

a(n)	cabinets	emergencies	gummed
about	called	engineered	handler
active	can	errors	hands
add	card(s)	establish	handy
adequate	centralize(-ing)	etc.	hard
after	certain	everybody	have
all	check	except	heavy
allow	chronological	expansion	help
always	clerks	expense	here
angular	completely	extra	his
another	condition	facts	if
anticipated	consolidation	fatigue	immediately
alphabetic(ally)	contents	file(s)	in
and	correspondence	filing	inches
are	courtesy	final	index
arises	current	find	individual(s)
arrange(ment)	customer	finger	information
arrival	date	firms	inserts
as	definite(ly)	first	insist
association	departments	fit(s)	into
at	depend	floor	investigate
authority	designated	folders	is
average(s)	destruction	follow	it
back	devices	for	jammed
be	did	free	Johnsons
beautify	disordered	frequent(ly)	judgement
before	divisions	full	keep(ing)
bellows	do(es[n't])(n't)	fumbling	labels
best	double	geographic	larger
better	down	get(ting)	last
blame	drawers	give	lazy
both	each	good	ledger
breakdown	ease	grade	legibility
broken	easier	greater	less
bulging	edges	growing	letter
by	efficiency	guide(s)	long

make	patterns	see	that
manual	pays	set	the
many	per	sheets	themselves
matches	period	shelf	then
material(s)	persons	show	they
maximum	pick	side	this
miscellaneous	pile	sixth	tight
misfiling	places	size	time
missing	plan	slow(ing)	to
name	point	Smiths	too
Nationals	possibilities	snap	top
necessary	posted	solution	track
need	press(board)	some	transfer
no	problem	soon	trouble
not	procedure	sort(er)(ing)	try
number	progress	space	types
numeric	pushing	special(ized)	under
occurring	put	speed	unless
of	readable	start	until
office	reading	states	up
oftener	ready	stationery	us(age)(e)(ing)
old	ready-made	stiffer	valuable
on	record	stool	versatility
once	reduces	stop	walking
one	reference	storage	waste
one-armed	reinforced	strength(en)	way
only	removed	study	wear
opinions	replace	subject	well
or	responsibility	such	when
others	responsible	supervisor	where
out(-guides)	right	sure	with
over	roving	suspended	working
own	ruling	system	write
pace	same	tab(bed)(s)	year
paper(s)	saves	take	yet
particular	scored	than	you(r)

Note

The standardization of filing systems into the alphabetic arrangements which now seem so natural can be historicized. That standardization records a specific moment in the histories of information technology, gendered social patterns, and labor. The most banal surfaces can carry the ugliest scars.

Where once, a secretary might well have spent her career in lifetime employment not only to a particular company, but to a particular executive, the more uncertain tenure of office-workers that emerged after the war meant that the maintenance of corporate information needed guarantees other than loyalty. The guardians of commercial memory had been swept, along with others, into a far more fluid economy of employment. And so the personal fiefdoms of idiosyncratic filing systems, maintained by a single secretary and remaining occult and largely inaccessible to others, were replaced by homogenized systems that could be managed by short term, expendable, employees. Where it might take years to master Mrs. Smith's files, those distributed according to standard alphabetization could be instantly commanded, regardless of a worker's familiarity with the information they contained.

This indexical evolution, however, carries traces of more than shifts in the practices of corporate labor management. Mrs. Smith's files were becoming increasingly unmanageable, as the volume of documents generated by business proliferated geometrically. This dramatic increase in the sheer amount of information archived in offices was the result of a conjunction between technologies of mechanical reproduction (the mimeograph, triplicate carbon papers, photostatic machines) and an increasingly regulated commerce requiring the retention of documents against the threat of litigation.

The preceding text was generated by taking one of the many manuals created in the early 1950s to instruct office workers in the mechanics of the new uniform filing system and submitting it to the rules of alphabetization that it itself describes. That a bodily, sexually corporeal narrative emerges from the determined reordering of this work is neither incidental nor accidental. The original text was entitled "How To Make Your Files Smile."