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An Administrative History of the Disposal of Federal Records, 1789-1949

James Gregory Bradsher

From 1789 to 1985 the federal government has created some 170 million cubic feet of records. At the end of 1984 it had accumulated over 40 million cubic feet of records, including 1.4 million cubic feet of permanent archives in the custody of the National Archives. Thus, 130 million cubic feet of federal records have been destroyed. Most of the destruction, about 120 million cubic feet, took place subsequent to the creation of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) in 1949 and to the passage of the Federal Records Act of 1950. The success the federal government has experienced in the disposal of records with insufficient values to warrant retention during the past thirty-five years is, in part, the result of the records disposition groundwork that was laid before 1950. This groundwork, consisting of congressional legislation, archival theory, National Archives efforts, and agency practices, is little understood or appreciated by today's archivists. Yet, archivists should understand and appreciate past disposition policies and practices, because much of what is done today in records disposition is based upon the pre-1950 policies and practices.

The acts of Congress of 1789 that created the executive departments of the federal government provided for the keeping of records pertaining to their functions, but they did not provide for the disposition of those records. By an act on 26 February 1853, Congress made it a felony to destroy a federal record. Legally, until legislation was

enacted in 1881, no authorization existed by which federal records could be destroyed. Records were, however, intentionally and unintentionally destroyed. Fires, especially those in Washington, D.C. in 1800, 1801, 1814, 1833, 1836, 1877, 1880, and 1887, burned substantial quantities of records. Others were also damaged and lost because of dampness, heat, and insects, as well as by careless handling. Still others were "alienated" when their custodians removed them upon leaving government service.²

Most records created before 1880 were not considered for destruction before that date. They were simply filed away when they were of no further use to conduct current business. In relative terms, their volume was not that great, especially before the Civil War. The total accumulation of Federal records up to 1860 was probably less than 200 thousand cubic feet, an amount the federal government now creates in two weeks. The Civil War and the subsequent veteran-related activities of the federal government caused the annual creation of records to increase. Without a disposal program, the total accumulation grew, so that by the mid-1870s,³ upwards of one million cubic feet of records existed.

In the 1870s many department heads, with their buildings filled with records and no authority to destroy any of them, began calling attention to their growing records problem in their annual reports to Congress. In 1872, for example, the secretary of the treasury reported that, with an annual accumulation of seven thousand cubic feet of records, his department was so engulfed by records that they were interfering with the conduct of business. He complained that rooms that could be used for clerks' desks were filled with records and that even the hallways in the building were cluttered with records. He, as well as other department heads, suggested that the answer to their space problem was to acquire more records storage space. A few officials, such as the quartermaster general in 1875, recommended that Congress authorize the destruction of certain records when they were no longer needed to conduct government

business. The term specifically used was "worthless papers."⁴

The records problem came clearly into focus after the 24 September 1877 fire that destroyed part of the Interior Department building and many of the records it contained. Three days later, President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed a commission to consider and report on, among other things, the state of federal records. This commission reported that it found records not worth keeping in every department and it had received many suggestions that these records be destroyed, especially since they constituted a fire hazard. Despite this, the commission did not consider it advisable to recommend any records be destroyed "however unimportant they may appear." The commission reported further that:

Every paper worthy at any time to be recorded and placed in the public files may be of value at some future time, either in a historical, biographical or pecuniary way, to the citizen, or the nation. Papers seemingly of the least importance have been connected with the proof of false demands against the government, and it is scarcely possible to arrive at a decision of what is important to be preserved and what is useless to be destroyed.

Therefore, the commission recommended that an ample fireproof building be constructed to accommodate the government's noncurrent records. The president endorsed this recommendation, and shortly thereafter, the quartermaster general submitted plans for such a building. Congress, however, did not make any appropriations for its construction.

In 1879 the postmaster general, believing Congress was not going to build a central storage building for the government's noncurrent records and seeing his department overwhelmed with records, asked Congress for authorization to destroy the department's valueless records. While Congress was considering this request, a fire broke out in the War Department building in December 1880. This calamity

focused attention on the need to provide for the government's noncurrent records. On 10 February 1881, the Senate passed a bill calling for the construction of a building to house these records, but the expiration of Congress three weeks later prevented the House of Representatives from considering a similar bill. During the next thirty years, forty-two such bills were introduced in Congress. Despite presidential backing, none became law. Although it did not authorize a storage facility, Congress, in the appropriation act of 3 March 1881, did allow the postmaster general to "sell as waste paper, or otherwise dispose of, the files of papers which have accumulated, or may hereafter accumulate in the Post Office Department that are not needed in the transaction of current business and have no permanent or historical value." Similar provisions in the appropriation acts of August 1882 authorized the secretary of the treasury to sell worthless papers of the department's auditor and, likewise, the clerk and doorkeeper of the House and the sergeant at arms of the Senate to sell valueless documents under the direction of the committees on accounts of their respective bodies.⁶

A more comprehensive law permitting the destruction of federal records was adopted in 1889 when Congress authorized heads of executive departments to recommend to Congress records for destruction. This law was the result of a recommendation made by a Senate select committee headed by Senator Francis M. Cockrell, which had been appointed in March 1887 to investigate the operations of the executive departments and "the causes of the delays in transacting the public business." The committee's recommendation relating to the disposition of records was introduced in the Senate on 8 March 1888 and eventually became law on 16 February 1889. It provided that heads of executive departments would report those records to Congress which they believed were no longer needed to conduct business and which had no "permanent value or historical interest." These reports, containing a

concise statement regarding the condition and character of the records, would then be reviewed by a four-member joint congressional committee. If the committee concurred, the department head would be authorized to "sell as waste paper, or otherwise dispose of such files of papers" and required to report to Congress that the records had been destroyed or sold. The 1889 law remained the principal statute under which federal records were destroyed until the adoption of the National Archives Act of 1934.

The War and Treasury Departments were among the first departments to submit lists to Congress requesting authorization to destroy records, the former doing so less than two weeks after the 1889 law was signed. The Treasury Department's first list, comprising 188 printed pages, was submitted to Congress in January 1890. Records created from the first decade of the nineteenth century to the late 1800s, weighing four hundred tons--a volume of some sixteen thousand cubic feet--were listed. Other departments were not so expeditious in submitting their first disposal lists to Congress, with the Post Office Department submitting its in 1893; the Department of Interior in 1900; the Department of Commerce and Labor in 1906; the Department of Justice in 1912; the Department of the Navy in 1915; and the Department of State in 1921.⁸

Until 1912, disposal lists were submitted and reviewed without any specific guidelines respecting the possible permanent value of the records recommended for disposal. To correct this situation, President William H. Taft issued Executive Order 1499 on 16 March 1912, which required heads of executive departments to submit their disposal lists to the librarian of Congress for review before they were sent to Congress's Joint Committee on the Disposition of Useless Papers in the Executive Departments. This procedure, the president believed, would allow the department heads to benefit from the librarian of Congress's "views as to the wisdom of preserving such of the papers as he may deem to be of historical

interest." Thereafter, the congressional printed lists of records recommended for disposal usually contained a statement from the librarian of Congress that the lists had been examined by the chief of the Division of Manuscripts.

In addition to records being destroyed after congressional approval of disposal lists, they were disposed of as the result of specific congressional authorizations. The most extensive authorization was given to the secretary of agriculture on 4 March 1907 authorizing him to "sell as waste paper, or otherwise dispose of the accumulation of Department files which do not constitute permanent records, and all other documents and publications which have become obsolete or worthless." Until 1936, when the secretary of agriculture submitted a disposal list to the National Archives for approval, he decided which of the department's records would be destroyed. From 1894 to 1930, other departments were specifically authorized to destroy certain series of records without first submitting lists to Congress. These records were generally of a routine administrative nature, such as vouchers, invoices, paid checks, money orders,¹⁰ and noncurrent files accumulated in post offices.

Despite congressional procedures for legally destroying records, government officials and employees destroyed records without authorization. The Keep Committee, a presidential committee established in 1905 to study efficiency in the executive departments, reported in 1906 that it had found several agencies, including the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Statistics, destroying records without any authority.¹¹

It was a combination of historians' fears that valuable records were being destroyed or not being given proper care and their and government officials' desire for a building to house the government's noncurrent and permanently valuable records that resulted in the establishment of the National Archives. Established on 19 June 1934 as the institution to identify and preserve the government's

permanently valuable records, the National Archives replaced the Library of Congress as the institution to which disposal lists would be sent for review and concurrence before they were forwarded to Congress. The act which created the National Archives empowered the archivist of the United States and those he appointed to inspect records proposed for destruction and required him to send to Congress, with the approval of an archives council, lists of records that had no permanent value and thus could be destroyed. Thus, the disposal procedures adopted in 1889 were changed very little by the National Archives Act of 1934, and the specific disposal acts adopted between 1894 and 1930 remained in force. This resulted in some confusion and inconsistencies in the disposition process, as well as the National Archives having no control over the destruction of records covered by the specific disposal authorizations. The 1934 act also failed to clearly define records, which¹² made additional problems for the National Archives.

To clarify and improve the disposal process, as well as to clearly define the term records, Congress passed the General Disposal Act of 1939 on 5 August 1939 which provided for a comprehensive disposition program that would apply to the records of all federal agencies. Under this act the word record meant "originals or copies of motion-picture or other photographic records in any form whatsoever, sound recordings, correspondence, papers, indexes, maps, charts, plans, drawings, punch cards, tabulation sheets, pictures, and other kinds of recordings belonging to the United States Government." The act provided that agencies, believing certain noncurrent records had no "permanent value or historical interest," would submit them on disposal lists accompanied by samples to the National Archives for review, that is, appraisal. If the National Archives and its council concurred in the disposal, the lists would be forwarded to Congress for disposal authorization. If the joint congressional committee concurred, the records were authorized for

destruction. If, during a congressional session, the committee failed to act upon any disposal list that it had received at least ten days prior to adjournment, the archivist of the United States was empowered to authorize the destruction of the records on the lists he had forwarded to Congress. The archivist was also given similar authority over records reported to him while Congress was not in session as long as the records had the same form numbers or were of the same specific kind from the same agency which had been previously authorized for disposal by Congress. Disposal was to be by sale, destruction, or transfer, without cost to the federal government, to a public or private institution which had made application for the records through the archivist of the United States.

The General Disposal Act of 1939 also authorized the archivist to report to Congress for disposal of accessioned records in the custody of the National Archives, provided he obtained written consent of the agency which transferred the records, if the agency still existed. By July 1944, Solon Buck, the archivist of the United States, using staff reappraisal recommendations, had reported over thirty thousand cubic feet of accessioned records to Congress for disposal. In his 1944 report, Buck reminded Congress that the "appraisal of records does not end with their transfer to the National Archives. The value of accessioned records in terms of the information in them is constantly being weighed against the cost of maintenance and the need for space in the National Archives." From 1944 to 1950, the National Archives destroyed over sixty-five thousand cubic feet of accessioned records, believing they no longer had sufficient value to warrant retention.¹³

Additionally, the 1939 act provided that "no records of the United States Government may be alienated or destroyed except by authority sought and obtained under the provisions of this Act." To clarify the act's relationship to previous disposal acts, Congress provided that "all Acts or parts of

Acts inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed." Thus, for the first time in the federal government's history, a competent authority, the National Archives, was responsible for appraising all records of all federal agencies.¹⁴

The 1939 act and the Photographed Records Disposal Act of 1940, which authorized the disposal of paper records once they were filmed, were the result of the concern of Congress, the National Archives, and federal agencies about the growing volume of records being created under the New Deal programs. In 1930 about 3.5 million cubic feet of records existed and over 200 thousand cubic feet of records were being created annually. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt began his second term in 1937, the federal government was creating well over 500 thousand cubic feet of records a year and the total accumulation had doubled since 1930. With so many records existing, occupying upwards of thirty percent of the government's office space in Washington, D.C., it was not surprising to find many agencies submitting disposal lists to the newly created National Archives. During fiscal years 1936-1938, the National Archives received lists containing some forty-eight thousand series to appraise. Staggering as that figure was, it was but only a portent of what would follow in the next three years.¹⁵

During fiscal year 1941, the federal government, for the first time, created one million cubic feet of records in one year; eleven million cubic feet of records had accumulated by the time the United States entered World War II. President Roosevelt was so concerned about the growing volume of records that he proposed in 1940 that the Pentagon, then under construction, be used to store records once it was no longer needed by the military. Not waiting for that day to arrive, many agencies, desiring to rid themselves of noncurrent records, increased both their transfers of permanent records to the National Archives and the number of disposal lists they sent to it. During fiscal years 1939-1941, the National Archives received disposal lists containing almost

170,000 series, over three times the number received during the preceding three years. With a relatively small staff to review the disposal lists, the backlog of series requiring appraisal increased from 6,400 in July 1938 to over 16,700 by June 1941. Despite appraisal of over 43,000 series during fiscal year 1942, that year ended with a backlog of over 22,500 series--interestingly enough the same backlog that existed in July 1982.¹⁶

Appraising federal records in the late 1930s and early 1940s was an enormous task, considering that the National Archives was faced with 150 years' worth of records. It was all that more difficult because two-thirds of the records existing in 1940 had been created just during the previous decade. As R.D.W. Connor, archivist of the United States, informed Congress in 1936, "the problem of determining whether contemporary records may be disposed of is not an easy one." Nor could the problem be quickly resolved, for, as he informed Congress in 1939, "records proposed for disposal cannot be appraised hastily." Yet, the exigencies of a growing federal establishment and a war necessitated that the National Archives appraise in¹⁷ haste to relieve agencies of their space problems.

Although the National Archives lost many of its personnel to military service and received over twenty-two thousand series to appraise during fiscal year 1943, that year ended with a backlog of only two thousand series to be appraised. Solon Buck, archivist of the United States, noted in his annual report to Congress that the reduction of the backlog was made possible by greater cooperation on the part of the other agencies resulting from the records administration activities of the National Archives, by simplifications in procedures, and by the fact that many items on the lists were of the same form and character as items that had appeared on previous lists and consequently could be appraised quickly.

There were two other factors the archivist did not

mention. One was the fact that many National Archives' archivists, such as Everett Alldredge, Herbert Angel, Robert Bahmer, Wayne Grover, and Emmett Leahy, assumed records management positions with federal agencies, which resulted in a more effective federal records disposition program. The other factor was the body of appraisal and disposition literature which appeared during the early 1940s. This literature, especially the works by Leahy and Philip Brooks, provided valuable guidance to those¹⁸ charged with reducing the size of the paper mountain.

By July 1943, the federal government had accumulated sixteen million cubic feet of records. With an annual creation rate of two million cubic feet, Solon Buck, despite being pleased with reducing the current backlog of series to be appraised, was concerned about the growing size of the paper mountain and anxious about the future disposition burden. There was not much he or his agency could do about the amount of records being created, but he believed that if Congress adopted a more effective law providing for the disposition of records, both the federal government and the National Archives would benefit. Otherwise, the former would be swamped with records and the latter with repetitious disposal lists, and the operations and efficiency of both would be hampered. Many government officials, however, felt that the solution to reducing the volume of records was to expend more monies on microfilming. This, they believed, would reduce the space records occupied and delay an appraisal decision. Many officials then, as now, simply did not want to destroy their records. "Micro-photography...is a fine thing," Buck informed Congress, "but it is not a panacea for all record ills." What is needed, he argued, was a more effective law. Congress agreed and passed such a law in July 1943.¹⁹

Until the adoption of the Federal Records Disposal Act of 1943, agencies had to resubmit disposal lists every time they wanted to destroy a

portion of a series. The 1943 act, although providing for lists, also provided for continuing schedules, which allowed series appraised as disposable to be destroyed in the future without further concurrence by the National Archives and Congress. This concept of continuing schedules was endorsed by the thirty-four agencies which made written comments on the proposed legislation. They, like Buck, saw in the continuing schedules a means by which records could be destroyed with the minimum of paperwork.²⁰

Besides providing for continuing disposition schedules, the Federal Records Disposal Act of 1943 also contained two significant changes in language used. The first pertained to the definition of records. Records were defined by this act as

all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any agency of the United States Government in pursuance of Federal Law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data contained therein.

This was certainly a more comprehensive definition than used in the 1939 act, and it has proven quite durable, still being used today with a slight modification. The other change in wording was the substitution throughout the act of the phrase "sufficient administrative, legal, research, or other value to warrant their continued preservation by the United States Government" for the previously used ambiguous phrase "permanent value or historical interest to the Federal Government." This wording was intended to define more clearly the criteria for the retention of records and their inclusion into the

holdings of the National Archives.

To many at the time, as has always been the case, it was difficult to understand why the National Archives, whose archivists were supposed to be concerned with the preservation of records, was so involved in the destruction of records. In the spring of 1944, Margaret Cross Norton, archivist of Illinois and president of the Society of American Archivists, explained why archivists were involved in records destruction:

Thus far American archivists have devoted themselves primarily to the task of preserving all government records. The increasing complexity of government organization and the ease and the cheapness of multiplying copies of documents have resulted in a stupendous growth in the bulk of government records.... It is obviously no longer possible for any governmental agency to preserve all records which result from its activities. The emphasis of archives work has shifted from preservation of records to selection of records for preservation.

Several months later, in his annual report to Congress, Solon Buck explained:

In disposing of records the chief reason for destroying is to save. By weeding out useless papers...and eliminating them promptly, the recognition and preservation of valuable records is fostered and an important step in saving the information in them for the use of the Government and citizens...is taken. Prompt disposal of records that have ceased to serve also saves the Government huge sums that would otherwise have to go for their maintenance. And finally, that elusive and imponderable thing known as efficiency of operations, with its attendant economies, is prompted by clearing out the clutter of years and keeping it cleared out.

With these views in mind, the National Archives made every effort to ensure that federal records that did not warrant continued retention were destroyed in a timely manner.²¹

On 7 July 1945, Congress, helping the National Archives in its efforts to destroy records efficiently, amended the Federal Records Disposal Act to allow the destruction of certain series of records common to most agencies. This amendment authorized the National Archives to develop general records schedules, which identified routine administrative records which could be destroyed after a specified period without further National Archives or congressional approval. By 1949 there were six general records schedules applicable, to probably five percent of the government's records.²²

After the passage of the 1943 Federal Records Disposal Act and the 1945 amendment, the appraisal burden on the National Archives was considerably lightened. Not only were fewer series submitted for review--some forty-three thousand during fiscal years 1945-1948, which was less than had been received in fiscal year 1941--but over seventy percent were submitted on schedules, which eliminated the necessity of resubmitting disposal lists for portions of the same series of records.²³

As a result of all the disposition efforts made by Congress, the National Archives, and the federal agencies, great strides were made in the disposal of records during the mid-1940s. For example, during fiscal year 1946, the Departments of War, Navy, Justice, the Selective Service, and the General Accounting Office destroyed nearly 1.2 million cubic feet of records. Such progress in the destruction of records without sufficient values to warrant retention and the decrease in the amount of records created after the war prompted Solon Buck to report to Congress in 1946 that "the seemingly endless pyramiding of Government records has come to a stop." This did not happen, because the volume of records created during the 1950s equaled that created from 1789 to 1949. But that is another story.²⁴

President Harry S. Truman, at the prompting of the National Archives, issued Executive Order 9784 during the summer of 1946, which, among other things, directed federal agencies to destroy temporary records in a timely manner. During the summer of 1948, the National Archives undertook a survey to ascertain how well the agencies were complying with the president's executive order. What the survey revealed was the necessity for a more effective program to rid the government of temporary records. Thus, the National Archives began lobbying for more effective laws and funds. It was supported in its efforts by the Hoover Commission, which had been created in July 1947, and was charged by Congress and the president with making recommendations for greater efficiency and economy in the federal government. In 1949, as a result of the campaign for a more comprehensive records management program, Congress placed the National Archives within the newly created General Services Administration (GSA), where it was renamed the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), and, in 1950, adopted the Federal Records Act.

The Federal Records Act of 1950 pulled together most of the previous legislation relating to federal records and the National Archives and gave considerable authority over records management to the GSA. It charged the GSA with improving procedures, methods, and standards relating to the creation of records; their maintenance and use when current; their disposition when they were no longer current; and authorized it to operate records centers. The act directed heads of agencies to create and preserve adequate records of all aspects of their agencies' organization, functions, and activities and to operate efficient records management programs. To ensure that agencies created, maintained, and disposed of their records in an efficient manner, the GSA was authorized to inspect agency records management programs and practices. Fortunately for NARS, the administrator of General Services delegated these responsibilities to the archivist of the United

States.²⁶

Although some scholars and archivists were concerned that NARS would become too involved in records management at the expense of its traditional archival role, Wayne Grover, the archivist of the United States, was pleased to have control over the life cycle of records. "Looking at the Federal records problem as a whole," he wrote in 1951, "we have every prospect in GSA bringing order and intelligence into the management of Federal records, improving their quality as well as decreasing their quantity, and--what is at the heart of the matter--assuring the preservation of those that are worthy of being preserved."²⁷

Grover, who became archivist in 1948, had reason to be optimistic about the future of federal records disposition, but he also realized the challenge facing his agency. In spite of all the efforts to destroy nonarchival records, over two-thirds of all federal records created since 1789 were still in existence at the end of 1949. By contrast, as 1985 began, despite the some 140 million cubic feet of records created since 1950, over seventy-five percent of all federal records ever created had been destroyed. Of the twenty million cubic feet of records still in existence at the end of 1949, half were not covered by an approved disposal schedule or list. In other words,²⁸ ten million cubic feet of records were unscheduled.

It would be unfair to those in Congress, the National Archives, and the federal agencies who labored so hard to provide proper disposition for the government's records to end this history by leaving the impression that their work was half done in 1950. Viewed from today's perspective, their work was indeed only partially complete in 1950. When compared to the situation before the National Archives became involved in the disposition of federal records in 1934, however, it would be more accurate to state that having the job half done by 1950 was a significant accomplishment. Considering that at least four times as many records were created

between 1934 and 1950 as had been created from 1789 to 1933, it was remarkable that so many nonarchival records were destroyed subsequent to 1933 and that half of the records in existence in 1949 were scheduled for disposition.²⁹

NOTES

¹ Volume figures for federal records created, destroyed, and accumulated after 1930 are relatively accurate, based on the annual reports of the National Archives and General Services Administration and the reports submitted to Congress by the National Archives and Records Service on the records disposition activities of the federal government. However, the figures for the pre-1930 period are, at best, estimates, generally made by scholars in 1912 and 1930 in their attempts to justify the creation of a national archives. For a detailed discussion of the volume figures see James Gregory Bradsher, "A Brief History of Federal Records, Archives, and Information, 1789-1985," which will appear early in 1986 in Government Publications Review.

² Leonard D. White, The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History 1789-1801 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 502-03; Leonard D. White, The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History 1829-1861 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 545-47; Victor Gondos, Jr., J. Franklin Jameson and the Birth of the National Archives 1906-1926 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 3-6; National Archives, Annual Reports of the Archivist of the United States 15 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936-1950), 1:2-3 (hereafter cited Annual Reports, with volume and page number).

³ The federal government now creates six million cubic feet of records annually.

⁴ Henry P. Beers, "Historical Development of the Records Disposal Policy of the Federal Government Prior to 1934," The American Archivist (hereafter cited as AA) 7 (July 1944): 182-83; Harold T. Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Recordkeeping, 1887-1906," ibid., 21 (April 1958): 164.

⁵ Beers, "Historical Development of the Records Disposal Policy," 183-84.

⁶ Ibid., 184-85; National Archives, Annual Reports, 1:3.

⁷ Beers, "Historical Development of the Records Disposal Policy," 185-86; Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Recordkeeping, 1887-1906," 165-68.

⁸ Beers, "Historical Development of the Records Disposal Policy," 187-88, 190.

⁹ This executive order was the result of efforts by historians during 1911 and 1912 to ensure valuable records were not destroyed. For their efforts see Victor Gondos, Jr., J. Franklin Jameson and the Birth of the National Archives 1906-1926, 30-58.

¹⁰ All of the specific disposal acts are cited in Disposition of Certain Records of the United States Government. Hearing before the Committee on Disposition of Executive Papers, House of Representatives Seventy-fifth Congress First Session on H.R. 7504 July 1 and 2, 1937 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937).

¹¹ Pinkett, "Investigations of Federal Recordkeeping, 1887-1906," 187.

¹² For background on the establishment of the National Archives, see the following works by Donald R. McCoy, The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968 (Chapel Hill: University of

North Carolina Press, 1978), 3-12 and "The Struggle to Establish a National Archives in the United States," Prologue: Journal of the National Archives 16 (Summer 1984): 75-89. For the composition of the National Archives Council and its activities see McCoy, The National Archives, 66-68, and National Archives, Annual Reports, 1:11.

13 National Archives, Annual Reports, 10:20.

14 For a more detailed discussion of the 1939 act see Emmett J. Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," AA 3 (January 1940): 13-38.

15 National Archives, Annual Reports, 3:10; 4:9. The 1940 Photographed Records Disposal Act authorized, with the archivist's approval, agencies to destroy paper records if they had been suitably photographed or microfilmed and if they had been previously authorized for disposal.

16 National Archives, Annual Reports, 5:5; 6:10, 13; 7:2, 5, 17; 8:3, 6, 11.

17 Ibid., 2:14-15; 5:6.

18 Ibid., 9:15-16; Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," 13-38; Philip C. Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation," AA 3 (October 1940): 221-34; Philip C. Brooks, "Current Aspects of Records Administration: The Archivist's Concern in Records Administration," ibid., 6 (July 1943): 158-64. For the National Archives' records disposition efforts during World War II see Donald D. McCoy, The National Archives, 109-11, 146-67 and H.G. Jones, The Records of a Nation: Their Management, Preservation, and Use (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 24-36.

19 National Archives, Annual Reports, 10:12; see also 7:2; 9:2, 4-5.

20 Providing for the Disposal of Certain Records of the United States Government. Report from the Committee on the Disposition of Executive Papers, House of Representatives Seventy-eighth Congress First Session on H.R. 2943 June 16, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 3.

21 Margaret Cross Norton, "The Disposal of Records," Illinois Libraries 26 (March 1944): 120; National Archives, Annual Reports, 10:17.

22 National Archives, Disposition of Federal Records: How to Develop an Effective Program for the Preservation and the Disposal of Federal Records (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 25; Isadore Perlman, "General Schedules and Federal Records," AA 15 (January 1952): 27-38.

23 National Archives, Annual Reports, 11:11; 12:14; 13:11; 14:10.

24 Ibid., 12:15; see also 14-15. For War Department disposal activities during the 1943-1946 period see Victor Gondos, "Retirement of Federal War Records," AA 9 (July 1946): 206-07.

25 Robert W. Krauskopf, "The Hoover Commissions and Federal Record Keeping," AA 21 (October 1958): 371-99; H.G. Jones, The Records of a Nation, 40-65; Donald R. McCoy, The National Archives, 196-97, 217, 220-33; Oliver W. Holmes, "The National Archives at a Turn in the Road," AA 12 (October 1949): 339-40, 347-50.

26 Wayne C. Grover, "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," AA 14 (January 1951): 8-11; Statement of Jess Larson, Oversight of the National Archives and Records Service: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations; House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh

Congress Second Session March 2 and 4, 1982
(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 151-52; Herbert E. Angel, "Federal Records Management Since the Hoover Commission Report," AA 16 (January 1953): 14-15.

27 Grover, "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," 9; Holmes, "The National Archives at a Turn in the Road," 351-54; Irving P. Schiller, "The Archival Profession in Eclipse," AA 11 (July 1948): 227-33; H.G. Jones, The Records of a Nation, 61.

28 General Services Administration, Annual Report of the Administrator of General Services for the Year Ending June 30, 1950 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), 55-56.

29 For various assessments of the National Archives' records disposition program to 1949, see Robert H. Bahmer, "Keep The Record Straight," The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly 63 (July 1954): 229; Ernst Posner, "The National Archives and the Archival Theorist," AA 18 (July 1955): 210-11; Wayne C. Grover, "The National Archives at Age 20," ibid., 17 (April 1954): 200; Robert H. Bahmer, "The National Archives After 20 Years," ibid., 18 (July 1955): 201; Krauskopf, "The Hoover Commissions and Federal Record Keeping," 372-73.