Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration Executive Summary

Student Consultant, Anlan Cai
Community Partner, Kave Ringi

I. About the Organization

The mission statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration is:

> *To protect and advance the political and socio-economic interests of the Cook Islands by developing and sustaining relations with foreign governments and international organizations.*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration is headed by the Minister Hom Tom Masters as the political leader and Jim Gosselin as the Secretary. There are 17 employees in total. Most of their daily job function is with policy analysis, decision making and application processing. The mostly-used technology here is Microsoft suit.

The MFAI has well-designed technology structure, and sufficient technology management, which is supervised by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management. There is instant technology support, but the whole process is done in an ad-hoc basis. The internal communication is efficient by using the Outlook email management and the pay-roll system is well-organized by using the MYOB accounting package.

The MFAI depends too much on paper-based working methods, which generates the needs of implementation of a record management system, and leads to my tasks below.

II. Research and Propose a Pilot Plan to Implement a Record Management System

The first outcome of my consulting experience in the Cook Islands is to research and propose a Record Management System. The proposal should be based on a very profound understanding of the MFAI's current problems, and then propose a pilot plan which is suitable and affordable to the MFAI and all the ministries of the Cook Islands. The proposal is well-organized, with detailed research information, budget plans, and implementation plans.

III. Build an Access Database for Correspondence Data Storage

The second outcome is to help the MFAI solve one of the data entry and keeping problems. By building an Access database, it is convenient for the MFAI to store and distribute the information of thousands of emails and correspondence received.

IV. Additional Recommendations

Besides the two major tasks and recommendations above, I also give the MFAI some recommendations to solve their problems before the time when they implement the Record Management System recommended.

The recommendation are given reflecting the four needs of the MFAI, and they are using dropbox solution to store and access data while traveling; building more access database for records keeping; standardize the naming and saving naming rules; explore the current Outlook email usage.

Consulting Partner

Kave Ringi

kringi@mfai.gov.ck

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Rarotonga, Cook Islands
http://www.mfai.gov.ck

About the Consultant

Anlan Cai

anlanc@andrew.cmu.edu

Anlan is a second year graduate student at Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University. She will graduate in May, 2013

Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Final Consulting Report

Student Consultant, Anlan Cai
Community Partner, Kave Ringi

I. About the Organization

Organization

The mission statement:

> *To protect and advance the political and socio-economic interests of the Cook Islands by developing and sustaining relations with foreign governments and international organizations.*

The ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI) has 17 employees in total, with 11 employees in the foreign affairs side, and 6 in the immigration side. The main role of the Foreign Affairs is "to provide Government with advice on the conduct of Cook Islands' foreign policy, identify and understand international trends, opportunities and risks that may impact the Cook Islands and offer advice on how to protect and advance its interests." [1] While the role of Immigration is "to ensure our borders are protected by effectively screening entry and departure of people to the Cook Islands and facilitate the movement of labor while maintaining social harmony." [2]

Most of their daily job function is with policy analysis, decision making and application processing. The mostly-used technology here is Microsoft Package.

Facilities

The office of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration is located on the third floor of a government building in downtown Avarua, and it is in the same building with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. There is spacious place in the working area, with a lobby outside for immigration permits applications, and several offices inside for different divisions of the ministry. The whole working place is clean and tidy. The offices are well furnished, and each staff has a computer to do work with, with Windows 7 and Microsoft 2007 installed. The work is efficient and there is adequate lighting and power.

Programs

As mentioned above, the MFAI is composed of two parts. The Foreign Affairs apart headed by Jim Gosselin, is divided into 4 main job functions, and they are Pacific Division headed by

---

[1] See http://www.mfai.gov.ck/index.php/about-us.html
[2] See http://www.mfai.gov.ck/index.php/about-us.html.

Carl Hunter, International Commonwealth headed by Dallas Young, Trade Division, and United Nations and Treaty Division headed by Myra Patai.

The immigration part deals with all kinds of the permit applications, such as permanent resident application, visitor extension, working permit, etc.

Staff

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration is headed by the Minister Hom Tom Masters as the political leader and Jim Gosselin as the Secretary.

Kave Ringi, the director of Immigration. He is the major leader of my consultancy here. Kave has experience working for the Australia government, and he has the vision to introduce a proper Record Management System for the ministry, and I am now doing research on it.

Vasie Poila, who is the Compliance and Immigration Office Manager, and also serves as the coordinator between me and all the staff members in Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration.

The staff here does most of their daily work by using computers. For their daily work, the intensively used software is the Microsoft office. They use Word, and Excel a lot, and they also have a small Access database, and using Microsoft Outlook for emails. The staff is capable of using the technology available to them, they know the basics about each software.

Technology Infrastructure

The computers used in Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration are all quite new, and they are brand new Dell with Windows 7 system. They MFAI also have some spare laptop computers for the staff. For their communication within and outside of the ministry, emails and phones are the most common. Every office has a landline phone. The MFAI also have advanced printing and photo copy machines, and they are new and work fine. Every staff is proficient in using these machines.

Internet connection is fine. Everyone should use a uniquely assigned user name to log in the computer, and everyone has an assigned internet quota usage, which is decided by the job function and the bureaucratic level.

The ministry has a network connection with 511 GB space, which can be access by staff from My Computer. The software used is Microsoft 2007, and it is capable of satisfying all the work, but they have budget constraints to upgrade to the newest Microsoft 2012.

Technology Management

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration doesn't not have their own technology team, and about two months ago, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM), which is located on the second floor of the same building as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, started to take charge of managing the technology infrastructure. The main technical support Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration needs is logging problems, maintenance of equipment, internet access assigning, etc.

The technical go-to person is Teu Teulilo from MFEM, and when encountering technical problems concerning the internet accessing or computer equipment, the staff here often emails him or directly goes to their office downstairs for help. The management is a government integrated decision and I am not sure whether there is a fee should be paid to the MFEM, but the whole technology management is usually done in an ad-hoc basis.

Technology Planning

Alouise Kado, Director of Finance and Administration, is in charge of all the planning and budgeting within the organization, and technology infrastructure is part of them. Alouise submits budgets every year according to the business plan of the ministry, and then send them to MFEM, and finally the parliament will approve or disapprove the budget.

To my knowledge, the MFAI does not have a technology planning committee for its own, and Alouise does most of the job.

Internal Communication

The files can be shared within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration. To ensure data security, the technology person, Peerui, from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management grants access to certain folder by setting users' rights, and some documents can only be accessed with a security code.

Each staff has an internet email account, with the suffix @ mfai.gov.ck, and the main software they use to organize the email is Microsoft Outlook. The website www.mfai.gov.ck is regularly updated by using Joomla. Sandra Tisam, the foreign affairs officer, is in charge of the website editing.

It is unfeasible for the organization to benefit from the social network tools such as YouTube, Skype or LinkedIn. Since internet does not allow Youtube or other online videos, most of the staff doesn't have a LinkedIn account.

Information Management

The client information is the most important, and some of them are managed electronically, and some of them are via paper.

The current database is using Access, which is old and not so much organized. It was built by a former staff here. Duplication of work and referencing difficulty is common.

For example, the immigration side of the MFAI has to deal with Permanent Resident Application. One of the criteria to be a Permanent Resident in the Cook Islands is to live in the country for more than 10 years. In order to ensure the qualification of an applicant, it is necessary to find the applicants' paper document within the 10 years. It is hard and unrealistic. However, a well-built database can help store and reference the data much easier. This is one of the approaches for my task. Therefore, a record management system can help the MFAI better organize the application process. This is one of the motivations for my task to research and propose a proper record management system for the MFAI.

A second example is that the MFAI uses paper-based application, and it takes a long time to for the paper to circulate from the customer to the permit officer, to the director, and then back to the customer.

Business Systems

Within Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, the accounting is also managed by Alouise. All the transaction is done within the system MYOB Accounting package. The payroll has to go through the MFEM office every Monday, the staff has to submit their timesheets from their ministry to MFEM, and get paid fore nightly to their own bank account.

II. Research and Propose a Pilot Plan to implement a Record Management System

Motivation

For the current situation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, there are four major problems which need to be solved concerning records keeping and managing. They are reflected in the four corresponding needs, which is exactly the motivation to implement a record management system for the organization.

Need for paperless or less paper working environment
The MFAI is changing from a paper oriented working style to a paperless one. Typically immigration application papers such as forms and documents take up too much space in the office. The paper based application is also not convenient for referencing, categorizing and searching. Therefore, there is a need for e-filing, and introducing a computer system to facilitate referencing, categorizing and searching for records.

Need for an organized way to save e-document
The MFAI is currently using a shared network drive to share information within the organization. However, the drive is not administered, and the staffs stores their information and files randomly without referring to a standardized naming and saving rule, which makes it hard to retrieve information. Unnecessary files also take up space of the shared drive. Therefore, there is a need to create a file plan for the organization and notify the file saving and naming protocol within the organization.

Need for e- document editing rights and version control
The MFAI currently does not have control over the editing rights for documents, which engenders duplication and overwriting problems of documents. When a document can be accessed by more than one staff, it is hard trace the editing process log, and it is impossible to ensure which version is the right version of the document. The current system does not support several people editing the same document simultaneously. Therefore, there is a need for a proper document managing tool to solve all these problems.

Need for accessing the documents remotely

The MFAI staff travels frequently and there is no efficient way to help them gain access to documents in the office computers. The MFAI also has to share information with the consulate in Wellington. Therefore, there is a need for remote access to files.

Outcomes

The first outcome is a research report on Record Management System.

I accomplish a 17-page Record Management System Recommendation Report, which is composed of my analysis of the MFAI's current problems, interview memos with different ministries and organizations in the Cook Islands, research on different types of Record Management Systems, and my recommendation and mitigation plan.

In the report, I recommend a software for the MFAI called M-files. I list out clear implementation plans and training plans with detailed budget. I also put the technology person of the MFAI with the technology team of M-files, to further discuss the purchase plan and implementation plan for the MFAI to follow.

The outcome satisfies the MFAI's need to move towards a paperless working environment with higher efficiency. Since the MFAI doesn't have their own IT person, a research plan will help them better understand their own problems and will also help them get budget for the incoming fiscal year for the MFAI.

In order to complete the first outcome of a research report on Record Management System, I organized several meetings with the secretary and the managers of the MFAI. I also did 2 presentations to show my progress of research. The board of directors is all satisfied with my recommendations.

The outcome is sustained as long as the MFAI still support the idea to build a better and more efficient working environment. Since the MFAI is considering implement the Border Management System, which is required in the MFAI's 2012 business plan. The implementation of a Record Management System should be in the MFAI's schedule once they get the budget.

Recommendations

In my final report, I recommend the MFAI should implement the software called M-files. M-files is low cost, and has easy-to-use features, and it is just fit the size of each ministry. While choosing the MFAI as the pilot to implement the M-files, it is also feasible and plausible to expand the M-files to other ministries, since most of the ministries have the same problem, same working structure and the same IT structure.

M-files has a re-seller called Docsmart[3]based in Auckland, New Zealand, which can provide us most of the technical support. For any highly technical questions will still be passed on to the M-filess technical team but we can help with most of your enquiries.

---

[3] www.docsmart.co.nz

Below is an example of how M-files can help organize the permit application process.

I also list out a detailed budget plan and implementation process.

Picture 1. How M-File Can Help Organize the Permit Application

Step 1: Every Applicant will have a folder in the M-File system containing all the electronic version of their application materials. If the application is coming from emails, the emails can be dragged directly into the M-File system.

Step 2: The case officer will double check with the information in the existing database, and then set the applicant's folder in the M-File system as a task for the Director to review. The Director will receive a notice in his computer. See Picture 2 for reference.

Case Officer
- Arrange all the docs for review
- Put info into database

Applicants
Come in with all the necessary doc

Director
- Arrange meeting if possible
- Make decisions

Case Officer
- Update database
- Issue the permit

Step 4: The case officer gives back the passport and updates the database.

Step 3: The Director gets the notice, and approves the application from his computer. The case officer will see the updates, and all the M-File system will save the before and after-approval versions of the file, so it is easy to retrieve information.

The Budget for the RMS system

The M-files is sold by user accounts, but not by the number of PC licences. Therefore, the MFAI could purchase the licences based on the number of the frequent users. There are three kinds of licenses, and the maintenance fee is included in each type of users purchased.

- Named User, $199, the users can log in at any time in the system.
- Concurrent User, $299, which means that if you have 5 concurrent licenses, and then 5 different people can be logged in at the same time;
- Read-only Users, $39, means they can open files to read them but they can't edit them.

Considering the situation of the MFAI, it is able to have a mixture of named licenses, concurrent licenses and read only licenses.

Based on the workflow and document usage rate within the organization, I recommend a purchase of 7 Named User licenses and 2 Concurrent User licenses.

First, the secretary and the directors each get a Named User's license and each share with the officers in their divisions, for example, Dallas as the director can share the license with Sandra, and it is also convenient because they are in the same office. Therefore, we need 7 named user licenses, which is $199 x 7 =$1393. Second, people in the blue boxes are those who may need to use the M-files, but not as frequent as the managers, then concurrent user licenses can be considered for this situation, the bold blue lines in the picture indicate that there may be 2 of the them may need to use the system at the same time according to the rough probability estimation. Therefore, the 2 concurrent user licenses cost $299 x 2=$598. The total cost $1393+$598=$1991 per year. [4]
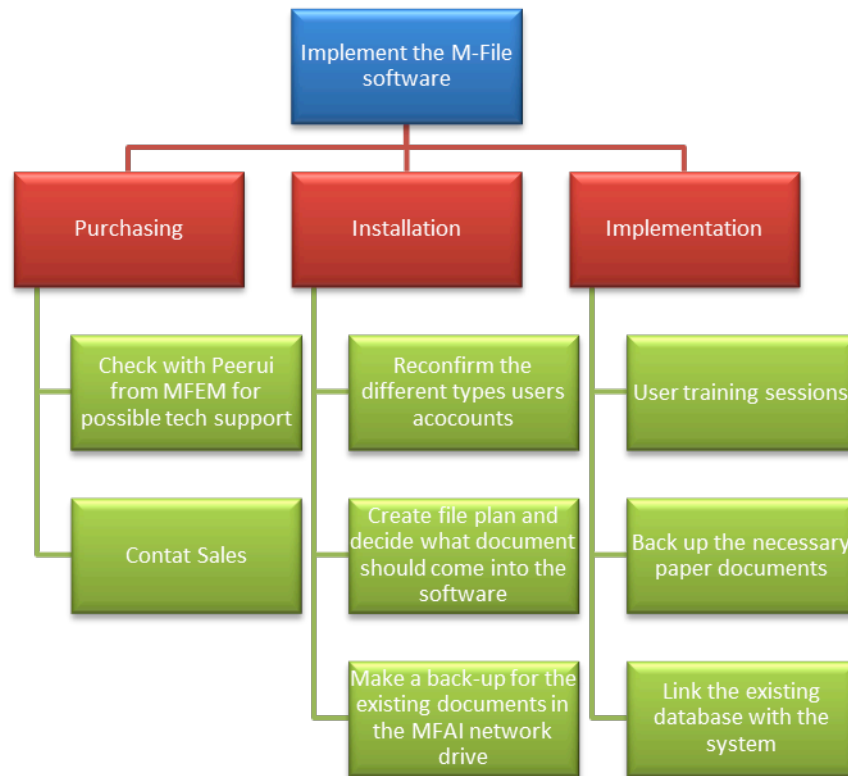
Category	Price per user[5]	Quantity	Total Price
Named user license	$199	7[6]	$1,393
Concurrent user license	$299	5	$1495
Total Price			**$ 2.888**

---

[4] The budget information is based on the webpage information on http://www.M-filess.com/eng/pricelist.asp.
[5] The currency is in US dollars.
[6] The number of users is unsure. Since the MFAI don't have an intensive traffic using the software, we can definitely reduce the licenses to 3-4, so as to save money. But I use 7 here for budgeting purpose.

Picture 2. The Implementation Plan

```
                    Implement the M-File
                         software
       ┌─────────────────────┼─────────────────────┐
   Purchasing            Installation          Implementation
       │                     │                     │
   Check with Peerui    Reconfirm the         User training sessions
   from MFEM for        different types users
   possible tech support acocounts
       │                     │                     │
   Contat Sales         Create file plan and   Back up the necessary
                        decide what document   paper documents
                        should come into the
                        software
                             │                     │
                        Make a back-up for the Link the existing
                        existing documents in  database with the
                        the MFAI network       system
                        drive
```

III. Build an Access Database for Correspondence data storage

Motivation

The United Nations and Treaties Division receive a lot of letters, emails, and faxes. All of these correspondences will go to Nga Kamana first, and she will categorize and distributed to the person ih charge. In order to facilitate their storage of this information, and realize the goal of easy reference, a database is considered to be the right decision.

Outcomes

I used Microsoft Access to build a database for her to store the correspondences information. The database has 4 tables, 1 form, and 3 queries. The 3 queries are categorized by the correspondence methods. They helped Nga store the right information in the right place, and easy for her to search. A user-friendly designed data entry form, also make it easier for Nga to input information.

I also gave Nga some basic training on Access, which can help her make better use of the resources.

Obviously, this outcome is sustained. Since it is really in the need of the MFAI correspondence system, and the database is a good way to store and retrieve information. The ICT office and some other IT persons could help Nga maintain the database.

Recommendations

Besides just building the database, I recommend some useful online training material for the MFAI to learn more about Access, so that they can make good use of this software.

IV. Additional Recommendations

Before the MFAI could implement the Record Management System, there is another approach which should be considered. Here I gave four recommendations for the MFAI to solve their problems by meeting the fours needs accordingly. It includes computer/software literacy training, and making use of the existing resources. The mitigation plan would reflect the four needs of the ministry accordingly

Dropbox solution

Sharing and accessing to data while travelling
If the current shared MFAI drive is enough for the internal data sharing, then to solve the problem of remote access to the files, and easy access to the data while travelling, or sharing the files with the Wellington consulate, the best way to do it is to use dropbox, available for download at www.dropbox.com. This is free of charge for individual users. For those who travel often, they can just register an account themselves.

There is also a "Dropbox for Team" version available for $795 USD a year with 5 users. But considering the current size of MFAI and the need for file storage, it is not so necessary.

Access database

Records keeping
Before the immigration switch to Border Management System, an Access Database is ideal for record keeping, and it is enough to meet our needs so far.

Create a File Plan

Standardize the naming and saving naming rules
Create a standard file plan and folder tree. Just as simple as how many folders we need, what the hierarchy is, and what kind of file into which folder. And then decide what kind of file can be put into the MFAI shared drive, and what Kind of information can only be saved in the staff's own local drive.
More information about naming protocol can be found at
http://www.im.gov.ab.ca/publications/pdf/documentnamingconventions.pdf

Explore Microsoft Outlook

Email Management
Functions such as distribution list, share calendar, and other usage should be notified and learnt by all the staff, and the user guide at http://it.emory.edu/MEDIA/Outlook2007-UserGuide.pdf, is useful for learning purpose.
More information about Microsoft Outlook can be found at http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/up-to-speed-with-outlook-2007-RZ010115400.aspx.
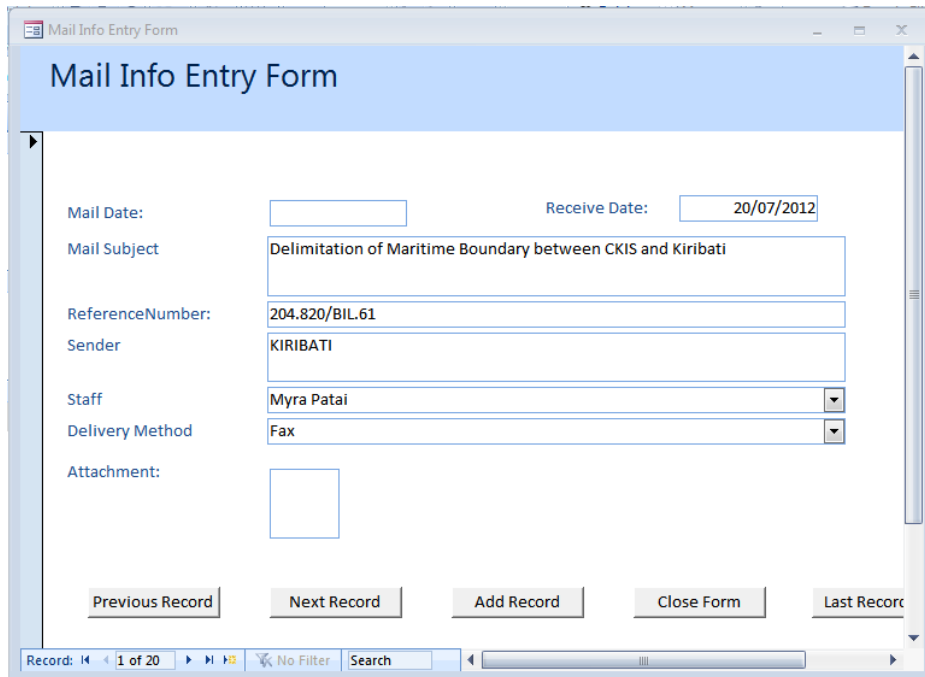
About the Consultant

Anlan Cai is a graduate candidate in Public Policy and Management program in Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University. She has finished her Technology Consulting in the Global Community internship in the Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration. She will return to school after the internship, and will also actively pursuing her career in consulting.
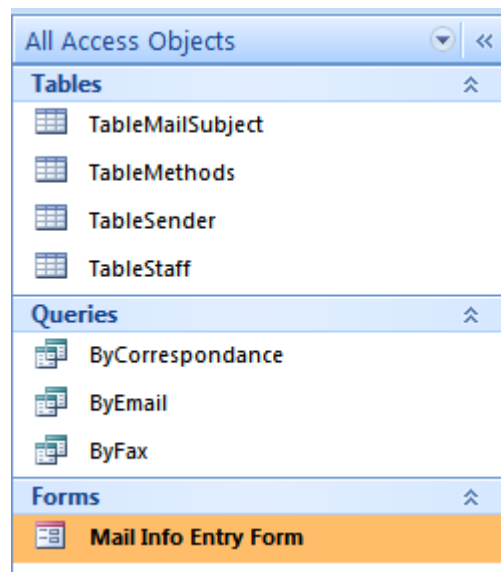
Appendix A.

Here is the screenshot of the database I built for the correspondence information storage.

Picture 1. The Mail Information Entry Form

Picture 2. The List of Tables, Forms, and Queries

Picture 3. The Information stored in the Table

ID	Ser	MailSubject	ReferenceN	Sender	MailDate	ReceiveDate	Staff	DeliverMetl	📎
1		Delimitation o	204.820/BIL.61	KIRIBATI		20/07/2012	5	Fax	📎(0)
2		SOPAC CIRCUL	204.820	SOPAC		24/07/2012	2	Email	📎(0)
3		Offer funding	ENV.10	UNFCCC		24/07/2012	5	Email	📎(0)
4		Engaging with	201.601	FIJI		25/07/2012	2	Correspondan	📎(0)
5		Acknowledger	ADMIN FOLDEI	COMSEC		25/07/2012	6	Correspondan	📎(0)
6		RNZAF flights I	202.30202	NZHICOM	24/07/2012	25/07/2012	11	Correspondan	📎(0)
7		Maritime Bour	BIL.62	NIUE		26/07/2012	5	Email	📎(0)
8		China Pacific Is	301.1055/204.5	PIFS		26/07/2012	2	Correspondan	📎(0)
9		Commission o	LOS.2.6	NZHICOM		3 /05/2012	5	Email	📎(0)
10		Draft Maritime	LOS.2.6	NIUE		3 /08/2012	5	Email	📎(0)
11		Letter from Go	204.406	PIFS		7 /08/2012	2	Email	📎(0)
12		JICA Training o	301.1024	JICA		7 /08/2012	11	Email	📎(0)
14		CKIS contributi	ADMIN FOLDEI	EDUCATION		8 /08/2012	6	Email	📎(0)
15		GEF5 Star Alloc	UNDP	204.316A/305.		8 /08/2012	5	Fax	📎(0)
16		Government o	204.3/SPR.5	MARSHALL ISL		8 /08/2012	2	Fax	📎(0)
17		PIFS CIRCULAR	204.5054	PIFS		9 /08/2012	2	Email	📎(0)
18		PIFS CIRCULAR	204.4091	PIFS		9 /08/2012	2	Email	📎(0)
19		CM(12) 0290: P	603.225/501.1C	CABINET		9 /08/2012	1	Correspondan	📎(0)
20		cm(12) 0284: A	CABINET	603.225/BIL.61		9 /08/2012	5	Correspondan	📎(0)
21						9 /08/2012			📎(0)

Picture 4. The Relationship between Tables