

# **A TEXTBOOK OF FILING**

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A textbook of filing by James N. McCord

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**JAMES N. MCCORD**

**A TEXTBOOK  
OF FILING**



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BY

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ILLUSTRATED

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## PREFACE

IN considering the subject of filing, it is our purpose to place before the student the most efficient, most up-to-date methods; but before taking up the modern methods it will be interesting and profitable to consider briefly the evolution of these, for evolution always works toward betterment, and the simplicity and practicability of the present day vertical file can more readily be comprehended if we acquaint ourselves first with some of the troubles met by our forebears in their use of various methods of greater or less degree of similarity—now hopelessly out of date.

Filing—if we may give it such a name—has existed in one form or another since written history began, as is attested by the many original tablets, parchments, manuscripts, etc., of great historical value, which have come down to us through the ages, and which are now jealously guarded in museums all over the world. Without some method of preservation most of these valuable documents of antiquity would have remained forever unknown to us, although it is of course true that our possession of many of them is the result of pure chance—record-bearing stones and tablets having been found in many places buried in the loose earth, with no attempt at preservation—lost, apparently, by the men of a bygone age.

One of the most common methods used by the ancients for the "filing" of their papers was that of keeping them in a stone or earthenware vessel, and many bits of historical evidence have been preserved for us, having been written upon wax or bits of stone, or parchment, or upon the receptacle itself. An interesting survival of this custom is our own universal practice of concealing in the

cornerstones of new buildings, letters, pictures, newspapers, etc.

Among the ancients, with their primitive life, written records played a small part as compared with the place they hold in present day law and life, and that there was any orderly arrangement of their few records, for the purpose of later reference, is extremely doubtful. Of course, the day came when man in commercial pursuits practiced the method of tying together the tablets from one man or group of men, of those received during a given interval, and piling these small packages where they would be least in the way. This method is still practiced in some localities, and is another proof of the hold that habit has upon our ways of work and life. It is easily seen that such a method is exceedingly primitive, cumbersome, and expensive, even in the case of stored or transferred material—often of great value—that it offers absolutely no advantages, and is attended by many disadvantages.

There gradually developed a realization of the convenience of keeping together the papers,—such as letters, received from one individual or organization, or those bearing upon one subject, or those received upon a certain date, or from certain localities. Here we see signs of, respectively, the subject, the chronologic, the alphabetic, and the geographic methods of filing. The so-called “Numeric” method developed later, and was employed in connection with both the names of the correspondents and the subjects dealt with.

As these methods came more and more into general use, various improved devices were put on the market for the segregation and housing of various records not bound, finally resulting in the universal adoption of the card cabinet and vertical file.

While these two indispensable articles of modern office equipment have become standardized the world over, there has naturally developed a number of systems, each representing some manufacturer’s conception of a proper alphabetic method. Particular emphasis must be laid upon the



term "alphabetic" since that is the only method which admits of any considerable variation—other methods being practically identical regardless of the manufacturer.

With the ever-increasing demand for improved filing methods came, of course, a corresponding demand for operators. It soon became obvious that the filing of papers in an office could not be relegated to the various clerks to be accomplished in their spare moments. Filing became a definite, fixed and most important office vocation, but a vocation with which no one was familiar. In a very small office it was a comparatively simple matter to secure the services of a clerk and let her glean enough from a manufacturer's advertising matter of the operation of any particular method that happened to be installed. When it came to the various refinements, the intelligent classification and segregation, the ability to accurately and instantly produce, and the broad knowledge of *Methods* instead of familiarity with but one *System*, there was no source from which properly qualified persons could be secured. Trained stenographers, typists, bookkeepers and telephone operators were easily available, but no provision had ever been made for similar instruction for filing and indexing clerks except by library schools whose excellent work is confined to library methods.

This condition was responsible for the founding early in 1914 of the New York School of Filing, which has since that time established branches in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Based on our experience in training thousands of girls and women for filing positions no matter what methods were involved, or what particular manufacturer's system was employed, this book has been compiled. While it is the text book used in our schools, it is designed for students of schools in which it would be impossible to maintain the extensive equipment used by our own schools in teaching such a highly specialized subject.

Its purpose is to instruct in the different *Methods* of filing, which are limited, while the different *Systems* are numerous and must be reduced to a possible four methods.

The applications of these methods to various lines of business and to professions; office routine, short cuts, cross reference and different refinements and ramifications all come in for proper consideration and the volume is equally as valuable as a reference book as a textbook.

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