

## How to set up a card-index

A tracing service is essentially based on the card-index. The success of all the work undertaken by such an office in fact depends on its being perfectly organized.

The various problems involved should now be examined in greater detail.

The tracing service will draw up **individual cards based on information** contained in different lists and in all kinds of documentation reaching it. It will do the same as regards facts given in the **enquiries** submitted to it.

The information card must **differ** from the enquiry card in **colour**.

Cards used should be thin, of post-card size (10 cm × 15 cm) and easy to handle and place in cardboard or metal boxes arranged on shelves.

Boxes should be provided with a movable label on which will be inscribed in large print the first one or two letters of the surname at the beginning of the box, as well as the first one or two letters of the last surname filed at the back of the box (for rules on the alphabetic and phonetic filing of names see pages 16 to 20).

Care should be taken not to fill the boxes entirely, in order to leave sufficient space to enable cards to be consulted and new ones to be added.

## How to fill in a card

### a) information card :

An individual information card must be the **summarized but strictly accurate transcription**, of all information contained in the document received and relating to a person. It should also give the reference No. allotted to that document

(Example : see bottom of page.)

A card must thus be drawn up for each person mentioned in the document in question. If it contains the names of a hundred persons, 100 individual cards must be drawn up, each giving all details relative to the person concerned. The cards must be meticulously checked.

Date of drawing up card  
and typist's initials

Ref. No.  
of document

NAME (in capitals) first names (small letters) : .....

Place and date of birth : .....

Father's first name : .....

Nationality : .....

(For military personnel) : Serial No. — rank and unit : .....

(For civilians) : occupation : .....

Date and place of capture : .....

Detaining power : .....

Prisoner of War No. .... or Civil Internee No. ....

Place of detention : .....

State of health : .....

Address of next of kin : .....

Date and source of information : .....

Similar procedure must be followed as and when new documents are received. The name of a person may appear in several documents. There must therefore be several cards drawn up in that name; they must subsequently be collected in the card-index in a single bundle, and held together by a clip.

Care must be taken not to record on a single card information from different sources and dates, and which appear at first glance to concern the same person. In fact, in view of the many cases of homonyms that arise the system of the single individual information card often leads to considerable confusion, difficult to unravel and with unfortunate consequences.

**b) Enquiry card :**

Similarly, enquiries must also be transcribed on cards bearing an enquiry reference number : **E** followed by a serial number with mention of follow-up action : (see page 21.)

Example : (see bottom of page.)

Date of drawing up card and typist's initials	Ref. No. of file
NAME (in capitals) first names (small letters) : .....	
Place and date of birth : .....	
Father's first name : .....	
Nationality : .....	
(For military personnel) : Serial No. — rank — unit : .....	
(For civilians) : occupation : .....	
Date and source of last information : .....	
Date of enquiry — Name, first name and address of person making the enquiry : .....	
Date of reply : (give a summary of the reply) * .....	
Initials of person examining the case : .....	

\* In the same way, all further information (sequel to operations, of whom enquiries made, communication of result) must be noted on the card.

## How to file cards in the card-index

Before making a detailed study of the rules for filing in alphabetical or phonetic order (see pages 16 to 20) one should examine the operations incumbent on the staff working the card-index.

### a) preliminary sorting

Cards for filing first undergo preliminary sorting which consists of arranging them in the alphabetical order of the first three letters of the surname.

### b) filing of cards in the card-index

If the card-index comprises several hundreds, if not thousands, of boxes, each staff member will be assigned a pre-determined number of boxes for which he will be responsible (viz. boxes from A to B, C to D etc.). He will file the cards into these boxes in alphabetical or phonetic order as instructed (see pages 16 to 20). However, if on filling a new information card, he finds that there already exists an enquiry card for the same person, he must take it out and send it together with the information card to the secretariat to deal with. The same procedure must be followed, if a new enquiry card is already preceded in the card-index by an information card. **Any card removed from the index must be replaced** there temporarily by a **marker card**.

The marker card, a cardboard rectangle (12.5 cm × 5.5 cm), must be placed **vertically** in the filing box so that it is higher than the other cards and can be easily found when the bundle is re-inserted after the case has been dealt with by the secretariat. On the marker card essential facts must be recorded: surnames and first names, date and place of birth, reference number, date of card's removal.

## Tracing in the card-index

Enquiries for news (letters, telegrams etc.), first of all sorted by the secretariat which underlines the essential facts in pencil, are then passed on to the tracing team at the card-index.

This tracing must be carried out thoroughly and systematically. If the result is negative this should be indicated on the enquiry before returning it to the secretariat.

If, on the other hand, a previous enquiry card, or information card, is found in the card-index, the card (or bundle of cards) must be removed after replacement with a marker card (see page 14) and must be attached to the new enquiry which is also to be returned to the secretariat to be dealt with.

When dealing with the case the secretariat must take care to draw up an enquiry card with an E. No., or if this already exists, to complete it by adding items figuring in the new enquiry, and making sure to indicate what follow-up action has been taken over the enquiry (communications, enquires etc.).

The secretariat must then return the cards to the card-index for immediate re-filing.

## Rules for filing

Which system of filing should be used, **alphabetical or phonetic** ?

The purely alphabetical system is obviously the simplest method to teach non-specialist staff. This consists of taking account of the respective alphabetical order of every letter in the names and first names, according to the method employed in preparing a dictionary or a list of telephone subscribers.

To train those not familiar with filing, they should at first be made to sort cards in alphabetical order of the first three letters of the names, then of the first four letters, etc., until they are able to arrange cards in the alphabetical order of all the letters of the names and first names concerned. They should be allowed to insert cards in the card-index only when they no longer make errors in sorting : a **badly filed card is a card lost**.

By following this alphabetical order, all cards with the same surname (spelt identically) and sub-divided in the alphabetical order of the first names, will be filed in sequence, e. g.

Cards relating to all persons called

DURANT Adolphe will be filed before those of  
DURANT Albert, followed in turn by  
DURANT Armand.

Within this sub-division by first names, there will be a **second sub-division** based on **age**. Thus all those called DURANT Adolphe will in their turn be filed by age, the oldest at the top, viz :

DURANT Adolphe, born 20. 8. 1930  
before :

DURANT Adolphe, born 31. 10. 1931

It must however be pointed out that, in practice, the **system of filing strictly in alphabetical order has its drawbacks**. In fact, it quite often happens that the name of the same person is, by error, spelt in several ways. Because of these divergences there is a risk of filing separately, in places possibly very far from

each other, cards referring to the same person but each one with an apparently different name.

**To avoid such drawbacks, should the system of entirely phonetic filing be adopted ?**

This system, which takes into account **only the sounds** of which a name is composed, and **not of its spelling**, would be ideal if it did not demand highly specialized staff.

It is therefore better to apply only **alphabetical order**, as a basis, and introduce a certain number of **groupings** for names most prone to errors in transcription.

For example :

- a) PERRAUD, PERRAULT, PERREAU, PERREAUT, PERROZ, PERROT, PEYRAUD, PEYROT = **could be filed together under PERRAUD.**
- b) MAIER, MAIR, MAJER, MAJR, MAYER, MAYR, MEIER, MEIR, MEJER, MEJR, MEYER, MEYR = **under MAIER.**

In the space in which the cards would automatically have been filed alphabetically with the names respectively of PERRAULT, PERREAU and PERREAUT etc., a rectangular piece of cardboard (different in colour from the information and enquiry cards) should be inserted. It should have the following indications in large print:

PERRAULT see PERRAUD  
etc.

Before making such groupings, it is necessary to make a close study of the phonetic similarity of certain names. **The responsibility for drawing up grouping rules for each language will be entrusted to those possessing a very thorough knowledge of that language.**

Should it be difficult to make such groupings, it might be sufficient not to take into account, in the alphabetical filing, **double consonants** or **double vowels**, e. g. :

ROSSI and ROSI, filed together under : ROSI.  
GOOSARD and GOSSARD, together under : GOSARD.

As regards first names, the tracing service must take care to hand over to those working at the card-index and the secretariat a list of all first names in use (with their respective diminutives) and, if necessary, together with their translation in various foreign languages (those of any enemy country, or of countries with which the tracing service has the closest relations).

There are some countries where surnames do not exist. People are designated by their own first name, followed by the first name of their father and grandfather and possibly by the name of the tribe to which they belong.

In cases of this sort, cards should be inserted in the following order:

**First sub-division:** the first name of the person;

all cards with the same first name, e. g. ALI, will be classified together, but will be subject to a

**second sub-division:** the father's first name;

example: all cards of ALI son of MAHAMMAD will be put together, but ALI son of MAHAMMAD will be filed before ALI son of OMAR;

**third sub-division:** the grandfather's first name;

example: ALI son of MAHAMMAD grandson of MILAD will be classified before the ALI son of MAHAMMAD grandson of SULIMAN;

**fourth sub-division:** (if necessary) : the tribes name;

example: ALI son of MAHAMMAD, grandson of MILAD of the EL-GEDEID tribe will be filed before the ALI son of MAHAMMAD grandson of MILAD of the EL-GHEIZAF tribe.

Within this filing by alphabetical order of first name, first names of father and grandfather etc., a further subdivision will be made of homonyms according to age (see page 16).

### Other difficulties

- a) in certain countries the spelling of names may vary,
- b) names belonging to one linguistic group can be subject to alterations when they have to be transcribed in characters of another language group,
- c) persons concerned may come from regions not having registry offices. They will therefore not be in a position to confirm their date of birth, which will multiply the number of homonyms which will not be distinguishable on the basis of age.

When such difficulties arise, the card, if necessary, should be drawn up in several copies for filing in separate card-indexes:

- the first copy will be filed in a card-index with **names and first names in alphabetical order;**
- the second copy in an index arranged with **military serial numbers in numerical order;**
- the third copy in an index arranged with **prisoners' and internees' numbers in numerical order;**
- the fourth copy in a card-index sub-divided according to **tribal membership.**

The tracing service will probably have to deal with persons of **various nationalities.**

In this case, it will be necessary to draw up **separate cards for each nationality.** It is in fact extremely difficult to file in one and the same card-index, names of very diverse origins, **each linguistic group requiring filing rules adapted to it.**

If a person's nationality seems to be in doubt, the card (information or enquiry) should be in several copies. Each copy

should be filed in the respective card-indexes of the various presumed nationalities and should mention in the margin the card-indexes concerned.

If necessary a card-index for stateless persons will be maintained.