

The Registry Application developed by Data Processing Department

The function of the Registry is to control all correspondence and files of the organization it serves. Those responsibilities include:

- Receiving incoming mail
- Maintaining a filing system (received and generated internally)
- Directing information to relevant sections for action
- Tracking the circulation of all internal files as well as files received from other ministries or departments
- Processing and dispatching outgoing mail.

The Data Processing Department addressed the challenge to create an automated registry system some years ago as Registries within the Public Service struggled to manage the flow of correspondence within their departments.

Initially, the Registry Application was a basic version recording incoming and outgoing correspondence thereby eliminating the need for incoming and outgoing registers. The information recorded was identical to that recorded in the manual registers namely correspondence date, reference number, sender and subject. Reporting was limited to printing a daily listing of incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Implementation of the very first version of the Registry Application took place at the registry sections of the Ministry of Labour, the Treasury department, National Conservation Commission and Data Processing Department. These Ministries/Departments were the testing grounds for further development.

The users, who were eager for process improvements, immediately realized that recording information only, did not address the issues related to managing correspondence. These include and are not limited to, routing and tracking files. Needs and systems analyses were conducted involving many departments over the years resulting in updated versions being released. With every new version additional functionality was incorporated.

The Registry Application was developed in MS Access and provides the user with the basic file tracking needs within governmental organizations. It has been custom made with government processes in mind. It is an uncomplicated, password secured system with minimal requirements. The Registry System is designed to replace most of the manual registry functions. These include registering incoming and outgoing correspondence and files, assigning correspondence to files, routing and tracking files, keeping track of archive files and generating daily reports for incoming and outgoing correspondence and files. The main advantage of a computerized file management system is that it can assist substitutes as well as permanent staff with locating documents, files and other bits of correspondence quickly and easily.

There are several parts to the Registry Application:

- Registering incoming and outgoing correspondence

- Registering incoming and outgoing departmental files and foreign files
- Browsing departmental files and foreign files
- Routing, Searching and Bringing-up files and Correspondence; Creating temporary files; Closing files
- Generating reports using a number of parameters for tracking files and correspondence; Listings of Main files, Temporary files, Bu files and Closed files
- Registering Archive files
- Adding users and their privileges to the system.

There is also an additional routing module designed for officers outside of the Registry section so they can input routing information when they pass on a file to another officer. The module is located on their desktop and this change is reflected in the module located in the Registry.

The Registry Application comes complete with an electronic user manual and maintenance provided by the Data Processing Department. Training is also provided to the users and customization, if determined necessary, can also be accommodated.

It is worthy to note that The Registry Application is not a Document Management Solution. Documents cannot be scanned, stored, electronically circulated and retrieved. This is beyond the scope of an Access application. The Registry Application is simply a tool that automates the registry processes for timely and efficient management of files and correspondence. Correspondence is received and with only a moment's notice that documents maybe required. It can be required a second after it has been received or a year afterwards. The document needs to be easily found and finding it should not be dependent on verbally querying individuals or the fragility of the human mind.

Regardless of what system is in place, a manual tracking system, computerized file manager or electronic document manager all Registries need to have taxonomy.

One of the ongoing challenges in developing the Registry Application is the need for standardized registry procedures within Government departments. File numbering formats for permanent and temporary files are non-existent. The application had to be designed to accommodate any type of file numbering format.

The success of the application does not only depend on its design but the cooperation of all officers to use the system as required. Failure to input tracking information electronically will result in work flow delays as in the case of the manual system where officers ignore request to fill out transit slips/ cards.

What is the future of the Registry Application? As new technologies emerge the next step is to develop a web-based registry application. This project has been initiated and development work has started. There are many advantages in justifying the development a web-based application. Firstly, the information is stored in an SQL database, which is more robust and can accommodate a larger volume of information than an Access database. Some Registries, notably Personnel Administration Division, have an

overwhelming amount of information and retrieval can be slow. Also, more users will be able to connect to the application at any one time. There will also be an improved user interface in an attempt to standardize user interactions so that the user will have a better experience in using the application in any Ministry or Department. The application will be easier to deploy and update for the developers as The Data Processing Department continues to strive for excellence in delivering a quality product and service to its customers.