
RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Managing Mail

AGENCY MAIL OPERATIONS

APRIL 1957

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

7610-543-4114

RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOKS are developed by the National Archives and Records Service as technical guides to reducing and simplifying Government paperwork.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOKS:

Managing correspondence: *Plain Letters*1955...47 p
Managing correspondence: *Form Letters*1954...33 p
Managing correspondence: *Guide Letters*1955...23 p
Managing mail: *Agency Mail Operations*1957...47 p
Managing noncurrent files: *Applying Records Schedules*.1956...23 p
Managing noncurrent files: *Federal Records Centers*.....1954...25 p

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| FOREWORD. | 1 |
| BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING MAIL. | 3 |
| OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES | 7 |
| I. INCOMING MAIL | 8 |
| Sorting and opening | 8 |
| Routing and classifying | 12 |
| Controlling. | 16 |
| II. OUTGOING MAIL | 23 |
| Preparing mail for dispatching | 23 |
| Dispatching | 25 |
| III. MESSENGER SERVICE | 29 |
| IV. ORGANIZING FOR AGENCY MAIL OPERATIONS | 32 |
| V. SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDES | 38 |
| Determining handling for various types of mail | 38 |
| The mail control form. | 40 |
| The Mail Guide | 42 |
| CHECKLIST. | 45 |

"The volume of mail handled by mailrooms of Government agencies approaches astronomical figures. It requires 25,000 clerical workers and 8,400 messengers, at a cost of \$104 million. . . . the majority of our mail operations are characterized by cumbersome procedures. . . . the efficiency of Government mail operations can be improved and at the same time substantial savings effected. . . ."

*Excerpt from the (Hoover) Task Force Report
on Paperwork Management,
Part I, January 1955*

FOREWORD

This Handbook has been prepared to assist agencies in improving mail operations. It presents a system for managing mail which will provide rapid handling with adequate controls at a minimum cost. The procedures described are founded on principles which have been proved in actual operations. Similar procedures are currently being used in many Federal agencies.

This Handbook includes much of the material appearing in the Department of the Navy's *A Guide to Simplified Mail Operations*. We are deeply indebted to the Department for permission to use its comprehensive pamphlet as the basis for this publication.

Each detail of the procedures described may not apply in an individual case. Modifications in the basic system may be necessary to fit specific needs. In this Handbook, therefore, the fundamental principles underlying each operation have been singled out and emphasized, so that any revisions which an agency finds necessary can at least be based on those same principles.

As an aid to management in evaluating the effectiveness of an agency's mail operations, certain practices which are usually indicative of inefficient mail operations are listed below. (These, of course, do not apply to security classified mail.) A study to determine if present procedures can be improved is recommended if any of these conditions exists:

Time

- An excessive amount of time (from two to four working hours depending on the size and physical layout of the agency) elapses between the receipt of a letter in the mail room and its delivery to the action desk.
- All control operations (including routing) for one letter take more than five minutes to perform.

Control Procedures

- The same letter is controlled at more than one place in an agency.
- More than 15% of the total incoming correspondence is controlled with the mail control form.
- A posted record is maintained to indicate in which office a letter may be found at a given moment when it is being routed.
- A large part of the incoming mail is time-stamped one or more times.

Route Slips and Control Forms

- A route slip or control form is placed on most of the incoming mail.
- More than an original and two copies of a mail control form are used for control purposes.
- The route slip or control form is filed with incoming correspondence even though no pertinent remarks have been added to it.

Messenger Service

- Messenger routes overlap.
- Messengers are idle for an excessive length of time between runs or while awaiting calls.
- Full-time special messenger service is required.

Efficient mail-handling speeds up the work of a Federal agency, whereas delay, misrouting, and other mishandling of mail prevent the agency from doing an effective job. It is important, therefore, that mail be processed by methods which insure quick and accurate handling while providing adequate, low-cost controls over important mail. The checklist on page 45 will show those areas needing further study.

After a more thorough survey has been made, management should determine how much service is necessary and economical for its agency. Efficient mail procedures can then be devised and installed, and responsibilities assigned. Continued successful operation will depend, however, on the active participation and support of every organizational unit of the agency. In particular, top management must accept the responsibility of maintaining a vigorous interest in all phases of mail operations to insure the proper over-all functioning of the system.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING MAIL

The following principles, applicable to mail operations as a whole, should be considered when installing or modifying a mail system or evaluating its effectiveness. Mail operations include mail handling methods and procedures such as receiving, opening, sorting, time stamping, routing, recording, controlling, and following-up. Mail operations as defined in this Handbook includes this work wherever performed - whether in the mail room or large file room, or offices at the branch and section level. Therefore, these principles are applicable not only to the central mail room of a large agency but also to each individual office through which the mail passes. At first glance it may appear that the system described in this Handbook is designed only for a large agency; a close review will reveal that it is as applicable to the small agency and to the small office.

PLAN AN EFFECTIVE MAIL ORGANIZATION

An organizational arrangement for mail handling should be planned to provide the most direct and immediate flow of mail to the point of action. A single standard pattern will not serve all agencies. Among factors influencing mail handling arrangements are size and complexity of the agency, volume and type of mail, and location of buildings. A few of the existing organizational patterns for handling mail in Federal agencies are illustrated in the charts beginning on page 32. They are presented as a guide in selecting the plan which will best meet the specific requirements of an agency.

DEFINE RESPONSIBILITIES

A clear definition of the duties, responsibilities, and authority of the

mail and file unit is an essential step in setting up mail operations. This definition should be issued either as a directive or as a part of the agency administrative manual, if one is used, and should clearly state the following:

- Responsibilities and authority of the mail and file unit.
- Responsibilities of other offices with respect to mail operations.
- Mail procedures.

All important points of both incoming and outgoing mail operations should be covered. On page 37 is a detailed list of the most important points to be considered in assigning responsibilities and preparing procedural instructions.

In addition to the procedures which are specified by directive or in an administrative manual, detailed operating procedures for each task within the mail and file unit should be developed and written up. When consolidated they will serve as an operating and training manual for personnel handling mail.

CONSOLIDATE MAIL AND FILE OPERATIONS

If possible, the mail and files of an office should be consolidated and physically located together. Benefits which will result are:

1. Routing will be more accurate, since routers will have access to files of past actions to guide them.
2. Searching service will be faster and more efficient, because both mail locator file and subject file will be readily accessible to the person making the search.

3. Any need for maintenance of duplicate locator files will be avoided.
4. The assignment of file symbols, if pre-classification is used, will be more accurate.
5. Combined operations will require less space, equipment, and personnel than two separate units.
6. Experienced personnel can be shifted more readily from task to task to meet varying work loads.

The mail system outlined by this Handbook is based on the assumption that these operations have been combined. In those agencies where this cannot be done, some slight modifications can be made in the system.

ESTABLISH SINGLE CONTROLS

No piece of mail should be controlled at more than one point in an agency. If control forms are prepared in a mail and file unit, additional or duplicate forms should not be prepared by other offices. Large agencies may find it most efficient to have the local Post Office deliver mail direct to major organizational units for detailed routing and control. Medium-sized agencies should route mail from a central mail and file unit to substations for detailed routing and control at those points. Small agencies should route direct to action offices from a central mail and file unit without control, if practicable.

COORDINATE ROUTING

All mail, both incoming and outgoing, should be fully coordinated by routing it to all interested offices. At the same time it is important not to circulate materials unnecessarily to offices that have no real need for the information. Each reader's initials should be placed on the face of an incoming letter or on the mail control

form when used. Similarly the official file copy (usually designated by a color) of an outgoing letter should also show who has seen and acted on it.

USE SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Under the right circumstances the use of special equipment will greatly expedite mail-handling and increase the general efficiency of the mail and file unit. Large agencies, in particular, may find it economical to use such labor-saving devices as the following:

- Envelope opening machine (automatic)
- Envelope sealing machine (automatic)
- Sorter (leaf type and pigeon hole type)
- Addressing machine (and related equipment)

Circumstances which may justify the use of special mail equipment are:

- When it will SAVE LABOR
- When it is important to SAVE TIME
- When it will SAVE MONEY

In each case, however, the estimated benefits to be gained through use of the equipment must be weighed against its cost. This evaluation should be based on actual workload and should take into account:

1. The initial and maintenance costs of the equipment
2. The volume of the work
3. The speed with which this work must be processed

If the results indicate that the equipment will materially benefit operations, its purchase is justified. For example, one agency has found that an envelope sealing machine may be used economically when approximately 1,000 envelopes of relatively common size and type are processed at a central point daily for mailing. This agency also found that an envelope opening machine is economical when 500 or more letters per day must be opened.

PLAN ADEQUATE SPACE LAYOUT

A good space layout is as important in the mail and file unit as in any other office or shop. Adequate provision must be made for good ventilation and ample lighting. Particular importance should be paid to accessibility. The unit should be so located that heavy mail sacks and packages can be conveniently carried in from post office trucks. In addition, it should be located as near the center of the agency's offices as possible in order to be readily accessible. This will also promote more efficient messenger service.

The flow of work within the unit should be carefully planned, and the equipment layout arranged accordingly. If possible, there should be two doors to facilitate the entrance and exit of messengers. The work flow should be so arranged that incoming mail is received at a point close to one door and processed for dispatching near the other. Furniture and equipment should be laid

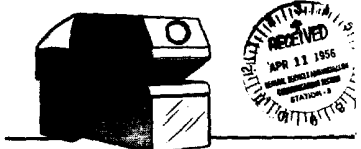
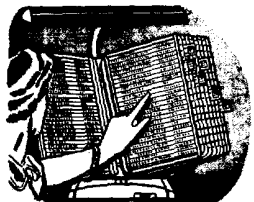
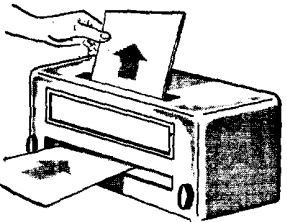

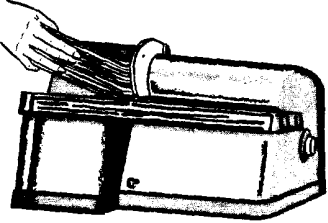

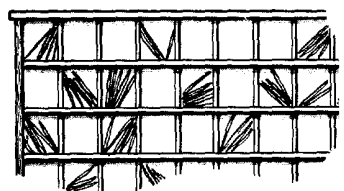
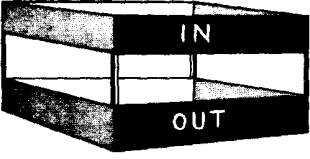
out so there is little or no backtracking in the flow of mail and transportation distances are cut to a minimum. Where possible, space should be left to permit more than one person to work at a table, sorting rack, or other equipment. Personnel can then be more readily shifted from one job to another to assist in handling peak loads.

MAINTAIN PERIODIC REVIEWS

When mail and messenger operations have been studied, revised where necessary, and installed, the administrator or supervisor should not consider that his task is completed. Periodic reviews by a responsible official are necessary to ensure that these operations continue to function on a sound basis, giving satisfactory service at a reasonable cost. Conditions change, and an adequate system under one set of circumstances may be unsatisfactory if these are altered.

Operations should also be checked to see if unwarranted additions have been made. Over a period of time simple procedures have a tendency to acquire unofficial elaborations which gradually destroy their effectiveness. The official responsible for mail and messenger operations must be constantly on the alert to prevent such additions. Any changes that are made should be incorporated only after having received the same careful study that went into installing the procedures.

HOOVER COMMISSION GOALS...

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>TIME-STAMPING confined to essentials</p> |  <p>ROUTING promptly adjusted to changes; provided in visual form</p> |
|  <p>COPY-MAKING held to necessary amount; done rapidly and cheaply</p> |  <p>RECORDING held to justifiable minimum</p> |
|  <p>MACHINES used where volume warrants</p> |  <p>OUTGOING REVIEW limited to essentials</p> |
|  <p>SORTING geared to organizational and functional requirements; synchronized with messenger schedules and routes</p> |  <p>DELIVERY AND PICK-UP efficiently planned; coordinated with mailroom and Post Office Schedules</p> |

OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

The following discussion is divided into five sections, which are in turn subdivided into major functional elements as follows:

I. Incoming Mail

- A. Sorting and opening
- B. Routing and classifying
- C. Controlling

II. Outgoing Mail

- A. Preparing mail for dispatching
- B. Dispatch

III. Messenger Service

- A. Planning of stops and routes
- B. Scheduling
- C. Sorting mail en route
- D. Servicing by special messengers

IV. Organizing for Agency Mail Operations

- A. Organizational patterns for handling mail

- B. Points to be included when preparing procedural instructions and assigning responsibilities for mail operations

V. Supplemental Guides

- A. Determining handling for various types of mail
- B. The mail control form
- C. The Mail Guide

Sections I and II are arranged with specific step by step procedures in the mail system listed at the head of each major subdivision. The steps are followed by a more detailed analysis and discussion of the principles involved. At the end of each subdivision the most important principles are summarized for emphasis and convenience of reference. Section III discusses the principles of messenger operations in general terms without being arranged as specific steps in a system. Section IV and V contain organizational material and guides.

I. INCOMING MAIL

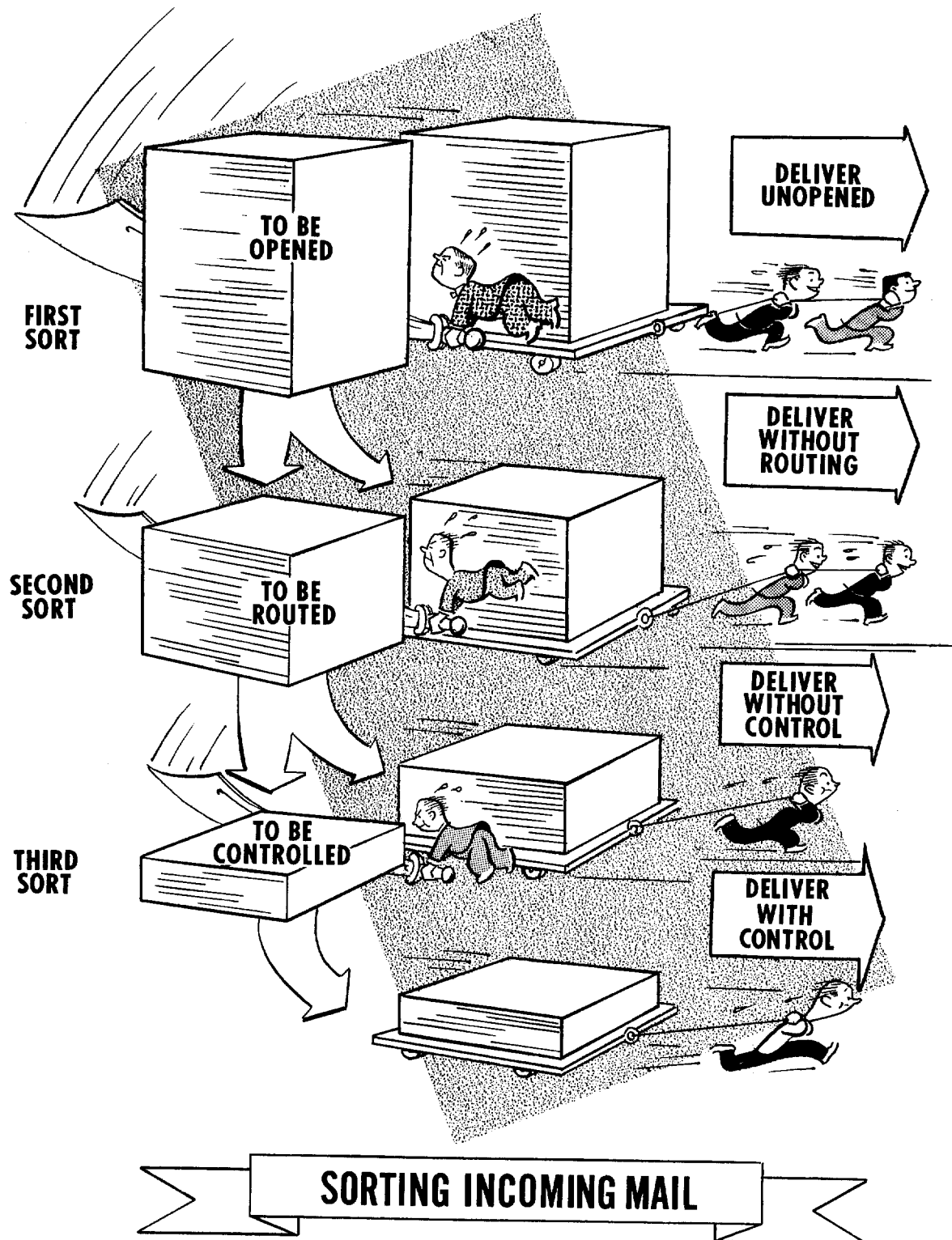
A. Sorting and Opening

- Step 1. Receive mail and give it an initial sort.

 - a. Send personal mail and as much routine official mail as possible to the appropriate office without opening.
 - b. Set aside personal mail requiring directory service for later processing.

Step 2. Open and sort remaining official mail.

 - a. Sort out routine mail for direct delivery.
 - b. Time-stamp certain types of mail such as bids and invoices.
 - c. Pass remaining mail to the routers or router-classifiers as appropriate.



SCHEDULING PERSONNEL

Mail personnel should be scheduled so that some employees report early each day to complete the first mail delivery before or soon after the beginning of regular working hours. Since the volume of the first mail is usually large, this schedule will avoid early morning backlogs and will allow action offices to begin operations without delay.

SORTING

Normally no more than three sorts are required in handling mail; any additional ones are usually superfluous. Graphically these three sorts can be represented as shown on the chart on page 8.

The sorting process can be likened to a series of cuts which at each successive level in the mail operation slice off as much mail as possible. A minimum of mail should be allowed to pass on to the next level for each additional step means greater cost and delay in handling. If this principle is conscientiously followed, the result will be a much more efficient mail room with

respect to both cost and service.

INITIAL SORTING AND DIRECT ROUTING

Initial Sorting

Upon receipt in the mail and file unit, mail is given an initial sort, which separates mail to be routed without opening from mail which requires opening. As it is separated, mail not requiring opening is sorted into the compartments of a sorting box or leaf sorter for direct delivery to the action office. This mail will be of two types, personal mail and certain types of official mail. Personal mail which requires directory service should be set aside for further attention. Mail to be opened will be placed in a special compartment, or merely pushed to one side during this initial sort.

Routing by sorting directly into the compartments of a sorting device is much faster and easier than routing by marking the office symbol on a letter or otherwise indicating its destination. Whenever possible mail should be so handled, either opened or unopened.



Direct Routing of Unopened Mail

There are two types of mail which can and should be routed direct without opening: personally addressed mail, and routine official mail which can be identified from the information on the envelope. The quickest and least expensive method of handling it is to forward such mail straight to the addressee without opening. For this reason as much mail as possible should be so handled. When an agency's correspondence practices require that official mail shall be addressed only to the head of an agency or organizational unit, it may be possible nevertheless to determine from information on the envelope the action office for direct routing. Obviously, addressing to organizational units or prescribing the use of an office symbol will permit direct routing without opening.

Personally addressed mail, which is forwarded unopened to the addressee, will fall generally into two categories — purely personal mail and personally addressed official mail. Agencies should reduce all such mail to a minimum; purely personal mail interferes with handling official mail, while personally addressed official mail is harder to route and cannot be controlled properly. Personally addressed official mail coming from outside should bear the names and titles of addressees. Inter-office correspondence should be addressed by titles only.

Reduction of the volume of personally addressed mail can be achieved by encouraging--

1. Personnel to have purely personal mail sent to their homes.
2. Personnel to handle official matters by official correspondence.
3. Outside organizations to address mail to office heads rather than writing direct to individuals in the office. Em-

ployees should be instructed to notify official out-side contacts of their correct mailing address.

Employees should encourage outside officials to use office codes or symbols with the address or to use an attention designation on the face of the envelope. Mail prepared in this manner can be delivered unopened.

In addition to the above a special policy should be adopted in the case of mail addressed to an employee who is absent or who has left the job. The head of an agency or organizational unit should designate a responsible person to open mail that is obviously official, such as mail bearing a penalty or official mailing indicia, to ensure that no important official correspondence affecting the agency is neglected or forwarded in error.

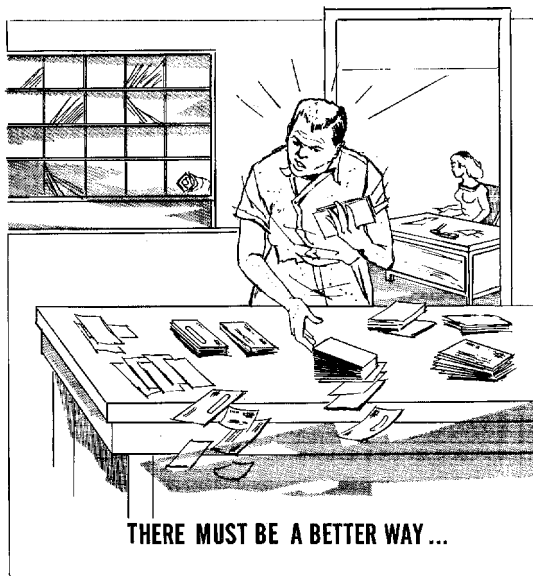
Routine or readily identifiable official mail should also be routed direct without opening when possible. Ordinarily there is no need for such mail to be seen by anyone other than the addressee. The mail room should recognize this fact and expedite its mail-handling by direct routing. Naturally not all routine matter can be handled in this manner. Incoming mail should, therefore, be surveyed to determine which type can be forwarded without opening. The basic requirement for handling such mail in this manner is that the material must be clearly identifiable from the information on the envelope.

OPENING, SECONDARY SORTING AND TIME-STAMPING

Opening

After the initial sort, the remaining official mail is opened. In the smaller agencies or offices this will be done by hand, but larger organizations may find that an automatic letter-opener will materially speed their operations.

The secondary sorting again segregates the routine mail which can be delivered direct to the action office without control. Such mail will be similar to the mail which was sent direct as a result of the initial sort, and will include such items as forms, reports, form letters, acknowledgments, and other routine correspondence which is of interest to only one office.



During both the initial and secondary sort, certain types of mail, such as Congressional correspondence, should be pulled out when recognized and given priority handling.

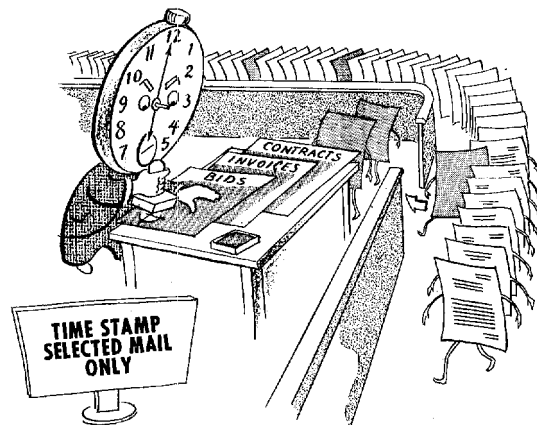
The routine items are routed in the same manner as unopened mail--by sorting direct into the sorting case. It is obvious, therefore, that the proper addressee must be indicated on the face of the letter or by the nature of the material. No office symbol or route slip should be placed on these items by the sorter, and he should not be required to read any farther than the address line or the subject line of the letter. He may, however, be required in

some mail rooms to check for enclosures, noting on the letter if any are missing. As a rule, a letter should not be held by the mail room while awaiting missing enclosures.

The remaining mail will be that which is either non-routine or not readily routed after a brief inspection of the heading. It is passed to the routers or router-classifiers for further action.

Time-Stamping

During the sorting process, certain types of documents, either opened or unopened, may require time-stamping. These documents, such as contracts, invoices, and the like, may warrant stamping because the time of receipt can have legal or monetary significance. The indiscriminate time-stamping of all mail should, however, be avoided. It is unnecessary, and furthermore, it delays mail delivery. Time-stamping the same piece of mail at more than one point in an agency is even more time-consuming and unnecessary. The list on page 38 indicates certain types of mail which may require time-stamping for the purpose of protecting the interests of the Government.



SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Schedule some employees to report early so that the first mail delivery can be completed before or soon after regular working hours begin.
 2. Whenever possible send routine mail to the action office without opening or formal routing.
 3. When appropriate route mail, whether opened or unopened, by direct sorting into the compartments of a sorting device rather than by indicating an office symbol.
 4. Reduce the handling of personal mail to a minimum.
 5. Time-stamp selected types of mail only when it serves to protect the interests of the Government.
-

B. Routing and Classifying

- Step 1. Route all remaining routine mail of minor importance.

 - a. Route mail going to only one addressee by writing the appropriate office symbol on the face of the letter.
 - b. Use a simple route slip if desired, as a transmittal sheet in routing or coordinating mail among several offices. A rubber stamp may be used in lieu of the route slip.

Step 2. If pre-classification is used, place the file symbol and any cross-reference symbols on the face of a routine letter at the time that it is routed.

Step 3. Route non-routine mail which is to be controlled by marking the appropriate office symbols and file symbols on a pre-assembled mail control form, which is then attached to the correspondence.

 - a. Use a two-part set for mail to be controlled without follow-up.
 - b. Use a three-part set for mail on which a follow-up record is to be maintained.

Step 4. If mail is to be followed-up, place a deadline date on the mail control form when it is routed.

Step 5. Forward routine mail to the proper office. Retain non-routine mail which is to be controlled for further processing.

ROUTING

Routing Without a Route Slip

The mail remaining after the two sorts described on earlier pages can again be divided into two categories--that which is not important enough to warrant controlling and that which is.

Mail which does not require controlling is routed *without* the use of a route slip or mail control form. While many agencies do use a route slip in routing such mail, this practice is not necessary. The router or router-classifier, after reading as much of the heading or contents as necessary, writes the proper office symbol and file symbols (if pre-classification is used) on the face of the letter itself. The letter is then ready for delivery. Since the preparation of a route slip is eliminated, mail is processed through the mail and file unit much faster, saving both paper and time.

Routing to more than one office will seldom be needed on routine action or information mail. When it is, the additional symbols can also be written on the face of the letter. If preferred, a rubber stamp with check boxes, as illustrated, may be used for this purpose. The letter itself will then bear a complete record of the offices or persons who saw it. This method eliminates the necessity for filing a route slip, thus saving both filing time and space.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| TO: | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FOR ACTION | | <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATION | |
| PREPARE REPLY FOR SIGNATURE OF | | | |
| FURNISH COPY OF REPLY TO | | | |
| COPY ALSO SENT TO | | | |
| | | | |

Except in very unusual circumstances, *all mail should be routed to the action office first*. Those offices having a direct interest in the subject can be included in subsequent routing for information purposes, with a file copy of the reply attached.

Routing With a Route Slip

While it is not necessary to transmit *any* routine mail with a route slip, some agencies prefer to do so in the case of mail that must be routed or coordinated among several offices. In this case the router or router-classifier uses a simple route slip on which he can check off the offices to receive the letter. Names of individuals in an office may be listed on the route slip to expedite routing. In lieu of a separate slip the rubber stamp illustrated above can be used. There is no need to number or date the slip or add any information other than the routing. If pre-classification is used, file symbols are placed on the face of the letter.

| ROUTING SLIP | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| TO— (Office Symbol) | |
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |
| FOR— | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVAL | <input type="checkbox"/> SEE ME |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FILE | <input type="checkbox"/> SIGNATURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMENT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NOTE AND RETURN | <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RECOMMENDATION | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARE REPLY FOR SIGNATURE | |
| OF _____ | |
| FROM _____ | |

Routing With a Mail Control Form

Mail to be controlled is handled differently from routine mail. In this case a mail control form (see page 40), which also contains routing information, is an integral part of the control procedure, as will be described later. The router, after deciding that a letter should be controlled, attaches a pre-assembled two-part control form to the correspondence. (These forms may be pre-assembled by messengers or other personnel having available time. In some instances, quantity will warrant the use of a specialty form for this purpose.) If the letter is also to be followed up, a three-part set is used. The proper routing is marked on the control form, and, if pre-classification is used, the file symbol is assigned at the same time. In the case of deadline mail a follow-up date is added to the control form. The correspondence and the control form are then passed to a typist for further processing.

Routing Symbol

In order to simplify the task of the router, the organization symbol used in the agency for identifying offices should be used in routing. If a code has not yet been prescribed, one should be developed by the agency along established organizational lines, such as illustrated below.

| Numeric or Alphabetic Symbols | | Office of |
|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 00 | A | Head of Agency |
| 001 | AA | Deputy Head of Agency |
| 01 | P | Chief of Personnel |
| 11 | PP | Placement Officer |
| 02 | M | Chief of Management |

| | | |
|-----|-----|----------------------------------|
| 21 | MP | Records Management Officer |
| 25 | MR | Research and Statistics Officer |
| 26 | MO | Organization and Methods Officer |
| 261 | MOA | Analyst |

Mail Guide

A Mail Guide, sometimes referred to as a Maildex, is a device which lists the proper routing for various types of mail. It assists in obtaining accurate routing and is a valuable aid in training new routing clerks. Any mail room receiving more than 1,000 pieces of varied types of mail a week will find it especially helpful. A complete description of the Mail Guide and its operation appears on page 42.

PRE-CLASSIFICATION

Pre-classification is the process of assigning a file symbol to an incoming letter as a part of the mail procedure rather than when correspondence is returned for final filing. When combined with the routing operation, it permits the routing clerk to assign a file symbol and the routing symbol at the same time. Thus in most cases only one reading of a letter instead of two will be necessary to complete both tasks; this will save time and money. In addition, the use of pre-classification makes it possible to prepare extra copies of the control form if needed for cross-reference purposes in the files.

Pre-classification is recommended if the mail and file operations have been physically combined, and if the very-difficult-to-meet conditions listed in the following paragraph regarding its use are observed. It is *not* recommended if

the mail and file operations are physically separated and cannot possibly be consolidated.

Offices utilizing pre-classification, or contemplating its adoption, must ensure that:

1. The routing and pre-classification operation, which takes more time than routing alone, does not excessively delay the delivery of correspondence, causing backlogs to build up in the mail room.

2. Router-classifiers are able to route and classify most letters after only one reading. If an excessive number of letters must be read once to assign a file symbol and again to assign a routing symbol, pre-classification is un-

justified because there is no over-all saving in time.

3. The symbol assigned by the router classifier--either formally or informally--is not reviewed for accuracy before filing. If it is reviewed, the benefit of pre-classification is lost; for instead of saving an operation an extra one is added. Such a review frequently develops as the result of router-classifiers being unable to anticipate the type of action which an incoming letter will require. The errors which result lead to the review as a means of ensuring accuracy in the files.

If the above conditions cannot be met, and they very rarely can, pre-classification should not be used in any type of operation.

SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Route mail by writing the appropriate office symbol on the face of the letter.
2. Use a route slip or rubber stamp only if mail must be sent to several offices in turn.
3. Route correspondence to the action office first and include in the routing only those offices having a direct interest in the subject.
4. Where necessary prepare a list of routing symbols for the agency.
5. Develop a Mail Guide, if volume warrants, to obtain accurate routing and to aid in training new employees.
6. Pre-classify mail if the mail and file operations are combined and the requirements for pre-classification are met.

C. Controlling

- Step 1. Pass the correspondence to a typist who extracts all information necessary to complete filling out the mail control form.
- Step 2. Distribute copies of the control form as follows:
- Attach the original to the correspondence, which is then delivered to the action office.
 - File the first copy alphabetically by the name of the originator of the letter (or chronologically or by subject if desired).
 - If mail is to be followed-up, place the second copy in a tickler file by follow-up date.
- Step 3. Check the tickler file each day or at least periodically. If the reply to any letter is overdue, notify the action office by telephone.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF MAIL CONTROL

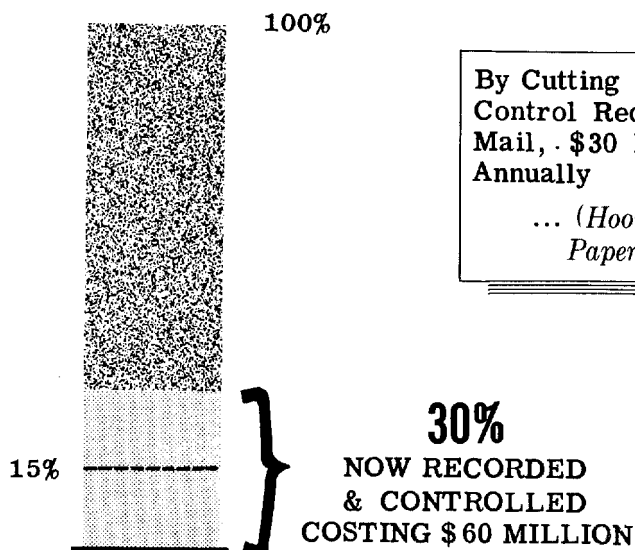
Definition

Although the term "mail control" is widely used, there is considerable difference of opinion as to its exact meaning. The definition as used in this Handbook is:

- Mail control refers to any procedure used to make a record of the receipt, location, or dispatch of mail.

Under this definition mail control includes such procedures as logging or preparing other records to indicate receipt, providing signatures for classified and registered mail if required,

ALL INCOMING MAIL



By Cutting in Half Recording and Control Requirements of Incoming Mail, \$30 Million Could Be Saved Annually

... (Hoover) Task Force Report on Paperwork Management, Part I.

following-up mail to ensure action, providing information on the location of mail, microfilming, or making copies by any reproduction process and all other methods concerned with maintaining some sort of record on mail. Thus there are varying types and degrees of control, just as there are different methods of sorting and routing.

Types of Mail to be Controlled

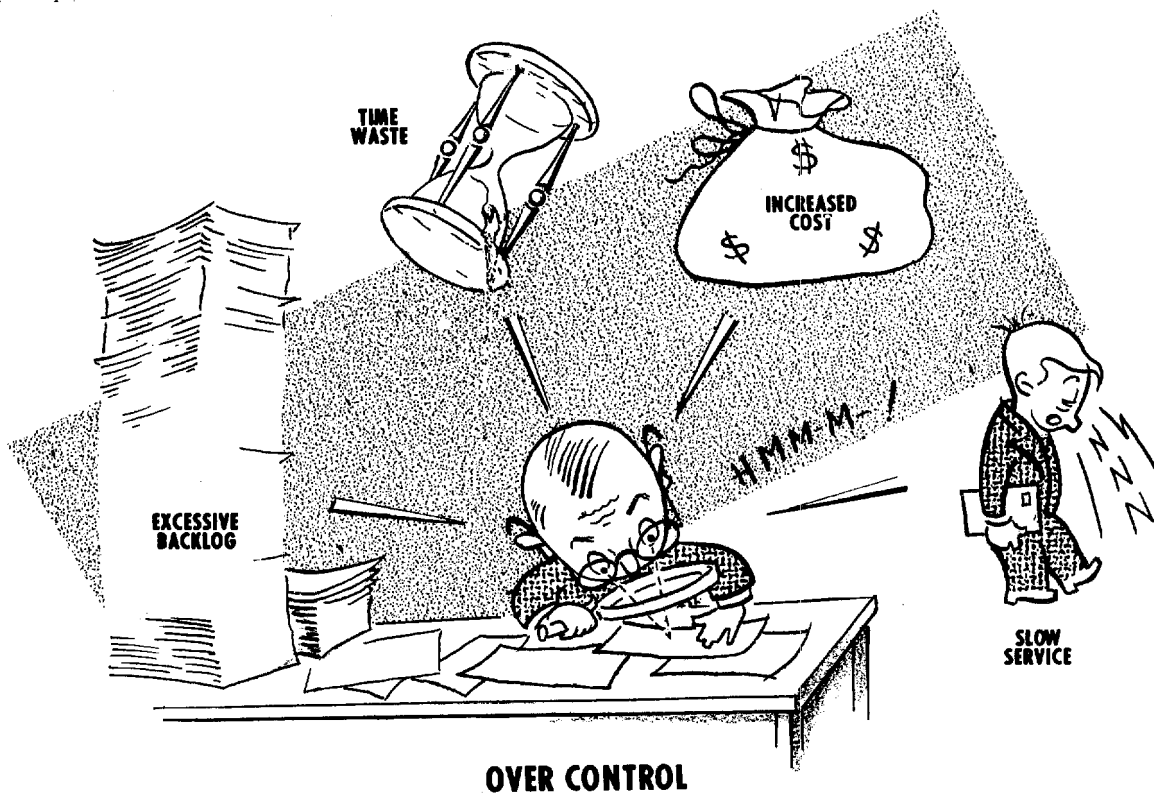
In an agency where replying to correspondence is emphasized as an action desk responsibility, most mail can be handled without controls. A number of agencies, both large and small, operate successfully under such a system. From the standpoint of economy and efficiency this is highly desirable, as indicated in the Hoover Task Force report: "In many instances mail recording has been almost eliminated and, to the amazement of the officials in the organization, the mail operations have become more efficient. As an example, the chief of a Navy staff office simpli-

fied his mail system and found after a year that he had greater efficiency and a saving of \$20,000. This was in an organization of only 200 people."

Many agencies, however, believe that control of some important mail is necessary in their own case and are willing to bear the cost. The outlined system presents a method of achieving such control simply and economically.

Efficiency in this operation is based upon the principle that only a few selected types of important mail should be controlled while in routing. This should be a small portion of the total mail received, usually not more than 15 percent. If the figure is higher, additional types can probably be dropped from the list.

The types to be controlled should be specified after all types of mail normally received have been subjected to a thorough review. The list on page 38 will serve as a guide in deciding what



these types should be. When the review is complete, each router or router-classifier should receive a list of the types selected for control, with the proper action indicated for each. This information can well be added to the Mail Guide, described on page 42, so that the latter will indicate both the correct routing and proper handling.

This principle of being selective in the choice of material to be controlled is simple, but it is the most important single principle in the whole subject of mail control. Controlling mail by any system always delays its delivery and increases its handling cost. This delay is usually cumulative so that as the quantity controlled increases, the length of the delay increases even more rapidly, often resulting in constant backlogs of undelivered mail. As a result the best system possible cannot provide effective mail service if an agency insists on controlling most of its mail.

Security Classified Mail

The handling of security classified mail is governed by Executive Order 10501 (3CFR 1953, Supp., 18 F.R. 5354) and the requirements of agency regulations. Within such requirements, however, most of the principles outlined in connection with the system described in this Handbook can be applied to speed operations and to prevent overcontrol of security classified material. For example, an extra copy of the control form may be prepared in the same typing operation and used for obtaining signature receipts.

Other Systems of Control

The system to be described is based on the use of a control form as a means of controlling the mail. This system is applicable to the majority of agencies. In two instances, however, variations may be advisable. The first of these

involves the rather small agency or field office, where a control form system is too elaborate. No control should be necessary in this case except for security classified material, and for the latter a simple log or receipt system should suffice.

The second instance concerns the opposite extreme -- the very large agency having a great volume of mail. Such an agency may find that even within the limits on controlling suggested by this Handbook, the volume is too great to be handled efficiently by typed control forms. In such a case other methods should be explored. For example, a carbon copy of a letter can be used for control purposes. In other instances, the greater speed afforded by a microfilm camera may justify the expense of its use as a means of controlling mail. A major drawback to microfilming is the tendency of a mail and file unit to control too much mail when the facilities of a camera are available. This defeats the purpose of microfilming--the process should be used for reducing work, not for making it possible to control more mail.

THE MAIL CONTROL SYSTEM

The Mail Control Form

The basis of the simplified control system described in this Handbook is the mail control form. Appearing on page 41 is a recommended format for such a form that incorporates only these items of information which experience has indicated as absolutely necessary.

It should be noted that the mail control form is not used when mail needs only to be routed. It is primarily a form for controlling correspondence, and is therefore more elaborate than a route slip need be.

Use of the control form is based on the following advantages:

1. It is basically a combination of a mail log and a route sheet, and as such eliminates the need for these separate forms.
2. As a combined form it is flexible enough to serve not only as a log and route sheet, but also as a follow-up record and cross-reference sheet.
3. Since several copies may be prepared as easily as one, various types of mail can be handled by preparing different numbers of copies without additional work or forms.
4. It is simple enough to be completed by inexperienced personnel after the routing symbol and file symbol have been indicated.

There are some disadvantages. The system, for example, is more elaborate than is necessary for small agencies or offices. In general, however, it is a simple but sound system that will work well in nearly any agency. Detailed instructions for filling out the control form appear on page 40.

The Control Procedure

Preparing the Control Form.—The initial step in controlling mail has already been described under ROUTING. After the proper routing symbol and file symbol (if pre-classified) have been assigned, the correspondence and control forms are passed to a typist who extracts the information necessary to complete the forms. Having the router or router-classifier fill in only the office symbols and file symbols utilizes the time of the higher-paid employee in the more difficult task. With routine extraction work being done by a typist, mail processing will be speeded up and fewer routers or router-classifiers will be needed. In small mail and file

units the complete operation may, of course, be performed by one person.

If a follow-up record is to be maintained on a piece of mail, the same procedure as above is followed with two exceptions: a three-part set of the mail control form is used, and a follow-up date is placed on the control form by the router. This date may be either a deadline date specified in the letter, or a date predetermined by agency policy regarding the time limit to be observed in answering certain types of correspondence. For example, it may be required that Congressional mail be answered within two or three days and ordinary action mail within five days.

It is usually unnecessary to place a control, or serial number on either incoming mail or on mail control forms. While this number may be a convenient means of referring to a letter, it is also another number on which the agency must maintain a record. For this reason it is recommended that no serial number be placed on control forms or on incoming mail unless the needs of the office clearly warrant its use.

Disposition of the Control Forms — — —
After completion of the control form by the typist, the copies are handled as follows:

The original of the control form is attached to the correspondence, which is dispatched to the appropriate office.

The first copy is filed alphabetically by source (or chronologically or by subject if desired) as a locator record of the places to which a letter has been routed, as a record

of the receipt of the letter, and as a cross-reference to the general subject files.

- The second copy, in the case of follow-up mail, is placed in a "tickler" file according to the day of the month a reply is due.

The Mail Locator File

One of the purposes of mail control is to provide a source of information on the location of mail. This purpose is accomplished by retaining the first copy of the mail control form in the mail and file unit. When requests are received for information as to the whereabouts of a letter, the office symbols indicated on the control form should give sufficient information to find the material. Taking into consideration the time lapse between routing and the request, one or two telephone calls will normally suffice to locate the letter. Since these requests are most commonly made by source, the locator file is probably best arranged alphabetically by the name of the originator.

The practice of requiring offices to report to the mail and file unit when they have forwarded a letter to the next routee is unnecessary. Similarly the requirement that mail be returned to the mail and file unit between each step in routing in order that its movement can be posted to the second copy of the control form is unnecessary. These procedures are costly, and delay the mail to an unwarranted degree.

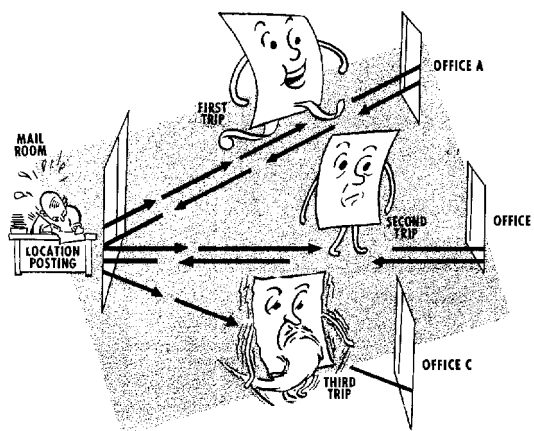
Any individual who *changes* the original routing, however, should be required to notify the mail and file unit, so that the locator copy of the control form can be changed accordingly. An office that receives a mis-routed letter should be made responsible for insuring that it is *promptly* forwarded to its

proper destination. The mail and file unit must be informed of such change in the routing. If the routers are well-trained and experienced, and if a Mail Guide is in use, the need for such changes should seldom occur.

The Follow-Up File

The follow-up "tickler" file is maintained by the mail and file unit as a means of checking the handling of action correspondence. Its arrangement is simple. It may contain 31 folders numbered consecutively, one for each day of the month; or if volume does not make so complete a division necessary, five- or ten-day groups will be adequate. The second copy of the control form is filed in one of these folders according to the date shown in the "Date Due" box.

If the volume of follow-up mail is small, the first copy of the control form may be used as the follow-up copy to be placed in the tickler file. After it is cleared from this file, the form is placed in the locator file with the rest of the control forms. With this system there is no need for a three-part control form. There will, however, be some inconvenience because of the occasional necessity for checking two different files to find a desired control form.



Clearance of the follow-up file is continuous. As replies to deadline correspondence are received in the mail and file unit with control forms attached, they are matched with the corresponding control forms in the follow-up file. The latter forms are then removed and destroyed, unless needed as a cross-reference sheet in the subject files.

Each day the person responsible for the follow-up file checks to see if there are control forms which are overdue. If there are, follow-up action is taken. This is best done by telephoning each office concerned to notify it that a reply is overdue and to find out when the answer may be expected. This date is entered on the control form as a new deadline date, and the form is refiled in the tickler file. The telephone call method of follow-up is recommended because it is quicker and simpler.

If the action office does not answer the letter within the next deadline period, appropriate action as specified by the agency head should be taken. If desired this can take the form of a memorandum calling attention to the delinquent correspondence, sent to the head of the office concerned.

Decentralized Control

In the discussion on Basic Principles for Handling Mail it was stressed that the same piece of mail should not be

controlled at more than one point in an agency. In the case of certain types of mail it will be found advantageous to decentralize mail control to the division or even section level. This may occur because:

- The incoming correspondence which must be controlled usually applies only to a specific division or section and is large in volume.
- It is impractical for the mail and file unit to determine the specific action desk for certain types of correspondence.

In the event control is decentralized, it requires only two changes in the procedures previously described.

1. The types of mail for which control is decentralized are routed by the central mail and file unit to the office concerned, without opening if possible, or with only the necessary routing noted on the face of the letter. No control forms are prepared by the mail and file unit for such mail.
2. The office mail clerk prepares and uses the mail control forms following the procedures that have been previously outlined.

Decentralized control is particularly appropriate if files have also been decentralized.

SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Excessive mail control slows the delivery of mail and increases the cost of handling.
2. Control only a minimum number of carefully selected categories of important mail.

3. Do not place control or serial number on incoming mail unless the needs of the agency clearly warrant its use.
4. Prepare a mail control form only when needed for the purpose of control.
5. Have the router or router-classifier place only the routing symbol, file symbol, and follow-up date on the control form, the remainder of the form being filled in by a typist.
6. Use the first copy of the control form as a record of receipt and routing; use the second copy as a follow-up record.
7. Do not require that mail be returned to the mail and file unit for location posting before passing to the next routee; however, require that the unit be notified if the original routing of a controlled letter is changed.
8. Notify offices by telephone of over-due replies to correspondence.
9. Do not control the same letter at more than one point in an agency.
10. Decentralize the control of mail if the size of the agency or the type of mail received makes it advantageous to do so.

II. OUTGOING MAIL

A. Preparing Mail for Dispatching

- Step 1. Receive outgoing mail from the agency offices. Check it for enclosures, proper number of copies, signature, and other sources of possible routine error.
- Step 2. Date-stamp each outgoing letter if this function is assigned to the mail room.
- Step 3. Separate file material from the outgoing correspondence.

RESPONSIBILITY

The discussion on Basic Principles for Handling Mail emphasized the importance of clearly defining who is responsible for performing each mail operation. This is especially necessary in the case of outgoing mail. There are several operations, such as dating and assigning file symbols, which can be performed in either the mail and file unit or in action offices. It is important, therefore, that the exact location be specified, preferably by agency directive, in each case to prevent duplication.

PREPARING MAIL IN ACTION OFFICE

The manner in which original letters or replies to incoming letters are prepared is generally prescribed by individual agencies in a correspondence manual, and is not discussed in this Handbook.

CHECKING

The mail and file unit becomes responsible for outgoing mail when it is received from the action office after being signed. Each letter should be accompanied by the number of additional copies specified by the agency for internal use. Every effort should be made to keep these copies to a minimum.

Upon receipt of a letter the mail and file unit inspects it to make sure that the proper number of items are attached. These will include enclosures, file copies, information copies, the original incoming letter and control form, if any, and an envelope, if required. The letter is also checked to see that it has been signed.

DATE-STAMPING

The outgoing letter is then date-stamped, if this practice has been adopted. Whether or not letters should be dated in the action office must be decided by each agency. There are several points to be considered. Dating a letter as it is typed is easier than dating it later with a date stamp; this, however, is not always practical. A letter may not leave an agency for several days after it is prepared, since it frequently takes this long to coordinate important correspondence among interested offices. Obviously, the date on such a letter would be misleading if it were added when the letter was typed instead of when it was mailed.

One solution is to have the office of the individual signing the correspondence date a letter with a date stamp when it is signed. This will be effective if the volume of mail to be so handled is small. If the mail volume is large, it will probably be more effective to have letters dated in the mail

and file unit, where the operation can be made a routine, highly repetitive task with a resulting increase in efficiency.

If, however, nearly all letters can be signed in the office where they are prepared and then sent directly to the mail and file unit, it will naturally be better to type the date rather than stamp it on later. Choice of the proper method is merely a matter of choosing the one which will save the greatest amount of time and labor. It may be that a combination of these methods will be best.

IDENTIFYING CORRESPONDENCE

Using three designations to identify a letter—a serial number, a file symbol, and an office symbol—is costly. For both originators and receivers, it requires several additional files for reference purposes.

The best method is to carry an originator's office symbol on all corre-

spondence. This symbol, in combination with date and subject, is adequate for identifying a letter.

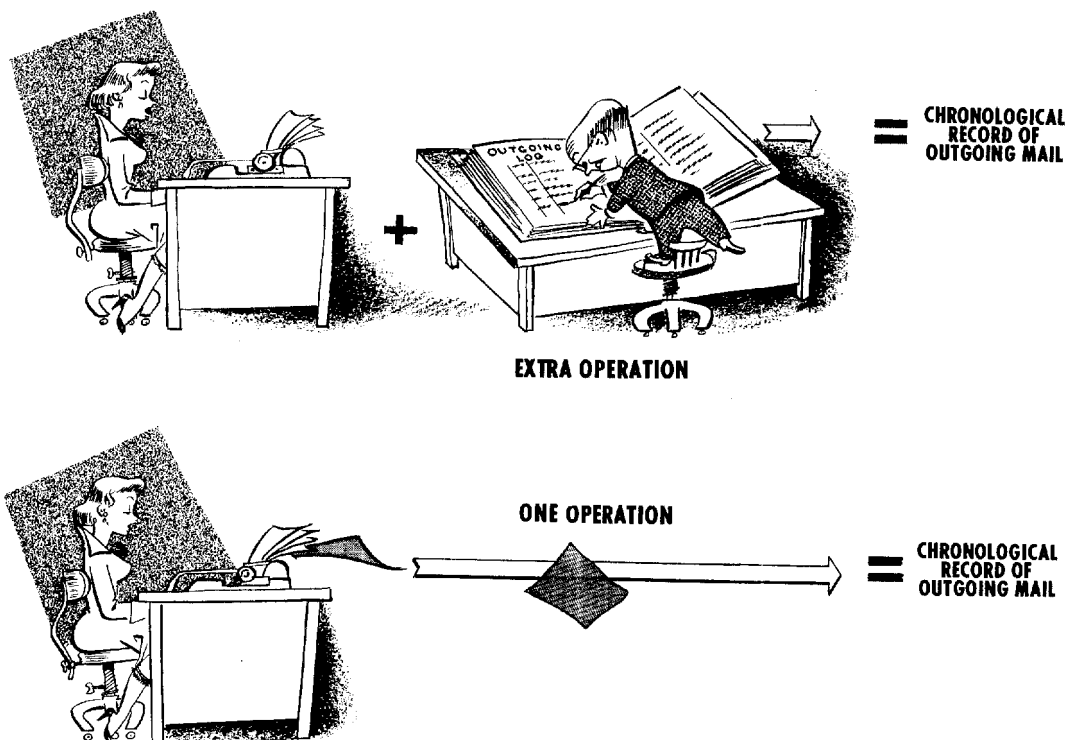
More important, this symbol is useful to assure accurate and fast routing when replies are received.

OUTGOING LOG

Some organizations maintain a log of outgoing mail, posting notations of all letters dispatched. This practice is usually unnecessary. If a chronological record of outgoing mail is needed, an extra copy of each letter can be prepared and filed by date for use in lieu of a log.

STRIPPING

As a final step in preparing a letter for dispatching, the file material and information copies are "stripped," or separated, from the outgoing letter. These copies are in turn separated from one another in accordance with ultimate destination.



SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Specify where mail operations such as dating, stripping, and preparing envelopes will be performed.
2. Keep the number of copies of outgoing correspondence for internal use at a minimum.
3. Date mail either in the office of the signer or in the mail and file unit.
4. Use the originator's office symbol as identification on outgoing letters.
5. Utilize an extra copy of outgoing letters in place of an outgoing mail log.

B. Dispatching

- Step 1. Sort outgoing letters, including information copies, by type (i. e., air mail, registered mail, special delivery mail) and by addressee.
 - Step 2. Envelope all letters, consolidating outgoing mail so that letters sent to the same address will be placed in one envelope.
 - Step 3. Add postage where necessary, bundle mail, and forward it to the post office.
 - Step 4. Forward internal information copies of outgoing mail.
 - Step 5. Send all file copies, together with the original incoming letter if routing is completed, to the files.
 - Step 6. Dispose of mail control forms and route slips as follows:
 - a. File original of control form and route slips only when important remarks have been added.
 - b. Retain the first copy of the control form in the locator file (see page 20) as a log of incoming correspondence and as a source cross-reference to the subject files.
 - c. Clear the second copy of the control form, if any, from the tickler file and either destroy it or use it in the subject files as a cross-reference.

SORTING

After outgoing mail, which includes outgoing information copies, has been checked, dated, and stripped, it is sorted for mailing. If the volume of

mail is more than a few pieces a day, a sorting device should be used which contains a compartment for each of the agencies to which mail is sent regularly. If the number of such compartments is sizeable, it will be advanta-

geous to divide the sorter into three or four major sections. The mail can then be given a preliminary sort by placing it in trays which correspond to each of these sections, permitting sorting in one section at a time and thus decreasing waste motion.

In addition to sorting by addressee, it will be necessary to separate mail which is classified and mail which requires special services, such as air mail, special delivery mail, registered mail, and mail to certain foreign countries. Other special sorts, such as dividing local mail from out-of-town mail, may also be required.

ENVELOPING

In most cases the mail room can envelope mail more efficiently than operating offices because:

- Letters from different offices addressed to the same agency or field office can be forwarded in the same envelope, thus saving envelopes, postage, and separate handling.
- Envelopes can be mechanically pre-addressed in quantity and used as needed by the mail room—obviously a more efficient procedure than typing individual envelopes.

Experience will show which addressees are sent mail in sufficient volume to make it worthwhile for envelopes to be prepared centrally. The offices originating correspondence can then be notified that no envelopes need be addressed for these agencies. For all other addressees the office typist should prepare the envelopes, unless window envelopes are used.

Use of window envelopes eliminates one typing operation and the time-consuming step of matching letters to envelopes. It also speeds up the envelo-

ping process by permitting the mail room to use mechanical equipment for miscellaneous addressed correspondence.

When practicable, originating offices should use self-mailers which are folded and stapled and do not require envelopes.

Envelopes should be matched to enclosures. The unnecessary use of large or extra size envelopes should be avoided. Such envelopes not only cost several times as much as standard-size envelopes but their handling in the mails is difficult and expensive. Single sheet letters and, whenever possible, printed matter, forms, etc., should be folded and enclosed in conventional letter-size envelopes (4-1/8 by 9-1/2 inches or smaller). Large flat envelopes should be used only for multiple enclosures, or for thick pamphlets, books, or other matter which cannot be folded and placed in the smaller letter-size envelopes.

If letters are checked in the mail room, they cannot be enveloped in advance. The mail room will thus have to stuff and seal all envelopes. If the volume of mail is large, either a hand-operated or an automatic sealing machine may be worth its cost.

FINAL DISPATCH

Envelopes should be stuffed and sealed on a schedule to coincide with the time mail must be sent to the post office. Local mail, however, should be dispatched more often. After enveloping, postage is applied where necessary. The mail is then tied in bundles as required by postal rules and forwarded to the local post office.

Mail personnel should be scheduled so that some employees remain after regular working hours to dispatch the mail received after the close of business.

DISPOSITION OF COPIES

Information Copies

After stripping, information copies for offices within the agency are delivered with ordinary inter-office mail.

File Copies

If routing has been completed - Incoming letters which required no reply are forwarded to the file clerks for filing. Incoming letters to which a reply was prepared are sent to the files after the stripping operation with the file copies of the outgoing letter. The original of the control form is destroyed unless important remarks have been added. If the incoming letter was assigned a deadline date, it is matched with the follow-up file in order to clear the tickler copy of the control form.

If routing has not been completed - Occasionally the information routing of an incoming letter has not been completed when the action office sends the reply to the mail room. In this case, after the outgoing letter is stripped, the incoming letter and the official file copy of the outgoing letter are forwarded for completion of the routing. The remaining file copies, if any, are sent to the files. If a deadline date was assigned, the tickler file is cleared before the letter is sent out for information routing.

Control Forms

The original of the control form remains attached to the incoming letter

throughout its routing. It is filed with the correspondence only when it contains important remarks.

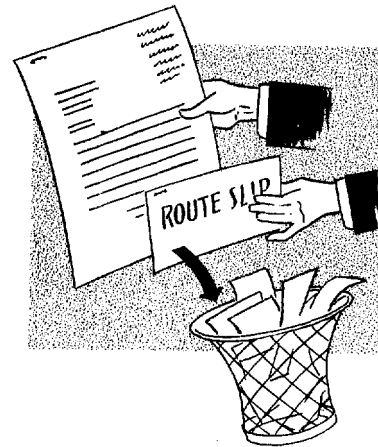
The first copy of the control form remains in the locator file (see page 20) if needed as a record of important correspondence received by the agency. The final action on a piece of correspondence should *not* be posted to this record, as official action will be shown on the official file copies.

The second copy of the control form is cleared from the follow-up file when the deadline correspondence is returned for mailing. This copy is then forwarded to the files with the file copies of the outgoing letter. If needed, it may be used as a cross-reference sheet; otherwise it should be destroyed.



Route Slips

Route slips should not be filed with the correspondence unless important remarks have been added which need to be made a part of the record. Initials indicating review or concurrence should be placed on either the face of incoming letter or on the official file copy of the outgoing letter.



SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Do not file the original control form or route slip with the correspondence unless they contain important remarks.
2. Use any available copies of the control form for cross-reference purposes in the files if needed.
3. Do not post the action taken on correspondence to the locator copy of the control form.
4. Consolidate outgoing mail so that letters sent to the same addressee will be placed in one envelope.
5. Use window envelopes, whenever practicable, to make the enveloping operation more efficient and accurate.
6. Use mechanical equipment to expedite sorting, sealing, and applying postage if the volume of mail warrants.
7. Schedule some employees to remain after regular working hours to dispatch mail received after the close of business.

III. MESSENGER SERVICE

Messenger service operations are an important segment in the total procedures designed to place mail on an action desk fast. It is readily apparent that to simplify mail controls and at the same time ignore the delivery aspect achieves only part of the job. Therefore, it is important periodically to review messenger service operations to improve deliveries and prevent delays.

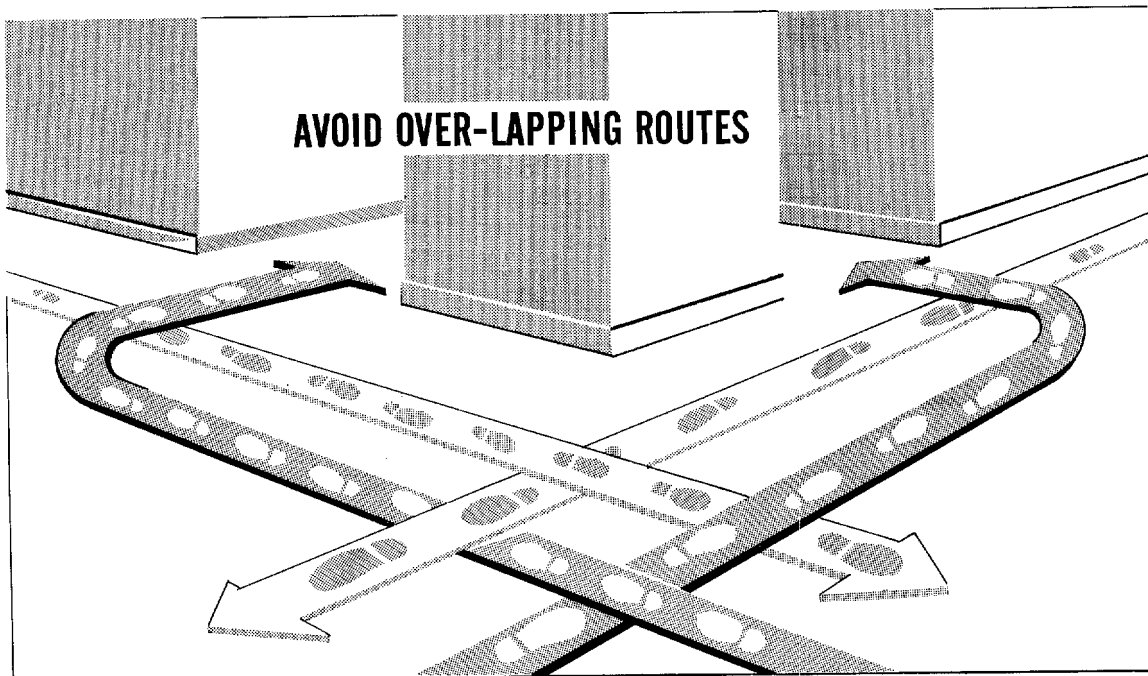
However, messenger service does not lend itself to standardization as a single system, for individual procedures will have to vary according to the nature of the agency. Hence the subject is discussed here in terms of principles rather than specific procedures.

A. Planning of Stops and Routes

To provide effective service in an agency, there must be enough central control over messenger operations to ensure that routes and schedules are planned efficiently.

The following principles are important:

1. Messenger pickup and delivery should be made on regular routes in order to minimize the necessity for special messenger service.
2. Routes should be so laid out that there is no overlapping or duplication of service.
3. Routes should be planned so that messengers travel a minimum distance in servicing the necessary stops.
4. The organization should be examined to find if there are offices which can be economically grouped into single delivery and pickup stops.
5. Consideration should be given to equipping messengers on extended runs with bicycles, motor scooters, or other types of vehicles which will speed delivery.



B. Scheduling

Proper scheduling of messengers will provide faster and more efficient service. This in turn will not only decrease the number of messengers required and expedite the operations of the agency, but will also cause the offices served to place more faith in the ability of the messenger service to deliver mail accurately and promptly. As a result there will be less time lost in the agency as a whole, since individuals will rely on and *use* the messenger system instead of delivering mail personally to make sure it reaches its destination.

Some of the principles to be observed are:

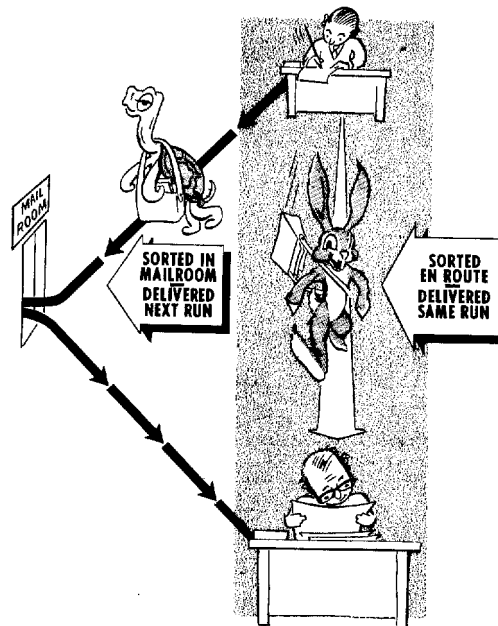
1. Pickup and delivery should be operated on a regular schedule, usually at intervals of one hour. Under unusual circumstances delivery may be made more often. Conversely, the number of trips should be decreased if agency operations do not require such frequent deliveries.
2. Messenger schedules should be planned to coincide with the local post office pickup and delivery schedules so as to minimize the time mail is held by the mail and file unit.
3. The slight lags that develop in even the best-ordered system should be absorbed between noon and 1 p. m. . For example, if runs are on an hourly basis the noon run should be omitted to permit the mail and file unit to dispose of temporary backlogs from the morning's mail and to provide time for a lunch period.
4. It is often advantageous to schedule messenger hours so that at least one messenger will work later than the rest of the agency to collect mail prepared at the close of the day. Similarly another messenger should report early

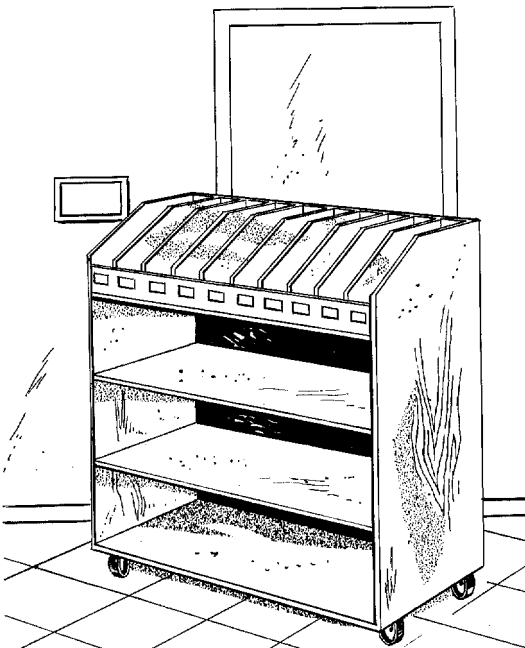
to sort and distribute mail before the day's work begins.

5. Schedules and routes should be maintained on an up-to-date basis and copies furnished to all offices of an agency.

C. Sorting Mail En Route

Some messenger systems require that messengers sort mail as it is collected, others that all mail be returned to the mail room for sorting. From the standpoint of faster service to the agency, sorting mail as it is picked up offers a distinct advantage if the quantity is not too great. Mail from one office to another office farther along the same route can be delivered on the run without being returned to the mail room, a saving in time of at least an hour (on an hourly schedule). This advantage of "sorting forward" (as the procedure of sorting each pickup is known) is worthwhile, although it is perhaps more difficult to sort on a run than in a mail room. Specially designed equipment, such as a cart with sorting boxes, can facilitate en route sorting.





CART FOR SORTING MAIL EN ROUTE

D. Servicing by Special Messengers

If special messengers, as distinguished from messengers operating on regular routes and schedules, are also used by an agency, their work must be

closely supervised to prevent inefficiency. Time is sometimes wasted while the messengers are awaiting calls, and occasionally a messenger will take advantage of being away from close supervision by loitering during his run. To combat such inefficiency, special care must be taken to see that all messengers are given additional duties to perform during their idle time. In addition a frequent check should be made on the activities of the special messengers during the time they are out on a run.

Special messengers should be assigned to a central pool rather than to individual divisions or offices. Under this system the messengers' time can be better utilized, thus requiring fewer messengers, and more control can be exerted over the messengers' use to prevent such abuses as their being detailed to run personal errands.

It is significant to note that as regular messenger service improves, less and less special messenger service is needed. Conversely, poor messenger service breeds over-extended service and what is worse, use of more expensive office personnel to run these special deliveries.

IV. ORGANIZING FOR AGENCY MAIL OPERATIONS

A. Organizational Patterns for Handling Mail

The attached charts with accompanying explanations illustrate several organizational patterns for handling mail in Federal agencies. They are presented as a guide in selecting a plan most suitable to the requirements of a specific agency.

SMALL AGENCIES

Chart 1. Central Mail Station Only

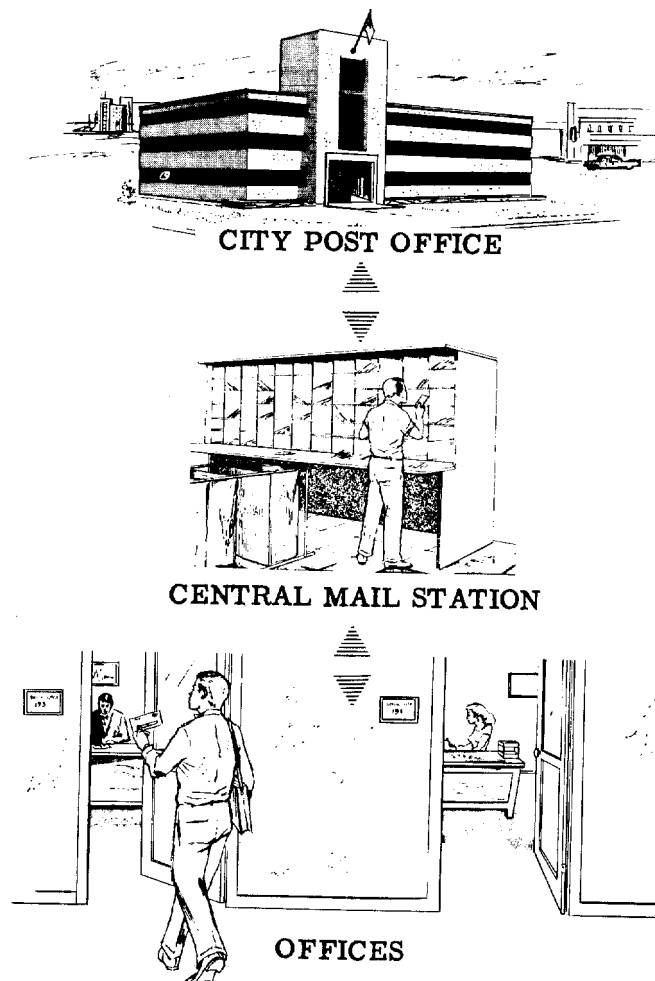
This arrangement may be appropriate for an organization which--

Has less than 1,000 employees

OR

Handles less than 25,000 pieces of mail each month

and has all its activities confined to one building



The Central Mail Station receives and sorts all mail for direct distribution.

MEDIUM -SIZED AGENCIES

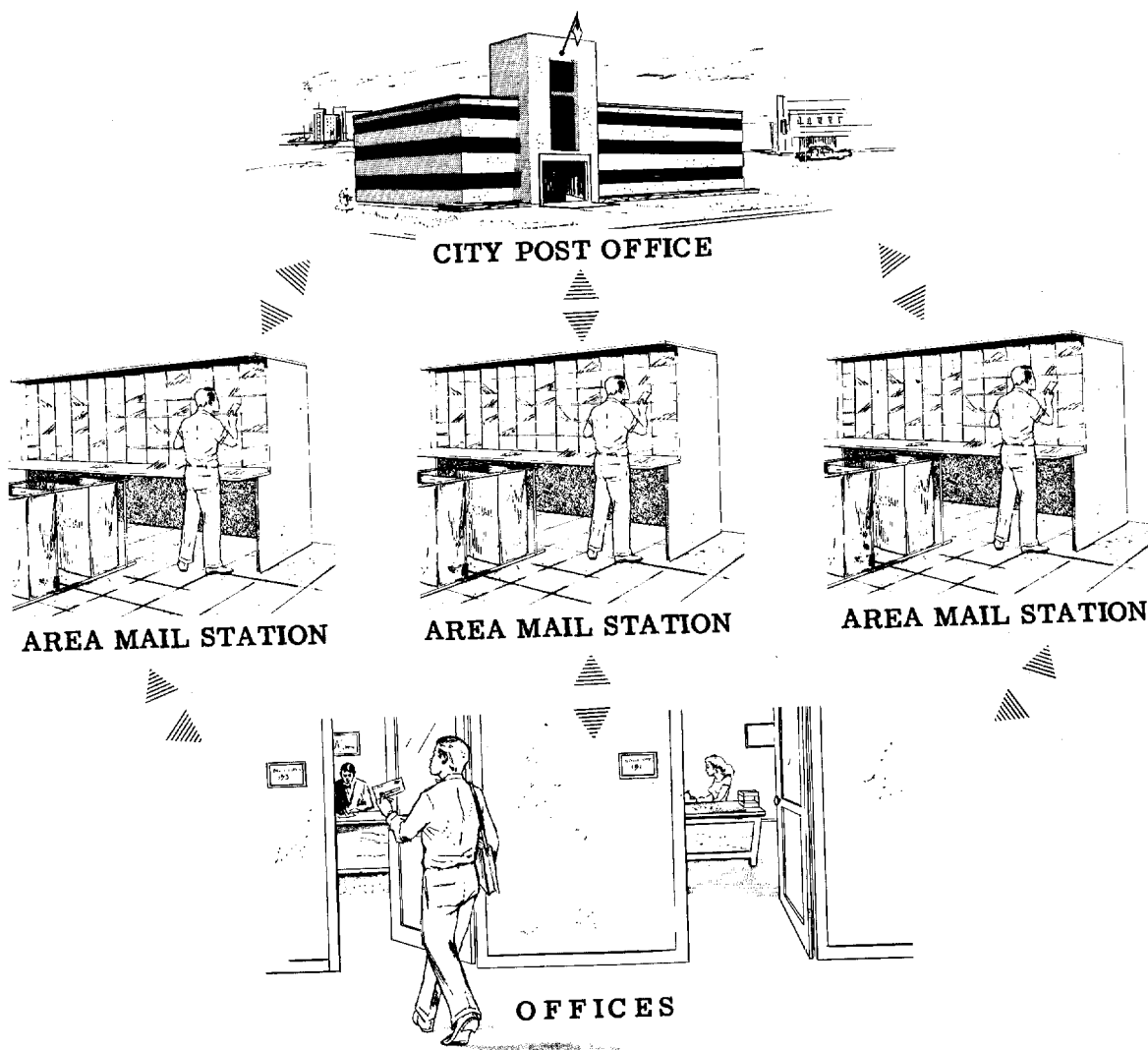
Charts 2 and 3 depict arrangements which may be appropriate for organizations which--

Have from 1,000 to 5,000 employees

OR

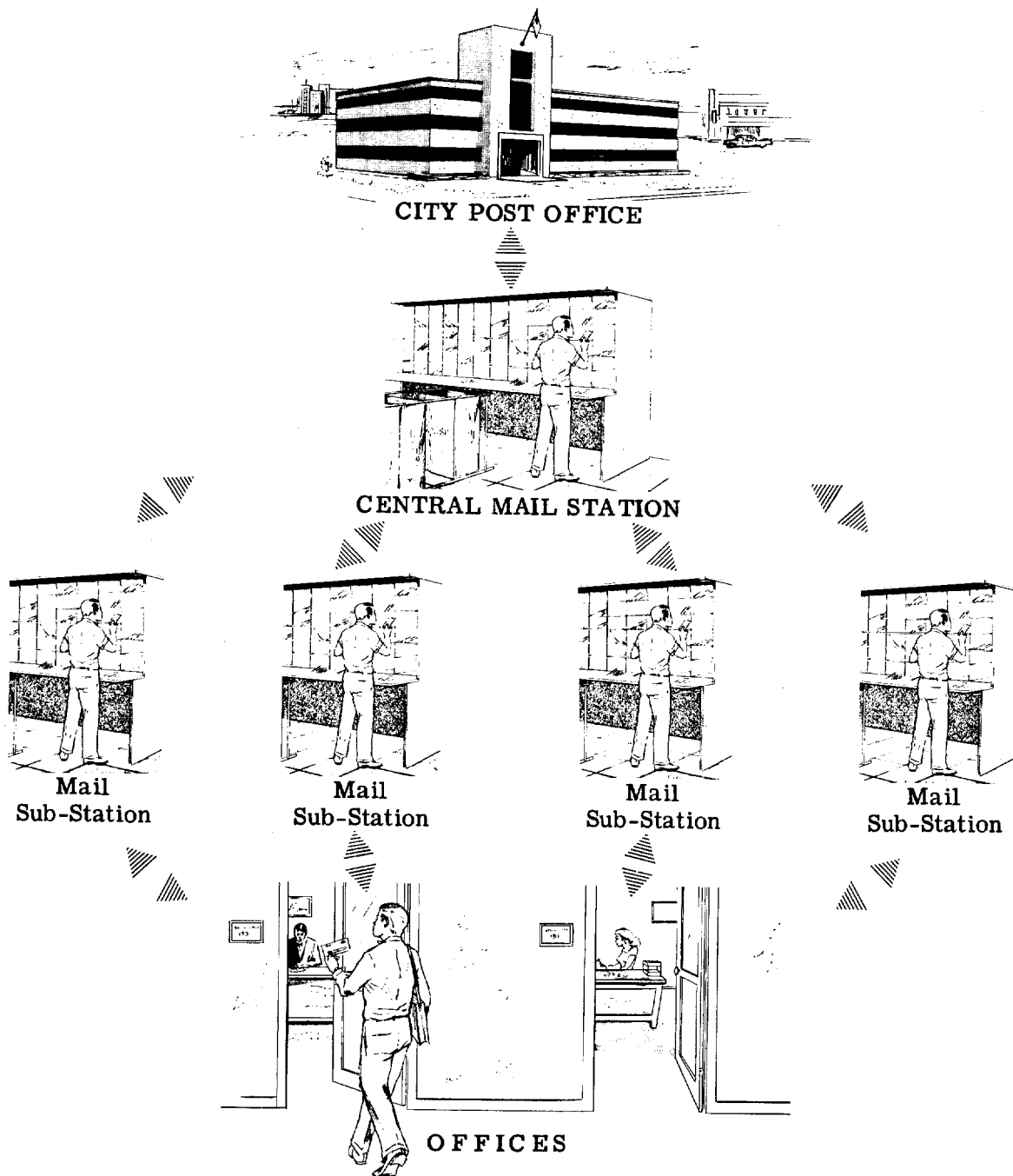
Handle between 25,000 and 50,000 pieces of mail monthly

Chart 2. Area Mail Stations



This arrangement may be appropriate when a medium-sized agency has organizational units located in several different buildings. The Area Mail Stations receive mail direct from the Post Office for routing and delivery.

Chart 3. Central Mail Station With Sub-Stations



This arrangement may be appropriate when a medium-sized agency has all its activities confined to one building. The Central Mail Station receives all mail, makes a primary sort, and distributes to Mail Sub-Stations. The Sub-Stations sort the mail by office or organizational unit for distribution. The Central Mail Station supervises the operations of the Mail Sub-Stations.

LARGE AGENCIES

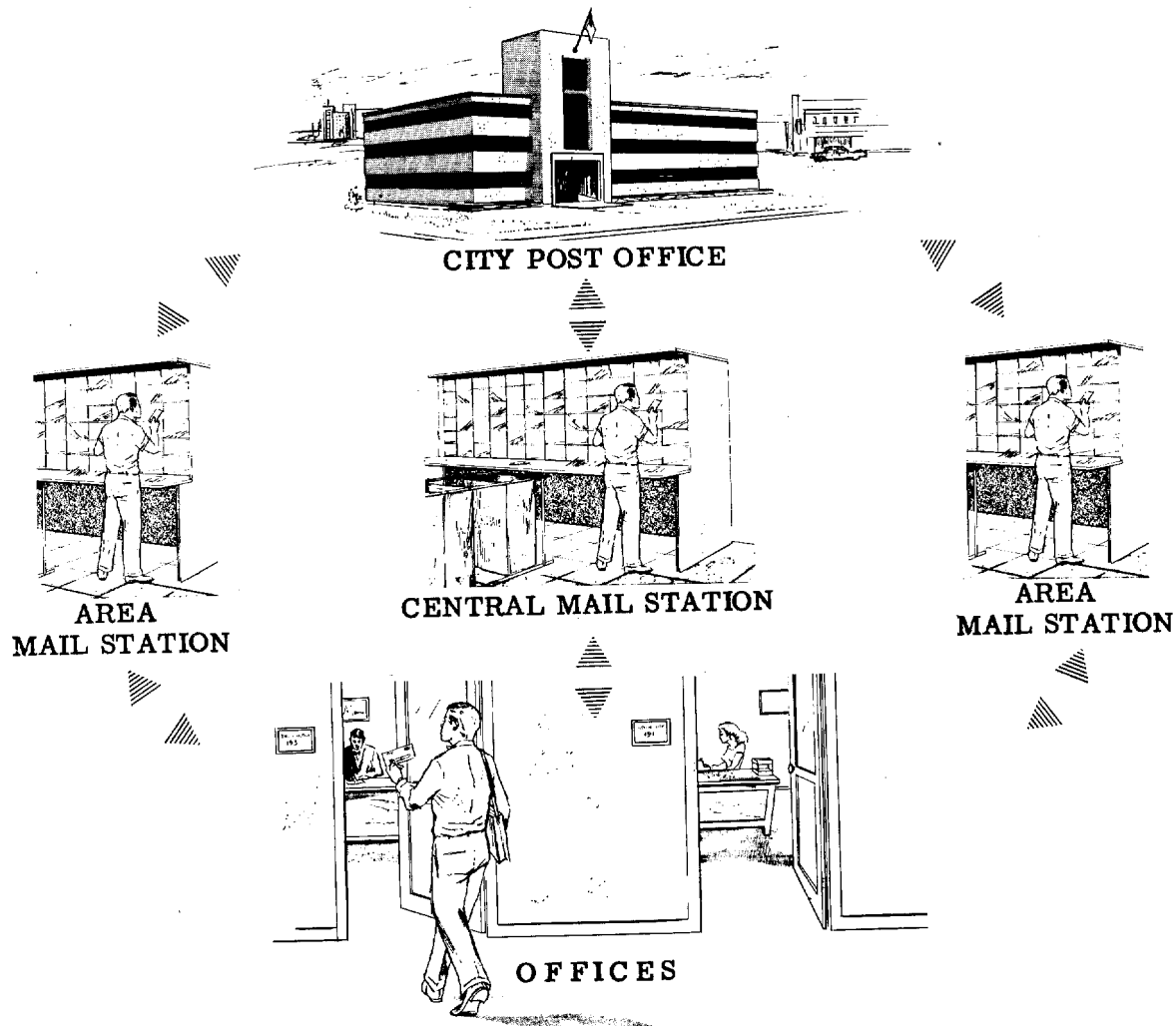
Charts 4 and 5 depict arrangements which may be appropriate for organizations which--

Have 5,000 or more employees

OR

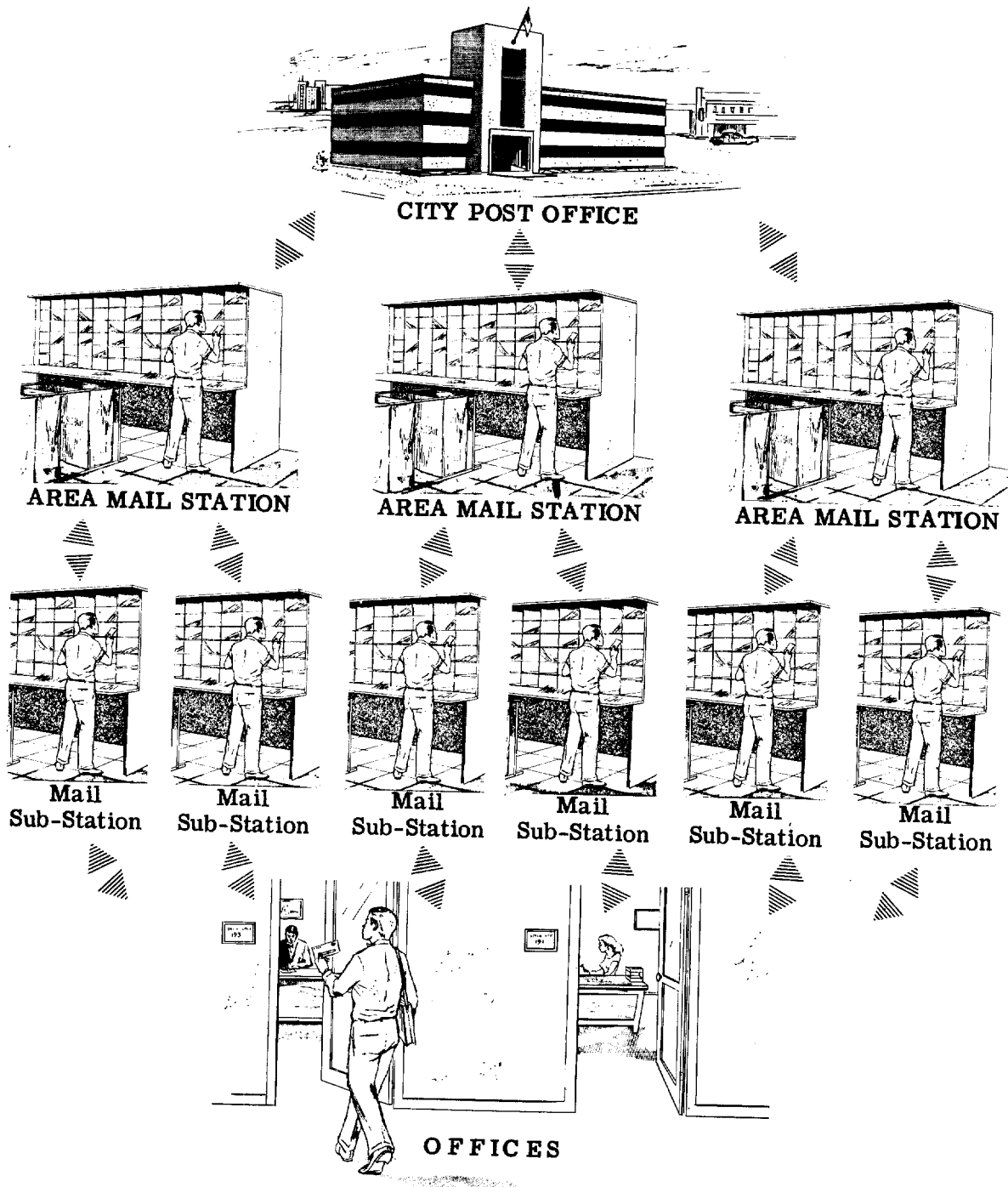
Handle more than 50,000 pieces of mail monthly

Chart 3. Central Mail Station and Area Mail Stations



This arrangement may be appropriate when a large agency has the majority of its offices located in a headquarters building and other organizational units located in different buildings. The Central Mail Station and the Area Mail Stations separately receive mail direct from the Post Office for routing and delivery.

Chart 5. Area Mail Stations with Mail Sub-Stations



This arrangement may be appropriate when a large agency has organizational units located in several different buildings. The Area Mail Stations receive all mail for the agency and make a primary sort for distribution to the Sub-Stations. The Sub-Stations serving the various buildings sort the mail and distribute it.

B. Points to be Included When Preparing Procedural Instructions and Assigning Responsibilities for Mail Operations

1. INCOMING MAIL

a. Specify the responsibility and authority of the mail and file unit for:

- (1) Receiving and opening of official correspondence.
- (2) Receiving and distributing private mail unopened.
- (3) Time-stamping certain classes of mail. Prepare a list similar to one in Section V-A showing the types of mail subject to this operation.
- (4) Routing mail to the division or subordinate level. Indicate the office symbols to be used.
- (5) Controlling mail. Specify the procedures that will be used. List as an exhibit the types of mail subject to control and follow-up and include a copy of the control form as an exhibit.
- (6) Assigning follow-up dates on controlled correspondence. Specify the reply periods that will be given to various types of correspondence.

b. Specify the responsibility of the action office for:

- (1) Maintaining control.

(2) Answering mail promptly in accordance with the specified reply periods.

(3) Preparing acknowledgements for correspondence which cannot be answered immediately. Indicate the time period within which an acknowledgement is necessary.

2. OUTGOING MAIL

a. Specify responsibility and authority for processing and dispatch of outgoing mail.

(1) Specify the number of carbon copies (internal) required for official purposes.

(2) Specify whether outgoing letters will be dated at the time of preparation, on being signed, or by the mail and file unit at the time of dispatch.

(3) Specify at what point or points in the organization the outgoing mail will be processed.

3. FILES

a. Specify the file point, e.g., action office or mail and file unit files, of various types of correspondence.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDES

A. Determining Handling for Various Types of Mail

It is sometimes difficult for mail clerks to decide whether a particular piece of mail should be controlled. When in doubt, mail clerks frequently will designate the mail for control. This tends to bring the total control operations well above the recommended minimum. To prevent this kind of over control, agencies should furnish all routers or router-classifiers with lists showing the handling for all types of mail normally received.

In preparing such a list, an agency should analyze all its mail, categorize it by type, and specify a practice for each type. If more than 15% of the total mail is marked for control, some categories should be dropped. The specifications, if desired, can be included with the Mail Guide (page 42).

The table which follows is a guide to the handling of various types of mail commonly processed by a mail and file unit. It represents the usual way mail is handled in an agency that has applied the principles contained in this Handbook.

It is not the intent of this table to specify an unvarying method for handling each type of mail. The examples used are general; within each type different methods of handling may be necessary under certain conditions. The importance of the action requested determines whether or not incoming letters will be controlled and followed up. It is not necessary, therefore, to control all action requests. Routine requisitions, for example, are action mail but do not need to be followed up.

Where both control columns in the table are checked for a particular type, follow-up should be made only in those cases where some action is required. If no action is necessary, the mail should be controlled without follow-up.

In terms of the system described in this Handbook, the column heading "Control Without Follow-Up" refers to mail which would require a two-part control form. "Control With Follow-Up" refers to mail requiring a three-part control form.

| TYPE OF MAIL | TIME STAMP | ROUTE WITHOUT CONTROL | CONTROL WITHOUT FOLLOW-UP | CONTROL WITH FOLLOW-UP |
|---|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Accident reports: | | | | |
| Major and unusual----- | | | X | X |
| Minor and routine----- | | X | | |
| Accounting data----- | | X | | |
| Acknowledgments----- | | X | | |
| Allotments (budget); appro- priations----- | | | X | |
| Announcements----- | | X | | |
| Applications for employment----- | | X | | |
| Associations (civic)----- | | X | X | |
| Authorizations----- | | | X | |
| Beneficial suggestions: | | | | |
| Completed suggestion forms----- | | | | X |
| Correspondence re status----- | | X | | |
| Bids----- | X | X | | |
| Bills of lading----- | | X | | |
| Budget estimates----- | | | X | |
| Bulletins----- | | X | | |
| Citizenship----- | | X | | |

| TYPE OF MAIL | TIME STAMP | ROUTE WITHOUT CONTROL | CONTROL WITHOUT FOLLOW-UP | CONTROL WITH FOLLOW-UP |
|--|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Civil Defense | | X | | X |
| Civil Service regulations | | X | | |
| Claims against U. S. Government | X | | X | |
| Commendations | | X | | |
| Complaints; criticism; disciplinary actions | | | X | X |
| Conferences | | X | | |
| Congressional correspondence: | | | | |
| Action requests | X | | X | X |
| Routine referrals and acknowledgments | | X | | |
| Conservation | | X | X | |
| Contracts | X | X | X | |
| Directives (Circular letters and other types of issuances) | | X | | X |
| Educational services | | X | | |
| Equipment, requests for | | X | | |
| Foreign trade | | | X | X |
| Grievances | | | X | |
| Historical matters | | X | | |
| Housing | | X | | |
| Incentive awards program | | X | | |
| Information, requests for | | X | | |
| Inspection reports | | X | | |
| Invoices, vendors | X | X | | |
| Leases | | | X | X |
| Legal matters | | X | | |
| Mailing list | | X | | |
| Manuals (including changes) | | X | | |
| Material shipped reports | | X | | |
| Messenger service | | | X | X |
| National Defense | | X | X | |
| Ordnance | | | X | |
| Organization | | | X | X |
| Patents | | | X | |
| Personnel allocations; ceilings | | X | | |
| Personnel jackets | | X | | |
| Personnel reports | | X | | |
| Photographs | | X | | |
| Plans, requests for | | | X | X |
| Policy correspondence | | | | |
| Promotional material (industry and organizations) | | X | X | |
| Public relations | | X | X | |
| Public works | | X | | |
| Publications | | X | | |
| Records management | | | | |
| Regulations: | | X | | |
| Printed | | | X | |
| Proposed | | X | | |
| Reports, periodic | | X | | |
| Requisitions | | X | | |
| Research reports | | X | | |
| Sales— excess material | | | X | |
| Security | | X | | |
| Shipment orders or requests | | X | | |
| Space allocation (office) | | X | | |
| Specifications, requests for | | X | | |
| Supplies and equipment | | | X | X |
| Survey reports | | X | X | |
| Taxes | X | X | | X |
| Telegrams | | X | | X |
| Telephone directories | | X | | |
| Training equipment | | X | | |
| Transfers, personnel | | | | X |
| United Nations | X | X | | |
| Voting | | X | | |
| Vouchers, public | | X | | |
| Welfare and recreation | | | | X |
| White House correspondence | X | | | |

B. The Mail Control Form

A suggested format for a mail control form is shown on the following page. When an agency has form standards not consistent with the suggested format, it can be adjusted to conform to those standards. An agency may prefer to preprint office symbols on control form instead of the blank columns for routing. In this case, since routing order must be indicated by numbers, it is suggested that "Office Symbol" be substituted for "Action" and the "Action" and "Info" columns be combined. Only symbols of major organizational units should be included. Too many symbols slow down and confuse reading of the form by both routers or router-classifiers and messengers. In addition, office symbols occasionally change; the greater the number that are preprinted, the more often the control form will have to be reprinted to keep it up to date.

PREPARATION

The following notes refer to the corresponding numbered spaces on the form:

1. Indicate the source of the letter-agency, organization, company, or person's name.
2. If a follow-up date is assigned for action, place it here.
3. Enter the receiving agency's file symbol.
4. Enter the date of the letter.
5. If the control form is used as a subject cross-reference sheet, indicate the additional file symbols. If more than one is listed, the pertinent symbol should be circled on each copy to indi-

cate where it is to be filed.

6. Enter the date the letter is received by the agency.
7. Note the originator's identification data, if needed.
8. Enter the subject of the letter. If the subject is too general to permit identification or is not shown, brief the content.
9. Use the inter-office portion of the control form for routing mail to the various offices of the agency. Symbol entries will be made by the routers or router-classifiers in the mail and file unit.
10. The intra-office portion is used for routing mail within an office (e.g., division or section). These entries will be made by personnel of the office concerned, not by the mail and file unit.
- 11 & 12. These columns indicate the purpose for which routed. It will be noted that the common practice of using separate columns to show the routing order and the office symbol has not been followed. Instead, indicate the routing order and the office to receive the mail by placing the proper symbol in the appropriate column of "Action" or "Info", in the order that the mail is to be routed. In other words, the first office to receive a letter is the topmost symbol shown, usually in the "Action" column. The next symbol below indicates the next office to receive the letter, and is written in whichever column is appropriate. Similarly, note other symbols as needed. Thus, *location* on the control form rather than a written number indicates the routing order and the purpose for which routed.

13. The person who receives the mail for action or information places his initials in this column.

14. The date is shown in this column when the review or action is completed and the letter is forwarded.

15. Important remarks, preceded by the office symbol, are placed on this part of the control form.

16. Use this space, if needed, to pre-print instructions concerning the use and handling of the control form.

[illegible]

C. The Mail Guide

- WHAT IT IS:** A Mail Guide (or Maildex) is a routing aid usually arranged in quick-reference, visible form, *by subject*, showing how each category of mail is to be routed.
- WHAT IT IS FOR:** To ensure fast, accurate routing so that mail is sent directly to the correct office or action desk.
- WHERE APPLICABLE:** In central incoming mail rooms, particularly. Some agencies receive mail in sufficient volume to justify this type of mail-routing guide at subordinate mail units, such as a major division.
- HOW IT WORKS:** When a mail-router is in doubt as to *where* a piece of mail should be routed, he can refer to the Mail Guide to determine the name or symbol number of the office to which the mail should be sent for action or for information.
- ADVANTAGES:**
1. Ensures accurate and prompt routing of mail.
 2. Ensures standardized routing.
 3. Helps to eliminate unnecessary control of routine mail.
 4. Indicates office designated to maintain each type of record, thereby eliminating tendency to duplicate files.
 5. Serves as a training guide for mail room personnel.
- HOW COMPILED:** The usual procedure for compiling a Mail Guide is:
1. Analyze incoming mail for a given period, usually a month, making a list of all types received. Arrange this *by subject* in alphabetical order.
 2. Indicate on this list the routing which the mail room thinks each type should receive.
 3. Have each office authenticate the list, deleting or adding routings and subjects as necessary.
 4. If differences occur as to who gets what, reconcile them at this time.
 5. Have an experienced mail router test the list by screening incoming mail against it.

6. When necessary rearrange the list and add cross-indexes to ensure quick location.

7. If desired, include as a part of the Mail Guide information on the types of mail which are to be controlled. Other information, such as designation of form letter for reply and name or title of official who will sign reply, can also be included.

8. Type the list on strip files or visible cards as follows:

| Subject | Action Addressee | Info Addressee | Control Without Follow-up | Control With Follow-up |
|---|------------------|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| C (The appropriate letter of the alphabet appears on visible card line or the top of the strip file.) | | | | |
| Claims | CA | CF | X | |
| Commendations | A | AR | | |
| Complaints | MP | MF | X | X |

9. If desired, the information may also be arranged by office to facilitate revisions. It is then placed on strip files, cards, or sheets as follows:

CODE: CB OFFICE: (Name of office appears on visible line)

Function: (Include a brief description of the office's mission)

Allotments
Appropriations
Bills, House and Senate
Budget, Bureau of
Charts, Financial
Civil Service Acts and Rules

10. Obtain final approval for the completed Mail Guide from each office concerned and from a responsible administrative official.

11. If additional copies of the Mail Guide are required by the agency, the cards or strip file panels can be reproduced by any available photographic process.

12. In many agencies a desk easel will be an efficient device to contain the Mail Guide. Small agencies, however, may find a simple list or vertical card file to be sufficient.

**KEEPING THE MAIL
GUIDE CURRENT:**

It is important that one person be given the responsibility for keeping the Mail Guide current, and for obtaining the cooperation of the operating offices to ensure that desired changes in routing are promptly reported by division or office heads. The Mail Guide in its entirety should be checked with all offices at least once a year.

MAIL OPERATIONS CHECKLIST

The questions are so worded that check marks in the "NO" column indicate the need for corrective action.

| | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| General Administration | | |
| 1. Are mail and file operations, if practicable, consolidated and physically located together? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Has an instruction or manual release been issued to define clearly the duties and responsibilities of the mail and file unit and of other offices with respect to mail operations? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Have the basic mail handling and labor-saving devices been evaluated and, when justified by careful studies, purchased and installed? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Have mail room lighting, ventilation, and lay-out been planned so that optimum working conditions and smooth work flow exists? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Are mail operations periodically reviewed to assure satisfactory service at a reasonable cost? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Incoming Mail Operations | | |
| 6. Do mail personnel report early so that the first mail delivery can be completed before or soon after regular working hours begin? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Can a large part of the mail be delivered direct to appropriate offices without opening the envelopes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Is routing information usually placed directly on the face of the letter or document rather than on a routing form? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Is a Mail Guide (Maildex) available, if needed, to determine accurate routing to action and information offices? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Do less than two working hours elapse between receipt of mail from the Post Office and delivery to an action office? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Is mail time-stamped only when it serves the purpose of protecting the interests of the Government and individual citizens, such as for bids and invoices? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. If a letter or document is time-stamped, is it stamped only once? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13. Is 15 percent or less of the total mail received being re- corded and controlled? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. If a system of control and follow-up is being used, is a maximum of an original and two copies of a control form sufficient for this purpose? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Do control operations take less than five minutes to per- form? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. At the time correspondence is filed, is the route slip or mail control form, if used, destroyed when no pertinent remarks are on it? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Is mail delivered promptly to action offices even though en- closures are missing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Are files which relate to incoming mail sent to the action office only on specific request? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. If an agency is assigning file symbols as one step in the mail procedure, have the requirements to make this an effective procedure been met? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. When mail is routed to several offices, is it delivered in sequence without being returned to the mail room for post- ing to a mail control form? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Outgoing Mail Operations

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 21. Do mail personnel remain after regular working hours to dispatch the mail received at the close of business? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Are outgoing letters reviewed only once in the agency for items such as enclosures, signatures, dates, and number of copies? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. When letters from different offices within the agency are addressed to one of their field offices, are they handled as bulk mail? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. If a chronological record of outgoing mail is needed, is an extra copy of each letter used in lieu of a log? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Messenger Service

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25. Is internal pick-up and delivery of mail performed on an established schedule that is sufficiently frequent to provide adequate service? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

| | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 26. Is the schedule planned to coincide with local post office pick-up and delivery schedules? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Are schedules, routes, and stops promptly adjusted to organizational and physical changes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Are copies of schedules and routes furnished to all offices served? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Do messengers sort interoffice mail en route, as it is collected, so that as much of it as possible can be delivered on that run? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Is special messenger service rigidly controlled and provided only when regular messengers service will not suffice? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Are special messengers assigned to a central pool, rather than to individual divisions or offices, and given additional duties to perform during idle time? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Washington: 1957