

Identification of Working Papers

The signal reduction of data to IBM punch-card form presented a problem of mass transfer of figures by several workers. Recognizing that an orderly system of relating the original data to the questionnaire, the WORK SHEET, and the IBM card was imperative, a scheme of SERIAL NUMBERS was developed to answer this need.

The first data consisted of a series of letter-file folders identified by the year and location of the sighting or sightings they contained. The number of reports of sightings in a single folder varied from 1 to over 28. Under these conditions, there was a great possibility for incorrect transcription of data, duplication of transcription, or misplacement of intermediate figures. Further, it was considered desirable to retain all sightings of the same object or objects in one number. The concept of a four-digit serial number (major), followed by a two-digit subserial number (minor), was adequate to fulfill these requirements.

To expedite handling of the data, temporary serial numbers were assigned until each report had been collated and the phenomenon had been placed in a category of identification. The use of temporary serial numbers prevented the consolidation of duplicate reports from apparently diverse sources, such as a teletype message and an Air Force Fodor III. However, this consolidation was made ONLY when it could be proved conclusively that the sources of the two documents were one and the same. Factors of the observer's location, date and time of observation, description of the phenomenon, and finally, the name of the observer were considered. In this manner, the assignment of major serial and minor subserial numbers in continuous series was made only to the reports accepted for the statistical study. It is believed that the reports accepted represent unique and unobscured instances of sightings.

In the establishment of the serial-number system, it was necessary to define certain terms, so that a standard interpretation could be achieved. The terms and corresponding definitions were:

OBSERVER - Any witness reporting to a proper authority that he had seen unidentified aerial objects.

SIGHTING - The report or group of reports of the same observed phenomenon that remained unidentified to the observer or observers, at least until reported.

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