

THE COLONIAL OFFICE GROUP OF THE PUBLIC
RECORD OFFICE, LONDON
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
ATLANTIC CANADA

BY

PETER JOHN BOWER

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

The importance of the Colonial Office¹ records housed in the Public Record Office, London, to an understanding of the Canadian experience has long been recognized by our archivists and scholars. In the past one hundred years, the Public Archives of Canada has acquired contemporary manuscript duplicates of documents no longer wanted or needed at Chancery Lane, but more importantly has utilized probably every copying technique known to improve its collection. Painfully slow and tedious hand-transcription was the dominant technique until roughly the time of the Second World War, supplemented periodically by typescript and various photoduplication methods. The introduction of microfilming, which Dominion Archivist W. Kaye Lamb viewed as ushering in a new era of service to Canadian scholars², and the installation of a P.A.C. directed camera crew in the P.R.O. initiated a duplication programme which in the next decade and a half dwarfed the entire production of copies prepared in the preceding seventy years. It is probably true that no other former British possession or colony has undertaken so concerted an effort to collect copies of these records which touch upon almost every aspect of colonial history.

While the significance of the British records for

1 For the sake of convenience, the term "Colonial Office" will be used rather loosely from time to time to include which might more properly be described as precursors of the department. Further, the reader should be cautioned that some of the statements and conclusions presented in this paper are tentative in character, primarily because of limited appropriate secondary sources available in Canada.

2 Report of the Public Archives for the year 1949 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), pp.ix-x.

Canadian domestic research certainly declines after Confederation, there is no doubt that the P.R.O. houses material of great research value for the period after 1867. Indeed, the P.A.C. has acquired copies of documents from the P.R.O. which are dated up to World War II, notwithstanding the fact that the responsible archives section is called "Pre-Confederation".

This paper on British records must of necessity be restricted to but a portion of the P.A.C. collection from the P.R.O. While the focus will be the Colonial Office records it should be recognized that the P.A.C. also houses substantial, though less complete, selections from Public Record Office groups such as the Admiralty, War Office, Foreign Office, Treasury, and Audit Offices, as well as composite collections from the State Papers, Board of Trade, Treasury Solicitor, Privy Council, Home Office and so forth. Many of these collections exhibit techniques of arrangement and classification similar to those applied to the Colonial Office papers; however, they also reflect the unique nature of their own genesis and survival, and the particular responsibilities of their offices, effectively eliminating the possibility of a general discussion here of P.R.O. holdings other than those deriving from the Colonial Office. A proper understanding of the Colonial Office group requires some appreciation of the evolution and official concern for the papers. Notwithstanding the inherent inaccuracies of an extremely compressed statement of an historical process which took place over centuries, this paper will present an abbreviated context for the records, then concentrate on the arrangement of some of the classes, and finally discuss some typical problems which researchers will encounter at the P.A.C. when using our collections from the P.R.O.

The public records³ of Great Britain began with the earliest enlistment of literacy in the service of the

³ There is occasionally some confusion about the name of Britain's national archives. Sir Edmund Coke (1552-1634), the great judge and legal writer, defined a record as "a memorial or remembrance in rolls of parchment of the proceedings and acts of a court of justice...." However, this sense which might reasonably be applied to the earliest records accumulated in Britain was gradually modified and extended as the administrative papers, the so-called State Papers and Departmental Records, accumulated in association with the evolving system of government. The term "records" increasingly acquired the broad connotations suggested by Sir Hilary Jenkinson, Deputy Keeper of the Records, 1948-1953, who more or less equated "records" and "archives" as "Documents drawn up for the purpose of, or used during, the conduct of Affairs of any kind, of which they themselves formed a part, and subsequently preserved by the persons responsible for the transactions in

Crown during the so-called "Dark Ages" and developed through the Middle Ages as a system of "departments" emerged, partly in response to the increasing complexity and burden of the King's business. The earliest records which were preserved were largely of a legal nature, maintained primarily to protect certain rights and privileges. A select committee struck to investigate the state and condition of the public record noted in 1800 that even in the 14th century it had long been understood that the "Public Records are considered to be the People's evidence and it is ordained that they shall be accessible to all the King's Subjects."⁴

A theme basic to the history of Great Britain is the increasing central control fostered initially by the sovereign and gradually assumed and extended by Parliament. Attendant on this development was the proliferation of government "departments" to provide the means of exercising central control. A schematic example might clarify an aspect of this evolution: the King's chaplain became the Chancellor as the volume of administrative and executive business expanded, most probably because he was a man of at least some learning at a time when the nobles and even the King might not be literate. In time, the Chancery "went out of court" to become a proto-department in fact, though not in theory. This, as beneficiaries of the British civil service system might suspect, may have been the lighting of the fuse of the administrative and bureaucratic explosion with which we are all too familiar. These prototype departments gradually appropriated the ever increasing management of Crown business as the sovereign became more and more restricted in political authority and as government came to be controlled by elected members of Parliament with short and uncertain tenure. By about 1540, the administrative machinery had evolved to the point where-by the link between the Crown and Council with the various departments of state was provided by two principal secretaries of state, who between them handled most of the King's public business. It is from these beginnings that

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question, or their successors, in their own custody for their own reference." The meaning of the word "Public" in association with "Records" has also been modified from its early sense of "open for all to see", to mean "documents accumulated by the central government, irrespective of whether there is any general right of access to them." [Hilary Jenkinson], Guide to the Public Records, part I, introductory (London: H.M.S.O., 1949) p. 2; S.F. Thomas, Hand-Book to the Public Records (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1853) p.2.

4 Report from the Select Committee, appointed to inquire into the State of the Public Records of the Kingdom...., reported by Charles Abbot 4 July 1800, Hansard 1st Series, volume XV.

the modern civil service emerged, providing some of the underpinning and continuity required in the Parliamentary system. With these developments came administrative baggage: records, not strictly legal in type any longer, but which are of the greatest interest and importance to Canadian history.

In theory there was only one secretariat, including two secretaries who were mutually interchangeable. After the Restoration, the practice of dividing responsibility in foreign affairs became slightly more institutionalized in 1674 when the Northern Department, responsible for the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland and Russia, was distinguished from the Southern Department, responsible for the Barbary States, Turkey, France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The secretary for the Southern Department was normally the senior of the two officials, but the feature of interchangeability continued. The more senior secretary also carried the chief responsibility for home affairs, Irish and colonial matters.

Even as the secretariat was emerging into new prominence, Britain had begun her colonial adventure in America. The history of England's attempts to develop a mechanism to deal with its growing interests in an economic empire is a complex study which we need penetrate here only deeply enough to appreciate in broad terms the evolution of the Colonial Office, which in turn will assist an understanding of the organization and content of the records.

For the greater part of the 17th century, colonial affairs were entrusted to committees of the Privy Council or to various commissions and councils. By the end of the century, dissatisfaction of the mercantile interests with the conduct of trade and colonies contributed to the constitution of a special council charged with promoting and extending the trade of the kingdom. This council, the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, commonly known as the Board of Trade, was charged with gathering information and providing advice. The actual executive function, however, remained with the secretary of state for the Southern Department. The activity and authority of the Board fluctuated over the years, at times subsiding into discreditable lethargy, at others virtually replacing the secretary of state as the leading authority for colonial affairs. By 1752, the Board reached the zenith of its official authority when it was granted the right to nominate all colonial officials, outside the jurisdiction of the Admiralty and Treasury, for the acceptance of the Privy Council, and also to be the sole channel in civil matters for correspondence with colonial officials and governors, instead of being the additional source and recipient in conjunction with the secretary of state as before. By the middle of the Seven Years' War, new orientations in colonial and trade management and revived interest in these matters by the executive departments began

the final decline and eclipse of the Board of Trade. In 1761 and 1766, the Board lost the privileges which it had received in 1752. A third secretary of state was created in 1768, responsible primarily for the colonies. The success of the American revolution spurred further administrative reorganizations, and both the Board of Trade in its colonial function and the office of the third secretary were abolished. The secretary of state for the Northern Department took over the direction of foreign affairs while his colleague assumed responsibility for home matters, war, Ireland and the colonies. In 1794, the office of the third secretary was revived, and seven years later was transformed into the secretary for War and Colonies. In 1854, following the Crimean War, and amidst major reforms in the civil service, the two functions were separated and a distinct secretary of state for the colonies was created.

While these offices appeared and disappeared, merged and reappeared, one constant factor at least increasingly demanded attention: records were accumulating in enormous quantities creating problems of storage, control and retrieval. As early as the 16th century, interest and concern had been expressed for the old papers. While the origin of the State Paper Office is obscure, it is certain that by the early years of the 17th century this office had been formally constituted as the repository for the official papers of the two principal secretaries of state.⁵ Beginning in 1703, a series of inquiries into the condition of the records was initiated, culminating in 1800 with the relatively comprehensive report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the State of the Public Records.⁶ Virtually without exception, the various investigating committees reported that the records were scandalously neglected, miserably housed and in a deplorable state of deterioration and decay.

There does not appear to have been any systematic attempt to arrange or to calendar the State Papers until about 1610 when Sir Thomas Wilson and one Levinus Munck were appointed joint "Keepers and Regesters" of the papers. Wilson appears to have been a spy in Europe before his

⁵ [Hilary Jenkinson], Guide to the Public Records, part I, introductory (London: H.M.S.O., 1949) p. 9; First Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records...., I, part 1 (London: H.M.S.O., 1912) pp. 9-11. The date 1578 which is frequently offered as the beginning of the State Paper Office appears to be based on a misinterpretation of a phrase in Sir Thomas Wilson's account of the antiquity of his office. Guide to the Contents of the Public Record Office, II (London: H.M.S.O., 1963) p. 1.

⁶ Report from the Select Committee, appointed to inquire into the State of the Public Records of the Kingdom...., reported by Charles Abbot, 4 July 1800, Hansard 1st Series, volume XV.

appointment, which might explain his interest other than pecuniary in ferreting for information difficult to obtain. The need for some system was obvious, and the inchoate collection was divided into papers "Domestical" and Foreign. Although not all his suggestions were implemented, a chronological arrangement was established and no fundamental change, save for the addition of the "Colonial" category, was made until the reorganization of the secretariat in 1782. From this point, the "Domestical" papers evolved into the Home Office papers; State Papers Foreign into Foreign Office Papers; and State Papers Colonial mutated to Colonial Office Papers. Despite Wilson's contributions, A Royal Commission on Public Records appointed in 1910 noted that Keepers, with rare exceptions, from Wilson onward "were chiefly interested in the recognition of their official position in respect of salary, fees, and the transmission of secretarial papers into their custody." Meritorious as the last interest might have been, the Commission reported that the jurisdiction of the Keepers appeared to have been restricted to the papers of the secretaries of state, excluding the records of other departments such as the Admiralty and Treasury. Further, though the proprietary right of the Crown in all State Papers was asserted and sometimes even sustained by vigorous action, "in default of penal enactments this elementary rule was frequently evaded, to the detriment of later historical studies."⁷

The Public Record Office today houses essentially three kinds of records: legal, departmental and the State Papers. The historical expansion of the administrative system not only increased the extent of the records, but also tended to scatter official papers to departmental offices and in some cases even to the private dwellings of clerks. From this point, it was but a simple step to a later official system whereby the custodians virtually relied for their livelihood upon the various fees extracted for searches, particularly in the legal documents. The practice of some secretaries of state of treating public documents as private possessions by taking away the official papers led the Crown to establish the State Paper Office to accommodate these records. Warrants were usually issued when secretaries left office to ensure that their papers remained in official custody. Despite these warrants and the exertions of some Keepers, substantial portions of State Papers were alienated from the national custody. The Public Record Office Act of 1838 and the establishment of the Office provided yet another refinement to protect the public record. However, the Act appertained solely to the "custody" of the "legal" records,

⁷ Report from the Select Committee of 1800, XV, pp. 4-10; [Jenkinson], Guide, 1, pp. 9-16; First Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records...., I, part 1 (London: H.M.S.O., 1912) pp. 6-11; Guide to the Contents of the P.R.O. II, pp. 1-2.

though it had been argued that the framers of the legislation intended that provision would be made for the records of the departments, the organic offshoots of the early "Courts" which had conducted not only the legal but also the administrative business of the central government. Within seven years of the passage of the Act, adjustments were made to allow departmental papers to be taken into the "charge and superintendence" of the Master of the Rolls, who directed the Deputy Keeper. It was not until 120 years after the Act of 1838 that its full provisions could be applied without question to the departmental records.⁸

The State Papers comprise a rather artificial category somewhere between "legal" and "departmental" records. State Papers today include the "Home" and "Foreign" documents from the office of the secretaries of state to the date 1782. After this date, even if once held in the State Paper Office, the documents are joined to the appropriate departmental records. The "Colonial" records once housed by the State Paper Office are classed as "departmental", partly because they do not originate wholly from the activities of the secretaries of state. It is within these nice distinctions that one may observe some of the mechanisms of the evolution of the term "Public Records". The early "legal" records might have been considered open to the public, but the accretion of the Public Record Office to include departmental/administrative records complicated the initial principle because general public access to these latter documents without special access controls was deemed undesirable.⁹

The Report of the Select Committee of 1800 led to a series of commissions, which in general were severely criticised for having spent enormous sums on publication and general expenses (about £400,000), while so little was expended on arrangement (approximately £1,500) which had been the prime objective of the commissions. Not until the middle of the 19th century, some time after France had nationalized and reconstructed its archives giving a very clear lead in the field, was the foundation stone of the Public Record Office laid, finally realizing the 1838 Act for safely keeping the Public Records. In 1854, the State Paper Office became simply a branch office of the P.R.O. Eight years later it was abolished and its records were transferred to the main repository.¹⁰

⁸ Guide to the Contents of the Public Record Office, II (London: H.M.S.O., 1963) pp. 1-2; First Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records...., I, part 1 (London: H.M.S.O., 1912) pp. 6-10; [Jenkinson], Guide, I, pp.13-16; The British Public Record Office, Special Reports 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Virginia Colonial Records Project (Virginia: State Library, 1960) pp. 19-22.

⁹ Committee on Departmental Records Report (London: H.M.S.O., 1954) pp. 8-12; [Jenkinson], Guide, I, pp.12-16.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The early years of the P.R.O. were marked by a number of misguided attempts to organize the records. The sudden transfer of vast quantities of documents to quarters that soon proved to be too small led to subsequent relocations of portions of relatively coherent collections. Such moves adversely affected the condition of the records and frequently contributed to the blurring of the fonds. Nevertheless, there was an unmistakable tendency toward the type of organization which the material exhibits today. During the first half of the 19th century, major reforms were initiated in the Colonial Office record keeping system. The office was divided into four geographical sections or departments: the West Indian, North American, Mediterranean and African, and the Australasian. A senior clerk was usually responsible for the records within each section. All subsidiary documents and enclosures were filed with the incoming letter. After a few years of more or less efficient operation, the system began to disintegrate until "Mr. Mother-country", Sir James Stephen, Permanent Undersecretary, 1936-47, revived the operation. With some refinements, this system continued through the 19th century. The "usual course of the business" in the Colonial Office by the middle of the century was described by a committee of investigation of 1849:

When the letters of the day have been registered, they are delivered to the Senior Clerk of the Department to which they respectively belong, who minutes them with those prominent points which his experience and constant reference to the general correspondence suggest, and proposes, in ordinary cases, the form of the answer, or the practical course of dealing with the subject; and when the correspondence having been prolonged or complicated, requires an explanation or analysis, he forwards with the papers such a statement of facts, prepared either by himself or under his supervision, as may assist the practical consideration of the question. The papers are then sent either to the Assistant Under Secretary, or to the permanent Under Secretary, according to the nature of the subjects, each of whom passes them to the parliamentary Under Secretary with his observations upon them, and from him they reach the Secretary of State, who records his decision upon them, after he has considered all that has been submitted to him, and called for such further information as he may require. After that, the papers are returned through the same channel to the Senior Clerk, and it then becomes his duty to examine carefully the minutes and drafts, in order to see whether any point in the instructions may be at variance with facts, regulations, or pre-

cedents not known to the Secretary of State or Under Secretaries; and to execute all the final instructions he may receive, by preparing the drafts, or causing them to be prepared by his assistants, and superintending the copying and despatch of the letters to be written from them. The usual practice is for the senior to pass on to his assistant those papers which require ordinary drafts, or drafts closely following the minutes, reserving to himself such as involve any question of doubt, or on which no very precise instructions have been given. Drafts are also frequently prepared by the permanent Under Secretary and Assistant Under Secretary, in cases which they consider to require it. All drafts finally receive the sanction of the parliamentary Under Secretary and of the Secretary of State.¹¹

Before turning to the modern organization of the Colonial Office, a brief digression might at once suggest the atmosphere of the reform impulse which was influencing record keeping in the 19th century, as well as strike a responsive chord among penurious archivists of today who might regret some of the changes. The Select Committee of 1800 reported that many of the finding aids, i.e. calendars and indexes, were regarded by Keepers as their personal property to be sold to successors. The Committee recommended that all such indexes be purchased by the Crown and be appropriated to the record office for future use. This recommendation was executed, terminating a tradition which today might have proved to be quite lucrative. On the other hand, most modern archivists do not have to endure quite the same working conditions as did some of the clerks of the Colonial Office. The report of a committee of inquiry into the Colonial Office noted in 1854 that the buildings housing the department remained in the same condition as had been described by a Parliamentary committee in 1839; "inadequate to the present extent of public business, in parts unsafe, and generally in such a state of dilapidation as to render it inexpedient to expend any large sum on their substantial repair." The Surveyor of Works and Buildings suggested that if the office continued to keep its papers in the basement, a practice already adopted to reduce strain on the structures, the buildings might survive another two or three decades. They lasted nearly forty years, to the relief, no doubt, of the Duke of Newcastle who in 1860 while Colonial Secretary was praying that "the building will fall (for fall I believe it will) at night". The working

¹¹ Reports of Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices, Colonial Office, XXVII, (London: House of Commons, 1854) pp. 79-80.

conditions of the office employees almost beggar description: quarters so cramped that clerks had to work in unheated attics, in filthy cellars which had to be pumped clear of water periodically, without adequate supplies and equipment, besieged by draughts, nauseating gases, vermin and rodents. The 1854 report on the Colonial Office stated: "The means of arranging and preserving the records of the Colonial Office are especially deficient; and while much of the accommodation is most inconvenient and unsuitable, the copyists and their Superintendent carry on their occupation in cellars the dampness, closeness, and darkness of which must be very injurious to their health."¹² While the dreadful conditions perhaps should not be overemphasized, for there were redeeming features and mitigating circumstances, a brief description of the situation does thrust the statement in 1858 of the young Parliamentary Under Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, into bold prominence:

We are really in a destitute and deplorable condition. We have no maps that are fit to be consulted -- none of the mechanical apparatus for carrying on the Government of fifty Colonies in various stages of civilization and in different parts of the world. We have no furniture -- carpets, chairs, tables are all decrepit. We have no room I believe for the storing of papers and official records.¹³

In 1853, Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir Stafford Northcote brought down a report resulting from an investigation of the civil service. The report, "The Organization of the Permanent Civil Service", is usually recognized as the functional beginning of the modern civil service. Concluding that the poor state of the civil service derived in considerable measure from the system of patronage and lack of competent and well-trained staff, the report recommended the use of competitive examinations and promotion on the basis of merit as means of improving the standard of the personnel. However, revision and reform were often slow to take effect, and there were many means of frustrating and

¹² Report from the Select Committee of 1800, XV, p. 11; Reports of Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices, XXVII, p. 92; E. Trevor Williams, "The Colonial Office in the Thirties", Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand, volume II, no. 7 (Mary, 1943) pp. 141-142; John W. Cell, "The Colonial Office in the 1850's", Historical studies: Australia and New Zealand, volume XII, no. 45 (October, 1965) pp. 43-44.

¹³ Cell, "Colonial Office in the 1850's", H.S., p. 44.

and resisting change. For example, Sir William Hayter, financial secretary of the Treasury, kept a record of dull individuals known as Hayter's idiots who would be placed in competition against a friend he wished appointed.¹⁴ Charles Dickens, in a speech delivered to the Administrative Reform Association in 1855, deplored the inertia of custom:

Agos ago, a savage mode of keeping accounts on notched sticks was introduced into the Court of Exchequer; the accounts were kept, much as Robinson Crusoe kept his calendar on his desert island. In the course of considerable revolutions of time, the celebrated Mr. Crocker was born and died; Mr. Walkinghame, of the Tutor's assistant, and a terrible hand at figures, was born and died; a multitude of accountants, book-keepers, actuaries, and mathematicians, were born, and died; and still official routine clung to the notched sticks, as if they were pillars of the constitution, and still the Exchequer accounts continued to be kept on splints of elm wood, called 'tallies'. Late in the reign of George III, some restless and revolutionary spirit originated the suggestion, whether, in a land where there were pens, ink, and paper, slates and pencils, and systems of accounts, this rigid adherence to a barbarous usage might not possibly border on the ridiculous? All the red tape in the public offices turned redder at the bare mention of this bold and original conception, and it took till 1826 to get the sticks abolished.¹⁵

Notwithstanding these conditions and factors, it appears that by the middle of the 19th century, the Colonial Office had already developed fairly efficient systems of communication and record keeping because of procedures developed and maintained by men such as Stephen. The department's papers were well kept compared with the poorly minuted and arranged records of, for example, the Treasury and Foreign Offices. Consequently, the impact of the mid-century reforms on these internal matters was relatively slight for the Colonial Office. Of greater importance to the office's channels of communications and record keeping were technological changes, such as the use of steam and telegraphy, and

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 51-55; Ray Jones, The nineteenth-century Foreign Office; an administrative history (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1971) p. 50.

¹⁵ E.W. Cohen, The Growth of the British Civil Service, 1780-1939, (London: Frank Cass & Col. Ltd., 1965) pp. 50-51.

the increase in work, records and staff necessitated by a growing empire with many extremely remote parts. Despite irregular but not insubstantial transfers of older records to the P.R.O., by 1880 the Colonial Office was confronted by that most modern of archival problems when the Treasury brought attention to the provisions of the Public Record Act of 1877 dealing with the disposal of "valueless" documents. Up to this point in time, the Colonial Office had kept all its records without distinction. This could not have continued much longer especially in view of the rapidly growing bulk of papers relating to colonial affairs. Nor would the overall problem have been alleviated by wholesale transfers to the P.R.O., which in any case had long been seeking the authority to effect the destruction of useless documents to control the burden of an unlimited accumulation of worthless records.¹⁶

The Treasury action was most disturbing to many members of the Colonial Office where very serious doubts were entertained about the advisability of any records destruction. The head of the general department in the office, Ernest Edward Blake, who entered the service of the office through competitive examination in 1863, voiced an opinion which subsequent generations might have cause to echo with gratitude: he would "be inclined to keep most of the correspondence with the Governors, as supplying materials for the histories of the Colonies."¹⁷

The full extent and nature of the debate over "weeding" of "valueless" documents is not evident from sources readily available in Canada, but the apparent sense of Blake's comment and the inherent perils of scheduling records for disposal and destruction suggest that we are fortunate indeed that the process of "weeding" was not extended to those papers which had been bound up to the date 1873. In fact, staff shortages and events such as the South African War forced the postponement of a systematic paring of the post-1873 records until 1902, when the intolerable problems of space shortages

¹⁶ Cell "Colonial Office in the 1850's", H.S., pp.53-55; R.C. Snelling and T.J. Barron, "The Colonial Office and its permanent officials", Studies in the growth of nineteenth-century government, Gillian Sutherland, editor (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) pp. 152-153, 164-165; First Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records...., I, part 2, pp. 15, 16, 121-127; R.B. Pugh, The Records of the Colonial and Dominions Offices (London: H.M.S.O., 1964) p. 44; Committee on Departmental Records Report (London: H.M.S.O., 1954) pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ R.B. Pugh, The Records of the Colonial and Dominion Offices (London: H.M.S.O., 1964) p. 44; The Colonial Office List for 1905 (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1905) p. 478.

finally launched the Colonial Office on a programme of scheduling and selective retention. Consequently, the body of Colonial Office records is essentially complete to 1873. Following this year the papers have been subjected to "weeding".¹⁸ However, experience does show that not all documents noted in Colonial Office registers as "Destroyed Under Statute" have been eliminated in fact, though their survival admittedly has been relatively rare.

In 1908-10, a major reorganization of the Colonial Office records in the P.R.O. was undertaken to simplify access. A new structure, which has been called "scientifically more perfect, but without historical significance,"¹⁹ was devised and imposed upon the records. As we have seen, many different bodies from time to time had been responsible in one form or another for colonial affairs since the early 17th century. No official records of the advisory bodies on colonial matters of a date earlier than 1660 appear to have survived. After this date, the Lords of Trade kept regular records including a journal of their meetings. Most of these records were incorporated into the Board of Trade papers after 1696. The Board's records were organized into geographic groupings, with some special subjects, resembling the modern Colonial Office records in considerable measure. The history of these papers is obscure, but it appears that between 1782 and 1786 they were scattered to a number of different repositories, including the Privy Council Office and the Home Office, while some remained in the custody of a former member of the old Board. In 1842 they were transferred to the State Paper Office, and finally were moved to the P.R.O. in 1862.²⁰

The reorganization of 1908-10 eliminated the old series and groups such as Colonial Papers, Colonial Entry Books, America and West Indies, Board of Trade Papers, Board of Trade: Commercial Series, Colonial Office Correspondence Miscellany and so forth. This systematic change in the records further obscured the administrative evolution of the papers, particularly for the material up to 1782, a process already well-advanced by the various reforms and changes which had taken place in the 19th century. Unfortunately, little or no account was taken of the old system, and no tables of equivalence were prepared to preserve or to enable a simple and expeditious reconstruction of the evidential value of the records.

¹⁸ Pugh, Colonial and Dominions Records, pp. 43-45.

¹⁹ C.M. Andrews, Guide to the Materials for American History, to 1783, in the Public Record Office of Great Britain, I (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1912) p.78.

²⁰ Pugh, Colonial and Dominions Records, pp. 17-18; Andrews, Guide, I, pp. 103-112; First Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records...., I, part 1, p. 10.

However, the historian C.M. Andrews identified the problem while conducting research into the holdings of the P.R.O. for the publication of his classic, though dated, Guide to the Materials for American History...in the Public Record Office, which appeared in 1912.²¹ Andrews included a partial key to the Colonial Office papers as an appendix to volume I of his Guide.²² Notwithstanding these and other attempts, including efforts at the P.A.C. as required, no complete conversion list exists.

The difficulties presented by this feature of the organization in terms of the evidential value of the records need not be elaborated here beyond noting that it further complicates the use of material transcribed for the P.A.C. under the system of the first Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, which largely ignored the principles of provenance and respect des fonds.²³ Nevertheless, the system implemented in 1908-10 for the P.R.O. records has many advantages for the researcher and archivist who understand the principles which underlie the present organization and arrangement of the documents.

The Colonial Office papers were divided into topographic groupings so far as was possible,²⁴ reflecting to some degree the organization used by the Colonial Office in the early 19th century, and by the Board of Trade in the 18th. However, the modern organization broke up a number of the old record groups and redistributed or consolidated many of the old series. In some instances, for example the Board of Trade series, old groupings were dismembered because the collection included many different types of documents such as journals, sessional papers, acts, prints, original correspondence, in a form which did not fit the new system of incorporating the Board of Trade material directly in the Colonial Office series and including a division of material by type. In other cases, such as C.O. 391, BOARD OF TRADE, MINUTES, the order was not disturbed for the records were merely placed in an appropriate class in the new system. However, the provenance of perhaps the bulk of the Colonial Office records which concern Canadians has been lost, or at best remains difficult to reconstruct. Many classes, for example C.O.

21 Both C.M. Andrews and the Canadian Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, gave evidence to the Royal Commission see First Report of the Royal Commission on Public Records, I, part 3, pp. 108-110. Other efforts have supplemented Andrews' work, for example: C.S. Higham, The Colonial Entry-Books (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921); A Guide to manuscripts relating to American in Great Britain and Ireland, B.R. Crick and M. Alman (Oxford: University Press, 1961).

22 Andrews, Guide, I, pp. 279 et seq.

23 See below, pp. 14-15.

24 Pugh, Colonial and Dominions Records, p. 46.

194, NEWFOUNDLAND, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE, contain papers of the Board of Trade and perhaps some of the early agencies concerned with colonies, as well as the records of the secretary of state for the Southern Department, the secretary of state for America, the Home Office, the secretary of state for War and Colonies, and the secretary of state for the Colonies. Another peculiarity of note is that when the War and Colonial Offices were separated in 1854, the records were divided insofar as this was possible, but a substantial quantity of military papers were left in the Colonial Office records. For example, much of the secretary of state for War and Colonies material concerning the war of 1812 remained in the Colonial Office Papers, now located in C.O. 42, CANADA, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE.

At first glance, the organization and arrangement of the Colonial Office papers might seem to be rather obscure. However, the system is really quite simple, ingenious and utilitarian. The greatest difficulty, once the basic principles have been grasped, lies in the idiosyncracies which have accumulated for various reasons, including clerical error, administrative misunderstanding, and the intrinsic problem of devising a system which could accommodate every item in a logical manner.

The topographically defined classes are the fundamental groupings for any colony, and are known as the "colony" or "natural" classes. Material which did not fit easily or logically into these classes required the adoption of various other types of classes which we might call "artificial", "register", "subject" and "private papers" classes. Most thorough searches for information will probably require some knowledge of the potentialities of these additional classes. Once the records had been divided topographically, they were subdivided internally, predominantly by the type of record, but including that apparently unavoidable category "miscellanea". Following is the basic subdivision common to all topographically defined Colonial Office classes:

1. ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE, (in-letters) which normally includes the despatches from governors or other senior officials responsible for administering a government, as well as interdepartmental and private communications.
2. ENTRY BOOKS, (out-letters) which usually consist of copies of letters, representations, official instructions, warrants, commissions, reports, interdepartmental communications, abstracts of letters received and drafts of out-letters to offices, colonial officials, individuals and companies having business with the Colonial Office.

3. ACTS, under which general title is encompassed governors' ordinances and proclamations as well as acts of the colonial legislatures;
4. SESSIONAL PAPERS, which is comprised of the journals and minutes of colonial assemblies and councils;
5. GOVERNMENT GAZETTS, which include the official gazettes published in the colonies;
6. MISCELLANEA, which vary widely in content from colony to colony, but generally include material such as the blue books of statistics, shipping returns, colonial newspapers, accounts, reports and memoranda of various types.

The first two categories, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE and ENTRY BOOKS follow basically a common internal arrangement. While the terminology of the internal titles vary, the fundamental division within these two categories is usually apparent in one form or another, although the earliest volumes in most classes tend to be peculiar. The three fundamental sections common to ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE and ENTRY BOOKS are:

- i. DESPATCHES, which most often includes only the correspondence of the senior colonial official administering a colonial government with the Colonial Office. The contents by volume are normally arranged under the name of the governor, and chronologically by date of receipt within this division;
- ii. OFFICES, contains interdepartmental communications and is often arranged under the title of the originating office in alphabetic order, such as: Admiralty, Council, Foreign, Treasury, War, etc. The documents are normally arranged by date of receipt for the in-letters and chronologically by date of despatch for the out-letters. The heading OFFICES varies, sometimes being replaced with PUBLIC OFFICES, which then usually includes only those offices deemed of major status. On occasion the titles MISCELLANEOUS OFFICES will be encountered, usually including lesser government offices, agents general, and companies or corporations such as the Hudson's Bay Company;
- iii. INDIVIDUALS or MISCELLANEOUS, which generally provide correspondence with individuals, public and private, sometimes lesser companies and associations, arranged alphabetically (but often only by the first letter of the name) and usually by order of receipt for the in-letters

and by date of despatch for the out-letters. The OFFICES and INDIVIDUALS or MISCELLANEOUS categories are quite frequently bound together and entitled OFFICES AND INDIVIDUALS or some variations thereon.

Use of the remaining classes, ACTS, SESSIONAL PAPERS, GOVERNMENT GAZETTES and MISCELLANEA, is generally not complicated because most of the material is arranged by date. Note that ACTS may be found in either manuscript or printed form; that SESSIONAL PAPERS may frequently include reports of the administration; that MISCELLANEA varies in content so greatly between colonies that really only special knowledge of each unique colony class will ensure the maximum utility of the material. MISCELLANEA not infrequently provides copies of very early colonial newspapers. Although it was not until the Colonial Regulations of 1837 were issued that the governors were urged to send to London two copies of the colonial newspapers,²⁵ a number of earlier specimens were accumulated. In some instances these may be the only surviving copies of the early newspapers. The published P.R.O. Lists and Indexes²⁶ are frequently extremely useful in identifying the contents of each class, but they are not always reliable or detailed enough for many of our requirements as archivists and researchers.

Once these six basic divisions within a colony class had been made, class numbers were assigned to each category, with an attempt to keep the numbers in consecutive order. Thus, taking Newfoundland as an example, we see that its basic records may be found in C.O. 194, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE; C.O. 195, ENTRY BOOKS; C.O. 196, ACTS; C.O. 197, SESSIONAL PAPERS; C.O. 198, GOVERNMENT GAZETTES; C.O. 199, MISCELLANEA. Although it is not true for the basic records of the Atlantic Provinces, the six classes do not always run consecutively. For example, the fundamental Vancouver Island class numbers, in order, are: C.O. 305, C.O. 410, C.O. 306, C.O. 307, C.O. 308, C.O., 478.

If these rules are understood, the problems of locating material will be very substantially reduced even without the assistance of detailed finding aids; however, there are a great many anomalies and exceptions, which at times seem numberless, particularly to the archivist with an anxious researcher breathing down his neck. Thorough research may require study of material in

²⁵ Ibid., p.41.

²⁶ His Majesty's Stationery Office published in 1911 a List of Colonial Office Records Preserved in the Public Record Office. This has been superceded by a "Comprehensive List of Colonial Office Records" bound for the P.R.O. Round Room in 1950.

the records of other colonies and of special classes which embrace supplementary correspondence, confidential prints, registers and some classes which concern more than one colony or no colony in particular. After looking at some of the more important idiosyncrasies, we shall turn briefly to a few of the lesser problems and exceptions which illustrate the need for a knowledgeable and resourceful approach in the search process.

Colonial Office 537, AMERICA, BRITISH NORTH, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE, SUPPLEMENTARY, is an example of the need to create an artificial class in the Public Record Office for documents which never formed part of the regularly organized groupings within the Colonial Office itself, or which were delayed for one reason or another from being transferred to the P.R.O. with its related material. This class, replete with idiosyncrasies, also incorporates some formerly secret papers which have been declassified. The class encompasses documentation relating to each of the Atlantic provinces, but Newfoundland is the most heavily represented of these former colonies.

The class which houses confidential prints presents its own particular problems, contingent partly upon a recent change in the class number as the P.R.O. continues to refine its systems. Material began to be printed for Parliament in the 19th century, and it seems likely that correspondence and other papers initially were printed primarily for the confidential use of the Cabinet. It appears that such printed documents soon began to be utilized more widely by other components of Parliament and by the Colonial Office itself. The Public Archives of Canada transcribed or microfilmed substantial portions of the prints relating to Canada when the class number was C.O. 807. The proper class and number is now C.O. 880, leaving the P.A.C. in a bit of a quandary, for the targets and running heads on the microfilm apply to the former class.

Another important source for researchers is the COLONIES, GENERAL classes, which broadly speaking are the groupings of material which concern more than one colony, or none in particular. These classes include: C.O. 323, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE; C.O. 324, ENTRY BOOKS SERIES I; C.O. 381, ENTRY BOOKS SERIES II; C.O. 325, MISCELLANEA. The P.A.C. has selectively copied portions of these classes which contain for example, correspondence, reports, memoranda received and sent by the Colonial Office concerning matters of general policy, Indian affairs, defence, patronage, emigration, appointments, financial matters, land grants and so forth. The selections from C.O. 381 held in Ottawa are principally copies of commissions, instructions, warrants, orders-in-council, charters and petitions.

Examples of special subject classes are provided by C.O. 384, EMIGRATION, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE and C.O. 385, EMIGRATION, ENTRY BOOKS. These classes are organized upon the same basic principles as described above, but are rife with peculiarities too numerous to elaborate here. However, a few details might usefully be mentioned. Prior to 1874, there is no DESPATCHES category relating to emigration, nor is there an INDIVIDUALS subdivision before 1827. The INDIVIDUALS category was more or less replaced by a SETTLERS division which includes correspondence from persons seeking information and assistance in emigrating. Petitions from groups are usually found at the end of the category. After 1827, both the SETTLERS and INDIVIDUALS categories appear from time to time until 1837 when the SETTLERS category was dropped permanently. The SETTLERS category was used for material relating to persons who were actually considering emigrating or were evidently very active in emigration, while the INDIVIDUALS division tended to be the location for material from or dealing with persons or groups with a less direct or immediate interest in emigration, such as agents, philanthropists, shipowners, etc. In general, the classes provide lists of settlers and deal with applications for assisted emigration, interpretations of the Passenger Acts, and so forth. C.O. 384 was closed between 1857 and 1874, and some of the material one might expect to locate in this class or C.O. 385 may on occasion be found in C.O. 6, BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE, vols. 24-28, 30. After 1874, the classes concerning emigration were broadened in scope to include governors' despatches relating to emigration.

Three other classes, each with its own peculiarities, should be mentioned to suggest the wisdom of researchers ranging beyond the limits of the basic colony classes when doing research. C.O. 1, COLONIAL PAPERS, GENERAL SERIES, incorporates papers relating to the early British colonial period in North America up to about 1688. A number of extensive and extremely detailed calendars has been published for this series, beginning with the Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1574-1660, ed. W. Noel Sainsbury (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1860). Material post-dating about 1688, of a nature similar to that which is found in C.O. 1, will often be located in C.O. 5, AMERICA AND WEST INDIES, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE. This artificial class, which amounts to being the State Papers of the Colonial period for the thirteen colonies, follows a similar internal arrangement as described above, but all six basic classes for each colony are included within this single class of C.O. 5. There are published calendars for C.O. 5 up to 1738 similar to those mentioned above for C.O. 1. Work at the P.R.O. is still in progress on additional calendars. Each of these two classes contain a great deal of information relating to the Atlantic provinces before the American Revolution. C.O. 6,

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA, ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE was originally planned as a subject class of records. Between the years 1816 and 1850, the contents concern predominantly British North America - United States boundary disputes, North West and Arctic exploration. From 1850 to 1857, the class was in abeyance save for the year 1854, when a small quantity of Foreign Office correspondence was attached to the collection. The class was revived in 1857, but its character was transformed to include more than special subjects. It received documents which, though relating generally to North America, could not sensibly be placed in any of the topographically defined classes.

While the P.R.O. does not as a rule solicit records or manuscripts outside the products of public administration, it does house in special groups some additions through gift, deposit and even purchase. To some extent, the British Museum might be regarded as the national repository for these other collections of state interest which are not housed by the P.R.O. Indeed, the Museum houses material which one might expect to be located at the P.R.O., including many state papers which left official custody for one reason or another. Even if these papers returned to the P.R.O., they would not be integrated with the series to which they might naturally belong. This policy is connected with the doctrine of constant custody obtaining in the Law Courts and promoted by Sir Hilary Jenkinson. The principle is that public records which have never been out of officially recognized government custody have a weight as evidence denied to other documents which are not "of record" and have to be "proved" by the testimony of experts.²⁷ Generally, speaking, though not without exception, the P.R.O. collections of an additional character are restricted to ministers' papers, such as the Chatham Papers (P.R.O. 30/8), from which the P.A.C. has copied selections which have been placed rather anomalously in Manuscript Groups 23 A 2.

The last special groups of material which can be mentioned in this paper are the register classes. Unfortunately, they are of such diverse and complex character that a detailed discussion can not be attempted. However, they are very important finding aids and a large proportion of the classes of interest to Canadian researchers includes at least some of these contemporary registers. They are usually assigned a class number themselves and an Index Room Number: e.g. C.O. 359, volumes 1-16 provide registers of correspondence for Newfoundland in-letters for the period roughly 1850 to 1922. The Index Room

²⁷ W.H. Galbraith, An Introduction to the Use of the Public Records (Oxford: University Press reprint, 1952) p. 12.

is simply the search room identification number at the P.R.O. Note that many of the Colonial Office records include indexes, either at the beginning or end of each bound group of documents. These volume indexes which begin to appear reasonably consistently after about 1820, reflecting the various changes and reforms in the Colonial Office, generally provide a brief subject statement, names of the principals, date, and sometimes the page reference and despatch number.

This paper cannot deal with all the characteristics and peculiarities of the Colonial Office records, but it should provide some conceptions of the nature of this extraordinarily rich collection. It remains now to look briefly at some of the problems researchers might expect to encounter when using the Colonial Office records copies for the P.A.C.

Within a decade of the opening of the new Canadian national archives, Douglas Brymner embarked upon an ambitious programme of transcription from the Colonial Office papers. There was no doubt in his mind about the importance of such records to Canadian scholars. The significance of the records was underlined by the very title used for the papers copied and acquired by the Public Archives: i.e. State Papers, a term no longer in fashion, and which, strictly speaking, probably derived from the British title for papers from the State Paper Office. Though Brymner was not an academic by training, he was quite aware of the fact that few archival collections rival the wealth of detail and degree of completeness of the Colonial Office records.

In 1883, Brymner made one of a number of visits to England to inspect the records of the British government relating to Canada. After some negotiation he secured permission to inspect the Foreign Office records to the year 1842, but despite being treated as an "exceptional case" he was informed that it "must be clearly understood that Mr. Brymner is not at liberty to copy any departmental minutes which he may find on the letters and despatches in question."²⁸ A similar restriction applied to the Colonial Office records. During the next two years, Brymner was confronted with another related difficulty. He received a memorandum from one of the London copyists protesting that the transcribers had been prohibited from copying certain portions of documents which reflected badly on British administration in America. The specific items concerned the deliberate spreading of smallpox among the Indians to "extirpate this execrable race", a proposal possibly made by General Jeffrey Amherst

²⁸ R.G. 37, Public Archives of Canada, Letters Received vol. 106, Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 21 September 1883; R.G. 25, Department of External Affairs, A-1, vol. 32, Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 21 September 1883.

in 1763. In a letter to the Deputy Keeper of the P.R.O., Brymner astutely quoted the very lines in dispute, but copied from duplicates housed in the British Museum, pointing out the "hopelessness of trying to conceal any matters of this kind that are purely historical...." Strongly objecting to this policy which had even prohibited editorial notes in the transcribed volumes indicating the fact that something had been withheld, Brymner finally prevailed and the restriction was lifted.²⁹ However, the prohibition against the copying of marginalia proved to be more troublesome.

Although we can identify in the transcripts at which point in any given series the restriction against the copying of marginalia was lifted, it is difficult to pinpoint the precise date when the general prohibition was removed. Indirect evidence suggests that the restriction was waived at about the turn of the century. A letter from H.P. Biggar at the P.A.C. London Office suggests that while this restriction was certainly removed officially some time before 1905, the copyists themselves either were not adequately informed or were misled by some lesser officials at the P.R.O. about the change in policy.³⁰ Consequently, the transcripts are deficient in some respects at least up to the early decades of the 19th century. This should not be taken to suggest that the transcripts are discreditable. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of these copies are excellent and accurate sources, and have been the reputable foundation of much historical research in Canada. Furthermore, these problems have been largely eliminated by the acquisition of microfilm copies of many of the records already held in transcript form at the P.A.C.

The transcripts, which are still remarkably popular with researchers, pose other problems. Apart from the fact that many of the pages are disintegrating, many suffer from the early system of arrangement devised by Brymner and his staff.³¹ Partly to simplify the use of the records by researchers, Brymner, in his own words, "arranged the whole on a strictly chronological system, no matter in what series the document might be found. The papers will thus follow each other in consecutive order, so that there will seldom be occasion to refer to the page for any document of which the date is known."

29 R.G. 37, P.A.C., Letters Received, vol. 111, n.p., E.W.A. Dixon to C.C. Chipman, 2 September 1886; Letters Sent, pp. 154-155, Douglas Brymner to Sir William Hardy, 5 April 1884; pp. 252-253, Brymner to Chipman, 22 September 1886; p. 252, Brymner to High Commissioner in London, 22 September 1886.

30 R.G. 37, P.A.C. 50-11-1, vol. 1, H.P. Biggar to Arthur Doughty, 15 June 1905.

31 See above, pp. 15-16.

He believed that this system would eliminate unnecessary and expensive transcription of duplicate material.³² Fortunately, he instructed³³ the copyists to include the reference of the original item for "those who may desire to consult the original documents...."³⁴ When the P.R.O. changed its own classification system in 1908-10, all the old references provided according to Brymner's instructions were altered, leaving the P.A.C. one step further removed from an easy conversion to the new system. After the change at the P.R.O., the P.A.C. followed suit, abandoning Brymner's chronological arrangement by adopting the P.R.O. organization and arrangement in full.

The early P.A.C. transcripts continue to be problematic for researchers, despite the existence of various tables of equivalence at the P.A.C., partly because series such as Manuscript Group 11, Nova Scotia "A", for example, include not only transcripts from the Colonial Office records, but also from Lambeth Palace, the British Museum, the Dartmouth Papers, and a variety of other collections. With apologies to Fowler, at times one suspects that the Canadian research community might be divided into (1) those who neither know nor care what Nova Scotia "A" is; (2) those who do not know, but care very much; (3) those who know and condemn; (4) those who do know and approve; and (5) those who know and attempt to distinguish. There is no single, simple rule which may be applied to avoid confusion with these transcripts. Care and caution seem to provide the only satisfactory approach.

One final point should be made, which in certain respects summarizes many of the problems researchers will encounter with both the P.A.C. and P.R.O. collections. This paper has stressed the idea that thorough research will often demand that researchers go beyond the basic colony classes of records. An outstanding example of this requirement is that a very substantial proportion of the Colonial Office records relating to the Atlantic colonies is located, not in the appropriate colony classes, but rather in the Canada class for Entry Books; C.O. 43, volumes 49-141 (1810-1867). A complication

³² Douglas Brymner, Report on Canadian Archives for 1894 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1895) p. vi.

³³ An example of the type of instructions issued to copyists may be found in R.G. 37, P.A.C., vol. 185, pp. 239-244, memorandum by Brymner, 16 September 1895.

³⁴ Brymner, Report on Canadian Archives for 1894, p. vi.

at the P.A.C. in this area is presented by the well-known "Q" series of transcripts which includes copies, predominantly from C.O. 42, for the period 1760-1841. A conversion list has been prepared for this series of transcripts, but it does not take into account the fact that "Q" also includes copies of what became C.O. 43, CANADA, ENTRY BOOKS. Further, the "Q" series in its entirety does not include marginalia.

What of the future for collecting copies from the Colonial Office records at the P.R.O.? All fiscal and logistical limitations aside, it seems obvious that each former colony should hold an entire set of all the relevant records from the P.R.O., particularly from the C.O. group, for they amount to the state papers of these colonies. At this time, Canadian repositories appear to hold a respectable proportion of some of the P.R.O. records which might appropriately be collected for Canadian research. Nevertheless, there are a great many records which still need to be acquired and an enormous amount of work remains to be done to identify material which should be gathered. It will be some time before a proposal for a systematic acquisition programme may be authoritatively advanced. Furthermore, traditional acquisition policies will have to be reviewed to establish, for example, how much contextual material should be collected along with the specifically Canadian documentation. C.O. 616, DOMINIONS (WAR OF 1914-1918) contains a great deal of information relating to the participation of Canada in the First World War. It has been estimated that only 25 to 30% of the material is of specifically Canadian content. Nevertheless, the records relating to Canada would be only marginally intelligible and could not be properly appreciated or analyzed without looking at the other 70% of the records which are of general concern or of specific interest to other Dominions such as Australia and New Zealand. The implications of this problem are perhaps too obvious to belabour, but it may be mentioned that the P.A.C. has made contact with the P.R.O. on a consortium collecting procedure. This proposal, which the P.R.O. welcomes, basically entails the cooperation of interested repositories which might order records of mutual interest on microfilm at a rather substantial financial saving. This is one means whereby the high cost of copying may be reduced while increasing the speed at which material might be acquired from the P.R.O. and incidentally improving the quality of our collections by being more inclusive and less rigidly selective.