THE PAPER CHASE—ARCHIVES AND THE PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE OF HONG KONG

["It is to be noted that when any part of this paper appears dull there is a design in it"—The Tatler]

A. I. DIAMOND *

This evening I propose to tell you something about the development of the Public Records Office of Hong Kong, and about the role which it can or should play in the conservation and use of Hong Kong's archival resources. But before doing this I think that it may be worthwhile to spend some time talking about archives as such—about what archives are and how modern archive institutions operate.

Many of you may be quite knowledgeable on this subject already, and if you are I apologise for seeming to assume otherwise. But some quite astonishing misconceptions exist about archivists and their profession, as all archivists know, and when we asked to address a general audience few of us can quell the thought that at least some present may be harbouring what we have come to recognise as the classic delusions about us. And what are these:

Well, the other evening, for example, my hostess at a dinner party said to me "What a wonderful job you must have. Fancy being able to sit all day reading through all those fascinating old papers". There it is, you see, one of the archivist's main preoccupations, apparently, is reading through all the documents in his care—and mark you, they're bound to be old and fascinating. She was just being polite of course, but I realised at once that here was someone with a full quiver of misconceptions about us. I could guess that in a moment she would tell me that I do not really look like her idea of an archivist. She would not have had to explain what she meant by that. I know already. I should be old and leathery looking with a beard and long grey hair and wearing steel-rimmed bi-focals. In fact I should look like a cross between Charles Darwin and Karl Marx in their old age. And what else do I do? Well, when I am not poring over fascinating old documents in my

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study I am down in cellars or up in attics ransacking their contents for yet more documents. And when I light upon them—especially on the choicer specimens—I probably make delighted chuckling sounds in my throat like Ben Gunn discovering a cheese.

And what is an archives repository like? Well, externally, to fit the popular conception of things archival, it ought to be neo-gothic in style, rather like a 19th century English provincial railway station. Internally, though, and my hostess would be much certain of this, it would look more like a derelict warehouse, its floors piled with books and papers, evidently in the utmost confusion and, of course, covered with a thick mantle of dust (Dust is always an important feature in the myths about us). And, strangely enough, considering the archivist's obsessive love for fascinating old documents, they would be swarming with vermin.

Grotesque as it is, this image of the archivist and his work is all too common. In this regard we carry a burden not unlike the one which archaeologists once laboured under. Was it so long ago that the archaeologist was invariably depicted, and thought of, as a spindly, eccentric looking apparition, clad in a solar topee, bush jacket and bombay bloomers, devoted to all things arcane, and eternally and promiscuously ferreting in the sand for relics of the past—any relics? Old films of the "Mummy's Curse" variety usually reflected this impression of him perfectly.

But thanks initially to the unwitting cooperation of Tut Ankh Amen and to the literary efforts of people like Leonard Wooley and Sir Mortimer Wheeler, the archaeologist has sloughed off most of his comic attributes these days and emerged as a familiar and even heroic figure, just as anthropologists are doing through the influence of writers like Thor Heyerdahl.

Shall archivists produce their Wooleys and Wheelers to introduce the real archivist and his profession to the public? I fear not. Our profession is eminently free from danger—unless being caught between two stacks of mobile shelving can be thought of as dangerous—and however fascinating archival work may be for archivists themselves one has to admit that it is singularly lacking in the sort of features which make exciting reading for the man in the street.

There will never be a best-seller about archivology, and if popular misconceptions about us are ever to be dispelled it will probably come about only through archivists persistently reading papers like this one to captive audiences.
A. I. DIAMOND

So much for the sorry image of the archivist. Now what are the realities. What are archives and what do archivists do? Most people, if asked what archives are, will say that they are old documents of historical interest, or the records of some person or institution which have value for research purposes.

This is true enough as far as it goes. Many archives, of course, are old and historically interesting, but neither of these attributes is necessary for documents to qualify as archives. For example, an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament, the original instrument, bearing the seal and sign manual of the Sovereign is undoubtedly an archive, and it is so whether it was passed yesterday or five hundred years ago. Its age has nothing to do with its archival quality. And since, as soon as it receives the Royal assent, copies of it are generally published and distributed in their thousands, one could hardly claim that the original itself was of much interest to the historian. It has value, of course. An authenticated Act of Parliament is the final source of Government’s authority for certain of its actions; but it is not this either which makes it an archive.

Documents acquire archival quality from the manner in which they have been created and kept. The eminent English authority on archives, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, defines them as follows: “A document which may be said to belong to the class of Archives is one which was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part; and subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own information by the person or persons responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors”.*

Archives, then, are the totality of the documents produced or received by an office or other agency in the course of its business and which have been retained for action or reference.

It is sometimes supposed that the term “archives” applies specifically, or at any rate more properly, to government records; but this is not the case. The term is equally applicable to the records of banks, insurance houses, churches, clubs and any other forms of association or enterprise. And if it comes to that even families or private individuals may accumulate them. What makes a body of documents archives is not who accumulated it but how it was done.

A clear distinction can be noticed in the definition between archives and library items. Books, periodicals and other published matter do not normally form an integral part of the transactions of an office in the way that its records do; nor can they be said to accumulate naturally. Libraries result from deliberate acts of collection. The only circumstance in which published materials may acquire archive status is when they form annexures or enclosures to correspondence and thus actually comprise part of the working records of an office.

The reason for the emphasis on natural accumulation, preservation for reference and custody in the definition of archives is that documents created and kept under these conditions possess certain unique evidential qualities. The records of an office arise purely as a result of the conduct of its business. Taken together they form a factual and disinterested account of its operations, uninfluenced by concern for the views of posterity or by any other considerations external to the matters they deal with. And since any office may be presumed to have a strong interest both in protecting its archives from being tampered with, and in detecting forgeries and falsifications in them if these occur, archives, providing they remain in responsible custody, may be regarded as practically unimpeachable in their integrity as sources of information.

Archives thus possess qualities of authenticity and impartiality which are unrivalled by any other class of document.

This is not to suggest, of course, that manuscript collections or other bodies of documents which have been gathered together by selective processes are without worth—far from it—but just because they have been artificially compiled with research ends specifically in view the student cannot accord them the same degree of confidence as he can archives.

But, you may say, is it not the practice of archivists nowadays to cooperate with the producers of archives in the destruction of so-called valueless papers, and is not the selection of papers for destruction really the same as the selection of papers for retention, for after you have destroyed records from an archive assemblage what remains surely is what you have decided is of value to the student. You have presumed to anticipate his research ends in a manner very similar to that of the collector of manuscripts.
The charge cannot be denied. To destroy any of the papers which form part of body of archives, unless destruction is limited to word-for-word duplicates, is to place the peculiar integrity they had, as such, at risk, and the greater the destruction the greater the violence done to the principles on which their value for research is claimed to rest.

Archivists have no defence in terms of theory for the destruction of archives, and it is only when the practicalities are considered that justification can be found for it. The volume of records generated by modern governments is enormous and growing greater year by year. It has been claimed that if all the records produced or received by the Federal and State governments of the United States in a single year were packed on shelving, that shelving would extend for more than fifty miles. Faced with archival accumulation on such a scale what are administrators and archivists—and scholars themselves for that matter—to do, but to agree that a policy for the selective destruction of archives is unavoidable. The question, really, is not whether to destroy, but what.

Having said that, it might seem logical now to discuss criteria for the selection of documents for disposal. I have no intention of doing so. It is difficult to say anything in general terms on that subject which is not either spurious or self-evident. What should be preserved will always depend on the nature of the records being appraised and on their relationship, if any, to other records. And the answer may not be the same for similar records under varying sets of circumstances.

It would be more worthwhile, I think, to say a little about the mechanisms which are being developed in modern societies to conserve valuable archives and to channel them into the safe-keeping of archive institutions.

The archivist nowadays stands downstream of a veritable flood of papers, valuable and otherwise, and if he is not to be inundated he must be granted some part in manipulating the sluicegates.

It is no longer enough for archivists to know how to manage records already in their own custody. They must be conversant also with the techniques and exigencies of records management in the agencies they serve. For it is only if archivists are knowledgeable in this field that they can anticipate problems arising for themselves and hope to enlist the aid of administrators in solving them.
One of the areas in which modern archivists are most interested, of course, is that of systematic records disposal.

All too commonly, offices allow their archives to accumulate until they find them becoming an administrative and financial burden and then reduce their bulk by destructions based on more or less *ad hoc* decisions about their relative values. Alternatively they may solve their problem by offering the whole mass of their unwanted records to the luckless archivist, if there is one, who is then faced with the task of sorting out, by whatever scratch means are available to him, what records should be kept. But in the last forty years or so, the larger producers of archives, and in particular governments, have been driven more and more to develop procedures for the systematic and regular destruction of unwanted records, the aim being to keep the total mass at a minimum consistent with the actual needs of the office.

There is no time to discuss in any detail how this is done, except to say that such disposal systems are based upon the fact that the records of any office will be found, on analysis, to be divisible into a number of classes, the components of each of which are sufficiently similar, as a rule, for the whole of them to be evaluated as one and to be disposed of in due course according to the same set of directions. A schedule can therefore be drawn up listing all of the discernable classes of records generated by an office and giving separate directions, class by class, for their disposal. If the schedule is executed satisfactorily, and updated from time to time as new classes appear and old ones are discontinued or re-appraised, records are enabled to flow steadily either into the incinerators or into archival custody according to their pre-determined values, and the office is left at all times only with the records it actually needs.

Where disposal is undertaken by these means it obviously becomes very much the concern of archivists to ensure that the potential research values of the records concerned are not over-looked at the schedule-making stage. For if the administrator is attending strictly to his business it is not the future uses which his records may have for students which will determine his views on their worth, but their administrative and legal uses now—their continued relevance or otherwise to the work of his office.

Administrators generally lack both the time and inclination to consider the research ends to which their records may be put, and
even when the inclination is there, the ability to make sound judgments about what should be preserved in the interests of academic study is often lacking.

Is this to imply that archivists are endowed with a special prescience which enables them infallibly to make the sort of predictions about records which administrators cannot make? No. of course, it is not; but the ability to make consistent and reasonably certain judgments about the research value of archives depends to some extent on a sound knowledge of, and experience in, historiography and research methodology in the person who attempts the business and these are attributes which archivists may be expected to have if they are properly qualified. Moreover, if an archivist is doing his job properly he will not rely solely on his own judgment in the selection of records. He will seek the advice, of authorities in every academic discipline to which the records he has to consider relate. Even this will not preclude the possibility of mistakes, but it will at least lengthen the odds against them.

In modern governments, where archive services are well developed, the role of archivists in the scheduling of records for disposal is accepted as part of the administrative scheme of things and, generally, well established lines of communication exist for consultation between archivists and academics in the various fields of study.

I hope that such cooperation will develop between the Public Records Office of Hong Kong and the two Universities. It is doing so already, as a matter of fact. I have had the advice of academic staff on several occasions in the appraisal of records and I hope that as time goes on our panel of learned advisors will expand.

Archivists are concerned nowadays not only with the making of disposal schedules but with the execution of them as well.

The prodigious quantities of records produced by archive-making bodies in modern societies and the rising costs of storage for them have combined to encourage the development, particularly by governments, of facilities for shared bulk storage for what are termed "intermediate records".

In the jargon of records management intermediate records are those which, though no longer in current use by an office, and having no permanent value, are nevertheless required, for legal or
administrative reasons, to be kept for specified periods of time or until the completion of certain actions.

In many departments of government records of this kind may represent as much as 50% of their total holdings at any one time, and where their volume is great, as it often is, the problem arises of how to keep them readily available at the same time as minimising the cost of their storage.

Computerisation, microphotography and other techniques have been used increasingly over the last twenty or thirty years to help meet this problem, and with considerable success; but over quite a wide range of record classes the application of these bulk reduction and information storage and retrieval processes has been found to be uneconomical or impracticable due to the form or physical condition of the records themselves or because of the relatively short periods during which some intermediate records need to be retained.

For the time being, then, there is no escape from the need to store and control large bodies of records by conventional means.

One of the expedients employed increasingly in developed countries over the last few decades, as I have said, is that of centralised storage. Records reaching the “intermediate” stage of their existence are relinquished by their creating departments to a central repository which operates as a division of the government's Archive office. These central repositories, or “intermediate record centres” as they are termed, are usually located in low-cost areas and operate in some measure as extensions of the departments' own registries. The transferred records are maintained in very much the same manner as they are in the departments and are regularly culled and finally disposed of in accordance with schedules developed and administered by the archival authority in consultation with the departments concerned. Official reference to the records in the meantime is facilitated by a courier service.

The main advantages of the system are that it minimises storage costs, rids offices of seldom-used records and facilitates the regular and systematic destruction of valueless papers; and since records are kept in a more orderly condition in intermediate record centres than they generally are in departments it leads to more rapid retrieval of information. An efficient record centre should be able to produce any paper demanded of it within ten minutes.
In modern countries the development of intermediate records repositories has already come to be accepted as one of the normal functions of a government archive service and their management is becoming one of the specialised fields in archives administration.

Before leaving the subject of archives in general I should like to say something about what archivists do with archives once they are in their care. I am often asked about this. How do we organise them? Do we arrange them by subject or theme or what? How do we retrieve information from them?—and so on.

Well the first thing to point out is that archivists do not arrange archives at all, in the sense of reorganising them to suit some pre-conceived or ideal pattern. On the contrary, one of the archivist's chief concerns is to maintain them precisely in accordance with the scheme of classification which was imposed upon them by the office which created them. When a body of records is passed to an archive office one of the first things an archivist does is to examine it in order to discover how the records were classified and controlled by the office of origin. And having come to understand the system thoroughly the only re-arranging he may do will take the form of returning papers which are out of order to their proper places, and this he will do only after noting carefully, for the information of future users, that these items were found misplaced in such and such locations and have been returned to their correct positions.

Why this emphasis on original order? Well, you will recall that one of the attributes of archives which lends them their special evidential quality is the fact that they accumulated naturally. A body of archives acquires a kind of organic unity as it accumulates, rather like a growth of coral, and the relationships of papers in it can have significance in themselves and actually add meaning to each individual paper. This can be illustrated by considering an ordinary correspondence file. In its undisturbed entirety it may record the whole or part of some administrative transaction. It chronicles what happened, when and why; who said what to whom and for what reasons. In places it may be wrong in matters of fact or mistaken in the views it records. It may not say all that could have been said, and if it is like some government files it may say a good deal more than need have been said. But for all that it is the record; it is what passed among administrators themselves as an account of that particular piece of business and it served both to
remind them of what had happened in the past and to guide their actions in the future. Add to it or subtract from it a single attachment or minute and the record will not be quite the same. Its evidential quality will be impaired. Indeed whatever you add or subtract may have the effect of substantially altering, or even of obscuring altogether, the meaning or significance of other items in the file; or it may have the effect of reducing to nonsense actions taken or statements made in other related files. The whole file in this sense is more than the sum of its parts. And if you break up the file altogether and amalgamate its contents with those of other files to fit some ideal scheme of classification based subject, theme or whatever, not only will the history of the transactions they recorded be lost, but very often the full meaning of the individual items as well.

Just as the full significance of individual papers in a file may be apparent only when they are considered in relation to the other papers in it, so the full significance of the file may emerge only when it is considered in the context of other files in the same or another file series.

So archivists are very much concerned with the provenance of papers; and not only with provenance but with what might be called the mechanical relationships of the units which comprise an archival assemblage.

The archives of any office arise solely in the service of its functions. Its registers, indexes, correspondence, journals, cash books, ledgers and the rest are component parts of the documentary mechanism by which the office operates. These components may arrive in an archive institution at different times and in varying states of repair and often in forms differing, through modification, from the original. The archivist's concern is to identify these parts as he receives them, discover how they relate to other parts, assemble them in their original order and get the mechanism back into working condition again.

In some archive institutions the component parts, or series as we call them, of archive groups are stored in the repositories in a manner which actually reflects physically, in so far as this is possible, their relationships to one another.

In broad terms this answers the question about how archivists organise their archives. It also goes some way towards explaining
how information is obtained from them. The original registers, indexes and other finding aids of the office are ready-made instruments of information retrieval.

However, the original finding aids will answer only the questions they were designed to answer and frequently questions which the student wishes to ask of the records are quite different from those which the administrator had in mind. It therefore becomes part of the archivist's business to devise supplementary media in the form of guides, inventories, lists, calendars and select indexes to which the student can turn for further guidance.

Archives are highly significant resources and the most important of them are the archives of governments. Official archives constitute government's memory. They contain information on every aspect of its business, and this information increases in value and extent as archives are accumulated and preserved. "Public records define the relations of government to the governed. They are the immediate proof for all temporary property and financial rights that are derived from or are connected with a citizen's relations to a government, and are the ultimate proof for all permanent civic rights and privileges".*

For these reasons if for no other, the proper management by a government of its current records and the conservation of its archives should be viewed by it not as a luxury or as a concession to academia, but as an essential object of national concern.

The last time I was asked to talk about the development of an archive office was in 1965 when I was in charge of the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission. It was comparatively easy because I then had nearly a decade of development to look back on. In this case it is more difficult because the Public Records Office, Hong Kong—hereafter referred to as P.R.O.—has been in existence here for less than eighteen months and we are standing a little too close to events to see what they really amount to in terms of progress.

The P.R.O. was established in July, 1972, and, as some of you will know, it forms at present a unit of the Colonial Secretariat under the general direction of the Home Affairs and Information Branch.

The main function of the P.R.O. is the conservation of all government records of permanent value for official reference and private research. More specifically, this means all documents which possess value for:

(i) documenting the constitutional and legal basis of government;

(ii) documenting the origin, development, organisation, functions, policies and substantive activities of government departments;

(iii) protecting the rights and privileges of private citizens and organisations; and

(iv) research into political, social and economic affairs and the history of the community.

You will notice from this, by the way, that archives are not preserved, solely in the interests of historians. The scope of modern government is wide and there are few aspects of human activity and environment to which official records do not refer. A government’s archives, therefore, are potentially of research value to every academic discipline.

Archive institutions, like libraries, museums and art galleries, need to be located in places where they are easily accessible to the public. The trouble is that archives, and especially government archives, need a great deal of storage space; so that in cities like Hong Kong, where office accommodation is at a premium, the housing of archives has special problems. Stored archives are immensely heavy and this limits us to ground floor accommodation or to buildings especially constructed to withstand high floor-loadings. Again, if one provides at the outset for long-term space needs this means tying up large building areas which will remain under-utilised for a long period. The alternative, of providing only for short-term requirements, means constant removal to new premises. We have had to compromise. The P.R.O. is housed at present* in temporary premises in Garden Road with accommodation for 5,450 shelf-feet of records. In about April this year we shall be moving to the Murray Road Multi-storey Car Park Building where we shall have room to accommodate about 15,000 shelf-feet of records. The new premises will be equipped with, among other things, a document repair section and bindery, a photographic laboratory and, 1

hope adequate, library and reading room facilities. The repository will be specially air-conditioned to provide a filtered atmosphere and a temperature and relative humidity stabilised at the optimum levels. The records will be protected from fire by an automatic carbon dioxide extinguishing system.

But the Murray Road accommodation will also be temporary. If our present intake of permanent records is maintained we shall exhaust the storage space available there by the end of 1978. It is planned, therefore, that in 1979 we shall move for the second and last time to premises in Murray Building II, which is to be constructed on the site of the Garden Road Open-air Car Park.

In the Murray Building we shall have about 25,000 square feet of floor space, including accommodation for upward of 40,000 shelf-feet of records.

Even this will not meet our storage needs; but as we cannot continue to expand in the city centre our space requirements in excess of that allowed for in the Murray Building will be met by the provision of satellite accommodation in low-cost areas. These satellite repositories will be used for the storage of intermediate records and of permanent records which are not often consulted.

As the P.R.O. is the first Archives to have been established in Hong Kong it was no surprise to find that professionally trained staff were unobtainable here. What was less expected was the difficulty which we have had in recruiting suitable graduate staff even without archives training. In fact, after sixteen months I am still without any. Part of the reason for this is that the career prospects which we can offer at this early stage of our development are rather nebulous. As the scope and volume of the P.R.O.'s operations expand the avenues for advancement within the ranks of its graduate staff will presumably improve. In the meantime the problem is to find and keep staff with the interest and courage to take their chances in pioneering a new form of career.

The intention is that Assistant Archivists (graduates) should undergo a year's in-service training at the end of which time they will sit an examination designed to test their knowledge and proficiency. If they pass this, and are suitable in other respects, they will be eligible for diploma-course training abroad, probably in Malaysia or Australia.
So far, we have received transfers of records from 27 different government offices, the whole now occupying nearly 6,000 feet of shelving. We have therefore passed the storage capacity of our present premises and have had to resort to additional temporary accommodation on the old naval dockyard site.

When I came to Hong Kong I was told that practically all of the government’s pre-war records had perished during the Japanese occupation. It is true that pitifully little remains of the very large accumulations which must have been in government offices in 1941, and what records did survive, with a few notable exceptions, tend to be fragmentary and unrelated to one another in time or content.

Nevertheless the dearth is not as great as is sometimes supposed. The Rating and Valuation Department’s Rates Collection Book series, which we now hold, is practically complete from 1858 to 1952, and several large and exceedingly valuable series of 19th and pre-war 20th century Land Office records have been transferred to us from the Registrar-General’s Department. These include series of correspondence files dating from 1866 to 1940, Crown and Village Rent Rolls from 1843 to 1958 and 1856 to 1960 respectively and some 90—100,000 Surrendered Title Deeds, many of which date from the middle of the 19th century, and possibly earlier.

Other pre-war records have reached us from the Prisons Department, Audit, the Supreme Court, the Hong Kong Regiment (The Volunteers) and the Official Receiver’s Office and they are still coming. Only a few days ago some twelve volumes of Judicial Department correspondence dating from 1844 to 1903 were unearthed from a great pile of lumber and rubbish in a government record store and as my staff are still quarrying in it I have no doubt that more of them will come to light.

There is no knowing what treasures may lie in the many dungeons of government’s archival limbo. Some of them are so cluttered as to be virtually inaccessible, except by emptying them, and it will be years before we have prospected them all—that is, if we succeed in finding them all. Twelve years ago a very large crate of mid-19th century records was discovered quite by accident in the roof of the Supreme Court.

The loss of Hong Kong’s pre-war records is regrettable but the situation is not entirely irretrievable. As many of you know, a
number of large, and from a research point of view, extremely valuable accumulations of records, both official and private, relating to this area are preserved in various oversea institutions and in many cases these are available in Xerox, microfilm or other copy form.

It is desirable that the P.R.O. should acquire as wide a coverage of these sources as possible and the Hong Kong Government has agreed to support a programme of expenditure extending over several years for this purpose. A commitment of $65,000 to begin the programme has been approved in the current Estimates.

What is to be said of the government's post-war archive resources?

Most departments have developed, or are developing routines for the destruction of their unwanted records. As a matter of fact, planned records disposal has a surprisingly long history in Hong Kong. Measures to limit the accumulation of ephemeral papers were adopted by Colonial Secretariat and certain of the departments well before the war and, in spite of the wholesale destruction of public records during the occupation, similar methods were being re-introduced by some offices as early as 1948.

The increasing pressure on office accommodation since the war has led, in many departments, to acute storage problems and to efforts to solve these by records disposal programmes of increasing scope and intensity. The methods used have varied according to the nature of the records concerned and to the urgency of the storage problem. In some offices destruction has been sporadic and haphazard; in others it is carried out on a regular basis in accordance with carefully detailed instructions.

In the interests of efficiency it is desirable that departments should develop procedures for the elimination of valueless documents. The trouble is that in many cases these have been devised with such narrow attention to purely administrative or legal considerations, and prosecuted so rigorously, that much material of importance for historical and other research has been destroyed with the rubbish.

This should not be taken to imply that Hong Kong's officialdom has been remiss. Administrators, as we have noted, are not employed, and most of them are not equipped, to conserve records of academic interest; and even were they to attempt it their efforts in
Hong Kong must have been defeated by lack of storage space and of staff to cope.

Now that the P.R.O. has been established, such reduction as there has been of government's archival resources should come to an end. How soon it does so will depend on how rapidly and effectively the P.R.O. is enabled to develop its services. Departments have already been instructed that in future no records are to be destroyed without P.R.O. sanction; but this will become a dead letter if we fail to give them prompt assistance in the appraisal of their records and ready accommodation for those which are marked for permanent retention.

I believe that much will depend on our ability to develop efficient intermediate records services. The establishment of institutions which relieve departments of the burden of accommodating and administering great masses of non-current records would go far to obviate premature or unauthorised destruction of them.

In due course it will be appropriate to enact a Public Records Ordinance to provide a legal basis for the P.R.O. and its activities and to settle its relations with other government offices and the public. The character of this legislation, when it is passed, will be important in determining the future development of the Office and the effectiveness of its operations.