## **Records Management and Football** Administration in Ghana

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## Abstract

This study seeks to evaluate the nature and scale of the Ghana Premier League Board's records management practices, and propose recommendations based on findings. The study was qualitative. Data used for analysis were drawn from twelve (12) respondents with the use of face-to-face interviews and personal observations. The major finding of the study was that there was lack of appreciation of the function of reliable and authentic records in institutional development. This finding obviates serious gaps and weaknesses in the records management programme of the Ghana Premier League Board. In particular, this study has established the essence of an effective records management system for the administration of football in Ghana. Recommendations based on findings include the need for a corporate records management policy, training of records staff, staff motivations, among others.

**Keywords:** Records Management, Football Administration, Ghana Premier League Board, Ghana Football Administration

## Introduction

The management of records is a critical element of open and accountable governance all over the world.

Governments and institutions require building up structured systems that enhance rapid access to information all the time, and at the lowest possible cost. Organisations that take their responsibilities seriously create and sustain an environment that values information and the role it plays in governance. Because institutional records are the essential evidence of decisions, actions and transactions of the organisation's interactions with the public and their records must be created and maintained as evidence of efficiency and effectiveness. The activities of organisations do not automatically result in the creation of authentic, accessible and usable records. Organisations need to develop strategies and procedures to ensure that records are created, maintained and available when required. In developing economies, the absence of reliable records and record keeping strategies, poverty reduction and economic development and other goals of good governance become seriously impaired (Akotia, 2014). According to Lipchak (2002) in any setting, poor record keeping reduces the effectiveness of programmes and services; impedes the achievement of social, economic and other goals; and reduces the confidence that citizens and stakeholders have in their governance. Poor records management entails huge financial cost in terms of wasted and inefficient work, duplicated effort, legal liability and lost opportunity.

Football is the world's most popular team sport (World Book, 2005). In Ghana, the game of football is associated with incredible amount of passion. In particular, all the emotions football engenders are evidence-based, and as such, the integrity of its records must be secured. In order to ensure the integrity of its records, the records and information management policies and procedures of the Board should "... reflect the application of the regulatory environment to their business processes" (ISO 154891:2001, clause 5). This environment consists of laws and regulations including those relating specifically to records, archives, access, privacy, evidence, egovernance and data collection.

Without proper record keeping in football administration, it would be difficult to document its activities and achievements. Winners of competitions, top scorers and all-time greats are determined through the information available. Failure to record such information leaves a lot of gaps in telling the story about football. There is documentary evidence of coaches whose philosophies and ideologies of time gone by are being used by modern day coaches. Their tactics and systems have been recorded and serve as information for coaches to resort to or improve on to suit the present changing times. Significantly, football administrators must move beyond the "traditional view, of records management as an administrative responsibility, to see records management as a strategic responsibility...in the same way they might manage financial or human resources within a broad strategic framework" (O'Shea, 1997).

Football administration is a subset of sports management. Kelley et al (1994) defined sport management in a broad sense as "any combination of skills related to planning, organizing, directing, controlling, budgeting, leading, and evaluating within the context of an organization or department whose primary product or service is related to sport and/or physical activity." The highest level of football administration is in areas such as the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA), and the various confederations under FIFA such as the Confederation of African Football (CAF). At the lower levels are the various federations such as the Ghana Football Association (GFA). The Premier League Board ((PLB) like any other football administration generates large volumes of physical documents and electronic data on daily basis. These documents and data are very vital and need to be preserved for reference. Some activities and transactions undertaken by the PLB that lead to the creation of records are players registration, match reports, reports of the various standing committees such as the Disciplinary Committee, Match Review Panel, Referees Committee and Safety and Security Committee. The PLB requires for the purpose of sound administration an efficient and effective records management system for the "... control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of an information about business activities and transactions in the form of records" (ISO 15489-1:2001).

A lot of activities take place in the Ghana Premier League, and such activities need to be documented to help in decision making processes. Sometimes it is difficult to refer to previous league results for proper analysis. Arguments do arise about the number of league titles won by the various league clubs and the Premier League Board, which is the organiser of the league, finds it difficult to establish the fact of the matter. For instance, until 2012, Kotoko was known to have won the Ghana league in 1967, as well as 1968, but further research proved that the 1967/68 was a single league season and not two seasons, hence Kotoko lost a league title which was erroneously credited to them as a result of poor records management. Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) indicated that poor records management is guaranteed to result in information gaps that lead to the loss of document heritage.

Nevertheless, there is often confusion on issues of how many red and yellow cards that have been accumulated by players, and this sometimes leads to the deduction of points and subsequent protests. Another area of record keeping that leads to litigation in the Ghana Premier League is in the area of fines. It is surprising to know that some of the cashiers in charge of receiving fines against clubs do not keep records of fines slapped on clubs by the Disciplinary Committee and end up misleading them into missing deadlines for the payment of such fines. Football pundits hold the view that the Ghana Football Association and its subsidiary, the Premier League Board (PLB), are some of the most corrupt institutions in Ghana, because they sometimes find it difficult to provide proper records of their activities. A clear example of this happened in one of the sittings of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Ghana's 2014 FIFA World Cup participation in Brazil, when the Ghana FA President, Kwesi Nyantakyi revealed to the Commission that no records were kept on the exact amount received by each of the five Black Stars Management Committee members, who shared an amount of \$412, 500 (The Presidential Commission's Report, 2015). The Report recommended that the GFA President should refund \$412, 500 which he failed to account for as the head of the Black Stars Management Committee. In light of the above, this study aims to discuss the current situation of records management and football administration in Ghana, as well as issues and challenges faced by the Premier League Board in the management of its records.

#### Background Information of the Premier League Board (PLB)

The Premier League Board (PLB) which is a subset of the Ghana Football Association (GFA) was formed on the 19th of December 1993 (Obiwole, 2015). The league system in Ghana has always had an organised body since the inception of Ghana Football Association (GFA) in 1956. The GFS was directly in charge of the organisation of the amateur league from 1956/57 season to 1992/93 season. The Presidential Commission's Report (2015). The Ghana Football Association (GFA) was earlier called the Ghana Amateur Football Association (GAFA) before it was changed to the GFA. The Ghana FA was solely in charge of the organisation of the Ghana league until 1993 when Enoch TeyeMensah, the Youth and Sports Minister at the time, led a revolution for Ghana football to go professional. Structures were quickly put in place and a declaration signed by the first division clubs in Ghana at the time at Winneba leading to the formation of the Professional League Board (PLB), now designated the Premier League Board (PLB) to take charge of the day- to- day administration of the newly formed Ghana Premier League in the 1993/94 season. Ashanti Gold won the maiden Ghana Premier League and they won it for the first three seasons.

The PLB is made up of the chairman who is appointed by the President of the GFA, a vice chairman and other members, who together constitute the Board. In 2015, the Premier League Board was reconstituted to include a representative each from all the sixteen (16) clubs participating in the Premier League. The work of the Premier League Board is complemented by standing committees and departments set up by the Ghana Football Association. These committees are the Judicial Committee, the Player Status Committee, the Referees Committee, the Match Review Panel, the Research the Information Management Committee, the Security and Safety Committee, the IT Department, the Registry, the Front Desk and the office of the GFA General Secretary.

### Literature Review

Records management ensures accountability in football administration. Akotia (2000) argues that the transparency of government accounts effectiveness in the use of public resources, and the stability and transparency of the economic and regulatory environment for private sector activity is provided by documentary evidence. The Ghana Football Association (GFA) is a registered body under the Company's Code, 1963 (Act 179). The Company's Code makes it a requirement for the companies to prepare their accounts, audit the accounts and prepare their financial statements. Article 38 of the GFA Statute enforces the appointment of an external auditor to audit the accounts of the GFA; and every season, league clubs submit their audited accounts to the Premier League Board.

Football administrations such as FIFA. CAF and GFA in their daily activities transact business through securing sponsorship to organise their competitions such as the FIFA World Cup, Africa Cup of Nations and the Ghana Premier League, etc. Furthermore, the Ghana government channels some of its resources into the management of the national teams under the GFA. There is a direct relationship between internal regulation and the more complete and accurate recording of decisions and actions. Records provide evidence of compliance to regulations and records management provides guarantees that the evidence is reliable. When football administration financial controls lacks a record management component, they lose their capacity to provide evidence (Barata, Cain and Thurston, 1998). Corruption has now become part of the debate in football administration and has also become a significant driver in the demand for accountability. McLaughlin and Botelho (2015) report that nine FIFA officials and four executives of sports management companies were arrested on suspicion of receiving bribes totalling \$100m (£65m). This allegation has been leveled against these football administrators as a result of the available information or records obtained at the U.S Department of Justice. Records are usually the source of information for their investigation to ensure that the offenders are prosecuted at the law court.

The objectives of this study are to:

- examine the authority, standard and practice at the Ghana Premier League Board for the management of records, including records staff and their competences,
- (ii) establish the existence of digital records management, and
- (iii) make appropriate recommendations based on findings.

### Methodology

The study was purely qualitative. An open-ended interview schedule complemented with personal observation was used to obtain data from the respondents who were made up staff of the Premier League Board totalling twelve as at the time this study was conducted in 2015 (See Table 1 for a

break-down of the respondents). The data was collected from 1st to 5th June 2015. Selection of the respondents were based strictly on Creswell's (2009) suggestion that in qualitative research, selection of respondents should be purposeful and informants should be subjects who will best provide answers in line with the research objectives. Permissions were obtained from the Ghana Football Association (GFA) and the Premier League Board (PLB) before the conduct of the study. Respondents also received introductory letters explaining the purpose of the study and informing them that participation was voluntary. In addition to interviews, observation of the offices was carried out by the researchers. Thus, there were on-site observations at various offices which made it possible to personally observe the record keeping practices and procedures. The observation was carried out at the same time as the interview sessions (1st to 5th June, 2015) aided by a checklist to ascertain the facilities and practices. Information required was obtained instantly. The interview was recorded and the data was transcribed and analysed. They are presented under major themes outlined in the findings of the study.

Unit/Office	Respondent	Total Number of Respondents
Premier League Board Members	Premier League Board Member	2
Premier League Board Secretariat	Premier League Board Secretary	2
Registry	Registry Head	3
Ghana Football Association Emergency Committee	Committee Member	1
Chairs of Standing Committees that complemented the Premier League Board	Standing Committee Chair	1
Ghana Football Association General Secretary's Office	General Secretary	1
Information Technology(IT) Department	Head of IT	1
Front Desk	Staff	1
Total		12

 Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Source of data: Field survey

#### **Findings and Discussions**

Data obtained from interviews and personal observations were analysed using qualitative approaches. The findings and discussions are presented under the following themes:

- Knowledge and skills of records personnel
- Legal and regulatory framework
- Records creation
- Records storage
- · Records retrieval
- Closing of files
- · Records disposition
- · Digital records management
- Electronic records maintenance
- · Security classification of the records
- Vital records programme
- Equipment and facilities for the management of the records.

# The Knowledge and Skills of Records Personnel

In order to find out if the PLB had records staff with the requisite skills and knowledge on records management, respondents were asked to indicate their educational qualifications as well as trainings attended as far as records management is concerned. Responses from the interviews with respondents revealed that although none of the respondents was actively involved in record keeping, majority of the staff, nine respondents had attended seminars and workshops on records management. However, none of them had any qualification in records management or archives administration.

When probed further to find out where the workshops and seminars were attended, the nine respondents who mentioned that they had attended workshops on records management indicated that these workshops were organised in Ghana by some information management organisations. Five out of the nine respondents made available some certificates received as a result of attending such workshops. After a careful examination of the certificates presented, the researchers observed that the certificates presented were awarded by the Ghana Library Association. One of them however lamented:

....hmmm, well the trainings are good, because they have helped us to acquire the basic skills in records management, but we are not able to grasp some important skills in the management of records.

Another staff member out of the five who presented the certificates also said:

... I wish we could be sponsored by management to pursue at least some diploma or degree courses in records and archives administration, because this will go a long way to help us manage the records we receive or generate effectively.

#### Legal and Regulatory Framework

In relation to the availability of a formal records management policy (RMP), majority 10 (83%) respondents interviewed indicated that there was no policy governing the management of the records for the da- to-day operation of the PLB, whilst 2(17%) said they had a RMP.

One of the respondents from the 10 who indicated the absence of RMP made the following comments:

...there was no standard practice or business rules that required us to create records according to the business needs and business processes that adequately document the business activities which take place in this organization, as such there are no laid down rules or regulations to ensure that information created are managed to support business activities in this organization.

However, when probed further to find out the claims of the two respondents on the availability of RMP, observations and examinations of documents received from one of the two respondents indicated that the RMP being referred to was more of a manual or guidelines on how and when records should be generated at the PLB. This confirmed the finding that the PLB did not have any comprehensive policy on how records should be managed.

#### **Records Creation**

With reference to the types of records created at the PLB, responses from all the 12 respondents revealed that there were different categories of files created by the PLB. The broad categories of records mentioned included: policy files relating to the formulation of policy and procedures, operational or subject files which dealt with PLB implementation of policies and procedures, administration files dealt with the usual housekeeping matters with subjects such as building, equipment, supplies, finance and personnel, as well as with general internal administration, case files containing information on a wide and range of players and clubs. Case files were either operational (such as referees' files) or administrative (such as personnel files).

Observations also showed that the Registry of the Ghana Football Association (GFA) was the main administrative unit of the PLB responsible for the life cycle management of the records. This unit was responsible for exercising consistent pattern of control and oversight because of its strategic objectives which include: the establishment and maintenance of record keeping systems and procedures, creation and maintenance of the necessary control documentation, training records staff and action officers, and ensuring the proper storage and security of all PLB records. These functions are ignored resulting in a low level of professional practice. For example, general and agency disposal schedules have not been developed; and thus, there was no disposal programme.

#### **Records Storage**

The researchers enquired whether the PLB had different records units for the different categories of records created and received. The responses from the interviews with the records staff revealed that there was proper storage of current and semicurrent records at the PLB, but non-active records were not well attended to. The researchers observed that both current and semi-current records were under very good condition in the registry, where the files were stored in two fireproof vertical file cabinets and the room was well ventilated.

Another observation made by the researcher was that files were well arranged, making their retrieval easier. The researchers also noticed that some records were kept outside the registry, especially financial records and audited financial reports of the clubs. These were kept in the Accounts Office and the main PLB Secretariat, respectively. When asked why financial records and audited financial reports of the clubs were kept outside the registry, responses from three of the respondents revealed that this was for the purposes of auditing, but transferred to the registry at the end of every league season.

Furthermore, on records storage, one of the respondents also said:

"... Well, the records that are not needed anymore (Inactive files) are kept in a store room, called 'Archives. We have two of such archives; one is the GFA building where the PLB is located and the other at the Ghanaman Soccer of Excellence, Prampram"

When probed further to find out how these inactive records were stored, the researchers again observed that although the storeroom had file cabinets, some of the records were not well filed. Some records were seen lying on the floor and left to the mercy of the weather.

## Equipment and Facilities for the Management of the Records

During the interview and also from the observation carried out, it was revealed that the Registry which manages current records of the GFA had three fireproof cabinets, but no air conditioner. Three officers were in charge of the facility. There were also two storerooms known as archives, where closed files that did not have any current value were transferred. One was at the office of the Ghana Football Association and the other two, at the Ghanaman Soccer of Excellence at Prampram. Files created were stored in the registry until they were full and closed and the files were then transferred to the archives at the GFA. Records in the archives dated back to 2010, but records beyond that were at the Ghanaman Soccer of Excellence at Prampram. The records especially those at Prampram were dumped on the floor and had not been properly arranged. At these dead storage facilities where there was no control, accurate inventories did not exist and no attempt had been

made to dispose of them. Of the 12 staff interviewed three were not satisfied with the equipment and facilities available for managing records, while nine were satisfied with available facilities.

#### **Records Retrieval and Tracking**

To determine whether records were retrieved on time on request, respondents were asked to indicate whether records were retrieved on time or not. Almost all the respondents 11 mentioned that records of the PLB were not retrieved and issued out on time. One of the respondents complained

"... it is very difficult to control the movement of files in the registry because many of the officers do not fill the request forms at the office and some keep files for long periods in their offices, which led to officers on leave locking up files in their drawers while away".

It is interesting to note that the researchers in the course of this study became victims of the poor tracking system of the records at the PLB, because the introductory letter sent to the Board got missing and another letter had to be sent, which in the end delayed the collection of information for this study. This indicates that there were weaknesses in the tracking of records at the Board. In particular, the success of a records tracking system depends on the people using it. All staff of an organisation should be aware of the importance of the system and fully acquainted with its operation. However, an observation made by the researchers indicated that the registry of the PLB had a register that is used to control file movement within the organisation. There were no rules and procedures for controlling file movement at the PLB. As a result, it was difficult to attempt enforcing compliance since co-operation of action officers and file users was essential if the movement of records is to be accurate and reliable. To come to a conclusion as to whether records were retrieved on time or not, a follow- up question was posed to respondents to find out how fast records were retrieved on request. Respondents were given time options (0-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10+minutes) to choose from. The responses show that, records were not retrieved on time when a request was made.

#### **Closing Files**

According to the respondents, files were only closed when they were full, and then transferred to the store room when they were not frequently used. Of the 12 participants, five were not satisfied with the way closed files were handled, while seven were satisfied. There was a split opinion from the interviewees on how closed files were handled. The researchers however observed that some of the closed files were not in shelves in the storeroom, making them vulnerable to unauthorised access and destruction in the near future. When files are closed at the PLB. no further papers are added and the word "CLOSED" is written diagonally in bold letters across the front cover with the date of closure noted beside it. All the respondents 12 noted that although no new action may be taken on a closed file and no new papers added, they remain current in the sense that they were required for reference in the conduct of business.

#### **Records Disposition**

In response to disposition of records of the PLB, one of the respondents said:

...the PLB has no record disposition programme, so the normal practice is to use our reserve storage facilities as dumping grounds.

Another respondent also added:

...because we don't have a plan on how to dispose records, we have no option than to use our discretion to generate a strategy to dispose our records in order to control the buildup of records.

The responses from interviews with respondents on records storage were worrying because the effective life cycle management of records is only possible if there is adequate storage for semi current records. This is what makes the records centre or reserve facility one of the most important parts of a well-organised records management programme. In the present state, the collective memory of football administration in Ghana is in danger, because semi-current and non-current records are mostly dumped without proper care, hence some of them are deteriorating faster. If this situation continues, Ghana will be the loser without the lessons of the past which should provide important knowledge in defining, understanding and addressing new problems in football administration.

#### **Digital Records Management**

Information was sought on how fast the Board was adapting to modern trends in records creation. The responses from the interviews revealed that records created at the PLB were in two formats, namely: paper records and digital records. The respondents also indicated that the PLB prefers to receive and send mail electronically.

Furthermore, the respondents also disclosed that the registration of players who played in the Ghana Premier League is an electronic digital process, and this was made possible with a software called E-License Plus. This software, one of the respondents mentioned, was managed by the IT Manager and the clubs of GFA. When asked to explain, a respondent clarified that ach club was given a password and the software to register the number of approved players for the season. A back-up of the records created by the E-License was kept in Tunisia. Another software used by the PLB to manage its records electronically was Competition Management System which generates the league fixtures, tables, goal king charts and number of appearance by players in the League.

In addition, responses from the interviews with the respondents also revealed that not all paper documents received by the PLB were scanned, but plans were in place to scan all incoming mails and documents. One of the respondents lamented:

... Only the IT Department scanned documents that they received from

#### other departments.

Finally, all the 12 respondents were in agreement that they kept some of their documents electronically, but only 3 mentioned that, in addition, they tried to make sure they generated electronic versions of every document in their custody.

The researchers also observed that all emails generated and received had been backed up to prevent loss. Electronic files created were automatically saved as a back-up onto a hard drive in the IT office.

#### **Electronic Records Maintenance**

The study further investigated the security measures put in place to secure information in the records system. Responses from the interviews revealed that electronic records were stored on hard drives and other secondary devices such as external hard drives as backups.

Again, respondents mentioned that passwords were used to access the information and such information could not be accessed by any unauthorized users. Other security measures put forward by the respondents were the use of firewalls to prevent unauthorised access to or from a private network and also antivirus to prevent virus attack.

One of the respondents indicated:

"... The IT office which manages the electronic records of the PLB ensures that their equipment was serviced every quarter to prevent hardware failure."

On hardware and software obsolescence, the respondents revealed that the IT office uses different software at different times for the registration of players. Some software mentioned were Architecture Description Language (ADL), and Scientific Data Management System (SDMS).

When asked about the control systems in place, eight of the respondents played direct roles in the management of records at the PLB, and when asked about the control systems in place, all the eight said that there were procedures for ensuring that the content of the records they had in their possession remained intact. They had both manual and electronic systems in place. One of the respondents mentioned: --we have a file movement book that is used to track the movement of files within the Board, to prevent the loss of files.

Another respondent also reiterated:

... all electronic files saved automatically goes to the IT department as a back-up. Passwords are also required on the various computers to prevent unauthorized access, and these computers and other equipment have anti-viruses installed to prevent virus attack and firewalls.

#### **Vital Records Programme**

All the 12 respondents during the interview sessions admitted that confidential and secret records were handled separately. Some records designated as confidential included contracts of players and coaches which were mostly stored in the office of the GFA General Secretary and a copy stored in the President's office as backup.

When asked if there were information disaster management plans available, all the 12 respondents indicated that the PLB had no written plans for protecting records in case of any disaster. In the quest to find out if there were any measures put in place for mitigating disasters, a follow up question was asked requiring respondents to indicate whether they had fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, fire detectors among others. Available equipment investigated were fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and fire detectors. From the responses, it can be deduced that, even though the PLB did not have information disaster plans, in practice there were some measures in place to protect the records in case of disasters. Nevertheless, the researchers observed that the smoke detectors, the fire detectors and the fire extinguishers available were inoperative.

#### Conclusion

Despite the benefits for using information, this study demonstrates more effectively that in important institutions such as the GFA and PLB still lacked appreciation of the function of reliable and authentic records in institutional development. The findings demonstrate serious gaps and weaknesses in the records management programme. Records staff have little or no records management training, and other staff who create records neglect to capture them in a system that supports preservation and access or fail to plan for their disposal in a systematic way. The creation and preservation of PLB records needed by the organisation cannot be guaranteed unless records management issues are addressed when records creating systems are designed and implemented. Just as an effective records management programme should cover records in all media, so it should accept responsibility for all records of the organisation regardless of their age. Ineffective records management breeds litigation, and it is not surprising that clubs sometimes take the association to court on issues such as yellow and red cards accumulated by a player that could have been settled through proper record keeping. This unnecessarily delays the football calendar in Ghana. There should be in place a policy framework and plans to manage records at the Board. Skilled records managers, effective digital recordkeeping systems, proper storage of the records to preserve them for longer periods should be part of the records programme.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made to support the PLB's important mandate in football administration and to address the gaps and weaknesses in its records management.

#### Records management policy

The study has established that there is the need for the PLB to develop comprehensive records management policy to provide mandate and direction to its records management practices. The policy will ensure the transparency of records and the adequacy of records systems under a continuum of care, and the PLB can consult an agency such as the Public Records and Archives Administration Department in Ghana (PRAAD) in the development of such a policy.

#### Digital records

Effective technology-based systems are needed to support records management activities. Applications and systems standards and procedures must be improved. Adequate governance, accountability and staff support arrangements are of particular importance. Information literacy programmes should be organised for the records staff through seminars and workshops.

#### Training

There is a need for a concerted effort at defining categories of training needs and identifying priorities and planning the training programmes. Staff could be sponsored to attend refresher courses in records management. These could be periodically organised by the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) and some private consultants. If possible, staff should be sponsored and allowed to pursue some diploma and degree courses in records and archives administration at the Department of Information Studies, University of Ghana.

#### Improved storage systems

The storage of both semi-current and non-current records which serve as institutional memory for future reference is to be improved. There should be fireproof and waterproof file cabinets in the storeroom for non-current records. Effective collaboration with the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) to ensure records are transferred periodically to reduce the pressure on the limited space in the storerooms. Also, there should be appraisal of records on a regular basis to ensure records which do not have continuing value are destroyed.

#### Effective control of file movement

There should be rules and procedures to control file movement at the Registry. These rules and procedures should be enforced by the records officer to ensure compliance by users. In addition to the file movement book, the file transit slip system which is a more effective way of monitoring movement of files between action officers should be introduced.

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