

NAME OF SYSTEM:

Correspondence Retrieval

ORIGINATOR:

Naval Ship Systems Command

Department of the Navy

Washington, D.C. 20360

OBJECTIVE. To develop and operate a large volume subject correspondence retrieval system through integration of the document reference search, storage, and retrieval functions into a single unified retrieval system, thus providing a more responsive information service.

BACKGROUND. The Ship Systems Command is responsible for ships, other watercraft, and most nonordnance shipboard material support of the Navy. In performing these duties, the headquarters each day receives about 8,000 pieces of correspondence. About 75 percent of these items are screened and forwarded to other offices for controlled handling. The remaining 2,000 pieces have record and possibly reference value, and thus must be identified as to subject matter and responsibility of action. About 100 inquiries are received each day that require referring to earlier correspondence. Since the information requested could form the basis for making some decision, Central Records must promptly respond to these inquiries.

In support of the above responsibilities, both a manual conventional subject file and a source file were maintained. The source file contained half-size copies of processed microfilm and was filed by the originator of the paper and date. The original document, after being routed and acted upon, was returned to Central Files and either replaced the microfilm in the source file or was filed by assigned subject code. Persons requesting a document had to know its originator and date or its basic subject. Several files were often searched before the document was found. The basic problems of this large filing system were the misfilings, lost documents, and

limitations on the types of searches that could be performed.

THE NEW METHOD. Incoming documents selected for entry into the File-Search System are first indexed by file station personnel in accordance with an amplified Navy-Marine Corps Standard Subject Classification System. This guidance material permits the documents to be indexed by such identifiers as date, name, addressee, addressor, contract number, type of ship, and a wide range of subject topics. Once the various indexing terms have been determined, a code clerk enters the pertinent indexing information in coded form onto a code sheet. This information is then converted through use of a paper tape typewriter into a machine-language binary code on an edge-punched card. The holes on the edge-punched card thus represent the same data as shown on the coded sheet. The edge-punched card, together with the document it describes, are then placed upon the recording table of a special microfilm camera, and the coded index card is inserted into a slot on the control panel. The insertion of the card automatically triggers a camera recording device that simultaneously produces a photographic image of the binary-coded index data and the document. After development, the resultant roll of microfilm contains both the document and the photo-optical binary-coded index data. The information concerning documents and related index codes is stored on 1,000-foot reels of 35-mm. microfilm that hold 33,000 image pages each.

The processing of requests begins with receipt and "negotiation" of the search question. Once the search question is framed the processing procedures parallel those of the input sequence. First, the search question is coded in machine language. Then, through use of the paper tape typewriter, the resultant edge-punched card is ready for insertion into the File-Search Retrieval Unit. Next, the appropriate reel of coded microfilm is inserted into the Retrieval Unit. Then, with the proper placement of the edge-notched card, the Retrieval Unit will search automatically for documents answering the coded input infor-

mation. Once the match is found, the machine will stop automatically at the selected document image. At this point, three options are available to the requester: he can read the document directly as it is displayed on the viewing screen; he can obtain a hard copy of the image; or he can obtain a film copy of the selected frame through use of an auxiliary copy camera attachment.

REMARKS. This new Correspondence Retrieval System has improved both the breadth and responsiveness of the file search. The system also includes a capability for computer-like manipulation of information due to the programmed circuitry of the File-Search Retrieval Unit. Additionally, the file structure may be expanded or modified to meet changing patterns of requests.

CORRESPONDENCE RETRIEVAL

