A STUDY OF THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION

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A PROJECT WORK PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND ARCHVIAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF ARTS (MA) IN ARCHIVAL STUDIES

SEPTEMBER, 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION

I certify that this project work is my own original work. Where references have been made to views and analyses of others full acknowledgement is given. This study submitted with the approval of my supervisor has not been presented either in whole or part to any educational institution for the award of any degree.

Signed.............................

Candidate

Date.....APRIL....20,....2020.

Counter Signed...........................

Supervisor

Date....APRIL....20.,..2020....

Signed...........................

External Examiner

Date..............................

DEDICATED TO

My Mother, Mary Kissei and Uncle, Mr. Benny Kissei

PREFACE

As a partial fulfilment for the award of a Masters of Arts in Archival Studies, the Department of Library and Archival Studies, University of Ghana, Legon requires that graduate students passing out should present a project work in any subject related to records management and archives administration. The study is focused on the Records Management System in the Public Services Commission's registry, and a feasibility study of computerising the registry to bring about effectiveness and efficiency of the system to aid decision making.

In the course of this study, much help has been received from several quarters. This places me in debt of gratitude to many people.

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor M.S.K. Agyei who made many things possible for me. His direction, useful criticisms and skilful guidance contributed immensely to the success of this work..I also record my appreciation to Dr. Pino Akotia for his numerous advice and Mr. Harry Akussah for making available to me some relevant materials.

I again express my profound gratitude to Miss Allswell Gifty Brown, the department Librarian for the indepth assistance she gave me during the period of data collection the Public Services Commission.   Many others helped, and therefore will wish to express my gratitude to all especially Mr. Isaac Aggrey , Miss Sussie Mettle and Mr. Akwesi Anane Mensah.

Finally, I would like to express my profound appreciation to Mrs Gladys Aggrey, Secretary, Management Services Division for typing the script for me.

ABSTRACT

Information management is an important element in the total development of a nation. Although African governments acknowledged this fact little or no effort was made in the solving of the problems of poor information management.

In Ghana, the inefficiency in the public sector could be partly attributed to poor management of records. Clearing, the records keeping system established in the colonial era can no longer cope with the complex and growing challenges of modern administration.

The cost to the machinery of government depending on the poor records systems cannot be measured. The systems have also deprived the government agencies the needed information for administration and development. It has undermined their ability to formulate, evaluate and maintain continuity of policy.

The Public Services Commission is an important agency of government with personnel management functions. The study will establish that the responsibilities and executive functions of the Commission had led to increasing burden on the records management systems in operation. The study is to bring to the notice of the Commission the need for it's record management systems to be restructured and computerised in order to stimulate greater efficiency in the formulation and implementation of government policies and programmes.

Proposals on the computerising of the records management systems would be presented with recommendations that it would lead to efficiency and effectiveness of the record systems.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Records, even the older ones are needed by a government for its work. They reflect the origins and growth of a government and are the main sources of information on all its activities. They constitute the basic administrative tools and also a means of evidence of financial and legal commitments of the government. They embody the official experience that the government needs to give continuity and consistency to its actions, to make policy determinations and to handle social and economic as well as organisational and procedural problems. In short, they are the foundation upon which the government structure is built. Thus government's aim at achieving political and socio-economic efficiency in its administration depends on the creation, use, maintenance and disposition of its records.

Records once created or received, move through a series of processes until they are not much needed and then finally disposed. That is records go through the process of current, semi-current, inactive and disposition. The process of creation, maintenance and use, to disposal is what is known as the records life cycle.

Records management can be said to be the systematic way of acquiring, organising and controlling the access to and protection of an organization's information. It could be captured on conventional media or it could be by means of computer from its creation, through its use to its permanent retention or legal destruction.

In recent times records centers and archival institutions or services have come under much pressure because of the increase in the volume of records produced as a result of increase in work, staff and complexity of work in the modern age.

As record creation has increased, so has the demand for access to these records. Modern records center services have to deal with vast amount of material and have to find ways and means of making use of their information content rapidly and accurately.

In this context, a record management service cannot ignore the importance of computerizing the service. The additional power which computerization gives to the management of any record service is of great significance to the success of that service.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Records management is the process of controlling, directing and handling recorded information. Today, the concept of records management involves the collection of useful documents, the orderly filing, storing, protecting and maintaining of data and information, the systematic processing, disseminating, controlling the flow and retrieval of documents and the orderly disposition of records.

The modern records management is in essence, a continuing cyclical activity which is made of phases; the first phase is the origination of records (creation and gathering), the second phase being the storage (disposition and maintenance) the third phase being the retrieval (use and transfer) and the fourth phase being the disposition (destruction or archival storage).

These records are sources of evidence of the policies and activities of the organisation. They demonstrate and confirm the decisions taken by the organisation, the actions carried out in the course of business and the results of those actions. The concept of records management is relatively a modern concept. The term was used not until in the mid twentieth century.

To Emmerson, records management is " an administrative system by which an organisation seeks to control the creation, distribution, filing, retrieval storage and disposal of those records which are created or received by that organisation in the course of its business"[1] Emmerson further explains records management as "the development of a programme to control records throughout their life from creation to ultimate disposal either as waste-paper or as an addition to the archives of the creation agent"[2]

According to Penn and Morddel, records management is "the Management of any information captured in reproducible form that is required for conducting business."[3]

The Records Management Bulletin (Issue No.82 October 1997) states that "Records Management is the management process for records to ensure that effective and efficient production, organisation, storage, retrieval, dissemination and final disposal of records, regardless of medium, to achieve a business benefit."[4]

For Schellengberg, records management is concerned with the whole life span of the records. To him, the objective of efficient records management can be achieved only if attention is paid to the handling of records from the time they are released to the time they arrive in any archival institution .[5]

For Ellis Judith, records management is concerned with complete, accurate and reliable documentation of organisational activity for current purposes. It is also concerned with selective retention and destruction of records in circumstances of massive information overload. [6.]

Computerisation of the registry system of the PSC means computer-based information system. It therefore involves the use of database management system for the management of the records in the registry.

A computer may be defined as "a Mechanical or electrical device for processing information. This makes it quite clear that a computer is something relevant to the work of those who deal with information. It is not an instrument solely, or primarily, of use to mathematicians or natural term "Computer" does not describe the most characteristic action of the machine in its outward relationships, though it may describe the internal methods which it uses."[7]

The Computer-based information system comprises six parts- hardware, software, data/information, procedures, communication and people. The fourth component includes manual and computerised procedure and standards for processing data into usable information.

A management information system comprises computer-based processing and/or manual procedures that provide useful, complete and timely information. This information must support management decision making in a rapidly changing business environment.[8]

A database management system is a computer based system for defining, creating, manipulating, controlling and using databases. A database is a collection of integrated data organised as bytes, fields, records and files. Database management systems are replacing the old file management systems and are thereby improving data integrity and independence and reducing data redanduncy.[9]

Therefore an "automated records system" is a records system that uses Electronic Data Processing (EDP) equipment and procedures to accomplish some or all of its functions.

An automated system consists of computer hardware, software, written records machine-readable records and printer. [10]

It should be made clear however that literature on records computerisation is limited and even in the developed countries. There is limited

literature on the of Public Services Commission's computerised registry. Even on the manual system only a few exist.

In an earlier work done by Gbagbo Kwame Maxwell K; " An Evaluation of the Records Management Systems and Services in the Public Services Commission", he found out that most of the modern techniques required to manage records were not available in PSC and Ghana in general, therefore leading to the ineffective registry system in Public Services Commission (P.S.C) He suggested measures to check and improve the system.[11]

In another work by Rosemond Anima Ansah et al, found that although Records Management Improvement programme was introduced by the Records Office Restructuring Team in 1993 to improve the old system, the users have not adhered to the new registry practices and procedures thereby making them ineffective. They therefore suggested that users should adhere to the registry practices and procedures to make the new system effective.[12]

Both research works fail to link the cause of poor records management process or procedures to modern technology like the use of computers and for that

matter computerisation of the whole registry system. Therefore the effectiveness and the efficiency of the new system in the Public Services Commission can be linked to computerisation of the system.

However, the literature worked on so far substantiate the assertion that the field of records management has been explored. The contributions of the writers are enduring and useful in any attempt to learn about record management in Ghana and Public Service Commission in particular.

The present work is to look at the newly installed records management system in the PSC and undertake feasibility study of computerisation of the system the in Public Services Commission's registry.

Registries for the purposes of the present argument, are examples of specialised data banks. They are placed where large records are stored in safekeeping and can be drawn upon by appropriate users. When the information in the data bank is stored in the traditional forms (paper) record officers have generally found that it is a slow and technically demanding job to extract relevant items.

RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

a . Misfiling or inorderly manner of records keeping delay decision making.

b. There is often delay and time wasting in retrieving documents for policy making and implementation.

c. Untrained staff lead to misfiling of documents.

d. Computerised records system will lead to improvement in the efficiency of the storage and retrieval system.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

a. To conduct a review on the literature of records management and records automation.

b. To study the registry systems, mail and correspondence management, storage and retrieval systems and file movement of the Public Services Commission

c. To undertake a feasibility study on computerisation of the above systems and how it will improve and increase the storage and retrieval system of the Commission.

d. To make recommendation to the management of the Public Services Commission based on the findings and output of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study would be based on the following set of methods:

a. Literature review on books, manuals, articles, materials on Internet, and CD-ROM databases.

b. Data collection

- Interview with the staff of Public Services Commission
- Research on documents, on records automation
- Observation of other relevant information based on the researcher's interaction with the staff.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope refers to the extent to which the study will cover. Specifically the scope of the study has to do with.

a. The nature and the functions of the Public Services Commission.

b. The analysis of the different ways of creating or receiving, storing and retrieving records in the Public Services Commission.

c. A feasibility study of a computerised records system for the Commission.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher is limited by financial support in carrying out the research. Again the period for the research is short, for a comprehensive and detailed work. The literature on computerised system in the field of records is limited in Ghana, therefore it is not possible to exhaust the importance or present much literature on the feasibility study.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will prove the necessity of changing the manual system of records keeping to a computerised system for efficiency in the organisation and

management of records in terms of storage and retrieval of information at any given time in the Public Service Commission. That by computerised system, misfiling and loss of documents will be minimised in the Commission. The result of the study can be generalised to all records systems in the public sector.

Finally, it will serve as basis for other or further researches in the field of records management and computerised records systems.

POPULATION

All users of records or information in the Public Services Commission.

SAMPLE

The users of the registry (P.S.C.) and the registry staff.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The thesis will be organised into five chapters:

Chapter one will deal with the Commission's vision, mission and objective, the institutional set up and functions and responsibilities of the Commission.

Chapter two, will deal with Public Services Commission records systems.

Chapter three, will do a feasibility study of a computerised records systems of the public Service Commission and collect relevant data for analysis.

Chapter four will deal with analysis of the data collected.

Finally, chapter five deals with the recommendations of the research.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION

1.0 The public services in Ghana is composed of all services including those in

any civil office of government, the emoluments attached to which are paid

directly from the consolidated fund or out of moneys approved by

Parliament. These are:

a. the Civil Service

the Judicial Service

the Audit Service

the Education Service

the Prisons Service

the Parliamentary Service

the Health Service

the Statistical Service

the National Fire Service

the Customs, Excise and Preventive Service

the Internal Revenue Service

the Police Service

the Immigration Service; and

the Legal Service

b. public corporations other than those set up as commercial ventures;

c. public services established by the constitution; and

d. other public services as Parliament may by law prescribe;

The concept of a Civil or Public Services Commission seems to have evolved in most countries as the protector of a politically neutral, efficient and merit oriented civil/ public services system.

The areas handled include recruitment, promotions, transfers, discipline and generally the personnel management and appellate requirement of civil and public servants. The rationale for this endowment has been to safeguard a permanent, neutral, professionally efficient system that will survive and provide continuity in the administration of national affairs over successive governments. Ghana's Public Services Commission seems to have evolved from the same concept and ideals as in other countries.

As a central personnel agent of the government, the Public Service Commission (PSC) is expected to operate under three identifiable roles. These are advisory, functional guidance and service roles.[1]

Under the advisory role, the PSC is required to advise government on personnel principles and practices to enable government to formulate its personnel policies.

The PSC then operationalise the personnel policies by developing appropriate procedures and rules and regulations and communicate them to other agencies of the government under the functional guidance role.

The service role requires the involvement of the Commission in the implementation of some aspects of the personnel function such as employment of certain categories of public officers.

In the absence of a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) which will ensure among others, databank for personnel sources of information in the Public Services, the Commission, has not over the years been able to monitor and evaluate the performance of state agencies involved in the management of the human resources.

An interim Public Services Commission was established in 1948 to advise the Governor of Ghana on appointments and promotions in the public services. Soon after its establishment, the Commission evolved policy guidelines to ensure that all qualified and suitable Africans received preference over expatriates.

The commission's work was so laudable that in 1949, a Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Africanisation set up under the chairmanship of Sir Reginald Saloway, the Chief Secretary, recommended the establishment of a statutory Public Services Commission. This Recommendation was approved, and by Order-in-Council No. 2094, the Public Services Commission was established to advise the Governor on appointments, promotion, transfer, dismissal and disciplinary control of public officers. The Commission started its work in 1951.

By law, the Commission was supposed to advise the Governor, yet the Governor was not duty bound to act in accordance with the Commission's advice. Under the 1957 Independence Constitution, the power of appointment, promotion, transfer and discipline was vested in the Governor General, acting on the advice of the Public Services Commission. Subsequent legislation enabled the Commission to execute its decision in the name of the Governor-General without reference to him.

With the statutory power the Commission attained its full strength as an executive body with powers of appointment, promotion and discipline which neither the Governor-General nor the Prime Minister ever questioned. However, the 1960 Republican Constitution took away the Commission's powers of appointment, promotion and discipline and vested it in the President. At the same time, the Commission was transformed into a Civil Service Commission.

The Civil Service Act 1960 (C.A.5) and the Civil Service (interim) Regulation (LI47) further limited its area of operation to the Civil Service. Regrettably in August 1965, the Public Service Commission itself was dissolved.

The National Liberation Council (NLC) which overthrew the First Republic in 1966 passed the N.L.C.D. 363, which re-established the Commission. This decree gave the Commission increased powers, which were later entrenched in the 1969 constitution. Towards the end of the NLC Government, the Commission's area of operation was broadened to include all public boards and corporations of non-commercial venture.

During the Second Republic, the Commission again lost certain powers. The second military regime of the National Redemption Council (NRC), however, restored them. The Third Republic under Dr. Hilla Limann maintained the personnel management functions of the Public Services Commission.

Under the 1979 constitution there was a provision that on the advice of the Council of State, the President would appoint the Public Service Commission consisting of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and such other members as parliament would prescribe.

The Provisional National Defence Council Law 42 (PNDCL 42) which came into force on 31 December, 1981 enlarged the composition of the Public Services Commission from four to eleven. The Commission's power of appointment into the public services and those of discipline were, however, reduced. During the fourth Republic, the Commission's functions were broadened. This is embodied in the Public Service Commission Act 1994, Act 482.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has a Confidential Registry, Examination Registry, Secretary's Registry and the main Registry which include the Archives (which actually contains personal files). These registries are all storehouses for information contained in files.

Any storage system in a storehouse should have a purging process.
A system which is not purged of non-current material systematically and regularly impedes records retrieval. It must be noted however that, there is often delay and time wasting in retrieving important document for policy making and implementation. Sometimes such documents are not found at all while that particular document is available but could not be found because of

misfiling or the inorderly manner in which records are kept in the Commission. The effect of these on the Commission has been the slow nature in formulation of policies and decision making, and destruction of important documents due to mismanagement of these documents.

1.1   THE COMMISSION'S VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVE

a. VISION

In the light of its constitutional and legal mandate, the Commission is viewed as an independent central agency equipped with the capacity to provide professional advice and guidance to the public service on personnel policy and management matters as well as on institutional capacity building issues. This is to facilitate the realisation and sustainability of an efficient and effective public service system, as envisaged under the 4th Republican Constitution. [2]

b. MISSION The Commission is given broad supervisory, advisory, consultative and regulatory powers to enable it bring about a just, credible and good order in the areas of procedures and criteria for appointments to public offices; standards and guidelines on salary, terms and conditions of employment in the public services; manpower planning, development and utilization; the promotion of public service-wide efficiency, accountability and integrity This will ensure that human capacity, especially, within the entire public services is lifted to the commanding heights of excellence and dependability.

c. **OBJECTIVE**   To take all appropriate steps, within the framework of its constitutional and statutory mandate, to promote the establishment of its functions and responsibilities.

1.2   **INSTITUTIONAL SET UP**

i.   The Commissioners

ii.   The Commission's London Office

iii.   The Commission's Secretariat (Seven Functional Divisions)

a. Office of the Secretary

b. General Administration and Finance

c. Training and Human Resources Development and Manpower Planning;

d. Policy Analysis, Research, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation;

e. Appointments and Promotions;

f. Petitions, Appeal and Grievances;

g. Examinations

The Commission consists of the Commissioners. They are the Chairman the Vice-Chairman and three other members who are all full-time members of the Commission.

There are four other members of the Commission who hold office on part-time basis only. They support the full-time Commissioners. They include the Chairman of the National Council for Tertiary Education; and three other persons with experience in the operation of the public services. The President in consultation with the Council of State appoints the Chairman and the other members of the Commission.[3]

The Chairman is the over all head of the Commission. He has the Policy, Analysis Research, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation Division directly under him. The Vice-Chairman being the next in command, also, apart from his main functions has the Manpower and Human Resources Development Division under him.

Next in command in terms of authority is the Member I. He also has the Appointment and Promotions Division under him. Next to him is the Member II. He has the Petitions, Appeals and Grievance Division and the Examination Division under his control. The Member III is next in terms of authority. He/she has the Finance and Administration Division under his/her control. (See appendix D.)

The Commission has an out post in London headed by a Director of Recruitment to deal with the recruitment of qualified Ghanaians and expatriates from Europe and North America. The London office has full responsibility to recruit on behalf of the Commission qualified professionals and other degree holders into the administrative class in the civil or public service.
In this connection, it has authority to make offers of appointment to such professionals after fully satisfying itself of their registrable qualifications.

In addition to this, the London office prepares lists of candidates overseas for interview for appointment into the public services or those who are due for promotion within the Civil Service in the case of officers serving with the Ghana mission abroad. The functions of the office in London do not end with the recruitment only but sees to the arrangement of the recruit's passage to Ghana.

The Commission's secretariat is headed by the Secretary of the rank of a Director. The Secretary reports directly to the chairman of the Commission. He is assisted by Administrative Officers and others in the Executive ,Clerical and Secretarial grades.

The office of the Secretary of the Commission is administratively responsible for all the activities carried out by all the divisions mentioned above in the Commission and co-ordinates these activities as well. It also organizes full house meetings of the Commission.

The General Administration and Finance office is responsible for the provision of logistic support services to all the other divisions in the Commission. It also performs the normal general administrative work. It manages and controls the activities within the Registry (records), Accounts, Transport, Procurement and all other administrative work. A Director heads the division.

The Training, Human Resources Development and Manpower Planning division is also headed by a Director. The division is responsible for the assessment of the training needs of the Commission's staff and other public servants, and also determines the suitable institutions for training and manpower development.

The Policy Analysis. Research, Statistic, Monitoring and Evaluation Division has the responsibility of providing a standard frame work for evaluation and classification of jobs in the public services and undertake research to assess the manpower requirements of the public services using information from educational institutions and other sources.

The Appointments and Promotion Division advertises vacancies in the public service, examines application filled by candidates on the PSC Form 2 for posts in the public service, arranges interviews and gives recommendation for appointment of successful candidates. It examines recommendations from Heads of public service organizations for promotion of candidates.

After all interviews are completed, a selection board submits a report to the Commission for approval or disapproval by all the commissioners. If approved, the chairman then signs the "Record of Decision" before letters of appointment are issued out to successful candidates.

The Petitions, Appeal and Grievances Division receives petitions and appeals from aggrieved public servants and submits the merits and demerits of each case for a decision to be taken on them. It also examines and approves schemes of service submitted to the Commission by the public service.

In addition, the division evaluates certificates awarded by institutions outside the country to determine their equivalences and qualifications to posts within the public services. It also examines applications on break-in-service and submits recommendations to the Commission.

The Examinations Division is headed by the Controller of Examinations. It organizes examinations for the various categories of civil and public servants. These examinations, include the limited competition for promotion into various grades and classes in the civil service.

Another category of examination is the qualifying examinations for the up grading in the secretarial class in the Civil and Public Service. Sometimes, the Boards, Corporations, Banks and other educational institutions use the services of this division to conduct their entrance and promotion examinations.

1.3 FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Public Services Commission since the colonial period has over the years assumed various dimensions in terms of scope, coverage and activities to encircle other public organisations. As a result, successive governments have interfered at various stages to restructure and amend the functions and responsibilities of the Commission. Currently the Commission is operating under the Public Services Commission Act, 1994, (Act 482).

The functions of the commission are as follows:

(a)   to advise Government on the criteria of appointment of public offices as well as persons to hold or act in public offices;

(b)   to promote efficiency, accountability and integrity in the public services;

(c)   to prescribe appropriate systems and procedures for the management of personnel records within the public services

(d)   to identify, explore and promote the recruitment of suitable personnel into the public services, acting in collaboration with educational authorities.

(e)   to undertake planning of the manpower requirements of the Public Services, using data from the educational institutions and other sources;

(f)   to improve recruitment policies and techniques by introducing modern
        methods of judging suitability of officers;

(g)   to conduct examinations and interviews for appointment in the public
        services or within public corporations to ensure uniformity of standards
        of selection and qualifications.

(h)   to provide a standard framework for evaluating and classifying jobs in
        the Public Services;

(I)   to review the organisation structure and manpower requirement of
        agencies and bodies in the public services and advise Government on
        such manpower rationalization as may be in the Public Services;

(j)   to oversee the human resources development activities of the public
        services organizations to career development in the Public Services;

(k)   to advise Government on the principles and procedures for determining
        salaries and other conditions of service with the Public Services;

(l)   to prescribe a standard framework for the provision of incentive
        schemes to promote higher productivity.

(m)   to conduct in collaboration with training institutions, personnel research into human resources management in the Public Services in order to improve personnel practices and their utilization in the Public Services; and

(n)   to perform any other duties assigned to it under the Constitution or any other enactment.[4]

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2.0 **INTRODUCTION**

Records Management embraces many activities; the creation or collection

of useful documents, the orderly filing, storing, protecting and the

maintenance of data and information, the systematic processing,

disseminating, controlling, flow and retrieval of documents, and the orderly

disposition of records.

2.1 **RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Records are the foundations on which the administrative structures of an

organisations are built. It must therefore be seen that the management of

records is the cornerstone of any organisation's ability to provide service to

user community and its ability to ensure accountability.[1] Records are

needed as evidence of the policies and activities of organisations.

They demonstrate and confirm the decisions taken by the organisation, the actions carried out in the course of business and the results of those actions. They provide information for the day to day management of the organisation.

Records management is the development of a programme to control records throughout their life from creation to ultimate disposal, either as wastepaper or as an addition to the archives of the creating agency. [2]

The benefit to be accrued for proper records management are; it saves cost by the reduction in office space and staff time allocated to retrieving records; it also improves efficiency, effectiveness and performance.

In 1993 P.S.C. benefited from the restructuring exercises of the registries as part of the Records Management Improvement Programme in the civil service. With this support, the registry of the Public Services Commission has been broken into four (4) namely; the Confidential Registry, the Examination registry, the Secretary's Registry and the Main Registry which also houses personal files "archives" for some categories of grade in the Civil Service.

2.2. MAIL CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

The bulk of the records in P.S.C. comes through the mail/ correspondence either by the post office or by hand delivery.

On average about twelve (12) of such correspondence are received everyday. There has been a reduction in the receipt of mail/ correspondence due to reduction in the functions of the Commission particularly in issues relating to appointments and interviews of most of the lower grades.

The clerk in the Main Registry is charged with the opening of letters, He/she opens and registers such letters. After 3.00 p.m. the letters are sent to the Confidential Registry which services the Chairman of the Commission. The clerk at the Confidential Registry attaches the mail folder from the Main Registry to the confidential mail folder and sends them for circulation among the Commissioners. The main folder finally goes back to the Main Registry.

The letters come back to the Main Registry by the main folder, after which they are sorted into subject areas and then sent to the schedule officers.

The schedule officers acknowledge the receipt of the letters by means of the mail dispatch notebooks. The schedule officers do their own filing after working on these letters. This led to many misfiling since the schedule officer have no formal training on filing system. In some cases the letters were not filed at all. This led to a lot of reminders from organisations and individuals particularly on issues of delays in promotions.

Correspondence created in the PSC is reproduced in five copies. The original copy goes to the addressee, a copy is placed on the working file, while another copy is kept on the float file which is circulated to all the schedule officers. The other two- (2) copies are placed on file known as "surplus letters".

2.3 FILE MANAGEMENT

File management is the handling of any information captured in reproducible form that is required for conducting business which has been filed or placed in a folder to prevent its destruction but for easy identification and retrieval for use.

To Emmerson, it is "an administrative system by which an organisation seeks to control the creation, distribution, filing and retrieval by that organisation, in the course of its business."[3]

File management could be said to be a process of grouping related units of records of a particular subject into a file. It has a title peculiar to itself which is commonly used in the office where it is kept. A record series may consist of one volume or a whole filing system containing many hundreds or even thousands of files sometimes, classified according to a filing scheme, and with a common finding system.[4]

The files used in the PSC registries have the following information printed and recorded on them:

Department's name;

File title ;

Related files;

File movement markings;

File number;

(See Appendix E.).

2.4 CREATING A NEW FILE

When a letter or document is received in the Main Registry, the registry staff in charge check whether an appropriate file already exists. They do this by checking from the file index to see which heading the letter may be relevant to.[5] If no appropriate file exists, then a new file is opened and given a number and a title. No new file may be opened before the supposed correspondence is received.

If a new file is required, the registry staff will have to think carefully about what it will contain and how it will grow. The important point is that each file is related to a single subject or transaction. The reason for the careful decision on the file content is that if the scope of the information on the file is too narrow and specific, it may tell part of the story. Too many of such small files make it difficult for action officers to understand or get the full impression of what is going on, and cannot be sure of what the whole information is. A file which covers too many issues is also not easy to be used. The user will have to search through a mass of papers to get to the needed information. Moreover, the file of that type grows quickly and a new volume will have to be opened frequently making the existing problems worse. When a file grows very quickly, it is a sign that the file title is too broad and needs to be broken into more specific titled files.

Most of the created files in the PSC are policy files. Two officers of the grade of Higher Executive Officer (HEO) do the creation of new files in the registry. When a new document come into the registry, these officers examine the letters or the document to see if there is in existence already an appropriate file. Where a file exists, the document is filed on the appropriate existing file. On the other hand where there is no such file the a new folder is called for and a new file is opened.

2.5   THE CONTROLLING AND MONITORING OF FILE MOVEMENT

It is the responsibility of the registry to safeguard the files which are in its care. This can only be discharged if there are sufficient transit checks and controls in place. In order to be effective, the records office or registry identifies the location of every file for which it is responsible. Thus, each time a file moves this fact is recorded. The file movements are monitored on file transit sheets that are filed in the file transit book, on transit ladders that appear on file covers by means of file movement slips and through regular file censuses.[6]

Files are issued to action officers in at least two circumstances;

a.   a document arrives in the records office or registry, is recorded and filed and the file is passed to the officer;

b.   the officer requests the file in person or by telephone.

Users sometimes return files to the registry as soon as they finish using them. The registry staff checks to see whether any returned file contains mails. If so, the file copy is filed immediately and any loose papers firmly attached to the treasury tag. The fact that the file has been returned to the registry is noted on the transit sheets and on the transit ladder.

Next, the minute sheet is checked if "bring up" action is required. This must be recorded in the bring up diary. If the file is to be passed to another officer, department or ministry, this is noted on the transit sheet and the file dispatched.

If there are no outstanding instructions for action, then the file is put away immediately. No file, other than those due to be "brought-up" for the next day is left out unfiled in the registry at the end of the day.

When a file is lost the following registry steps are taken:

- the head of the registry contact the user to whom the file was last recorded the in transit record and ask him or her to trace it;

- if this fails, a note is circulated to all officers in the organisation asking them to check whether they have the file;

- if the file is still be found a special search could be initiated by an officer with authority to ensure that the search is effective. The search is repeated until the file is found. A record is kept on the areas that have been searched.

- as soon as the registry staff learn that a file has been lost, they indicate the relevant transit sheet with the words "missing file". A list of lost files is maintained.

In the PSC when files get missing, the registry staff consults the schedule officer on that schedule. It has become a normal practice that, schedule officers keep files until they have finished with all the work on them. Sometimes since they believe that there will be a follow up action on the decision taken they do not send the files back to the registry.

2.6 CLOSING FILES

In the PSC, files are closed when they become over five years or three centimeter (cm) thick or the file contains document more than one hundred and fifty (150) pages or when a new part is opened, if it is necessary to continue the subject. Handling bulky files is inconvenient and can cause storage problems. There is a danger of tearing the seams of files covers and ultimately damaging and even destroying the papers they contain, if files are allowed to grow too large in number. Closing is done by writing boldly diagonally across the form cover of the file the word "CLOSED". The closures include the last page minaret sheet marked closed. So is the file transit sheet also marked closed and the date for the closure of the file is written.

2.7 CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

In order to ensure that records can be easily identified and retrieved, they must be organised and controlled in a way that meets the requirement of all the users. This applies equally to records received from outside the organisation and those created within the organisation.

The records are classified purposely to improve identification and retrieval of the records. Classification in records management is the logical and systematic ordering or arrangement of records using numbers, letters or combination of both for records indentification.[7]

The reason for records classification is to provide a framework which;
- makes filing faster and more consistent;
- makes finding of information quicker and cost efficient;
- provides continuity and support decision making
- promotions information sharing among users.

However, the system of classification should be such that subject identification would be precise and clear. The scheme of classification is in accordance with the major functions and objectives of the organisation.

There are various classification systems which include: the Alphabetical, Numerical, Alphanumeric, Chronological, Geographical and Keyword classification.

In the PSC registry, the system of classification used is the keyword classification system. The keyword system is used in the PSC for policy and operational files because it provides an accurate yet flexible means of subject retrieval, which meets the needs of officials who make and implement policy. It is one of the most widely used and versatile conventions in governmental records management systems. It makes use of a controlled vocabulary or keyword list, which establishes the choice of words used when classifying papers or indexing files.
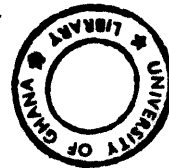
The keyword system is based upon a controlled set of index terms or keywords that are managed centrally. New keywords could be added only when it can be demonstrated that they are necessary, either to describe a new or unforeseen area of work. Without a central control, there would be a danger that people would index files under their own index term, which could conflict or overlap with existing terms.

The size of the keyword list must be kept as small as practicable without losing precision. In this way not only will the maximum efficiency of retrieval be obtained, but users will quickly start to remember the keywords for the areas with which they deal. This will make retrieval easier and quicker for both the user and registry staff. Each keyword covers one or more specific field of knowledge, subject or activity.

The keyword consists of a single word or combination of words or phrase. e.g. BENEFITS, STAFF CABINET, JUNIOR STAFF, REFORM PROGRAMME, STAFF STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT. Before the selection of keywords for the formation of Thesaurus, one has to critically analyze the organisation concerned, its functions, objectives and goals which the thesaurus is going to deal with.

The functional analysis helps in the determination of the words or phrase, which suit better function, and objectives of the organisation. It must be noted that users of the records are most of the time part or contribute greatly to the selection and the formation of the thesaurus and also avoid the use of homonyms and synonyms, however where such words are to be used scope notes such as "use for" or "see also" are provided. Each keyword chosen can be used to generate a registered number of a relevant file.

Example:

503	=	BENEFIT
102	=	STAFF
906	=	JUNIOR STAFF
207	=	CABINET
308	=	STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

It therefore means that; JUNIOR STAFF BENEFIT can be represented by

906/503. The functional area and the series determined for PSC are as follows:

FUNCTIONS	**SERIES**
1. Administration & Finance	AB
2. Appointment/Promotions	AC
3. Examinations	AD
4. Planning/Monitoring/Research	AE
5. Scheme of Service	AF

A typical example of a classified file with a functional area attachment is:

AC/43/267/04 for Senior Blood Organiser.

AC	Appointment & Promotion
43	Blood Donor Organiser
267	Ministry of Health
04	Senior Blood Donor

2.8   **INDEXING/CODING**

Indexing has an important role in the efficient functioning of a registry. It facilitates the location and retrieval of documents and files. Another way for identification of files within the filing system is the use of colour coding labels. Here colour-coding label can be affixed to individual file folders in the filing system. Different colour file folders can be used for the same purpose or for different record series.

In the Public Services Commission, the file diary is used to record the files opening date, indexes and titles. For the complexity or scope of the records handled by the PSC's registry, the colour coding is not in use to identify different records series of files though the Commission's registry uses file folders with different colours.

2.9 STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS

The storage and retrieval system is the process by which data or records after it had been processed is kept for future use. The storage of documents and files and the process, like the indexing and coding system also help in easy identification and retrieval of the documents or files.

In the P SC, the registries use manual system of storing and retrieving of the document, which will mean therefore that there is the possibility of misfiling and therefore delays in the retrieval system. Equipment often used is the steel cabinets with or without fireproof facilities. In the PSC, seventeen (17) steel filing cabinets are available for the storage of files in the Main Registry. Most of the cabinets are not locked though they contain important and sensitive information. It therefore gives an idea about their state of insecurity. Anybody who gets access to the registries can easily pick files from the unlocked cabinets and can easily identify the type of information contained from the titles of the records.

It is only the Examination Division registry that has better security system of steel cabinets, which are under lock and key. The keys are kept with the Controller of Examinations. The cabinets in the Examination Division registry contain documents such as Examination results and result slips.

In the PSC, retrieval of records is done by the use of the file diary.
In the first place, the storage equipment have indexes relating to the files coded on, them, this enables easy location of the documents. Therefore anytime a file is requested, the registry personnel consult the file diary to know if such a file has been opened. If it has, then the location is determined by looking for the appropriate storage equipment, which has the index relating to that file. A search is then conducted in the filing cabinet to retrieve the document to the action officer who asked for the file, by following the laid down rules, filling a form to certify that the file has been handed over to the action officer.

The arrangement of the files in the cabinets contributes greatly to the easy retrieval of the files. In the PSC, most of the files in the filing cabinets were resting on one another. This delay retrieval processes since some of the files hide under others

2.10   **DISPOSITION**

According to Schellenberg, the term "disposition" embraces all acts taken with respect to records that determine their ultimate fate. This fate may be transferred to a record center for temporary storage or to an archival agency for permanent preservation, reduction in volume by micro photo graphic means or outright destruction.[8]

The Government creates large quantities of records each year which should all be kept as long as they have legal, administrative or historical value to the nation. They must be destroyed as soon as they cease to have value, or if they have ongoing value, they should be transferred to the Records Center or to the National Archives. This is done to find solution to inconveniences created by the volume of the records and personnel as well as time needed to manage them.

The Director of the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) takes decision as to what records should be destroyed or transferred to the Records center or to the Archives. He does so in consultation with the relevant officials of the Ministry, Department or the Commission in question.

Disposition schedules are the means by which these instructions are communicated. There are two classes of schedules There are general schedules covering records relating to common agency functions such as finance, accounting or motor vehicle maintenance and the specific schedules relating exclusively to the records of individual organisations or establishments. Records offices will be issued with the specific schedule relating to their own organisation as with copies of relevant general schedules. In most cases the schedule will indicate that the closed files should be transferred to the Record Center after a period of time has elapsed.

In the registries of the PSC, there are no records retention schedules for records disposition programmes. It therefore means that all records are mixed up, be it active, semi active or inactive. All the records, active and inactive are stored in one and the same filing equipment in steel cabinets.

The Examination Registry houses mostly security and confidential documents such as examination results. This registry has at least a general policy on records disposition. Examination scripts are normally destroyed to ease the registry.

With the credit system in PSC examinations, application forms letters for complains and concerning examination results are kept for two years before destruction. In the Main Registry, the personnel files, which are partly known as "Archives" are inactive records but there is no disposition programme for them.

2.11   **FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY OF THE PSC REGISTRY SYSTEM**

The following weaknesses of the system were found. They are as follows:

- There is a lot of misfiling in the registry system of the PSC as a result of wrong grouping of functions in the Commission;

- Wrong heading or title of files

- There is no effective control mechanism for file movement;

- Over packing of files in cabinets;

- Keeping of files at the offices of the action officers after usage;

- Easy access to files by anybody due to free entry and exit of the registry office of the Commission.

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**A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE COMPUTERISATION OF THE PUBLIC
SERVICES COMMISSSION'S RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
(REGISTRY)**

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the feasibility study on the computerisation of the Public

Services Commission existing manual system. Rowley indicates that the object

of the analysis phase of a systems analysis and design exercise is the

establishment of the requirement of a system that is to be acquired, developed

and installed. If a good system already exists, she continues, then the

emphasis in design will be on "everything that the existing system does and

computerizing or re-computerizing it more effectively"[1]

It could be said from the previous chapter that the Public Services Commission's

manual registry systems are fairly well defined therefore the computerisation of

the registry systems can be based on the existing manual systems. It is

believed that the computerisation will iron out the few problems of the current

registry system like delays and time wasting in retrieving documents for

decision making as a resulting of misfiling or inorderly manner in which records

are kept in the Commission.

The writer is of the view that the computerisation of the current system should be seen as a way of making the system function more effectively and efficiently.

The chapter would therefore put forward the range of requirements for the design of a computerized system for the Public Services Commission's registry system, taking into consideration all that has been discussed earlier. For time limitations, the chapter would only dwell on a package of requirements which would form the basis of any future design, selection and installation of a computerised registry system for the Commission.

3.1   OBJECTIVE OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The objective of the study is to gain a clear understanding of the existing manual system, its shortcomings and to determine where improvement can be made by means of a computerized system.

It is believed that in the new system, the amount of time required to locate and retrieve files to be up dated or for decision making would be reduced by eighty percent (80%). Again with the new system, a new and proper procedure would be built-in in the system for updating and controls to reduce errors and misfiling.

3.2   INTRODUCING TECHNOLOGY IN THE GHANA PUBLIC SERVICES

Unlike developed countries, the introduction of computer applications in developing countries particularly Ghana was characterised by inconsistencies, lack of co-ordination and inadequate assessment of need, resulting in waste and frustration.[2] By the close of 1978, twenty two (22) computers were shared or rented by departments, ministries and organizations which did not have installations.[3]

These departments and ministries were using the computers mainly to solve their individual data processing problems. This fact still existed in most departments and ministries today.   Computers are under utilized for only word processing functions. As at now the Public Services Commission has seven (7) computers. Six (6) are in good condition and one is faulty. Yet all these computers are under utilized since they are used mainly for word processing. (See Appendix C).

3.3 **MANPOWER AND TRAINING**

Personnel engaged in Information Technology (I.T.) work, particularly in the public sectors have not grown in the same rate as the rate of computer proliferation in Ghana. Today one can find computers in some small offices and even some individual homes. Yet the personnel to use these computers to their maximum capacity fall far below expectation because of no proper attention to the development of personnel in the field of information technology.

In the Civil Service of Ghana, information technology personnel are categorized into three – systems personnel; programming personnel and computer operators. The manpower requirements for these categories of personnel in the Civil Service had gradually been increasing since 1976.

TABLE 1: ESTIMATED MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS 1976-1980

DATA PROCESSING STAFF	**1976**	**1977**	**1978**	**1979**	**1980**
Systems	13	15	17	19	20
Programmers	38	45	52	59	66
Operators	35	36	41	44	47

On the contrary however, as can be seen from Table 2, recruitment and staff strength had never matched requirements.

TABLE 2: PROCESSING STAFF STRENGTH FOR 1963, 1978 AND 1987

DATA PROCESSING STAFF	1963	1978	1987
STAFF			
Systems	0	4	3
Programmers	0	10	12
Operators	2	20	22

The situation may be blamed on the lukewarm and uncoordinated approach to the training in computer skills and the unattractive service conditions for such personnel in the civil service as compared with the parastatals and private sector.   The first and second cycles of the educational ladder in the public sector comprising primary, junior and senior secondary schools, technical and vocational institutes in Ghana have no inputs of IT in their training programmes. Some vocational and technical institutes in the private sector however offer some training in aspects of IT though they lack adequate resources.

The major public institutions engaged in formal training in computer skills are the Universities and the polytechnics. Complementing the efforts of these are some specialist training institutes such as the Management Development and Productivity Institute (MDPI) and the Institute of Accountancy Training. In addition, some computer vendors also offer some training.

The Central System Development Unit (CSDU) is responsible for providing training to civil servants in computer skills. This training is essentially tailor-made and is done on the job. Central System Development Unit staff are sent to man and train departmental staff after systems has been installed. Given the rate of automation in the civil service and the dwindling staff resources of the CSDU, one can expect a yawning gap in the installation of systems and the training of personnel to man them.
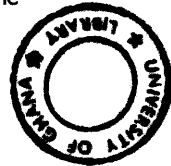
No doubt, the IT manpower and training requirements of the country particularly in the civil service are not being met. There is the need for a co-ordinated and accelerated training programme in the short term to address the problem. In the long term, the educational programme of the country, particularly in the public sector should take advantage of the proliferation and the affordable prices of computers and introduce IT training at almost every stage of the educational ladder in the country.

3.4 PROBLEMS OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM

There is a lot of misfiling in the manual system due to wrong groupings relating to functions. For example a file which is to be opened under AC series for appointments /promotions was wrongly opened under AF series for scheme of service. It therefore means that it will be misfiled during filing and for that matter cannot or will take more productivity days before it can be retrieved for an urgent or important decision.

In some cases too the file titles do not reflect the contents of the files. The control mechanism to check and control file movement is also thrown out of gear, as registry staff do not use the transit sheets for recording files released to action officers. Also the file transit slips used to record file movement among action officers to determine the location of the files is not also being used by the action officers. Another control system, the file census has not been conducted for some years now. All these controls have not been effectively utilized partly because of the repetitive nature of these control mechanisms and their boring nature at times.

In the Public Services Commission Main Registry, a cabinet houses five or six ministries or department files. Each ministry might have about fifty (50) or more files. This means that more files than necessary of these ministries are all in a cabinet. The worst of it is that these files of the ministries are not arranged accordingly but are mixed up.

To retrieve a file means that one has to flip through a series of files before one can locate a particular file. In some cases, the files cannot be retrieved because of the mix up and the overlap.

Again action officers sometimes enter the registry and pick files they need for their report without notifying the registry staff or filling the transit sheet. Sometimes these files are never returned to the registry but are kept in the cabinets of the action officers and are only released upon a request from one of the Commissioners. (" Bring up" instruction;) procedures for updating files are not clearly defined and sometimes mistakes do occur in the updating.

3.5   THE USE OF COMPUTERS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS

In view of the problems mentioned above, a call for a computerization of the existing system is a laudable one to make the system function more effectively for prompt decision making and also to up grade itself to modern trends.

For quick storage and retrieval of files, it is suggested that a hybrid of a Relational Database Management System (RDBMS) and a Text Retrieval System (TRS) would be most appropriate to solve most of the problems mentioned above. This will give the computerized system the benefit of the enormous structured facilities of RDBMS and the power of free text indexing and retrieval of TRS.

The late 1960's and early 1970's witnessed a number of milestone in software data Management technology. As the growing number of computer application demanded and afforded more encompassing, powerful and efficient data management systems, higher-level file organisations emerged to alleviate the mismatch between the increasing by complex multi-key information file facilities provided by the basic access methods in an operating system, namely sequential, direct, and indexed sequential access methods. I order to find a

solution to the mismatch evolved the Generalised Data Base Management Systems (GDBSM) which the Relational Data Base Management Systerms (RDDMS) is a part.

In the early 1980s, the Relational Software Incorporated introduced Relational DataBase Management Systems (RDBMS) called ORACLE which strive to be almost identical to structured Query Language/Data Systems (SQL/DS) at the logical user level. The RDBMS have enormous structure facilities. The RDBMS also have the ability of joining data from several files to generate a report.

The SQL/DS was introduced by International Business Machine (IBM) in the early 1980s. The SQL/DS represents a data base as a series of relations or tables. This is done via convenient data definition language in either on-line or batch form. A relationship is established logically between two tables by defining two fields common in each table. The SQL is used to define or create a user view or sub scheme as one tables derived from several sources or tables.

The SQL is a Text Retrieval Systems (TRS). Text Retrieval Systems are, systems set up to aid and speed up retrieval of data from the storage area of the computer system. An example is the SQL Text Retrieval which is an extension of text retrieval functionality of ORACLES.

The hybrid system would reduce the problem of repetition in data entry, which is one of the problems of the manual system. The relationship established between and among files in the computerized environment does not call for repetition of the process of entry in the system of the same data any time it enters the system. This ultimately improves the integrity of the data, since the most up to date data will always be available as a result of only one update which will be reflected in the whole data base.

The Relational Database Management systems have the capacity of establishing security measures to protect database files from unauthorized access. They are capable of establishing levels of security over the information in the database and thereby resolving the issue of restricting access to only registry staff.

The RDBMS easily allows for screen formatting which can lead to the customization of the data entry screens. The Text Retrieval Systems on the other hand afford its users the facility of free text indexing and a powerful information retrieval capabilities and facilities of the two systems, grafted into a hybrid, therefore would be the most advantageous.[8]

The computerization of the current manual system in the registry will therefore mean that most of the problems occurring in the manual system will be solved including the wrong grouping of relating functions and the fact that sometimes file titles do not reflect the contents of the files. This will be corrected by the refusal of the system to accept the data input until the correction is done.

The control mechanism will be handled by the automatic updating of the file movement without the registry staff or action officer necessarily filling the transit sheets or slips over and over again. With the larger storage capacity, storing more files from the various ministries and departments will not be a problem and will create more office space for other administrative purposes.

OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED SYSTEM

3.6 DATA ELEMENTS AND FIELDS

The current manual system uses a set of data elements but this needs to be restructured for the purposes of the computerization of the system to achieve more efficient retrieval and management report generation.

The following are the data elements for description at the individual file :

- File title or description or subjects;

- File reference number;

- File dates.

In the hybrid systems, the type of information and the structure of it to be stored determine the types of fields to be used.

There are four major fields' types;

a. Character field use for recording alphabets and numbers is used for recording file title or description and also as reference numbers for the individual files.

b. The numeric fields used for recording all information that involve numbers like reference numbers and sequential numbers.

c. Date field is for recording or storing all data that has to do with dates on which the events occurred.

d. The fourth is the logical field, used for storing information that has to do with answer of either yes or no or representing a true or false value.

3.7 **FIELD LENGTH**

The format for the length of space for storing data in a field could be either fixed or of variable length.

The fixed length format is where the amount of space reserved for each entry in the field is the same whether the character can fill all the space or not. This format sometimes led to waste of storage space since where the field contains few characters and therefore occupies not all the space located, the rest of the space will be wasted as it cannot be used. On the other hand, the variable length format is where fixed space is not allocated to a field but the computer uses up only the amount of space that any field needs.

The benefit of using fixed – length format lies in the fact that they are easy to use and they afford the possibility of moving data from one computer to another and for that matter data exchange and transfer is easy. However, the fixed-length formats waste diskette space since all entries must be assigned a field length long enough to accommodate the longest item in the field. The shorter entries are therefore not able to use up the maximum space, resulting in waste.

The variable field length format on the other hand has the advantage of being economical on space on micro-systems where space is a crucial limiting factor. Space is not wasted because it is only the space that is needed that is used up. There is no pre-determined field length. However, they may make data transfer or system migration more difficult.

After a thorough analysis of the structure of the data elements to be stored and noting the possible range of variations, particularly the descriptions and the fact that the system would use a micro computer system in which space limitation will be crucial, the variable-length field format is the most appropriate for the proposed computer system.[9] The size of the system is a major consideration for the design of the computerized system particularly the database. The size of the system depends on the current volume of the information, the annual growth rate and for that matter the future size of the information.

In the PSC the present volume of information is quite large. However the rate of inflow of information into the Commission has reduced compared to the rate of inflow of information sometime ago. This is so, because some of the functions of the Commission in terms of recruitment's and promotions have been taken away to the Office of the Head of the Civil Service and other corporations and services.

With these, information on the present volume and the rate of growth of the volume of information helps the designer of the system to make a fair decision about the size of the hardware and to some extent the software.

3.8 **DATA ENTRY**

There are many ways of capturing data into a computerized system. It could be through the mouse by clicking, the keyboard by keying in the data and others. The layout of the screens could reflect the structure of the records and could provide prompts or menus to help the inputted.

The entry screen on the computer could be flexible enough to allow modification. The computer system could accommodate simultaneous inputting and retrieval of data. The in-putter could be able to search during data entry to check existing records for consistency.

Data validation mechanisms could be built into the system to ensure the following:
- presence of mandatory fields;
- that data conforms to an authority list which allows only pre determined formats.

Finally, the system could have a built-in screen editor and could be flexible enough to allow interactive updating.

3.9 **INDEXING**

Indexing is a process or means of providing information to help in locating a record or information. Information stored in computer memory is assigned addresses. Any time the index is recalled to the screen, the addresses allow the searcher to determine where the information is stored.

There are various options for indexing. It could be indexing each field on a whole line (as a single string of characters), or indexing each word in each field (free-text indexing) or a combination of the two techniques.

For the Public Services Commission's system, there would be the need for free-text indexing. All words within all fields should be indexed. The reason for this option of indexing is that though it would take as much space as the database, in the long run the enhanced advantages in the retrieval would off set the disadvantages of the much space consumed.

3.10 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The issue of access involves both the technical means to the information and personal means or access to specific parts of the information. The technical means to information is where access to the system is interactively on –line through a terminal with facilities for screen copies to be made.

The personal means is where access to information in the computerized system is restricted to the registry staff only. This can be done by means of password access system to prevent other people from having access to the database in particular. The system should again restrict access to confidential records to only designated officers by means of a special I.D numbers to separate the access of such records from the database.

3.11 RETRIEVAL OF INFORMATION

Efficient indexing goes with effective search capabilities of any computerized system Revival system could be by free-text, where the whole database is searched for words, phrases, or where retrieval can be restricted to specific fields. There are various forms of free-text searching. These include word searching, related terms, synonyms, range and Boolean logic searching. It is possible to combine these searching facilities. This enables quicker location of hard – to find retrievals. It should also be possible to search for information interactively with adequate on-line help facilities.

3.12 **OUTPUT**

Output would be basically both on-line to a monitor and printed hard copies. The monitor would be for viewing purposely alone but the hard copy would be for parallel use in the registry.

As a requirement, the computerized system must have a pre-formatted screen display and hard copy formats and must in addition provide the opportunity for user-defined formats. Finally the system should provide facilities for sorting information for display or print in varying formats.

3.13 **BACK UP**

Ordinarily, computer data is kept on-line, on hard disk, diskette or tape and copied periodically onto another diskette, or tape. This second copy is what is called the "back up". Should the working data be lost through any disaster, or any other means, the data can be fed back into the system by using the back up. In the absence of a back up, the data would have to be re-keyed from the original source which would be a duplication of effort and time of the staff.

Apart from the inconveniences to the staff and users when re-keying data as a result of loss of data, the reference services of the registry will come to a standstill if parallel manual systems are not in place.

The schedule of back up adopted by any system depends upon the financial and times resources available and the scope and nature of the data.

However, the cost of losing data through disasters and the man – hours that would be lost in re-keying data, coupled with the inconveniences to the users is so high that backup data on a regular basis at any cost is justified. To serve the purpose, for which they are made, back up copies need to be stored separately from the registry. The back up facility must be periodically checked for validity and consistency.[10]

3.14 PERSONNEL

If the staff of the registry should be trained in all the computer system procedures. It is required that they are conversant with the system well enough to know whatever they need to know what data to enter, the data base status and where all files can be found. The overall responsibility for the system should be placed on the supervisor of the registry who may serve as the system administrator. He/ she should have a special training to enable him/ her cope with simple system problems as and when they crop up.

3.15 SYSTEM DOCUMENTATION

The establishment of an effective and comprehensive programme of system documentation is the first and perhaps the most important step towards maintaining a productive automated system.

Apart from the hardware and software documentation which might be obtained from vendors, the internal documentation relating to the customization of the system is very crucial. Sound procedures for the operation of the computerized system must be explicitly stated.

Procedure for inputting data, indexing, updating indexes, printing hard copies, updating indexes, printing hard copies, generating reports and all the system activities need to be well documented. This will enable the staff to resolve minor problems that might crop up in the course of operating the system.

3.16 COST OF COMPUTERIZATION

This computerization of the registry is not without cost. The initial cost will be very high comprising the cost of computers, printers, specific or customized software application, networking cost if all the four (4) registries namely the Main Registry, Examination Registry, Chairman's Registry and the Secretary's Registry are to be connected.

Again, there is the need to train all the registry staff on uses of computers. The users, action officers also need to be trained. The costs of setting up the whole system will also be high. All these will mean higher cost to the Commission. The cost can be grouped into development costs, capital outlay and operating costs.[11]

3.17 **BENEFIT OF THE COMMPURTEISATION**

Computerization of the present system will mean that the new system will be able to store larger records and can be retrieved by appropriate people at a very high speed in a few minutes if not in seconds at the press of a few keys. The manual system is full of flip up through a lot of files before getting a particular file.

The new system will also mean increase in the rate of processing data into useful information for decision making. While in the manual system the process will involve a lot of activities at different stages and therefore slows down the processing speed computerization means the machine doing all these activities in a twinkle of an eye and for that matter the best system.

This factor of speedily processing is due to the fact that the system introduces streamlining process through elimination of unnecessary or duplicated data. The computerization has facility for combining processes and the use of the same data to generate different kinds of information by manipulation of the data. This can not be done easily in the manual system.

The new system also has the advantage of reducing errors in the input stage of data processing. The computer systems for the computerization would have programmed formats, which will detect errors at the inputting stage by giving error messages like "bad command" or "many parameters".

The new system has the benefit of simplifying the system to the users by making the system user friendly by the use of menu and help keys to guide users.

The system also cuts costs in the long run by way of creating more rooms for other administrative use. It also has the advantage of improving the security aspect of the records particularly confidential records, as the computers rely on the use of a password and I.D. numbers to prevent unauthorized people to access the information unlike the manual system where one can easily enter the registry to pick a file without the registry staff noticing.

3.18 **THE EFFECTS ON THE COMMISSION**

When the computerized system is introduced, the staff particularly the registry staff will be burdened initially since apart from their normal manual work, they have to learn and practice the computerized system until the time that they become used to the new system and it becomes operational.

The automation will reduce the amount of routine work that has to be done by the various grades of staff and therefore faster and quicker way of achieving results.

The automation does not reduce the number of staff but rather it paves way for more recruitment particularly the professionals like the system analysts, programmers and data entry clerks. What it does is to increase productivity in terms of efficiency in output and therefore makes the project viable.

In a developing country like Ghana, there is the belief that the introduction of computers into an organisation means redundancy and nothing more. However, it is believed that the computerization of the Public Services Commission registry will prove that, that is not the case but rather lead to improvement in the records storage and retrieval system for quick decision making and development.

3.19 **IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation of the project will be in phases. Phase one would be a continuation of the computerization of the Examination Division as some part of its records had already been computerized.

The second phase would be the Chairman's Registry and the final phase would be the Main Registry. All these conversions go with the training of the personnel handling the records in the various registries.

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CHAPTER FOUR (4)

4.0 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Here data collected through the questionnaire is looked into critically to know
the views of the users and the registry staff.

4.1 METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire method of data collection was used for this study, mainly
because it is easier and faster to administer. It is easier to get responses from
all the users and staff of the registry than to interview all of them numbering
about forty (40) people. With the questionnaire, they were given enough time
to supply all the necessary information than the use of telephone or personal
interview which may be very expensive in terms of cost and time .

In all the staff strength of the Public Services Commission is fifty (50) people
apart from the secretarial grades, drivers, messengers, labourers and
watchmen. Out of the fifty, five are Commissioners, the Chairman, his Vice and
three other Commissioners, two Directors including the Secretary to the
Commission and one Director on retirement. Questionnaires were not
administered to them because of their busy schedule or for a reason of being
on retirement. One Administrative Officer and one Executive Officer were on
course. Two other Executive Officers were on leave.

Therefore in all, forty questionnaires were administered. Eight (8) questionnaires to all the registry staff and thirty-two (32) to the users of the registry comprising of two Directors, four Administrative Officers and thirty-six (36) Executive Officers.

The response rate was a hundred percent (100%). All the forty questionnaires administered were returned answered. Two types of questionnaire were issued. One to the registry staff (eight questionnaires) and the other to the users of the registry (thirty-two questionnaires).

The registry staff questionnaire had two parts. The first part required information on grade, age, sex and work experience. The second part contained nineteen questions, some of which had sub-questions. All the questions required simple answers of "Yes" or "No" while other questions had optional answers to tick or underline.

The user's questionnaire also had two parts. The first part demanded grades, ages, sex, and work experiences of the users. The second part had twenty questions, some with sub-questions. All the questions demanded simple answers of "Yes" or "No" while other questions had optional answers to underline.

In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher had some discussion with some of the staff and also had a direct observation of the staff attitude and job performance.

The questionnaire was administered in May, 1999 and was collected within a period of one month in June, 1999. Computer was used to analyse the data collected using the Statistical Programme for Social Science (SPSS) for MS WINDOWS Release 6.1

(See Appendix A & B for Specimen Questionnaires)

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.2. RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND (USERS)

TABLE 1

SEX	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGES
MALE	23	72
FEMALE	9	28
TOTAL	32	100%

TABLE 2

AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
21-30	0	0
31-40	10	31.25
41-50	16	50.00
51-60	6	19.75
	-------	---------
TOTAL	32	100%
	-------	--------

TABLE 3

GRADE	NO. OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
Clerk	0	0
Executive Officer	2	6.25
Senior Executive Officer	7	21.87
Higher Executive Officer	5	15.63
Principal Executive Officer	9	28.12
Asst. Chief Executive Officer	3	9.38
Chief Executive Officer	0	0
Assistant Director	4	12.50
Director	2	6.25
Total	32	100%

TABLE 4

NO. OF YEARS IN THE COMMISSION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS:	PERCENTAGE
0-4	0	0
5-9	4	12.50
10-14	2	6.25
15-19	7	21.87
20-24	11	34.37
25-29	6	19.75
30-34	2	6.25
Total	32	100%

The above tables, show the sex, age, grade and experience of the respondents (users.) The study from table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents (users) fall within the age range of forty-one to fifty (41-50). It also gives an idea of the age group who would be using the automation system. This could help in any further research as to the reactions of people in different age group to computers, to prove or disprove the fact that older people dislike the use of computers.

It is clear from the data collected that the staff strength of the Commission is basically dominated by the Executive Class with the Principal Executive Officers dominating, followed by the Senior Executive Officers and then the Higher Executive Officers. The Administrative Class being the least in number of four Assistant Directors and two Directors.

One of the questions for the respondents was on their length of service in the Commission. It was observed that a higher percentage of the staff (34.37 %) fell within the twenty to twenty- four (20-24) year range. This was followed by those in the fifteen to nineteen year range (21.87%) then twenty-five to twenty- nine (25-29) has 19.75% five to nine years had 12.8% and the least were the ten to fourteen (10-14) years and thirty to thirty four years ranges, each with 6.25%.

4. 3   **USERS**

MANUAL SYSTEM OF RECORDS KEEPING

On the question number one on the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing manual system of keeping records in the registry, twenty-two (22) of the respondents indicated a negative answer, that is "No". The total percentage for "No" answer was 68.8% and 31.2% for "Yes" answers indicating that the existing manual system is not very well appreciated by the users of the registry's records system. It was however realised that most of the "Yes" answers came from people who are not in favour of the introduction of computers into the system with the fear of either leading to redundancy or not being reliable due to power failure or power fluctuation in Ghana as experienced recently.

This information on the reasons for "Yes" answers was got through additional interviews with such respondents. With the majority answering "No" there is an indication that they are not satisfied with the existing records keeping system at the registry therefore they are looking forward for a better system.

COMPUTERISATION IS MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT.

On the question number two, the respondents were asked to indicate either "Yes" or "No", whether computerisation of the records management system would be better and more efficient than the manual system. On this issue the respondents for "Yes" answers was 93.8% and "No" was 6.2% using the Statistical Programme for Social Science (SPSS) for MS WINDOWS Release 6.1

It therefore means that majority of the respondents (users) were in favour of the use of computers. It was again realised that the few users 6.2% who answered "No" were the lower grades with the fear of being sent home after the introduction of the computers.

RETRIEVAL OF FILES

The data collected and analysed shows that most of the users request for files all the time for any work that they do at the office. But as to whether these files are always possible to be retrieved from the registry for their individual schedule work is another question that needed to be addressed. 37.5% gave positive answers that they always get such files while 62.5% of the users gave negative answers indicating that there are problems with the retrieval of the records.

On the question number five on whether these missing files are found later when its use has lapsed, 90.6% said they are found when they are not actually needed and 9.4% said that they are often not found at all. It therefore confirms the desire of the users of the need of better system to improve their output of work.

The respondents again suggested that solution to the problem of missing files, the antidote to the "NO TRACE of files" is computerisation of the existing system of keeping records in the registry and a strict supervision of the laid down rules for requesting for the returning of files from and to the registry. Twenty of the total respondents on question six suggested computerisation as antidote and twelve of the remaining respondents suggested strict supervision of the laid down rules for requesting for and returning of files.

TABLE 5

TIME SPENT IN GETTING FILE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGES
Less than 5 minutes	6	18 . 80
Less than 10 minutes	13	40 . 60
Less than 15minutes	6	18. 80
Less than 20minutes	2	6. 30
Less than 30minutes	5	15. 60
	------	--------
Total	32	100%
	------	--------

90

From the above Table 5, it can be said that ten to fifteen (10 – 15) minutes are used to retrieve files for users. This can be said to be a waste of time and resources as compared to an automated system where within a minute if not seconds the file is located for easy retrieval within two or three minutes if a good file arrangement is in place.

COST, ACCURACY AND RELIABLITY OF COMPUTERISATION

On the issue of computerisation reducing cost in the future, in question ten was totally agreed by all the respondents that is 100% ; so is the issue of computerized information being more accurate and reliable for decision making in the Commission in question nine. This also recorded 100%, indicating that all the respondents believed that information from a computerized system is accurate and reliable, compared to information from a manual system of processing data.

TABLE 6

CAUSES FOR DELAYS FILES RETRIEVAL	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Misfiling	27	84.40
Untrained staff	4	12.50
Shortage of staff	0	0.00
Volume of records	3	3.10
	------	-------
Total	32	100
	-------	-------

From the Table 6, it has been indicated by the respondents that the problem of delays in retrieving files for processing and consequent delays in decision making sometime is due to misfiling, thereby making it difficult for the registry staff to be able to locate where the files are, for retrieval. The percentage for the misfiling was 84.4% while those caused by untrained staff was 12.5%.

Delays were also partly attributed to the volume of the records in the registry which is the least 3.1% for the causes of the delays in the retrieving of files. It is also clear from the table that the causes for the delays are not as a result of shortage of staff at the registry implying that the staff strength of the registry is good. All the respondents also agreed, that misfiling of records delays decision – making.

COMPUTER TRAINING

TABLE 7 VALUE LABLE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGES
Yes	2	6.20
No	30	93.8
	------	-------
Total	32	100 %
	-------	-------

The Table 7 shows that out of the 32 respondents, only 2 have had some form of training in computers representing 6.2% and 30 the majority have had no training in computers representing 93.8 %. It therefore means that a lot has to be done on training of the staff in computers to make the computerisation of the records system in the registry work more effectively and efficiently

4.4 RESPONDENT BACKGROUND (REGISTRY STAFF)

TABLE 8

SEX	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Male	1	12.50
Female	7	87.50
	-----	-------
Total	8	100%
	-----	-------

TABLE 9

AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
21-30	0	0
31-40	3	37.50
41-50	3	37.50
51-60	2	25.00
	----	---------
Total	8	100%
	----	---------

TABLE 10

GRADE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Clerical Officer	2	25.00
Executive Officer	2	25.00
Senior Executive Officer	2	25.00
Higher Executive Officer	1	12.50
Principal Executive Officer	1	12.50
	------	---------
Total	8	100%
	------	--------

TABLE 12

NO. OF YEARS IN THE COMMISSION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
5-9	2	25.00
10-14	0	0.00
15-19	1	12.50
20-24	4	50.00
25-29	1	12.50
30-34	0	0
	------	-------
Total	8	100%
	------	-------

The above tables 8,9,10,11 also shows the same items of sex, age, grade and experience of the respondent (registry staff). The study revealed that the registry is dominated by females who are seven out of the total number of eight. It also indicated from the data collected that the staff is dominated by people with the ages between thirty-one and forty (31-40) years and forty-one to fifty (41-50) years range with three people in each age range. Out of the total staff strength of eight staff two are in the fifty-one to sixty (51-60) years age range.

It could be said that the registry staff on average is evenly distributed in terms of grades. Two staff each for the Clerical, Executive and Senior Executive grades with the Higher Executive grade and the Principal Executive grade taking each for the remaining staff. The working experiences for the registry staff as tabulated in the table shows most of the registry staff falling between twenty to twenty-four (20-24) years of working experience, accounting for half or fifty percent (50%) of the total staff for the registry.

There are two officers with service experience between five and nine (5-9) years accounting for twenty five percent (25%) .The remaining two staffs, one falls within the fifteen and nineteen (15-19) years working experience and the other twenty-five and twenty-nine (25-29) years of working experience accounting for 12.5% of each.

4.5 REGISTRY STAFF

Manual System of Records keeping

On the issue of the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing manual system of keeping records in the registry, most of the registry staff believed that the existing registry system is good. Out of the eight registry staff, seven answered "yes" that is 87.5% and only one person gave a negative answer representing 12.5%.

Interviews after the submission of the questionnaire shows that they answered "yes" because there was the idea among them that the introduction of the computers means that they will have nothing to do therefore would be sent home. Again it was realised that they have had no training in computers and therefore have no idea about the benefits of computers and how computers will enhance their performance. The only negative respondent, who believed that the manual system of records keeping is not effective and efficient, compared to a computerised system of keeping records was a staff of the registry who has read much on computers and automation of records, though had not had a touch on computer. Yet believed it is better than the existing manual registry system.

REQUEST FOR FILES
TABLE 12

HOW OFTEN ARE	PERCENTAGES FILES ASKED FOR	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Very often	2	25.00
Often	4	50.00
Not often	2	25.00
	-------	---------
Total	8	100. %
	-------	----------

TABLE 13

HOW OFTEN DO YOU FACE PROBLEMS ON RETREIVAL OF RECORDS?

Very often	0	0
	6	75.00
Not often	2	25.00
	------	--------
Total	8	100. %
	------	---------

TABLE 14

RECORDS FOUND LATER?	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Yes	6	75. 00
No	2	25 00
	-----	--------
Total	8	100 %
	-----	--------

From the answers gathered from the questions asked, indicate that records are often asked for after the records have been kept at the registry. Four (50%) out of eight answered that records are often asked for and another two (25%) answered very often, while two (25%) answered not often.

On the issue of problems associated with retrieval of records, it was indicated that they exist. Six out of eight representing 75% answer positive as to the fact that such problems exist while two, representing 25% gave a negative answer, implying that such problems do not exist while. It is therefore clear that even if we should accept the two negative responses to be true, that fact still remains that some problems exist when it comes to retrieval of files in the registry. This is confirmed by the fact that 75% of the registry agreed that missing files are found later when their need for useful work has elapsed, and 25% indicated that such files are not found at all.

RECORDS SECURITY

The storage equipment used for keeping the records in the Commission registry is steel cabinets, 75% of the respondents believe keeping the records in these steel cabinets is very secure while 25% are not very sure so indicated, it is somehow secure.

On question number three on the issue of problems associated with retrieval of records, it was indicated that they exist. Six representing 75% answered positive as to the fact that such problems exist while two representing 25% gave a negative answer, implying that such problems do not exist. It is therefore clear that even if we should accept the two negative responses to be true, the fact still remains that some problems exist when it comes to retrieval of files in the registry. This is confirmed by the fact that 75% of the registry staff agreed to the fact that missing files are found later when their need for useful work has lapsed and 25% indicated that such files are not found at all.

LAID DOWN PROCEDURES

It was accepted by the respondents that there were laid down procedures for asking for the records and for returning of the records. However such procedures have not been followed. 12.5% indicated that the procedures are being used while 62.5% said such procedure are not often followed and 25% indicated that such procedures are not used at all as a means of retrieving records from the registry. It therefore means that files are issued without going through the laid down procedures or the system to monitor the movement of the files has broken down. File census has not be taken for a very long time.

FILE CREATION

Opening of new files depends on whether or not the incoming mails have no existing records. However on the average the time spent on creating a new file is about fifteen minutes which is a lot of time if compared to a computerized system where this can be done in two minutes

TABLE 15

AVERAGE TIME SPENT ON CREATING OF FILE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Less than 10 minutes	2	25.00
Less than 15 minutes	4	50.00
Less than 20 minutes	2	25.00
	-----	--------
Total	8	100%
	-----	-------

TABLE 16

TIME SPENT ON TRANSFER OF FILES

Less than 10 minutes	2	25.00
Less than 15 minutes	4	50.00
Less than 20 minutes	2	25.00
	-----	-------
Total	8	100%
	-----	-------

TABLE 17

TIME SPENT ON TRANSFER OF FILES

Less than 10 minutes	0	25.00
Less than 15 minutes	4	50.00
Less than 20 minutes	2	25.00
	-----	-------
Total	8	100%
	-----	------

The time spent on the transfer of files from one registry to another on average is less than fifteen minutes. This was indicated by 50% of the respondents while 25% of the respondents indicated less than 10 minutes and 25% less than 20 minutes according to the table 15. This it is believed, could be done faster when all the four registries of the Commission are networked by means of Local Area Network.

The time spent on processing files is on the average between fifteen and twenty (15-20) minutes by the manual system. This can be done in less than two minutes by means of computers. It will need just some few key-ins and a press of the enter key to up- date the records.

TRAINING

Although 75% of the registry staff indicated that they have received some training at the registry, that is on the - job training, yet they think it is not enough to enhance their performance while 25% said they have not received any training at all. All the registry staff (100%) indicated the need for special training particularly training on computers to enable them cope with the proposed computerisation of the existing system.

INTRODUCTION OF COMPUTERS

On question number nineteen, most of the respondents 75% believe that the introduction of computers to the registry will improve the storage and the retrieval of records, while 25% indicated that they do not know, they have no idea. On the impact of the introduction of computers into the registries, in question nineteen sub-section "b", 37.5% believed that the computerisation will reduce cost in terms of money and time. Another 37.5% indicated that it will not reduce cost, the remaining in 25% indicated "don't know". The indications show how ignorant the registry staff are in the knowledge of records automation.

On the issue of duplication, 37.5% supported the idea of duplication of work, 25% said there will be no duplication while 37.5% indicated that they do not know.

However 62.5% of the respondents (registry staff) indicated that the records would be more secured in the computers while 25% did not know the security of the records in computers. The rest of the respondents 12.5% indicated that records will not be secured in computers for a reason that power supply may fail. This factor could be solved easily by the use of stand by generator or uninterrupted power supply (u.p.s) system

4.6 <u>SUMMARY</u>

The existing manual system is not functioning well to serve the purpose for which it was established according to the users. It takes longer period to locate records for retrieval. It therefore delays access to relevant information for decision making. In some cases the relevant file could not be retrieved for writing of reports due to misfiling of files. This affects the final report and for that matter the final decisions to be taken on very important issues.

It is however believed that the computerisation of the existing manual system would help to find solution to all the problems associated with the existing manual system. It has been expressed by the respondents (users) that such automation of the existing registry system would in the long run reduce cost, create more space for other administrative use, provide accurate and reliable information as compared to the existing system which is full of repetition and therefore boring, leading to so many human errors.

However it was indicated that all the positive aspect of the proposed system could be experienced. In the Commission's registry only when all the staff particularly the registry staff are well trained, for that matter all the staff should be trained and should be made to follow strictly the laid down procedures of the registry.

CHAPTER FIVE (5)

5. 0   RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

The decision to automate should require an investment of time up front to ensure that the selected system meets the requirement of the records management processes and that of the Public Services Commission.

A plan or how to go about the conversion should be defined before starting the whole project of conversion. The planning stage will ensure that the cost, amount of time, and responsibilities required to convert, is made clear and visible. The conversion plan should include time and resources support for hardware and software preparation, workflow, the actual conversion and training.

Timetable charting should be used to identify and schedule the necessary steps, assist in the identification of the completion date and project terms, track progress, and manage the critical path of the project to ensure that the project is completed on time as planed for.

5.1 **SOFTWARE**

The records management software to be used must be installed and tested and may require de-bugging. Prior to entering any data, it is important to document the responsibility for each of these steps involved in the installation of the software for the Commission's project. If software is a purchased package, specific vendor responsibilities should be agreed upon in the contract that defines the relationship. In most cases such software pinched package is self – installable by the use of installation help. However if the system is to be developed in – house, then installation experts, system analyst should be contracted for the conversion.

For the automation in the Public Services Commission I recommend that the software should be purchased package since such a package should be cheaper than an in-house installed records management system.

After the installation of the software, the next step is to start entering data for testing purposes. All the steps involved in storage and retrieval of data should be gone through with the help of the functions and all the tasks could be performed. Any problem identified including non-functioning sections of the program and those difficult to execute should be documented and the vendor's attention should be called to it and have them solved. All these solutions should again be documented for future references.

Procedures for the software use should be made available. Any system, whether purchased or designed in –house, should have operating guidelines. The vendor or the in –house system analyst should prepare, the guideline in the form of a document which illustrates all aspects of the software system's functions and maintenance which should be made available or possibly displayed at the registry. These guidelines would serve as a reference base for all users and would be very helpful to new registry staff or users. Whenever the system is updated, the guidelines must also be updated to reflect the system's operation.

The help screen should also be available in the software system. The help screens are operating procedures that can be accessed while using the system. The help screens are used in place of the manual or the guidelines when problems arise. Tutorial programs should be provided to give step-by-step instructions in the operations of the software system. These can be good training tools for operators to learn the system without the help of an instructor when the system has been properly set up.

The software system should be a menu driven. The menu drive makes it possible for one to have access throughout the system by means of a list or "menu" of provided options. These menus should lead the user of the system through like a road map with a minimum amount of interpretation. With the menu drive, the users will be able to use the system without referring to the manual or the help screens.

5.2 **HARDWARE**

The hardware selection decision should be taken by the registry section of the Commission in conjunction with a system analyst to ensure conformance to the existing Commission's records management policy.

A number of considerations come into play when identifying the appropriate platform on which the records management software is to be run. Some of the areas that must be considered in the selection of a personal computer (PC) on which the software system should be run are:

(a) The minimum amount of Random Access Memory (RAM) required. This may depend on the volume of data to be dealt with in the Commission's registry.

(b) Hard disk drive storage capacity – what is the minimum storage capacity required? (Taking into consideration any additional software packages that may be used)

(c) What kind of floppy disk drive is required to install?

(d) Will you need to communicate with another Computer?

A Printer to print the stored data in the form of hard copy is part of the hardware. Whatever printer is selected should be compatible to the computer (PC) to be used. This may limit the choice of printers, therefore its advisable to select the computer (PC) and the printer together.

5.3 TRAINING

The training of the registry staff is very important. Without such training they can not use the new system and that will mean a failure of the whole project. One way to improve the effectiveness of the staff training is to contract the consultant or the Vendor from whom the software package was bought to train the registry staff. Ideally, training should be conducted in an environment that is free from distractions so that the trainees can focus on learning.

Illustrations in the form of charts, workbooks and other aids can be used as reminders of rules and guidelines that the trainees will have to refer to, on a continuing basis. Training should proceed from an introductory overview to more in – depth, hands – on experience, first explaining the reasons for the new system and how it works in general terms and its advantages over the manual system.

5.4 MAIL/ CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

All mail received in the Main Registry must be opened promptly under the supervision of the registry supervisor. The purpose is to protect the supervisor against accusation of important/letters enclosures going astray. When there is delay through the post, it affects the decision of the Commission on letters which need prompt attention and supervision. The supervision of the registry supervisor in this wise help to check such letters going astray. Results slips, certificates, deeds and other legal documents must be given special care. Such documents should be placed in separate envelopes when posting.

5.5 COMPUTER DATA STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL

There are three methods for organising files on the computer (data storage and retrieval). They are; the sequential, direct access and indexed sequential. The Sequential method is where data is stored and retrained in a sequential way. Thus if one want information in key field "k". The key fields are for data identification and location on the computer. The direct access method is where data is stored or retrieved (accessed) according to a unique identified item called a key field. [1]

The indexed – sequential method is where data is stored in sequential order, however the file in which the data is stored contains an index that lists the data by key fields and identifies the physical location on the disk. The index that lists the data by their key fields is called the data base index. The database index could have the identifiers key fields arranged in ranges of numbers 0001 to 1000, 100 to 2000, and so on. For computer to find the key field 6666, it would go first to the index. The index would give the location of the range in which the key filed appears (for example 6001 to 7000). The computer would then search sequentially (from 6001) to find the key field 6666.

The PSC computerisation of the registry system would be based on the indexed – sequential method because it is the best when dealing with large batches of transactions or letters which must be updated occasionally, yet users got frequent and rapid access to records. It is also because it is a combination of the sequential and direct access methods.

All correspondence received or sent out should be recorded on the computer using their file titles, dates, department names and file numbers as their identifiers – key fields. This would be done by recording all letters or documents received or sent out of the Commission according to the date or time received or sent sequentially taking into consideration, the content of the letters or documents for proper file placement. The computer will do its own automatic indexing for the letters recorded for easy and rapid retrieval.

5.6 CREATING A NEW FILE

When a letter or document is received in the main registry or record office, the registry staff in charge should check whether an appropriate file already exists. They will do this by checking from the database index created in the computer to know under which heading that may be relevant. If no appropriate file exists, then a new file is created and given a number and a title. No new file should be created before the supposed correspondence is received. Opening of files in expectation of future correspondence leads to waste of effort, of valuable file space, covers and most damaging of all confusion in the file index. If a new file is required, the registry staff will have to think carefully about what it will contain and how it will grow. The important point is that each file should relate to a single subject or transaction.

5.7 CONTROL OF FILE MOVEMENTS

In order to be effective, the registry must know the location of every file for which it is responsible. Thus each time a file moves this fact must be entered in the computer. The file movements should be monitored using the transit sheets and the information entered on the computer. The return of the files to the registry must be noted on the transit sheets and on the ladder. This should also be effected on the computer to reflect the return of the files.

On issue of action officers refusing to returns files to the registry after they have used them. The solution is that the registry should carry out file census every week to retrieve such files from action officers' offices after usage and the necessary entries must be effected to reflect on the computer.

5.8 **CLOSING OF FILES**

Files must be closed when they become over five years or three centimeters thick or the file contains document more than one hundred and fifty (150) sheets or if a new part is opened, if it is necessary to continue the subject. Closing should be done by writing boldly diagonally across the form cover of the file the word "CLOSED". The closures include the last minute sheet marked closed and the date for the closure of the files.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The study was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the registry's manual system of keeping records and how a computerisation of this manual system would improve the effectiveness, efficiency and the speed of the records storage and retrieval system. Also taken into consideration, is the existing problem of the manual system of the registry like the inadequate training programmes, misfiling of files and for that matter the retrieval problems and the delays or the refusal of action officers to return files after they have used such files.

The manual system, no matter how well designed or how effective they were, in the past, cannot meet the needs of today's requirement for faster access to data. Manual systems usually require a large amount of repetitive work and duplication of efforts. They are also error prone, time consuming and inflexible, thereby making them very costly to operate. While on the other hand, an automated system is easy to learn, requires little space to operate in, provide multiple search capabilities and it's easy to update.[2]

The conversion into a computerised system would not be much of a problem because of the similarities between the manual system and the computerised system. A database on a computer is like a filing cabinet in which the various drawers hold a folder of documents and the items in the folder cross-reference other drawers and folders where more information is available. The organisation of the materials in the drawers should be logical and should reflect the date for both collection and use. This logic is also reflected in computer data base system.

Diskettes and hard disk drives can become overloaded with information just like filing cabinets. The only difference is computer generated indices and access to files can still be very fast even when searching through a large volume of data. Therefore, it is necessary to separate information in the electronic environment into active and inactive files because of the large volumes of data.

With microcomputer records, active electronic files are generally stored on floppy disks in filing boxes next to the work station or on large capacity disk drives connected to the user's computer system for ease of access. This is similar to active paper records, which are often housed in the registers. Inactive or infrequently used manual records are often sent to Records Centres. Its equivalent electronic files are stored on magnetic tapes, extra hard disk or on diskette stored away from the user.

In both records management systems, the creators and users of the records determine the value and uses of the records. This illustrates the fact that there are definite similarities between the use of electronic files or data and the manual system.

The determination of which records to copy and which records to delete during appraisal should follow the existing retention schedule. Guideline for hardcopy records or the manual.

The following hard copy principles still apply to the electronic environment. [3]

1. All information that may be possibly needed "some day" cannot be retained. It is simply too costly in storage and subsequent retrieval effort.

2. Retained information should have a "reasonable probability" that it will meet some business objective in the future.

3. A conservative approach that does not involve taking long term business risks with information while obtaining short-term saving of space is best.

4. Systematic destruction of records not needed may have positive legal consequences for the business in the future.

5. Consultation with informed individuals about the value of the information to be retained is the best method of ascertaining value over the life cycle of the Information. Whereas manual file may require individual browsing of the information contents to determine long term value or storage volume,

6. electronic records generally have several indicators that can be used for this purpose. There is considerable standard environment from the operating system about records value, age, volume labels, directory names, file names, file extensions, date, size in bytes are all available for request. Simply issuing "directory" (of files) command will usually give the needed information.

The disposition and destruction of microcomputer electronic records follow similar practices that are found in hardcopy or film documents. The retention schedules that give guidance is followed in the same manner. Information on computers required by organisational directive, government regulation or legal prescription also undergo retention schedule electronically. Working with microcomputer records requires attention to their unique security issues. Password protection can be used against persons that do not know the correct character code, making a file irretrievable.

Hardware solutions exist such as blocks that attach to computer ports which make the operation of the computer itself impossible without a password. Also data disks and removable hard disk can be locked in file cabinets, safes or vaults.

The problem with electronic records however is that updating records means that previously existing information is lost. Electronic database operations may not provide for back copies or chronological files which can be referenced to obtain the original data. Information being entered into electronic storage can be totally wiped out by a power failure.

These problems can be solved however with constant backups daily on storage diskettes so that the updated one can also be backed up on different diskettes. Again the problems of power failures can be solved by the use of stabilizers or standby generators or other interrupted power supply (ups) system to support the computer.

Again the hard copy form of record keeping (Manual system) currently in use in the PSC should still be maintained but improved to serve as a hard copy back up to the computerised system. The use of computers in record keeping cannot therefore be overlooked due to increment in the volume of records, because of expansion of functions and development in most business organisation.
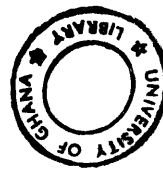
Registries for the purposes of the present argument, examples of specialised data banks. They are places where large records are stored in safekeeping and can be drawn upon by appropriate users. When the information in the data bank is stored in the traditional forms (paper, parchments etc), record officers have generally found that it is a slow and technically demanding job to extract relevant items.

Computers can speed up the processes of collection, handling and retrieval of information, and can also extend the range of information supply and use. Introducing computers may solve some of the problems of carrying out processes in the registry especially those, which depend on repetition of clerical work and may help the registry to be of more obvious and immediate value to its users.

Computerisation of record management is inevitable with the coming into being of various forms of automation to dominate administrative methods. The advancement of new technology may be obscured and delayed in some developing countries like Ghana but its eventual coming is a must and positive.

The advantages of computerisation have a cost, both in financial terms and in terms of change in the methods of work and attitudes of the staff. That is the

cost of acquiring computers and cost of training the staff on how to use the computers and attitudes psychologically since most people in Ghana see the introduction of computers into an organisation as a means of redeploying the unwanted staff of an organisation. However as it is necessary to invest in new equipment, so is it necessary to service and maintain equipment.

The system to be adopted must be a micro or mini-based hybrid system, which affords powerful dilating and retrieval capabilities, coupled with effective data sorting, manipulation and a fixable report generating facility. It must be an open system with net workable and up tradable capabilities.

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ESTIONNAIRE DESIGNED FOR REGISTRY STAFF OF THE PUBLIC
VICES COMMISSION FOR RESEARCH TO BE CARRIED OUT ON THE
ALUATION OF THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF THE PUBLIC
VICES COMMISSION AND A FEASIBILITY STUDY OF A
MPUTERIZATION OF THE SYSTEM

se read all questions carefully. You name is NOT required and any information
rded will remain strictly confidential and used for academic analysis only.
nks for your co-operation.

ITION/GRADE: ....

E: ....

: ....

. OF YEARS OF WORKING EXPERENCE: ....

Manual system of records management is effective and efficient. Do you agree?
'es/No (underline your answer).

How often are records asked for by users within a week ....

How often do you face problems of the location and identification, when
etrieving the records?

Are the records, which you are unable to retrieve, found later? Yes/No
f yes how often within a week ....

What type of storage equipment do you used for the records? (Open shelves,
:abinets, closed shelves (underline the type, it not indicated. Write the types).
....

How secure are the records in the equipment? (very secure, not secure,
omehow secure) Underline your answer.

s there laid down procedure for or retrieving records? Yes/No.
f yes how often are they adhered to...

On the average how many new files do you create per week.
....

9. How many files are destroyed or transferred to archives per month..

10. What is the average time spent for the creation of new files (minutes/hours)...

11. How many minutes /hours do you spend on the transfer of files to the records office?

12. How many minutes/hours do you spend on creating a file?

13. Is registry under staffed or over staffed? Yes/No.

14. Since you joined the registry have you receive any training? Yes/No.

15. If yes, do you think the training is enough to enhance the efficient performance of your duties.

16. Do you think there is the need for any special training for the staff working at the registry? Yes/No

17. Do you normally conduct file census? Yes/No. How ....

18. What other ideas, or suggestions can you offer as regards to the training of the staff ....

19. The introduction of computers into the records systems will lead to the following. Do you agree? Yes, No, Do not know. (choose one).

a. Improvement in the storage and retrieval of records ....
b. Reduction in cost, both in time and money...
c. Leads to duplication ....
d. Records would be more secured ....

QUESTIONNARIE DESIGNED FOR USERS OF THE RECORDS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICESCOMMISSION FOR RESEARCH TO BE CARRIED OUT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND A FEASIBILITY STUDY OF A COMPUTERZATION OF THE SYSTEM
Please read all question carefully. Your name is NOT required and any information recorded will remain strictly confidential and used for academic analysis only.
Thanks for your co-operation.

POSITION/GRADE:...

AGE:...

SEX:...

NO. OF YEARS OF WDORKING EXPERIENCE:...................................

1. Manual system of records management is effective and efficient. Do you agree? Yes/No (underline your answer)

2. Computerisation of the records management system would be better and more efficient than the manual system. Do you agree? Yes/No
   b. why?..

3. How often do you request for files from the registry? Write the number of times per week..

4. Do you always get the files when asked for? Yes/No.
   If no how often per week ....

5. Are the records, which you are unable to get, found later when the time for their use has lapsed? Yes/No. If yes how often per week...

6. Is there a laid down procedure for asking for records from the registry? Yes/No. If yes how often do you adhere to them?............................

7. How many minutes/hours do you spend in getting a file ....

8. What suggestion will you give as an antidote to the "NO TRACE" of files problem in the registry office...

Computerised information is more accurate and reliable for decision-making. Do you agree? Yes/No

10. Computerisation will reduce cost in the future in terms of money and Time. Do you agree? Yes/No

11. Computerisation of the records will affect the unique, originality and evidential value of the records. Yes/No (underline)

12. Do your request the files for official used only or for private use as well?...

13. What are the possible causes of the delays? Misfiring, untrained staff, shortage of staff, volume of records (underline one).

14. Do you think the registry plays an important role in the performance of your work? Yes/No

15. Have you had any training in the uses of computers? Yes/No.

16. In what condition do you find the documents after they have been released Do you for your work?..

17. Do you think the documents are stored in an ideal environmental? Yes/No

18. Do you think the registry is well equipped? Yes/No

19. Do you believe the training of the registry staff periodically well improve their skills and knowledge?...

20. Misfiring of records delays decision-making. Do you agree? Yes/No

STATISATICS OF COMPUTERS RECEIVED BY PUBLIC SERVICES
COMMISSION

ROOMS NO.	NO. OF COMPUTERS	YEAR RECEIVED	REMARKS
512	1	1995	Good condition
508	2	1995/1997	Good condition
IPPD	1	1995	Good condition
504	1	1998	Good condition
507	1	1998	Good condition
514	1	1998	Good condition
204	1	1997	Faulty

(SOURCE: PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION'S STORE RECEIPTS)

THE ORGANISATION CHART

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┌─────────────────┐                              ┌─────────────────┐
│   CHAIRMAN      │                              │  VICE CHAIRMAN  │
└─────────────────┘                              └─────────────────┘
        │                                                 │
   ASST. DIRECTOR 1                                    DIRECTOR
        │                                                 │
┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐
│ POLICY, ANALYSIS,│   │                 │    │ MANPOWER AND    │
│ RESEARCH, STATS.,│   │  OFFICE OF THE  │    │ HUMAN           │
│ MONITORING & EVAL│   │   SECRETARY     │    │ RESOURCES       │
│ DIVISION        │   │                 │    │ DEVELOPMENT     │
└─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘    │ DIVISION        │
                                               └─────────────────┘
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MEMBER (1)   MEMBER (2)   MEMBER (3)

DEPUTY DIRECTOR   DIRECTOR   CONTROLLER OF EXAMS.   DIRECTOR

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┌─────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌─────────────────┐
│ APPOINTMENTS AND│  │ PETITIONS, APPEALS│ EXAMINATIONS │ │ FINANCE AND     │
│ PROMOTIONS DIVISION│ AND GRIEVANCES  │ │ DIVISION     │ │ ADMINISTRATION  │
│                 │  │ DIVISION        │ │              │ │ DIVISION        │
└─────────────────┘  └─────────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └─────────────────┘
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UNCLASSIFIES (Upgrade as Necessary)	FILE NUMBER		
FILE TITLE			
INDEX HEADINGS			
PREVIOUS FILE NUMBER		SUBSEQUENT FILE NUMBER	
SENT TO	DATE	SENT TO	DATE

FILE CENSUS FORM

DATE..

	FILE REF. NO.	FILE TITLE	NEW LOCATION/OFFICER

FILE TRANSIT SLIP

Action Officer please complete this form and send it to the registry when you pass a file to another Action Officer so that registry can ensure that is records are accurate.

File no:..

File title:..

To:..

Date:...

Signature:..