

As a participant in the event, however, the Public Archives is expected to play a role in the festivities. Apart from providing researchers with information, it must be willing to publicize the Parks records. This is done by providing facsimile copies of documents for exhibitions in the parks, writing articles using the records, and preparing small exhibitions for the launching of the festivities or related conferences. While this is sometimes done on a short notice, thus exerting some pressure on the institution, it also provides the PAC with an occasion to show the merits of its service and the collections in its care. The enthusiasm and goodwill demonstrated also have attracted the recognition of officials who might not otherwise be concerned with the ordinary aspects of the complete records management process. Archivists hope that by the end of the year they will see more transfers of records to the Federal Archives Division, especially from the regional offices and the individual parks.

The Parks Canada project is an ambitious one considering the limited time within which it will be accomplished. However, nothing that has or will be undertaken is incongruous with the normal curatorial services provided by the Federal Archives Division. The only difference is that the complete custodial process will be done at one time rather than piecemeal over a long period of years as is normally the case. The archivists will proceed from the accession level to a fully processed and documented collection in which future accessions can be easily integrated. The emphasis placed on one record group is justified by the importance of the acquisition, the public interest it will attract, and the positive reaction to the transfer coming from the Program's administrators, records managers, and researchers. Furthermore, the preparation of the complete inventory will provide a unique opportunity for the archivist presently responsible for the Parks holdings to familiarize herself with the history of the agency and the records it has created.

This acquisition and custodial project serves as a good example of how archives and donors can work together to ensure the proper conservation of records. While at first both institutions may have thought that their interests were very different, they soon realized that they shared the same concerns about the records they were discussing; both wanted the records preserved, retrievable, and accessible. It was consequently up to the Public Archives to convince Parks Canada that this goal could only be met within an archival institution. The PAC proved this point by demonstrating its expertise in the area. It then took advantage of the forthcoming Parks centenary to rearrange its custodial work and internal priorities in order to make the transfer a part of the celebrations.

Scheduling Data in Systems: Three PAC Pilot Projects

by **JOHN McDONALD**

For several years the Public Archives of Canada has depended, in large part, upon records scheduling for the identification, appraisal, and acquisition of historically valuable information generated by the federal government. Scheduling itself, however, depends

upon the establishment of a well-designed records management operation in each government agency. Recently the strength of this function was reinforced by the passage of the *Access to Information* and *Privacy Acts* and the issuance of a government-wide Treasury Board policy on records management which was developed in support of these acts. Although intended to be comprehensive, this policy is largely concerned with the management of hard-copy records or, more specifically, the management of information recorded in paper form. Although the policy requires that records managers apply controls to the indexing, retrieval, transmission, retention, protection, and disposal of a wide range of record media, very few have focused their energies beyond the management of traditional textual records. Even fewer have addressed the challenges associated with controlling information recorded in machine readable or computerized form. In fact, recognizing that other jurisdictional areas of an organization are involved (e.g., Information Systems), the records management policy purposely avoided this area, with Treasury Board preferring to develop a separate policy for machine readable records which, while drafted, has yet to be released. Meanwhile, computerized information continues to be generated at an alarming rate, most of which is unscheduled and, for historically valuable data, poorly protected (e.g., inadequate documentation, archival tape management service, and so on).

In spite of the lack of a comprehensive and integrated information management policy framework and of the often fragmented organizational structures which are responsible for managing recorded information in many agencies, the Public Archives is concerned that an integrated approach be adopted for the identification, description, and scheduling of all recorded information regardless of physical form. In taking its first steps towards the establishment of such an integrated approach, the Public Archives initiated a series of pilot projects to address the scheduling of machine readable data in three federal government agencies: Statistics Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, and Employment and Immigration.

Essentially, these pilots, which have been endorsed by senior management in all three agencies, are designed to ensure that archival and records management considerations are reflected in the management of information in computerized systems. Although a wide range of issues will be addressed, the primary focus is to develop a valid approach to the establishment of a retention and disposal schedule and the development of procedures for the archival appraisal and acquisition of historically valuable information managed in these systems. The overall objective is to develop a model of this process which could eventually be extended across the entire government.

The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was selected because the data managed in a number of this agency's systems contains personal information of considerable historical value. One of the major areas to be examined, for instance, is the Indian Membership system which contains demographic data used to confirm the status of registered Indians in Canada.

Statistics Canada was selected because, in addition to managing data of considerable long-term value (e.g., social and economic data used to describe the state of the Canadian economy and society), the agency is faced with the problem of maintaining large volumes of valuable data but, in the case of such personal information as that collected for the census, not being in a position to disclose the data to anyone, including the Public Archives, by virtue of the confidentiality provisions of the *Statistics Act*. As both agencies recognized the substantial benefits to be gained in maintaining the data in a form which

would ensure future remanipulation in support of a variety of research purposes, and yet also recognized the legal restraints that the legislation imposed on the disclosure and re-use of the data, both shared a common interest in addressing these issues through the experience gained from the pilot project.

Finally Employment and Immigration was selected because it manages extremely large volumes of personal information recorded in both computerized and hard-copy form. In order both to assess the impact of the *Privacy Act* on scheduling and archival management and to examine the problems of sampling in a large multi-media system, the Immigration systems were selected as the pilot application in Employment and Immigration.

The pilots themselves were initiated during the spring of 1984 through the establishment of working groups in each agency. These groups consist of representatives from the records management, EDP, user, and Access to Information and Privacy areas of each pilot agency, as well as textual and data archivists and records analysts from the PAC. Meetings of the groups are combined with one-on-one working sessions with either group members or other individuals whose responsibilities may have an impact on the projects (e.g., senior managers, computer operators, personnel officers, tape librarians, and so on). A final report, complete with proposed procedures based on the results of the pilots, will be issued this year.

Based on the experience gained to date, however, a draft set of procedures for the scheduling of the systems selected in these pilot agencies has been developed and will be further tested and refined as the pilots continue. These procedures are based on a systems rather than a media approach. In other words, rather than develop a tape-by-tape or disk-by-disk inventory, the approach proposes that agencies prepare descriptive overviews of their systems. An overview is designed to provide a generic picture of the information content of the data managed by a system and a large-scale map of the major stages through which data flow when processed by the system. These overviews are currently being prepared and will serve as formulae by which both the agencies and the Public Archives can define the retention and disposal provisions associated with each file in each system, and in accordance with various legal (e.g., *Privacy Act*) and administrative (i.e., operational needs in each agency) requirements, as well as archival considerations (i.e., based on appraisals performed by PAC archivists).

The overview approach is designed to ensure that all forms of recorded information in a given system are accounted for in one comprehensive descriptive and scheduling process. Archivists then need not be concerned that they are reviewing only one slice of the system when appraising, for instance, only the hard-copy input to the system. As a result of this approach, all recorded information — both hard-copy and computerized — can be viewed in the proper context within a given system or application.

Whereas the scheduling function will provide the map with which archivists can understand the information context and technical aspects associated with the data flowing through an information system, the appraisal process provides the analytical framework from which decisions can be made concerning which forms of data should be required, the means by which the data should be preserved and controlled, and even the manner in which they should be disseminated to the research community (format, access restrictions, and so on).

Based on experience gained to date, the analytical approach will be complex; it must balance the potential research value of the recorded information against the potential costs to the archival institution of maintaining this information for an extended period of time. Regardless of this complexity, however, it has become clear that the scheduling function and the appraisal process must be viewed as equal partners in an integrated perspective, in order to account for both the hard-copy and the computerized information flowing through these systems. Similarly, the archival programme, which benefits directly from the scheduling function, must itself be integrated. Appraisal, the heart of the archival programme, must address all of the various physical forms that comprise a system and must be seen as the driving force behind decisions regarding the acquisition, preservation, and subsequent dissemination of individual stages of systems. Such integration is essential to ensure that the historically valuable recorded information generated in computerized information systems are properly identified and preserved.