UNIT 9 : FILING AND INDEXING

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss the concept and meaning of filing system
- describe the objectives and importance of filing
- learn classification and arrangement of papers for filling
- learn the different methods of filling system
- discuss about centralized and decentralized filing systems.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to discuss the various concepts related to filing system in office management. A well-planned system contributes significantly to efficiency of operation as well as to the image of an organization. Whether records are filed in a computer or in a cabinet, they have to be readily accessible as and when required. Filling is the practice of

maintaining the records of an organization from the time they are created up to their ultimate disposal. This process includes classifying, storing, securing, and destruction of records. So, in this unit we will discuss the objectives and importance of filing system and will able to get some idea on the classification of papers for filing and the various methods of filing system.

9.3 CONCEPT AND MEANING OF FILLING

To know the concept of filling, first we have to go through the meaning of record management. Records management is the field of management which deals with the aspects regarding systematic control of creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including processes of maintaining evidence and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records in an organization. Records need to be managed in a meaningful and systematic way so that they can be easily accessed and used in the course of daily business functions in an office. So, filling is a form of record management where documents are filed in a systematic order so that they can be easily available for the future and also to preserve the important documents for future.

According to Zene K. Quible: “Filing is one of the activities in the records management programme which involves systematically classifying, coding, arranging and placing of records in storage”.

9.4 OBJECTIVES AND IMPORTANCE OF FILING

The importance of filing in an organization arises from the fact that large number of papers and documents cannot be preserved and handled without proper arrangement. Filing is an important function of modern office because of the following reasons:

a) Filing is helpful to protect records from dust and dampness.
b) It is very helpful in settlement of disputes because it provides factual information.
c) It facilitates preservation of records to meet the legal requirements.
d) The previous records provides for future reference.

e) It is helpful to exercise a better control over sales and financial position.

f) By providing availability of previous records, it helps in the future planning of the organisation.

The following are some of the objectives of filling :

1) **Increases Productivity :** A functional office filing system will not only help officials of the organization to become more organized but it will also increase their productivity levels.

2) **Document the Program's Activities Effectively :** The programmes or the activities that are done in the organization are documented effectively.

3) **Identify Records Constantly :** Because the files are properly placed in the office, the records can be identified constantly.

4) **Retrieve Records Quickly :** Filing system helps in retrieval of records quickly and instantly.

5) **Link to the Records Schedules :** The contents of a file can be indexed for easy access.

6) **Time Savings :** Faster access and retrieval of information is possible if proper filing is done in an organization that helps in time saving. This leads to higher staff efficiency and productivity of the employees.

7) **Integrity and Continuity :** Filing helps in integrity and continuity of record keeping despite changes in office personnel

8) **Cost Savings :** Good filing system helps in using less office space for filing equipment and that helps in saving cost. For good filing, likelihood of litigation and losses resulting from lost documents gets reduced. Moreover, for good filing there is less likelihood of lost documents leading to unfavorable audit findings and penalties. The recovery of important records is likely to be less costly.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 : What do you understand by is Filing?

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Q.2 : State any three objectives of Filing.

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9.5 CLASSIFICATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF PAPERS FOR FILING

In order to make files promptly available, it is necessary that they should be given proper titles and classified or grouped according to some fixed basis.

Paper filing classification is the process of selecting headings under which documents are grouped or classified on the basis of common characteristics before filing takes place. The following are some of the classification and arrangement of filing.

1) **Alphabetical Filing System :** An alphabetical filing system works well when we need to retrieve names of people, customers, authors, names of movies, books etc. An alphabetical filing system is often the easiest system to use, because if the files are maintained in alphabetical order then it is easy to identify the files. An example of alphabetical filing system may be the telephone directory.
2) **Numerical Filing :** This type of filing system is used for date or number filing. For example, if we have receipts, dated events etc. In this system a number is allotted to each client/customer and the same number is put on all papers or documents relating to transactions with them. If one file contains records of more persons, decimal system may be used e.g., 10.1 denotes one person; 10.2 denotes another and so on. And these are file No. 10. To locate a

particular file, it is necessary to refer to an index. Therefore index cards are prepared and the file numbers are written on them and arranged in alphabetical order.

3) **The Alphabetical-Numerical or Alpha-Numerical Classification :** It is a combination of the alphabetical system and the numerical system. In this system each letter or sub-letter is given its own number and an index card is placed behind the guide card for each alphabetical section. The names and numbers of all the folders are mentioned in numerical order behind each card. The colored guide cards are used to sub-divide for folders into groups to facilitate their speedy location. For instance, the folders and files of XYZ firm can be arranged in a Alpha-Numerical manner and the first group may be 15/CV/O1234, where 04 is the year, CV is the resume and the four digit number may be the employee number (shown in the following figure).

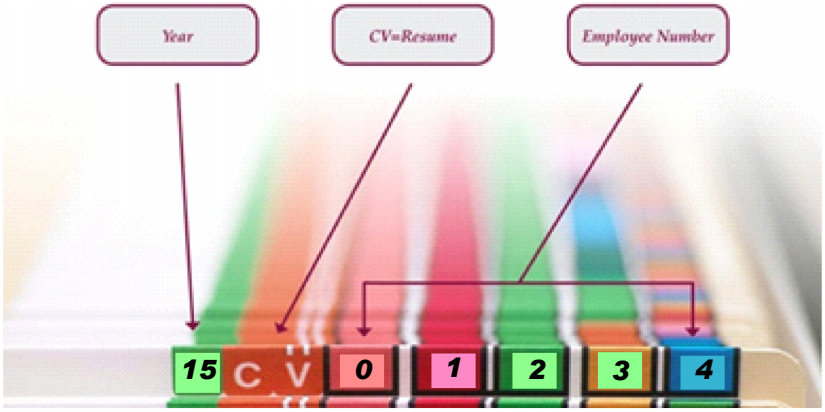


Fig. 9.1 : Alpha-Numerical filing

4) **Geographical Classification :** Geographical filing system is an arrangement of files that are related to countries, towns, other areas in an alphabetical order. It is convenient to use the geographical system for major groupings and then introduction of alphabetical order. The area over which the activities of a firm are spread may be divided into a number of regions and the papers are filed on the basis of locality. The files which contain the correspondence of one locality are arranged state wise, city wise, etc. This system is generally used by banks, insurance, departmental stores, etc.

5) **Subject wise Classification :** In this classification of filing, records are filed according to the nature of their subjects or contents. This system can be efficiently adopted by a concern which may classify correspondence into well-defined groups. Papers are first arranged subject wise and then in alphabetical order. There may be order file, invoice file, complaint file, etc. Papers on a particular subject are arranged and put together, rearranged alphabetically or numerically and filed accordingly.

6) **Chronological Classification :** Various records are identified and arranged in date wise order and also according to the time of the day. For examples, newspapers, current prices, market reports etc. It is a useful system if dates are known.

7) **Topic Order Classification :** This type of classification is useful when in retrieving information when the work or study is in a variety of subject areas. For example, if we work for lawyer, then we could have subject headings of contract, constitutional law, torts, administrative law, international law etc. And according to that the files and folder were classified and arranged.

8) **Color Coding :** This is used for creative filing and is especially effective for those with good visual recall. It can also help with cross-referencing with color coding used for projects.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3 : What is Alphabetical filing system?

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Q.4 : What is Alpha-Numerical classification of filing system?

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9.6 METHODS OF FILING SYSTEM

There are mainly two methods of filing system which are based on different types of equipments used for filing system. The methods of filing system can be described as follows:

a) Conventional method or Old method

b) Modern Methods

   i) Horizontal filing

   ii) Vertical filing

9.6.1 Conventional Method of Filing

The conventional method is the old method of filing system which were commonly used in the offices, but now-a days the conventional methods are been replaced by modern methods. The types of conventional method that are still used in many offices are as follows:

a) Metal Holders : In this method of filing, the papers and documents are held together in metal holders. The papers are placed in chronological order.



Fig. 9.2 : Metal Holders

b) Card Board Files : Card board holders are used in many office organizations. It is made up of foolscap paper with two pieces of stout paper attached on either side in the middle and there is long ribbon attached on the both side to hold the papers.

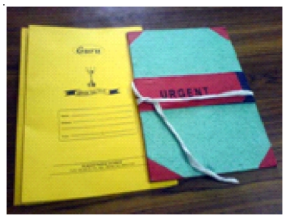


Fig. 9.3 : Card Board Files

c) **Spike or Pillar and Post Filing :** This type of filing is fitted with wooden stands which may be kept on the table or hung against the wall. A spike is lifted on a wooden disc which may be kept on the table or hung against the wall. The papers are punched into a metal spike and made to rest on the disc. This is the cheapest method of filing. But the method is not suitable where frequent reference to the documents has to be made.



Fig. 9.4 : Pillar and Post Filing

d) **Expanding Files :** Under this method, papers and documents are placed in letter or numbered pockets. This method of filing system is also used in many office organisations.



Fig. 9.5 : Expanding Files

e) **Concentrina Files :** This file is made up of cardboard and has a number of light cardboard pockets and is satisfactory for document under simple alphabetical classification. But it has a drawback of limited capacity.



Fig. 9.6 : Concentrina Files

f) Pigeon Hole Method of Filing : Pigeon hole cabinets featured numerous styles of filing systems. Pigeon-hole files had doors. A cupboard is divided into a number of tiny compartments and each compartment is allotted to letters alphabetically. The letters are folded and a brief description is made on the outside fold.

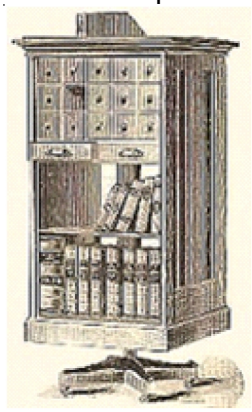


Fig. 9.7 : Pigeon Hole Method of Filing

9.6.2 Modern Method of Filing

In large organisation it was found that the conventional method of filing system difficult in order to maintain the files and that resulted in newly organised and maintained filing methods. Many sophisticated and improved filing equipment have been developed to the filing system of modern business and large organisation, which are classified as:

A) Horizontal Method

B) Vertical Method

A) Horizontal Method : In horizontal filing system, documents are placed in a horizontal position, one on the top of another in order of date and the latest document is kept on the top. The best example of horizontal filing is flat files and arch lever file. The types of horizontal methods are discussed below:

1) Flat Files : That files are cover of cardboard or thick papers, fitted with metal hinges with which to fasten the papers together. A separate cover (file) is allotted to each customer or subject, and all the correspondence and documents

relating to the customer or subject is placed in that cover in a chronological order. If a letter of paper related to more than one file, copies are made of it and placed in different covers. The paper to be filed is punched with a punching machine and is inserted in the file through the metal hinges. The files are placed horizontally one upon another. An index of files is generally prepared for quick reference. This index is displayed outside the almirah or drawer in which the files are kept.



Fig. 9.8 : Flat Files

2) **Arch Lever Files :** It is a very popular type of horizontal filing system which is used in an organization. It is a strong cardboard folder which contains strong metal arches which can be opened with the help of a lever. Records to be filed are punched with two holes with the help of the punching machine and the papers are then filed on the metal uprights, after the arch has been opened by the lever. The arch lever file facilitates alphabetical division which is done by inserting thick card at suitable places.



Fig. 9.9 : Arch Lever Files

The following are some of the Advantages and Disadvantages

of Horizontal Filing System :

Horizontal Filing has the following Advantages :

a) This system of filing is simple and any one can understand this easily.

b) The papers are kept in order in which they have been filed and these letters are punched and put through a metal hinge so that it cannot be misplaced.

c) This system facilitates speedy reference of letters because here letters are placed according to dates of receipts.

d) This system requires less space because the files are kept one over the other.

e) This method is economical to operate.

Disadvantages of Horizontal Filing :

a) It is unsuitable where volume of records is very high.

b) To take out any paper, other papers have to be dislocated as the papers are kept in the order in which they are received.

c) When a large number of papers are stored in one file, their location becomes somewhat difficult.

d) This system is less flexible and takes more time as compared to vertical system.

B) Vertical Filing System : This is the most modern system of filing. It has grown essentially out of the drawbacks and defects of the horizontal method. Because of its outright superiority to the horizontal method, vertical filing has come to be adopted by most of the modern offices aiming at efficiency in record keeping. Under this method, the papers and the files containing them are placed vertically or in a standing upright position which gives its name vertical files. The following are some of the used under vertical filing system :

a) Folder : Folders are the basic of vertical filing. They are made

of ***Manila*** paper or some other strong paper and are used to hold papers and documents. The back of the folder is slightly higher than the front. The extended back is used to write the contents and necessary details about the subject. When the folders are placed in the cabinet, the extended edges are visible in a sequence so that contents can be easily read.



Fig. 9.10 : Folders

Manila : A strong paper or thin cardboard.

b) Filing Cabinet : Filing cabinet are that where folders are kept vertically in a wooden or steel cabinet which consists of a number of drawers. The drawers are deep enough to permit folders to be placed in a vertical position. Each drawer is fitted with slider which pushes it backward or pulls it forward. In order to divide the drawer into convenient sections, guide cards are inserted at appropriate places.



Fig. 9.11 : Filing Cabinet

The following are some of the advantages and disadvantages of vertical filing.

Advantages of Vertical Filing :

1) Vertical filing allows ready reference of papers and documents.

The heading of each folder is visible from the extended edge of the back-sheet.

2) It is adaptable. The folders can be arranged according to any classification such as alphabetical, numerical and subject-wise.
3) It is economical as compared to the horizontal equipment as it can accommodate more papers.
4) It provides ample scope for expansion. While installing this type of equipment, adequate provision for expansion of the number of folders can be made in the drawers.

Disadvantages of Vertical Filing :

1) Vertical filing is not as fast as the other methods of filing such as visible card filing and rotary card filing.
2) There is always a possibility of folders slipping down the drawers. This may lead to unnecessary wear and tears of various folders.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5 : What is Conventional Method of Filing?

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Q.6 : What is Pigeon hole method of Filing?

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Q.7 : What is Flat File?

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9.7 CENTRALIZED AND DECENTRALIZED FILING SYSTEMS

Centralized Filing System : Centralized filing system places all records of the organization in one central location. The following are some of the features of centralized filing system :

a) All the flies are kept in one place.
b) All the files of general interest are kept by respective departments.
c) Although the files are held by the respective departments but are controlled and staffed from one central point.

The following are some of the advantages of centralized file system:

a) There is greater control over the files.
b) Uniformity and consistency is easier to maintain.
c) All important information is located in a central location.
d) The need for duplicate files is eliminated.
e) Storage of records requires less equipment and space.

Decentralized Filing Systems : Under decentralized filing system the record series are placed in different places within an office. It is most useful when only one individual requires access to a specific record series. The following are some of the advantages of decentralized file system:

a) There is less chance of folders being misfiled into the wrong record series.
b) Limited access to a record series leads to greater security and confidentiality.
c) The record series is physically located closer to the user.

In many organizations both the centralized and decentralized filing system are used as per the convenience. But the majority of the record series may be filed centrally.

9.8 INDEXING

Indexing is an important aid to filing. Filing and indexing are so interrelated that filing without indexing is incomplete and indexing without filing does not exist.

Indexing is the process of determining the name, subject or other captions under which the documents are filed. Index is a guide to records. The main purpose of an index is to facilitate the location of required files and papers. Index helps the staff to find out whether a particular file exists for a party or subject, and its place in the container. It also facilitates cross referencing. Where records are classified in numerical order, or subject wise an index is necessary.

Types of Index

Various types of indexes are used in different offices according to their requirements. The main types of indexes are:

1. Ordinary Page Index
2. Vertical Card Index
3. Visible Card Index
4. Strip Index
5. Wheel or Rotary Index

Let us now discuss the types of Index in the following ways:

1. Ordinary Page Index: It is similar to the subject index given at the end of standard books in

which the subject matter is alphabetically arranged and then relevant page numbers are given against each heading or sub-heading. Some times it consists of specially designed pages fitted with a tab indicating an alphabet and on each page the names or subjects starting with that alphabet are written along with the page numbers. This type of index can be (a) Bound Book index, (b) Loose Leaf index, or (c) Vowel Index.

2. Vertical Card Index: Under this system each subject, customer or document is allotted a separate card on which necessary information appears. The cards may be of small size (12.5 cms x 7.5 cms) or as per need. They are classified and arranged alphabetically, numerically, geographically or subjectwise. The alphabetical classification is more popular. In some cases more than one card may be prepared for the same set of information and each card may be arranged in different manner e.g. in library usually two cards are prepared for each book — one is arranged on the basis of author and the other on the basis of title of the book. The cards are filed vertically in steel or wooden drawers. A hole is punched into each card to keep the card in its proper place. Guide Cards may be used to indicate groups of cards in a class. This type of index is very popular in big offices.

3. Visible Card Index: Under this system, the cards are arranged flat in a shallow tray or metal frame. Each card is attached to metal hinge and

overlaps the one before it, so that name address and other particulars are visible without touching other cards. The frames or trays are attached vertically to the metal stands or they can be put horizontally into cabinets. The details of data can be written or typed on the front or back of the cards for reference.

4. Strip Index: In every office there is need for a list of names of parties to be maintained with their telephone numbers, addresses etc. A line entry on a narrow strip of card board can be prepared for a single item. These strips are arranged in a frame in such a way that they can be taken out and replaced with ease. Frames can be hanged on the wall or put on the table in a book form or even arranged on a rotary stand which can be turned round to look at any part of the index. This system is a variation of the visible card index, offers the same advantages and suffers from the same drawbacks.

5. Wheel or Rotary Index: Under this method cards are arranged around the hub of a wheel which may be portable. A single wheel can hold as many as 5000 cards. A card can be inserted or withdrawn without disturbing the other cards. Entries can also be made on the cards without removing from the wheel. The merits of this system are-quick and easy referencing, economy of time and efforts, economy of space, elasticity, etc. This indexing system has gained popularity because it is simple to operate.



9.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the following :

- Filing is one of the activities in the records management programme which involves systematically classifying, coding, arranging and placing of records in storage
- The objectives of filling are (a) Increases productivity (b) Document the program's activities effectively (c) Identify records constantly (d) Retrieve records quickly (e) Time savings (f) Integrity and continuity
- The classification and arrangement of paper filing are (a) Alphabetical filing system (b) Numerical filing (c)The Alphabetical-Numerical or Alpha-

Numerical Classification (d) Geographical Classification (e) Subject wise Classification (f) Chronological Classification (g) Use a topic order (h) Color coding.

- There are mainly two methods of filing :
    a) Conventional method or Old method
    b) Modern Methods.
- Centralized filing places all records series in one central location in an office. It is most useful when the majority of individuals within an office require access to a majority of the files.
- Decentralized filing physically locates record series in different places within an office. It is most useful when only one individual requires access to a specific record series.
- Indexing is the process of determining the name, subject or other captions under which the documents are filed. Index is a guide to records. The main purpose of an index is to facilitate the location of required files and papers.The main types of indexes are:
    1. Ordinary Page Index
    2. Vertical Card Index
    3. Visible Card Index
    4. Strip Index
    5. Wheel or Rotary Index



9.10 FURTHER READING

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6) Dubey, N. B. (2009); *Office Management: Developing Skills for Smooth Functioning*, Global India Publications; India.

9.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Filling is a form of record management where documents are filed in a systematic order so that they can be easily available for the future and also to preserve the important documents for future.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : a) Time savings, b) Retrieve records quickly, c) Identify records constantly.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : An alphabetical filing system is often the easiest system to use, because if the files are maintained in alphabetical order.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : It is a combination of the alphabetical system and the numerical system.

Ans. to Q. No. 5 : The conventional method is the old method of filing system which were commonly used in the offices

Ans. to Q. No. 6 : A cupboard is divided into a number of tiny compartments and each compartment is allotted to letters alphabetically.

Ans. to Q. No. 7 : Flat Files are cover of cardboard or thick papers, fitted with metal hinges with which to fasten the papers together.

9.12 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1 : Discuss the importance of filing.

Q 2 : What are the changes in maintenance of files in a large organization in today's context?

Q 3 : What do you understand by filing system and also state its objectives.

Q 4 : Write down the methods of filing.

Q 5 : Write short note on :

a) Centralized Filing

b) Decentralized Filing

Q 6 : Write down the advantages and disadvantages of Vertical filing system.

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