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ADMINISTRATIVE SURVEY OF THE TERRITORY OF HAWAII

Preliminary Report Number 3

STENOGRAPHIC SERVICES

February 24, 1950
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
University of Hawaii

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Preliminary Report Number 3

Prepared for the Sub-Committee on Governmental Efficiency
of the Holdover Committee of 1949

STENOGRAPHIC SERVICES

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU
TERRITORY OF HAWAII

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
HONOLULU

STATE OF HAWAII

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LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

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STENOGRAPHIC SERVICES

Introduction

One out of every ten persons employed by the Territory is a typist or stenographer. In eight selected territorial departments surveyed 163 employees, ranging in classification from CAF 1 to CAF 7, are presently engaged in three main types of stenographic duties--taking dictation, transcription, and typing. These 163 persons spend, on the average, an estimated 50%-75% of their time on stenographic duties, varying from a very small percentage to 100% in individual cases. In most cases non-stenographic duties such as filing, record keeping, serving as receptionist or occasional messenger service are also assigned.

In spite of the number of stenographers and typists employed by the Territory and the importance of the services they render, little attention or guidance is given them as a group.

Present Organization for Stenographic Services

Personnel

Nearly every division or bureau surveyed makes some use of stenographic help. In the smaller offices only a fraction of their time is actually devoted to stenographic duties, with various clerical jobs occupying the major portion of their working hours. In many cases a clerk will perform the necessary typing when there is not a typist or stenographer in the office. The usual practice, however, is to have a typist or stenographer available and give her other duties with which she is occupied when her typing and stenography skills are not being utilized. A CAF 4 stenographer, for example, who should be assigned to difficult dictation and transcription tasks may regularly be given copy typing, machine transcription or even unrelated clerical jobs so that she spends only about half her time utilizing the skills for which she is being paid.

During this survey a brief examination of a good many typists and stenographers in several departments yielded the following instances of incorrect practices:

1. Straight chairs instead of posture chairs being used for typing.
2. Incorrect use of posture chairs so that little or no support was given the back during typing.
3. Incorrect typing position, such as having feet wrapped around the chair, legs crossed, feet not touching the floor or body slumped in the chair.
4. Desks so cluttered that little work area remained free.
5. Personal belongings, including purses, piled on desks.
6. Employees searching for ordinary office supplies and sometimes borrowing from another employee if not found.
7. A wastebasket placed in such a way that employees stumbled over it.
8. Typing copy resting flat on desk instead of at an angle.
9. Constant switching of attention from the copy to the insertion in the typewriter.
10. Excessive interruptions for erasures and to ask for information or additional instruction.

Some centralization of stenographic services was found. One department has almost completely centralized such services in its main building with only the secretary to the department head and one typist remaining outside the central pool. Another department has partially centralized services, with each division being staffed for normal routine operations and everything above that being handled by a central service within the department. In the latter case most straight typing jobs are handled by the pool. Employees from the pool are assigned to fill vacancies in the various divisions created by vacations or leaves of absences.

In one department, in which no centralization of services has been affected, there are 36 typists and stenographers in relation to 90 to 95 administrators and technical personnel making use of typing and stenography services in their regular routine work--one typist or stenographer serving two and one-half administrators. In another department which has almost completely centralized stenographic services, there are eight typists and stenographers in relation to 45 to 50 administrators using their services, or one stenographer serving almost six administrators.

Equipment Utilization

Dictating and transcribing machines are in use in at least two departments, which report satisfaction with their operation. One department had purchased and tried this type of equipment but is using it very little at present. One division in another department expressed a desire for such equipment saying that it would receive considerable use if available. Several divisions expressed themselves as having no interest in stenographic equipment or as believing it would be of no value in their office.

Under procedures existing in most departments a stenographer must be present during dictation--usually an inefficient procedure. Even if fully occupied with dictation the entire time in the dictator's office, it would be inefficient if dictating equipment could serve the purpose. Usually that is not the limit of poor economy however, since interruptions frequently occur to call the executive away from dictation, leaving the stenographer completely unoccupied. Dictation equipment cuts in half the man hours involved in dictation, since it eliminates the need of having a stenographer present during the dictation period.

In general, each typist and stenographer, as well as many clerks and technical personnel, has a typewriter. One department, for example, employing eight typists and stenographers in its main building, has 18 typewriters in the

same building. A larger department with 36 typists and stenographers has 69 typewriters. The latter department reported that most of the typewriters disposed of during the past three years--either by sale or trade in--have ranged in age from 11 to 24 years. The department estimated that the age of its typewriters in use averaged over five years.

Desirable Organization and Practices

To insure satisfactory performance of an organization's stenographic services, constant attention must be directed to them. Since many new typists and stenographers are inadequately trained, as well as being unfamiliar with departmental routines and personnel, it is essential that they be given training and close and intelligent supervision especially at the beginning of their employment. Besides training the new employee, expert supervision will constantly seek to increase the skill and speed of all employees and will develop certain standards of performance. Each typist and stenographer should be fully instructed in procedures and forms in use in the organization so that as little time as possible will be spent in speculating on details so that the form throughout the department will be standardized. This makes feasible the interchange or substitution of stenographers among divisions--a practice which is particularly helpful during the vacation season. The proper use of standardized office procedure manuals is of great importance in providing such training.

It is desirable that there be one person, thoroughly familiar with the problems of typing, stenography and general office management responsible for the supervision of all typists and stenographers in the organization. This can best be accomplished and there can be greater opportunity for training and constant increase of skills, if all or most of the organization's stenographic employees work together in a single unit or pool, under one supervision. Only when there is enough work of a single type--such as expert stenography or

secretarial duties--or when necessary because of the confidential nature of the work, or for other similar reasons, would it be desirable to have a stenographer assigned permanently to a particular individual or division. Even then, the assignment should not go to a new employee but to one trained in the central pool, thoroughly familiar with departmental routine and trained to assume a position of greater responsibility.

Centralization also makes it possible to substantially reduce the number of typewriters purchased. Under a centralized system fewer persons are assigned typing jobs and hence fewer typewriters needed. Those remaining would be in almost constant use and could frequently be traded in on new models. This would insure better equipment and advantage could be taken of improvements in equipment--such as the use of electric typewriters. A department which has used a typewriter for more than 11 years has paid out many times the price of a new piece of equipment in terms of slow and inefficient production.

It would also be possible and desirable under a centralized system to develop performance standards. Under present organization a work measurement would be difficult to accomplish and the development of performance standards almost impossible. With centralization, however, a supervisor can observe the performance of all employees and develop logical standards for their performance.

A central pool also makes the use of dictating equipment practical. Such equipment could be available to executives desiring it with transcribing equipment in use in the stenographic pool and one or more operators trained specifically in its use. It is then possible for an executive to dictate at any time without waiting for a stenographer. It also makes it possible for the stenographer to plan her work more efficiently and perform it with fewer interruptions. There are still instances and particular jobs where the services of a stenographer are essential.

In-service training is essential in achieving satisfactory services. A technically trained person, available to all departments, would be most helpful in improving the training given stenographic employees. He could be assigned the responsibility for the development of manuals and other training aids for use in the departments. Several training films dealing with this field have been made in the past few years and are generally well received by stenographic personnel. Such films should be available for showing to territorial employees as a part of a comprehensive training program.

In-service training could also concern itself with other means of improving quantity and quality of work produced.

Under a centralized system training periods could be worked in with the regular routine of the unit. The technician and the pool supervisor, working together, could organize a series of demonstration and practice periods teaching correct techniques to be held during the slack periods or a few hours each week on a day when work is usually light.

Under present organization in-service training would be difficult to accomplish since it would involve working out time schedules with every division of a department or arranging an individual program for only a few employees at a time--hardly an economical arrangement.

The problem of developing stenographic manuals would also be greatly simplified under a centralized system. The study of practices and procedures could be more or less confined to one area and group of employees instead of the necessity of studying the work of employees scattered throughout the organization.

The problem of staffing during peak periods and during vacations and leaves of absence is one about which concern was expressed by several administrators and one which could be met by the pooling of services. Employees in a pool would become familiar with the work of all the department and could be

assigned where needed as the need arose.

Control of work through a pool also insures that approved form and style of typing will be used by all employees.

In summary, experience of innumerable private and public organizations indicates that the following advantages can result from a properly organized and administered stenographic pool:

1. Increased efficiency through the use of dictating equipment;
2. Increased efficiency through better utilization of skills, i.e. simple jobs to lower paid employees and enough dictation and transcription to occupy highly skilled stenographers;
3. Increased efficiency resulting from adequate training programs which insure that proper work methods and habits will be practiced and which familiarize new employees with departmental routine before placing them in difficult jobs;
4. Decreased costs resulting from specialized supervision which constantly seeks to improve skills and methods and is in a position to keep abreast of new techniques and developments in the field;
5. Better service through the speedy adaptation of personnel to needs, such as during peak periods or leaves of absence.

Recommendations for Improving Organization

Possible means of rendering better stenographic services were discussed with many department and division heads. There was general agreement that the problem could best be met on a departmental basis, rather than by means of centralization for all departments. The increased efficiency noted in those departments in which some degree of centralization has been accomplished indicates the desirability of the extension of centralization to other departments.

We recommend, therefore, that each department make a thorough study of typing and stenographic services to determine if the following desirable standards are being met:

1. Skilled stenographic services available where needed, and not in excess of needs;
2. Duties assigned in relation to classification, and skills utilized to justify salaries paid;
3. Dictating equipment available and in use wherever practical;
4. A continuing program for in-service training;
5. Expert supervision constantly striving to improve stenographic service and to increase speed and accuracy; and
6. A current office procedure manual in use showing standard forms and practices throughout the department with all typists and stenographers familiar with such standards and with all work similar in appearance and form.

It is further recommended that:

1. Stenographic services for each department be centralized on an individual department basis with two or more departments pooling facilities for such central pools where administratively practicable;
2. A comprehensive program of in-service training be adopted to be

worked out in conjunction with the civil service commission and the bureau of the budget;

3. Departmental office procedure manuals be compiled, such manuals, when completed, to be referred to the bureau of the budget for compilation into a standard territory-wide office procedure manual to be used by all departments. Upon adoption to be made available to all employees concerned with stenographic services;

4. A survey by departments of present condition and utilization of typewriters, desks, chairs and other stenographic equipment having as its object the replacement of obsolete equipment;

5. Greater utilization of dictating machines in all departments, with transcribing to be performed by the central pool;

6. New employees recruited for typing and stenographic duties be initially assigned to the central pool, for at least a minimum training period under supervision; and

7. Replacements, promotions and transfers be effected from central pool personnel, and temporary assignments for vacancies created by leaves, similarly filled.