The “Big Bang” of Government Documentation: The Future Has Arrived, and What You Can Do About It

William B. McAllister
Chief, Special Projects Division
Office of the Historian,
U.S. Department of State
Growth in Number of Countries

Growth in Number of IGOs and NGOs

Growth in Topics Susceptible to Diplomatic Negotiation

YEARBOOK OF THE UNITED NATIONS

- 1961: 1.79 kg, 813 pages
- 1979: 2.52 kg, 1,439 pages
- 2005: 2.28 kg, 1,716 pages!

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- 1979: 2.52 kg, 1,439 pages
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Growth of Department of State Bureaucracy

1961
38 Boxes

Source: Department of State Telephone Books
Growth of Department of State Bureaucracy

2009
54 boxes

Source: Department of State Telephone Books
Growth in the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Source: Embassy of the Czech Republic in the United States
Growth in the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2009
84 Boxes

Source: Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí
Growth in the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations

1961
37 Boxes

Chart 1. Organization Structure: Itamaraty 1961

Growth in the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations

2009
155 Boxes!

SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DAS RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES segundo o Anexo II do Dec. 5.979, de 6 de dezembro de 2006

Ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores

Source: Brazilian Ministry of External Relations
Growth in Federal Agencies Represented at U.S. Embassies Overseas

In **1961**, an average of 7 federal agencies were represented at a medium or large U.S. embassy.
In 2009 an average of 30 federal agencies were represented at a medium or large U.S. embassy.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>US Population</th>
<th>Non-Postal Executive Branch Employment</th>
<th>Blue Collar ¹</th>
<th>White Collar</th>
<th>Clerical ²</th>
<th>Non-Clerical White Collar Employment</th>
<th>Resident to Employee Ratio</th>
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<td>170M</td>
<td>1.8M</td>
<td>450K</td>
<td>1.35M</td>
<td>1.013M³</td>
<td>337.5K</td>
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<td>1965</td>
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<td>450K</td>
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<td>1.537M</td>
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<td>122.7K</td>
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¹ 1950s and 1965 numbers estimated based on various reports from that era and are conservative estimates.
² Average throughout the 1950's
³ 1950s numbers based on widely reported percentage of the Federal white collar workforce in that era, and recent OMB Budget Analytical Perspectives.
⁴ Source: OMB Analytical Perspectives 2013. “Fifty years ago, most white-collar Federal employees performed clerical tasks....”
⁵ “Most” estimated at 60% based on reports from that era and fact the personal computer revolution did not occur until the early 1980s.
⁶ Source: OPM Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce, May 2001
⁷ Source: OPM Fedscope
Growth in the Number of “Non-Traditional” Documents to be Consulted

- “Born Digital” Records
- Satellite Images
- Video
- E-Mail
- Mobile telephones
- Scanned Documents
- Website Pages
- Mobile Digital Communications (Blackberry)
- Social Media and Networking Sites (Facebook, YouTube, twitter)
Issues Inherent in “Born Digital Documents”

- Drafting and Authorship
- Transmission
- Reception
- Response
- Approval/Copy of Record
- Retention (categorizing, cataloging, role of secretaries/clerks)
- Citation Methodology
- Reconstruction in case of damage or technological obsolescence
Example of Multiple Drafters

**Spaso House and Its Historical Significance**

Few buildings with the American diplomatic profession carry the same resonance as the residence of the American ambassador in Moscow, informally known as "Spaso House." Since American diplomatic personnel first occupied it on March 1, 1934, the House has hosted a long list of noteworthily distinguished guests: from jazz musicians to Presidents of the United States. Located on a small side-street near the upscale Arbat district, the house takes its name from not its original owner, the Tsarist-era industrialist Nikolay Aleksandrovich Tirov, but rather the square which stands directly in front of the building, which was immortalized in 1878 by the painter V.D. Polenov in a work entitled "Moskovski ovrich." [Approximately 40 years later, during the height of the early Cold-War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, the painting inspired a fascinating anecdote that then-Ambassador George Kennan recounted in the second volume of his Memoirs.]

During a late-night stroll through Moscow during his unhappy tenure as Ambassador, Kennan noticed a reproduction of Polenov's painting while passing a bookstore. Kennan, a great admirer of 19th-century Russian culture, immediately recognized the painting, which he had seen previously in the Tretyakov Gallery. Like all American ambassadors, because the outbreak of the First World War, every time Kennan left the residence or the embassy, he was immediately tailed by five Soviet plain-clothed guards from the Ministry of the Internal Affairs. These men were noted for their taciturn disposition, and there was an informal understanding between the American diplomats and their Soviet "bodyguards" that they would not converse with one another. On this occasion, however, Kennan "violating all the rules and traditions," turned and asked them if they recognized the picture and its significance. The guards were initially too stunned to respond. However, after several moments of uncomfortable silence, one of them, the superior, nodded his head and replied, with a slight smile: "We know, we know." They were pleased; I suspect that their knowledge of Russian art was equal to mine.\(^3\)

In many ways, the history of Spaso House mirrors the history of Soviet-American relations since 1934. When the first American ambassador to the Soviet Union, William Bullitt, first arrived in Moscow in December 1934 to present his credentials and find a suitable location for the embassy, there were great hopes as to what might be achieved during the "honeymoon" of Soviet-American relations.\(^2\) And the Spaso House served as the primary venue where American diplomats were able to socialize with their Soviet counterparts. In spite of their best efforts, the lavish parties organized by Bullitt (and so wonderfully recounted by Charles Thayer) that attracted the

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\(^1\) According to both Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith and the wife of Ambassador Alan Kirk, following the assassination of the German ambassador by an enraged mob following Germany’s declaration of war against Russia in August 1914, both the Tsarist and Soviet governments ensured that the ambassadors of the United States, Germany, and Great Britain would always be escorted by an armed bodyguard. Kirk, 7. Smith, 162-103. The practice was suspended however, in 1928, following the death of Joseph Stalin. Clifton Daniel, “Our Ambassador Behind the Iron Curtain,” The New York Times (July 24, 1955), 22, 26.

\(^2\) Kennan, It n. 114.
Access to Archival Databases (NARA)
Example of an (initially) unrecoverable born-digital record

Message Text

MRN: 1975ROME 017858 SEGMENT NUMBER: 000001 EXPAND ERROR ENCOUNTERED: TELEGRAM TEXT FOR THIS SEGMENT IS UNAVAILABLE
Can’t Access a Document?

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969–1976

257. Telegram 45319 From the Department of State to All Posts, Washington, February 25, 1976, 1627Z. ¹

[text not declassified in time for publication]

¹ Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 045319. Unclassified; Priority. Drafted by Palmer; cleared in AID/PPC, AID/GC, S/P, PM, EA, AF, NEA, EUR, ARA, T, L/HR, D/HA, H, L/PM, PM/SAS, EB/IFD/ODF, IO/UNP, and L and approved by Ingersoll. Repeated for information to Geneva USUN, SECDEF, USCINCEUR, CINCLANT, USCINCSO, CINCPAC.
### Display Partial Records

**File unit:** Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1976 - 12/31/1976

**In the series:** Central Foreign Policy Files, created 7/1/1973 - 12/31/1977, documenting the period 1973 - 12/31/1977 - Record Group 59 [info].

You searched for: **45319** and any field.

You found **107 partial records** out of 347,422 total records in this file.

* If your search or query has returned more than 1,000 partial records the sort option cannot be used. If the width of any column displayed in the partial records is greater than 80 characters, there is no option to sort the partial records by this column.

You may wish to [View the FAQs](#) for this series. As noted there, clicking on the "View Record" icon on the Display Partial Records page takes you to a PDF document of the record. You can print it or save it to your computer.

To view the cables you will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#). Once you have the Reader, you can view any of the cables.

#### Results per page

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<th>Film Number</th>
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[http://aad.archives.gov/aad/display-partial-records.jsp?date=1976&cat=2032&sp=25993%2c25992%2c25986%2c25942%2c25958%2c25971%2c25969%2c25946&cat=WR43&fileX&&bc=%2Csp%2Cid&qs=45319&](http://aad.archives.gov/aad/display-partial-records.jsp?date=1976&cat=2032&sp=25993%2c25992%2c25986%2c25942%2c25958%2c25971%2c25969%2c25946&cat=WR43&fileX&&bc=%2Csp%2Cid&qs=45319&)

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Example of Extent of Problem

Lost to History
When War Records Go Missing

Army Says War Records Gap Is Real, Launches Recovery Effort

An Army sergeant from Alpha Company 1-325 of the 82nd Airborne Division prepares to search a home in the Hurriyah neighborhood of Baghdad, Iraq, in September 2007. Among the missing war records are nearly all those from the 82nd Airborne Division. (John Moore/Getty Images)
The U.S. Army has conceded a significant loss of records documenting battlefield action and other operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and has launched a global search to recover and consolidate field records from the wars.
[Army Secretary] McHugh, in his letter to [Congresional] committee leaders, said that while the Army had kept some of the required records, “we acknowledge that gaps exist.”

And in an enclosure responding to specific questions from the committee, McHugh confirmed that among the missing records are nearly all those from the 82nd Airborne Division, which was deployed multiple times during the wars.
“Although numerous directives have been issued to emphasize the importance of the preservation of records,” the [DOD] response says, “these directives unfortunately were often overcome by other operational priorities and not fully overseen by commanders.”
70% of Records Incomplete

Military History Detachment (MHD) Collections
OEF through the end of 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OEF 1</th>
<th>OEF 2/3</th>
<th>OEF 4</th>
<th>OEF 5</th>
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<td>82 ABN</td>
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<td>25 ID</td>
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<td>82 ABN</td>
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<td>OR: CO/</td>
<td>CJTF-180</td>
<td>CJTF-180/76</td>
<td>45 BDE HQ</td>
<td>(OK ARNG)</td>
<td>51 BDE HQ</td>
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<td>CJTF-180</td>
<td>3/82 ABN</td>
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US Army Center of Military History Assessment

- Green – Adequate Records at CMH to write the Army’s history
- Amber – Some Records, but not enough, to write an adequate Army history
- Red – No Records on hand
- Black – Records enroute to CMH or pending evaluation.
Curtis Sherman, July 16, 2013, 8:37 a.m.

“I expect that deep down this lack of record keeping is deliberate, for a variety of reasons, including making it more difficult for veterans to collect benefits.”
The Big Questions

- How do researchers cope with the explosion of documents, agencies, actors, and topics susceptible to interaction?

- How do researchers make claims that our insights are of general applicability if our studies represent an increasingly small subset of the total universe of records/issues?

- What is a “document/record” and how do we know a “document/record” is real?

- How can the research community become more involved in the creation of “preservation structures” for archival records?
Advocate “upstream”

- **Audience**: Specifications for messaging systems should reflect down-range user needs (i.e. the *American People*)
- **Relevance**: Make the case that records management matters not only for posterity, but also for current-day informed decision making
- **Accountability**: Query those responsible with specificity and perseverance