



### **Internal records management**

Request for information about how The National Archives administers the disposal of its own internal information.

### **Information provided**

Like other government departments, The National Archives has its own Departmental Records Officer with responsibilities for our internal records. I fulfil that role. I also have a Client Manager, with whom I liaise about the appraisal and transfer of records from our own file store to the archives (in the classes PRO, HMC and RW). Records are selected for permanent preservation by the Client Manager (in agreement with the Departmental Records Officer) in line with TNA's Acquisition Policy and usually by use of the Operational Selection Policies that are derived from it. Unfortunately, the records created by TNA and its predecessor body (the Public Record Office) do not yet have an OSP. However, the Acquisition Policy and a list of OSPs created to date can be found at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/>

Much of my team's recent work has been focussed on the implementation of our Electronic Records Management system. Hence there has been a pause in the review of paper records whilst we have concentrated on the new system and methodologies. This now means that we have two parallel systems in place, and I have a variety of documentation to illustrate what we do.

### **Paper file review**

The official "registered" files of The National Archives are recorded on a database. This records files created before 2003. The screen shot below gives you an indication of the information recorded.

This is the main finding aid for files, but it only has limited space for notes. Additional information about review decisions have been recorded on review forms such as **2ED Destruction Recommendations.pdf**. The reviews were normally carried out on a file-by-file basis, and recorded as such.

A more complete form would bring all the information into one place, which would facilitate answering external enquiries such as yours. **Blank review list template.doc** is the form I have passed to colleagues for some work in progress.

### Electronic file review

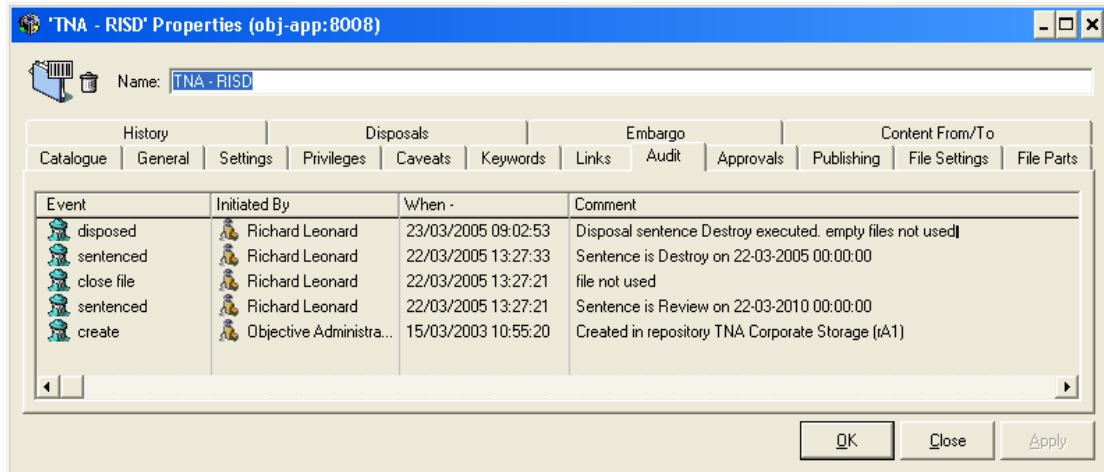
Much work has been done since the closure of the file **Administration: Registry: Electronic Documents and Records 2/ED/101.10.6**, cited above.

The National Archives now uses an electronic records management system (ERMS) to manage its electronic files. This combines storage in one system. However, disposal of a Word document does not necessarily mean that the information about the record is removed from the system. Hence it should be easier to report on records that are no longer held.

Emerging practice about the review of electronic files is moving away from the file-by-file review of records. Macro-appraisal of whole sets of files can make the process more manageable, although a risk assessment must be carried out when using this method to ensure that the risk of destroying records that are historically valuable and preserving records that are not is minimised. We designed our file plan on a functional basis, grouping files into activities such as Outreach or Financial Management. Decisions can then be applied to several files at one time, perhaps reflecting business needs for outreach work, and legal requirements for financial information. The system still uses the idea of a file, or container, to group several documents, eg spreadsheets. We are not using file in the MS Windows sense.

The file plan was designed in 2002, and actually started being used in 2003. With such a new system there is very little that is due for disposal. However, a review of the file plan revealed several files that were no longer necessary. These empty files were then closed, as a mock disposal exercise. The file **F0004921 Objective reports.pdf** shows a couple of the reports that are possible.

The audit trail for the individual files can give more information, such as the comment at the top of the list "Disposal sentence Destroy executed empty files not used", indicating that a number of files were processed at the same time.



You can also see that this is a multi-stage process. The file has to be Closed, Sentenced, and then that sentence Executed. Other sentences include Review, or Archive.

These different states mean that reports can be produced at various stages, for instance for consultation with our Client Manager.

Date of disclosure: 1 November 2005