local archives of societies often are not able to carry out the methods recommended for pruning and arranging archives. In many countries there are now regional and national archival authorities which can help them to get practical information, and in some cases even carry out detailed work. They can even act as final archives for the local material after it has been properly pruned and organized.

ORGANIZATION AND TECHNIQUES

THE THREE STAGES

The storage and care of documentation is entirely tied up to the administrative and ordered, routine methods of work. The major responsibility for keeping material in order is with the staff of the archives. The pattern of processing documentation may be as follows:

1. The current stage: A matter is started by a question, a suggestion or a decision, pieces of paper result. These are collected in files of various kinds, and in time will form a whole collection, on that subject.
2. The preparatory stage: When a matter or programme has been concluded, the file is closed. At this particular point - if not before - the archivist is put in charge of the care of the material. It is not yet a question of preserving all the material for the future. The main intention of keeping the files and the accounts documentation in the required places is determined by various laws for a given number of years, and they will need to be available for routine checking or for various inspections demanded by law, such as audits.
3. Final archives: The major part of business documentation neither needs nor should be kept for an indefinite period. Documents of historical importance should be selected and transferred to the final archive, the sooner the better.

Know-how and training of staff is very important and the various types of technical equipment equally so. The longer the storage periods envisaged, the higher the demands for quality in the construction of the building, furniture, containers, and packing of archives.

STORAGE PERIODS

The laws, rules and instructions which regulate the administrative, accounting and archival routines are a help to the societies in carrying out their duties, in keeping their accounts in good order and making sure that all documentation of historical importance is kept securely. In this connection it may be useful to describe the various storage periods which are applied to different types of archival material. Since custom and rules vary between countries, the chart below will only indicate average periods for storage.

Permanent storage	Long-term storage (10 to 20 years)	Short-term storage (1 to 5 years)
<p>Balance sheet</p> <p>Membership lists and registers of original members from the early years of the society</p> <p>Annual reports</p> <p>Interviews and material referring to individuals (not printed material)</p> <p>Original certificates of registration, rules, legal documents referring to the society, ratifications, etc.</p> <p>Memoranda, research undertaken at a high level, and other documentation which refers to matters that have a permanent value</p> <p>Minutes of the decision making bodies such as executives committees, annual general meetings and various sub-committees, working parties, etc.</p> <p>Collections of letters referring to leaders and pioneers of the movement, and other correspondence relating to the development of the movement</p> <p>Other remarkable documentation and also historical pictures, photographs, films, tape recordings and articles to be placed in a museum</p>	<p>Books of accounts</p> <p>Invoices to and from trading partners outside the movement</p> <p>Vouchers referring to financial transactions between the society and others</p> <p>Memoranda, reports, inquiries and suggestions referring to projects within various departments</p> <p>Letters which wholly or partly deal with the organization of various matters, but after the legally prescribed time do not have historical importance; to be kept for 10 years</p>	<p>Orders</p> <p>Offers (five years)</p> <p>Invoices referring to internal transactions (e.g. between departments of the organization)</p> <p>Vouchers referring to internal transactions (one year)</p> <p>Work programmes for smaller units and programme superficial small surveys</p> <p>Minutes of departmental meetings and similar meetings, where decisions are not binding</p> <p>Letters regarding detail in the work or which simply confirm minor matters; any decisions based on the information in these letters may be found in other vouchers, invoices or receipts available in the accounting archives</p>

THE PRUNING PROCESS

The chart contains very different storage times, to which the three different columns only give a schematical frame. In addition it contains a number of different documents of varying kind and value. Deciding what is of historical value may be particularly difficult for local societies to determine. The separation of correspondence into historically valuable material and less important material demands experience, judgement, and perhaps also a fair amount of courage! It is better done by "professionals" at the regional or national archive level.

The local societies, however, can undertake valuable preparation for pruning regardless of where the pruning is to be undertaken. Bids, offers, and invoices, which are normally arranged by year, should be packaged and labelled with the year they refer to and also the year in which they may be destroyed.

Subject files are different since they contain both material to be destroyed and material which will be kept in the archives.

The societies can empty out their intermediate archives quite regularly and send everything that has to be pruned to regional or national final archives where the final sorting is undertaken. An alternative is that the national pruning expert should visit the various intermediate archives and with the help of the people in the local society undertake the pruning there. This can sometimes mean savings are made on transporting material; the material is straight-away divided up into that which is to be sent to the final archives, and that which is to be disposed of. Archival material, to be preserved, should be transported in containers which will withstand the journey.

District auditors or district officers, who are used to helping the societies in many different administrative and managerial duties, can help with elementary advice on archives. Problems which are difficult to solve can always be referred to the national archival institution.

REGIONAL ARCHIVES STRUCTURE

It may be apparent from the previous chapters that the situation of co-operative archives shows many similarities in different countries, even though there are national differences. The similarities include the division into local, regional, and national archives, staffed by people with higher qualifications, and with increasing authority and powers, as the archive's importance grows.

An international inquiry showed that this graded archive structure is used successfully in a number of different countries. The archive and pruning routines which are in use within the VdK, the consumer co-operative organization of the German Democratic Republic, may be mentioned as an example of this structure. The three steps mentioned (current files - intermediate archive - final archives) look as follows within the VdK:

The movement of a document through the organization starts within the various so called "Aktführende Stellen", i.e. units which have an obligation to organize and look after the subject files and similar material, as long as it is needed in the current work. When it is no longer needed, the next stage is the intermediate archive. There are such intermediate archives within each unit of the organization, which takes over all material which is no longer needed in the current work. Each delivery of documentation from the responsible official to this intermediate archive is accompanied both by a list which contains the papers in their original chronological current numbering, and by another list where the same papers are organized in subject order. The intermediate archive has the duty of sending archival material of a permanent nature to the final archives.

The final archives has to "receive and store archives of a permanent economic and social value, and store it under proper climatic conditions in order to preserve the paper".

Each unit within the VdK has an obligation to keep its own intermediate archives. But only some of the larger organizations and productive units within the movement have their own final archives (as a rule this is at the regional level).

Destruction of material which has not gone to the final archives is undertaken within the VdK by the intermediate archives. With the help of directives on the lines of the schedule in a previous chapter stating the varying periods that each type of document ought to be kept, combined with accessions lists, the material which is ready to be destroyed is identified, and a list is established of this material. The list is submitted to the management of the final archive responsible for the intermediate archives; after receiving permission from the final archives for the destruction of material, the material that has been sorted out is sent to a paper mill to be re-cycled.

There is a similar procedure for sorting out material in regional intermediate archives; however, permission for destruction of documents has to be sought directly from the national organization VdK.

The consumer co-operative movement in the GDR at present has approximately two dozen regional final archives within organizations of productive units; these are geographically dispersed fairly evenly throughout the country. In each of these final archives there are approximately ten sub-ordinate, intermediate archives which work in the smaller units within the region. These intermediate archives feed the final archives with historical documentation.

MARKING AND LABELLING

What is then hidden inside a file, a box, or a package? This has to be shown clearly on a label or at least be clearly written on the package. Illustration 1 shows various examples.

Suspended folders have thin label holders at the top edge. Labels stuck into these holders can only contain one line - normally the subject and the running number. Suspended folders are open at the top provide inadequate space for bulky items, and so have limited applications. They are used for current filing, or for frequently used intermediate archives.

The bulk of archival material is, however, stored in containers with broad backs, mostly in files or in boxes. These boxes give space for more detailed texts; the labels can give details of the source (such as the name of the society or department), the general heading for the type of series with any sub-heading, dates of the material, retention period, date it may be destroyed.

Illustration 2 shows a minute book. The label on the minute book acts as the identification only during the time when the minute book is being used. When the minute book has been finished and is sent to the final archive, it should be packaged (preferably together with similar books from the same society). The backs of these packages should only need a running number, as mentioned above. In illustration 3 an example of this is shown.

Where there is reason to write the identification of the items straight on the papers around the package, this labelling technique must be used consistently on the whole series. This is particularly the case for collections of portraits, and material referring to individuals; this is usually contained in small envelopes. The smaller envelopes (illustrations 2 and 4) show that the marks refer to the name of the person (or society) and the place. The contents of the envelope (photographs of individuals, annual reports, and by-laws) will be shown by the printed contents, and by the shape and colour of the envelopes. In the final archives these various envelopes are used as internal signals of recognition for the various series; e.g. blue envelopes with only the name of the society will contain annual reports, brown envelopes will contain memorial publications, etc. These are routines which will develop and differ from archive to archive.

Series of larger envelopes should be properly labelled, however. It depends on the contents and on the detail given. The type of label that has been chosen for each series should be pasted consistently in the same place on each envelope, which gives this very varied series of texts a stable appearance. (see illustrations 1 and 4)

A SCHEME FOR ARCHIVES

Accounting and archive rules usually prescribe that documents which are of importance to the movement must be preserved in an organized manner. This text has given a number of examples of how this demand can be met. Systematic arrangement, proper labelling facilitate searches and organization considerably.

An archive must have internal rules on which its structure is determined; it is necessary to know how many and what type of series of files have been formed, what names they look like physically, and where they are located. The basic document which gives the main items on the structure of the archives is called a scheme for archives (please see illustration 5).

The archive scheme describes the various series and their sub-groups in systematic order. In some cases close definitions are also given. In a special column the various locations of the series are also given (the town, the building, the department, the room).

Given the background of the diversity of activities of the co-operative movements in five continents it will be very difficult to find an internationally applicable archives scheme. The most suitable archive structure for an organization is usually found by studying the organization's own enterprises.

ACCESSIONS LISTS

When an organization has decided to adopt a legally acceptable and properly structured archives scheme, the next object will be to build out a network of detailed guides which will lead to the documents which have to be found. So-called "accessions lists" play an important role. Whether the method used is subject filing, type series or a combination of both systems, it is necessary for all incoming archival material to be written down in some sort of chronological order.

Some archives keep just one ledger in which all the memoranda, files, minutes, legal documents etc. are entered in chronological order without any attempt at grouping the various types together. This method means that for instance one subject, or series, or individual, or archival source must be specified for each new note. The work, however, can be simplified and the ledgers can become more lucid if the chronological ledgers are divided up into different lists: there can, for example, be a chronological list of all the minute books of societies, there can be another list of microfilms that have been received, another one for subject files, and one for tape recordings.

Examples from about a dozen national co-operative archives show that the average number of series into which they are organized is approximately twenty. Something over half of these series are what may be called national specialities; i.e. these were demanded by legal or organizational peculiarities of the country or the organization.

In nearly all organizations, the following will usually be found:

- (1) minutes of the national organization;
- (2) files by subject;
- (3) archival material referring to local societies, originating from local societies;
- (4) minutes of local societies;
- (5) annual reports of local societies;
- (6) press cuttings;
- (7) photographs;
- (8) microfilms;
- (9) tape recordings.

As the materials vary in size and form they must be kept in separate containers, furniture and areas. Each series, however, does not necessarily demand a separate accessions list. In the case of the minutes of a national co-operative organization, collected receipts for delivered documents in turn become a sort of accessions list.

In dealing with material from the local societies, these are to a large extent kept in rows of boxes or envelopes, in alphabetical order. Labels on the boxes or envelopes clearly show which society is kept in the containers, and this shows that the latest annual report or similar material is to be added to the collection when it arrives. When it does so, this will be noted, but not in a special accessions list, but rather on the special catalogue card for that particular society.

In practise, chronological lists are of practical use only in regard to subject files, microfilms and tape recordings. For all these categories it seems that the most natural manner of organizing is to allot a running number and note the date order. Illustration 6 shows a register sheet from a list containing isolated records. The running number, the names of the main persons concerned, and the place and time for the event, and possibly some indication of the contents are noted on this register.

In the list of packages containing the material from societies, there are, however, as we may see only two types of information: there are the numbers in proper order of the packages, and the names of the societies whose documents are kept in packages. This is quite enough, since a researcher who wants to know in detail what type of material is kept in the packages would not look at the accessions list but at the catalogue card referring to the society.

LISTS OF SUBJECTS AND NAMES

Press cuttings and photographs which directly and unequivocally can be referred to a specific society have their given place in series dealing with just societies; they are normally stored in the envelope marked with the name of the unit in question. The catalogue card will indicate materials deposited. If the words 'cuttings' 'illustrations' etc. have been written on the catalogue card then any person looking for such material need only open the cuttings or photographic-box containing the specific material.

It is definitely not worthwhile registering in lists or even on catalogue cards every single photograph or cutting. If any person wants to read articles about a specific society or search for one illustration or the other about its work they will have to go through all the variable material. Some preliminary help, however, may be given to such researchers. It is possible to make alphabetical lists of all the persons and subjects about whom or which illustrations or articles have been collected in the archives.

Problems arise when additional cuttings or photographs are received references to them are put in an appendix and not in their proper alphabetical place. The whole list should then be re-organized and re-written. We would not recommend the use of catalogue cards in this connection; cards are easy to organize alphabetically but looking through a few sheets of typed paper is much easier.

THE CATALOGUES

Two main parts of the reference system of an archive have now been described: (a) the archive scheme, which gives a picture of the division into groups of the archive; and (b) the lists in either alphabetical or running order which indicate whether certain material is available in the archives or not. The archive scheme and the lists give only general references. For precise

indications of where a particular document is to be found, it is necessary to have a catalogue organized according to definite criteria.

These criteria are principally (a) the name of the author of the document in question, (b) the title of the document, (c) the society within which the document has been produced, (d) the subject area which the document deals with. It is evident that an archive which has an author catalogue, a title catalogue, a society or source catalogue ought to be able to give optimal service to all the visitors who come to the archive to look for any documentation, and have even the slightest idea what they are looking for.

Catalogues answering to the description given in the previous paragraph ought to consist of cards or loose-leaf systems, where each of these cards or loose leaves may be devoted to only one single unit. There is one exception to this rule: the society catalogue where the rule observed is normally "One sheet of paper - one archival source". Since these sheets must list all the documents received from the organization or the society in question, they must as a rule be larger than the small card catalogues which are used in the author-, title- or subject catalogues.

With the help of illustration 7 it will be demonstrated how the latter three catalogues work. The first illustration shows a card the text of which is introduced by the name of the author. The card is part of the author catalogue, where the cards of all the works of the author in question are placed together alphabetically. If a visitor to the archives wishes to have an overview of the works of this particular author the staff of the archives would therefore look in the author catalogue, where all the cards concerning him are kept together. The notation in the upper left corner indicates where the work is kept, whilst the signs on the right indicate the subject areas which are treated by the author in this particular document; the markings form part of the internal code used in this particular archive.

The next card is somewhat different; the title of the document is given before the name of the author. This card belongs in the title catalogue, which is used by all the people who wish just to get hold of this particular work, whose title they know. Otherwise the card is organized in the same way as the previous one.

The number of subjects listed on the catalogue card would determine how many copies of the card have to be produced. The card shown in illustration 7 will be catalogued under the name of the author, under the name of the title, and under the one subject listed for this particular card. This gives a total of three cards: one in each of the author-, title- and subject catalogues. However, if the book were to have to refer to seven different subjects, which would be mentioned on the card, then it will be necessary to put seven different cards in the subject catalogue under the various classified headings. Including the author - and title card this would give a total of nine cards.

This system of cataloguing has been particularly developed within libraries. It has been described here in detail because the methods which are so important in dealing with archives are clearly expressed here. For use in small or principally type series archives the cataloguing can be simplified by drastically cutting down the number of subjects listed on the card. One or two main subjects ought to suffice, the rest may be left out. In archives it should further be unnecessary to go into detailed classification using letters and numbers. Instead a thesaurus ought to be prepared listing the subject areas covered in the archive. There need not be more than some dozen main subject areas, each with about four sub-areas. It is then necessary to adhere strictly to these words when making out the catalogue cards.

The societies' catalogue (or in more general terms the source catalogue) consists of cards or sheets of suitable size. The leading words arranged alphabetically consist of the officially registered names of the units (the societies or productive units, etc.) from which the archival material mentioned on the card originated.

The text of the card must be absolutely clear and unambiguous; even so it is not always possible to keep strict order. There may be sometimes twentyfive years between receipt of material from some societies; it cannot therefore be demanded that the cards referring to a society should be kept open for notes about such irregular receipts of archival material. Sometimes a large consignment of minutes or books of a society will have been entered on the card, and when the card has been filled up further notes will have been made on the back, and extra cards may have been added; if the disorder is too apparent, and the notes difficult to read, it would be necessary to have the card rewritten.

Cards should be of a standard format, at least 10 by 15 centimetres (four inches by six inches). In order not to squeeze the text too much and not to make continuation cards necessary, the material from the societies is given only in summary form. It ought, however, to be specified in detail in some places; this can be done on large society sheets, organized in the same way as the society cards. The detail given on the society sheets can be as great as is necessary, and will lead the researcher to the correct item straight away.

BUILDING UP AND EQUIPPING THE
ARCHIVE

THE LIFE SPAN OF PAPER

A well stored document can be likened to a fruit seed which is contained in several protective covers. Nature has so organized it for plants which can only live under specific conditions regarding for example, temperature, humidity, light, etc. Paper, too, is a sensitive material, which has many natural enemies: dust, heat, damp, bacteria, mould, insects, sunlight. In addition there is the risk of accidents, such as for instance fire and floods.

Since the protective shell for archival material is not grown biologically, it is necessary to construct it. How many shells and what materials are used, depend partly on the particular conditions that are necessary for paper. The humidity of the air plays a key role: it ought to be between fifty and sixty per cent. If it is higher there is a risk of biological attacks; and if the air is too dry, the paper will become brittle. Nor is it a good thing if the relative humidity is allowed to go from one extreme to the other. The binding agents that are present in paper are dissolved by humidity, and then if the air is too dry they will be dried out, or lose their binding properties by chemical deposition.

The temperature of the archive should also be kept fairly constant. The ideal is 17 degrees Celsius at a stable humidity of the air of 55 per cent. However, we have the possibility through technology to make perfect archive air with the help of thermostats, hygrometers, cleaning filters and high pressure air pumps. A pure climate for archives can be achieved regardless of the heat, humidity and dust conditions that prevail outside. But air-conditioning plants are extremely expensive.

HOW TO CONSTRUCT AN ARCHIVE BUILDING

Most archives will have to make do without very sophisticated technical equipment in order to ensure a reasonable climate for archival material.

The ideal figure given of 17 degrees Celsius and 55% humidity locally have a certain margin of tolerance. If the temperature were to go down to 10° or rise to 30° there is no harm done; this under the condition that the air humidity has not been too much affected. With humidity tolerance is less: under no condition must it rise above 60%; however, drying out to 35% or 40% is less of a danger - at least for fairly limited periods.

One of the most effective weapons against unnecessary loss and damage to paper is good planning of buildings. Even if the changes of temperature in the place where the archives are located should be as extreme as a difference of 40° between night and day out of doors, there is still a chance of keeping a relatively even temperature inside of the archives - provided that none of the six sides of the archives (floor, ceiling and four walls) is in direct contact with the outside air. The archives (at least in the case of the final archives) should be the core of a building, surrounded by a protective zone, an outer ring of other offices. An attic or upper floor prevents unnecessary heat or cold penetrating from above.

The archive itself should always be located on the ground floor in order to use the coolness which the floor of the ground-floor rooms normally transmits evenly during the day. The advice of an expert builder should be sought about suitable materials, insulation, damp-proofing, etc. In very hot climates the archives floor may be located somewhat below ground level. This will help to protect the room from excessive heat.

As the weight of documents varies between 500 and 15,000 kilograms per square metre, ground floor locations are advantageous. In a number of countries there are still no flooring materials that can take such a load on a floor above ground level. Only the direct contact with the ground on a concrete base preferably, will be a guarantee against buildings collapsing. Varnishing of the concrete floors will help to reduce dust.

VENTILATION

In hot weather, keep doors to the archive room closed. Short periods of circulation of fresh air are necessary but in places where the air contains numerous insects, dust, etc. the ventilators should have filters.

FURNISHINGS AND FURNITURE

Furniture in which the archive's documents are placed also protects them. Other equipment for packing, re-packing, and opening of parcels that arrive in the archives will be useful. In this connection, a large table is very useful. It needs to be strong or to be suitably strengthened.

Furniture used for storage is mostly shelving. Shelves for archives should be open and airy without dividing walls in the horizontal plane, or between the vertical sections. To accommodate the weight of archives shelves should have diagonal bracing. Thickness of the shelves should not be less than 20 millimetres; the length of the shelves (the length between the vertical partitions should according to the weight be placed on them - be kept between 80 and 125 centimetres, and the depths of the shelves should be not less than 30 centimetres. If possible, shelves should be adjustable.

Open shelves are very practical from the point of view of keeping the archives well aired. There are, however, many situations in which closed cupboards are to be preferred, especially where the air is very dusty or where the changes in climate so affect the indoor climate that the limits given for temperature and humidity are exceeded by that. Original documents, small items that belong in a museum section, films and records on tape must always be kept in cupboards where they are protected from light, dirt, and from people who should not get at the material.

Cupboards with drawers meant for final archives are principally available in two main types; there are catalogue cabinets, and so called archive cupboards with either deep or shallow drawers. The first type is meant for card catalogues, the second one for archival material arranged in files or (which is cheaper and easier) in envelopes which are stored upright. The depth of these drawers is therefore between 25 and 28 centimetres. Shallow drawers which are 10 to 12 centimetres deep are usually used for small boxes and similar covers which contain for instance microfilm, photographic slides, or other small visual material, such as cassettes, but not larger tapes.

COMPACT SHELVING

Passages between archive shelving take up more than half the available floor space. Moveable shelves use space much better. Such shelves have to be supplied with a set of precision made wheels, which work in runners sunk into the floor.

Compact shelves increase the protection against fire; since they are closely packed. A big disadvantage is the price - they are costly fittings.

STEEL OR WOOD

Furnishings and furniture can be of steel or wood. In damp areas steel rusts quickly. Timber suffers under difficult climatic conditions; it expands when exposed to damp; cracks if exposed to very dry conditions.

Timber treated with modern chemicals will protect it against insects, rot, fungus, bacteria, etc.

Steel cases will not burn. Though in the event of fire, steel around the book cases on fire may become so hot that they are distorted.

Damaged wooden shelving can easily be repaired.

THE INNERMOST SECTION

The files, boxes and other storage materials, which cover the various documents, have been mentioned several times above; here we will only make a summary survey of what is available, and give some illustrations. The choice of packaging depends on the function, size, material, current use, and frequency of documents. The only thing that is important within the archives is that the means of packaging is used consistently within the various series. If it has been decided, for instance, that the annual reports of

affiliated societies should be kept in a certain type of blue box, standing on its end, then this principle should not be abandoned.

The personal temporary archives which have been described above, and which some officials are allowed to keep with them in their offices, is an area we will not go into. It is up to these officials to keep their documents apart whilst they are dealing with a current matter. But archivists are still responsible for the packaging as being the administrators of intermediate archives or of filing cabinets. Thin files, with or without hanging arrangements (preferably containing protective edging) become more and more common in offices. Later they will go to the archives once the matter is no longer current and the archives have to take over the material. It is then time to move the material from hanging files or other open covers to some type of packaging that gives better protection, such as envelopes or boxes of a suitable thickness.

The main object of such changes is to stop loose items from falling out of the files.

The previously described administrative phases may also be mentioned whilst having regard to packaging. The official dealing with a current matter is keen to be able to get out current documents easily which is why he holds on to these open files or folders which are easy to grip hold of and look through. The staff of the intermediate archives is primarily interested in keeping proper order in the very varied material which they have to look after. Secure fastenings and containers for the paper, careful separation between the series, but uniformity of the types of packagings within those series, are the guidelines at this stage. In the intermediate archives virtually all means of storage meet the needs, except perhaps the most extreme ones. Those that are totally open are rather too dangerous, whilst packages that have been tied up with string are difficult to open when necessary; they are unnecessary, beside, particularly with regards to material that is eventually to be destroyed.

The final archives naturally do not either make any concessions as to the demand for order, but in addition there is the demand for optimal physical protection of all the material that is to be preserved for the future. The various covers have to be as air and dust-tight as possible, even if this implies difficult packaging procedures. Envelopes, parcels, cartons and special boxes are the main groups that are to be used at this point.

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

Tapes, films, slides, negatives, are becoming more and more usual in archives. Storage demands are different from paper. Magnetic tapes, for instance, are very tolerant as far as temperature goes; but they need to be stored in relatively dry air. When they are not in use they should be placed in their proper boxes; if there is some form of inner protection like polythene bags etc. it is good extra protection. The playback equipment can be damaged by dusty tapes.

Photographs and film normally can be stored in ordinary air conditioned "archival air", provided it is black and white film. Colour photographs, however, change their values in damp air, and prefer the ordinary air of any office. In general, photographic material should be kept in total darkness. Unreliable colour, badly developed films, or other technical insufficiencies may mean that there are flaws in photographs which quickly get worse when the material is exposed to more light.

Some large archives have microfilm and microfiche (microform) which are used to reduce to one fiftieth the original that has been photographed. Storing this very spacesaving material ought to be undertaken according to the principles which apply to all other black and white film. The demands on keeping the material away from dust are particularly high in this case. Just one particle of dust can make a whole word illegible or make scratches on the film surface.

Considering how fragile all these materials are, it is understandable that the manufacturers usually provide films, tapes, cassettes, etc., with fairly expensive special covers, often made from hard synthetic materials. These particular boxes and packages should be used in the archives; they normally represent the best cover for the contents.

A F I N A L W O R D

This is a short guide to archives. For any omissions please make allowances. The intention has been to give a description of the most important items and practical problems in archival work, in a strictly limited amount of space. My thanks for advice and experiences from colleagues in many countries. From this wealth of experience, I have tried to offer different alternatives, weighing the disadvantages of one against another.

For anyone who wants to start a thorough-going job of organizing archives, this guide can only serve as an introduction to the subject.

There is a rich literature available on all the matters that have been discussed above. Further information can be obtained through the ICA Working Party of Librarians and Documentation Officers which can also refer the reader to advanced archives within the co-operative movement. It may be worth contacting those archivists or even visiting them to study their methods.

And finally: Good luck!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BUSINESS ARCHIVES COUNCIL

The Management and Control of Business Records

London, Business Archives Council, 1966

16 pages

A brief, simple, easily-read guide. Useful appendix on selection of documents and suggested periods for retention.

COOK, Michael

Archives administration:

A manual for intermediate and smaller organisations and for local government.

Folkestone (England) Wm. Dawson & Sons, 1977
viii, 258 pages bibliography

Thoroughly practical. Appendices include suggested regulations for readers and access to archives collections. Excellent guides to further reading.

FOTHERGILL, Richard, and BUTCHART, Ian.

Non-book materials in libraries:
a practical guide.

London, Clive Bingley, 1978
256 pages bibliography

HODSON, J.H.

The Administration of archives

Oxford, New York, Pergamon Press, 1972
217 pages bibliography

Very useful guide to repair, physical storage, arrangement and description of archives. Contains a chapter "The Enemies of Archives".

JENKINSON, Hilary,

A Manual of archive administration.

London, Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1965

xxii, 261 pages, bibliography

KATHPALIA, YASH PAL,

Conservation and restoration of archive materials

Paris, UNESCO, 1973

231 pages bibliography

Practical, though technical manual on the problems encountered in treating, repairing and preserving archives.

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION. Media Cataloguing Rules Committee

Non-book materials cataloguing rules = integrated code of practice

London, National Council for Educational Technology and the Library Association, 1973

vi, 129 pages

MULLER, S and others

Manual for the arrangement and description of archives.

New York, H.W. Wilson Co., 1940

225 pages

Authors describe it as a "tedious and meticulous guide". To the non-specialist, other manuals will be more useful and helpful.

SCHELLENBERG, Theodore R.

The Management of archives

New York, London, Columbia University Press, 1965

xvi, 383 pages. bibliography

Thorough, comprehensive manual. Author was Assistant Archivist of the United States.

**ILLUSTRATED APPENDIX
to "A short Guide to Archives"**

Preface to the illustrated appendix

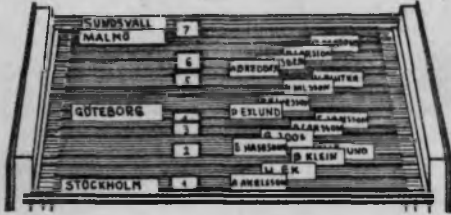
Just as the brochure itself, the pictures selected for this appendix are to be regarded as a proposal of principle. The main aim is to elucidate the preceding text here and there (cf. references to the respective pages). As for the aids and equipment shown in the pictures, not all of them are available in younger states. Organizations, schools, documentalists, administrators and others interested in using the original edition are therefore free to pick and choose, add or change what they like according to resources or judgement.

There are no copyright restrictions in a legal sense; on the contrary this piece of work is a farewell gift to international co-operation and to all popular movements concerned. Those who intend to base their own publications entirely or partly on the original edition of the "Guide" are, however, asked to inform the representative or the writer about their intentions. The reason is that on the international level a general edition is planned and if these plans are implemented some work on the local level might be superfluous.

Ludwig Schnabl

Illustration 1

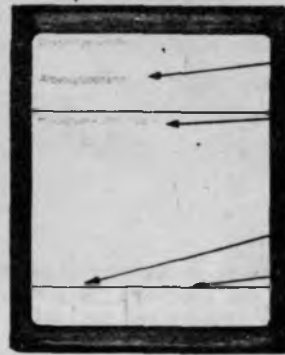
Marking and labelling - various examples



Hanging folders have thin label-holders at the top edge. The labels can only contain one line.



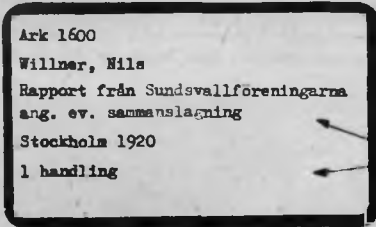
Boxes with broad back give space for more detailed texts.



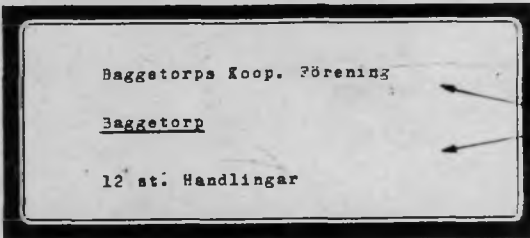
Department
Working group
Subject(s)

Year of origine

Year the material may be destroyed



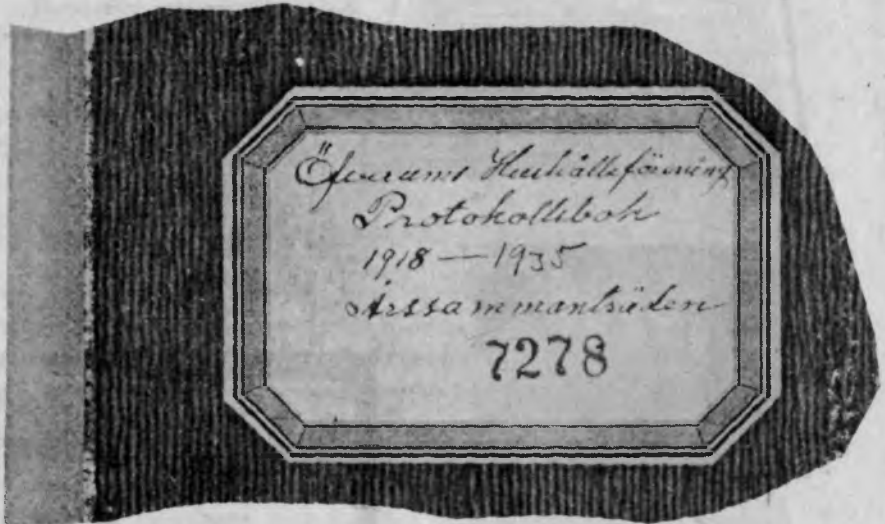
The rounded label with its particular pattern of text indicates the series "Special Documents"



The label with sharp corners and the way in which the text has been written, indicate that the envelope belongs amongst the archival material of societies.

Illustration 2

Marking and labelling



The label on the front of the minute book has been given a text by the chairman of the society. The number underneath the text has been added by the final archive and indicates in which parcel the book is to be stored.

Sometimes there is reason to write the identification of the items straight on the envelopes. Naturally, this labelling technique must be used consistently on the whole series.

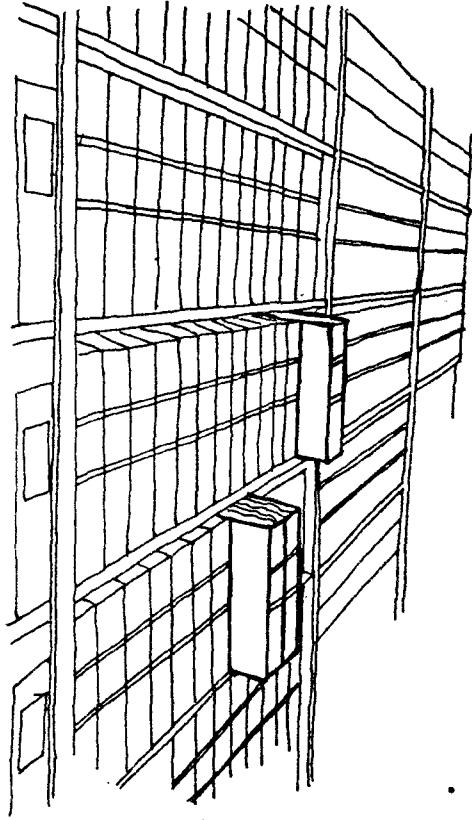
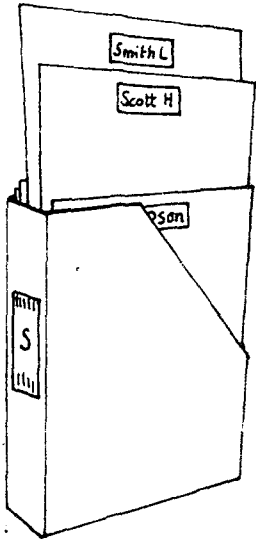
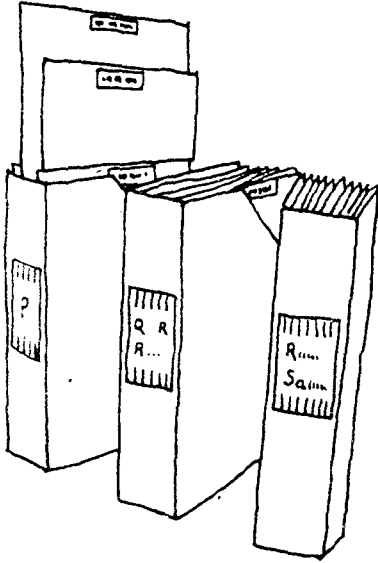




In the final archives, certain material which is not used frequently can be packaged in brown paper, which is cheap and keeps the dust off. Please note the punctual numbering of the packages.

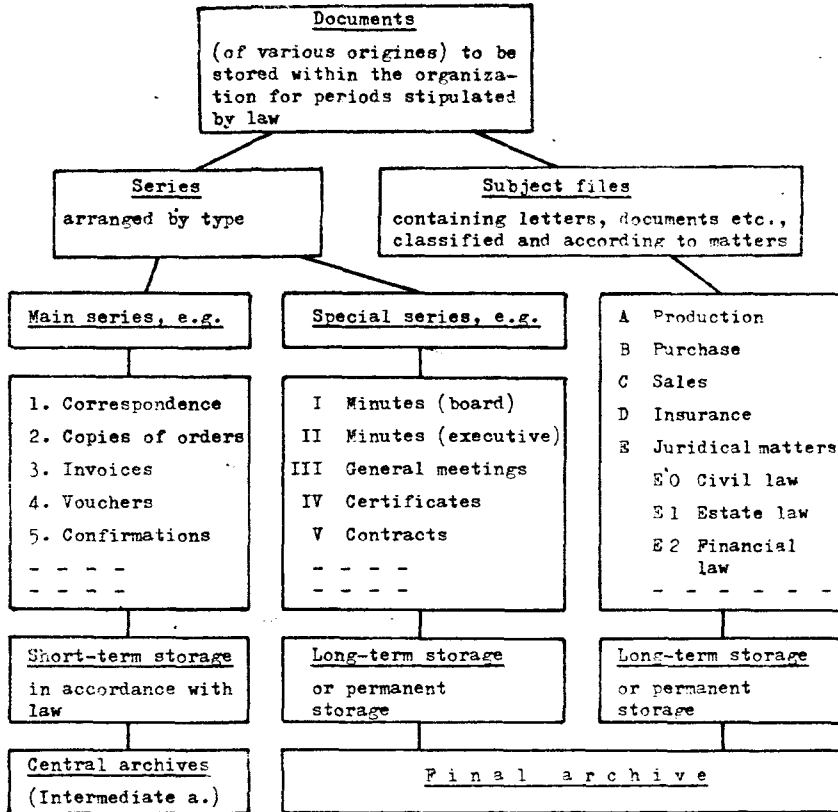
Illustration 3

Illustration 4



In a picture library or -archive each subject (person, shop, group, factory etc.) should have its own envelope. The envelopes are stored, in alphabetical order, in open boxes. The labels indicate the contents clearly. _____

Illustration 5



The plan for the archives and the introductory schedule should have a structure which corresponds to the organization of the society or firm in question. The illustration only gives an outline and is not meant to be followed in detail!

Illustration 6

Accession list of packages containing societies b				
Package number	Names of the societies			
5444	Klagshams Trading Company, Klagsham			
5445	"	"	"	"
5446	"	"	"	"
5447	Arlow's Retail Co-op Society, Arlow			
5448	"	"	"	"
5449	"	"	"	"
5450	Saleby Workers Society, Saleby			
5451	"	"	"	"
5452	"Victory" Co-op Society, Malmö			
5453	"	"	"	"
5454	"	"	"	"
5455	Lomma Co-op dairy, Lomma			
5456	"	"	"	"
5457	"Own House" Housing Co-op			
5458	"	"	"	"
5459	Co-operative Bakery Ros			
5460	"Phenix", Consumers as			
5461	Ystad's Retail Co-op s			
5462	"	"	"	"
5463	Osby Consumers			
5464	"	"	"	"

In the list of packages, there are only two types of information: there are the numbers in proper order of the packages, and there are the names of the societies whose documents are kept in the packages.

Accession list containing isolated records				
Tape	Main person	Place	Time	Content
239	Carl Gruveman	Aabenraa, Dk	12/11-74	Memorie
240	Willy Pabst	Gera, GDR	06/03-75	Politi
241	A E Rauter	Wien, Austria	25/04-75	The Na
242	Adolf Leodolter	Salzburg, Au.	05/02-76	Staff
243	W P Watkins	Moreton W GB	22/03-77	History
244	Fridolf Olsson	Stockholm, Sw	27/10-77	Thule
245	Filip Larsson	Vaggeryd, Sw	03/12-77	Memo
246	Laszlo Szilagyi	Budapest, Hu	23/01-78	
247	Sven Thomsen	Copenhagen Dk	02/02 78	

A more detailed accession list -

Illustration 8



Documents with charge to be kept only for a limited time may be stored on open shelves with easy access.

Documents of historical or legal importance, such as minutes of executive meetings, must be stored in locked, secure cupboards.

C O N T E N T S

Preface

Archives today

Who makes decisions
in the co-op movement

Everything must be
written down

The different types of
documents and archives

How files are organized

Filing series by type

How to turn a file into
archives

How to find the correct
file

Arrangements by origin

The accessions method

The file is lost

Organization and techniques

The three stages

Storage periods

The Pruning Process

Regional archives structures

Marking and labelling

A scheme for archives

Accessions lists

Lists of subjects and names

The catalogues

Building-up and equipping

the archive

The life span of paper

How to construct an
archive building

Ventilation

Furnishing and furniture

Compact shelving

Steel or wood

The innermost section

Audiovisual material

A final word

Printed by Publishing House of the Central Agricultural Union of
„Peasant Self Aid” Co-operatives in Poland for the ICA
Warsaw 1980

ISBN 83-209-0229-0