

1979 WL 43472 (S.C.A.G.)
Office of the Attorney General
State of South Carolina
July 19, 1979

*1 Mr. Neal Forney
Assistant Director
South Carolina Court Administration
Post Office Box 11788
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Neal:

In a letter to this office your referenced [Section 17-7-330 of the 1976 Code](#) of Laws which states:

'Every coroner shall keep a book to be called 'The Coroner's Book of Inquisitions' into which he shall copy all inquests found within his county, together with evidence taken before the jury and all proceedings had before or after their findings. Such book shall be public property and shall be turned over to his successor in office.'

You stated that you were informed most coroners do not keep a 'Book of Inquisitions' because it is more convenient to keep records of proceedings by the coroner in a file system. You have asked specifically whether a coroner may substitute a file folder system in place of the 'Book of Inquisitions' prescribed by [Section 7-7-330](#).

By definition a 'book' is generally considered to be '. . . a volume, bound or unbound, written or printed.' It is also defined as '. . . a collection of paper leaves sewed or bound, used for any kind of writing.' 'Book', [Words and Phrases](#), Vol. 5A, p. 169.

With reference to such definitions and from a review of the wording of [Section 17-7-330](#), it is obvious that what is intended by such statute is a recording of all inquests in a volume as opposed to totally utilizing a file system to maintain records relating to an inquest. Therefore, while a coroner may find it more convenient to keep records of proceedings in file folders under a heading for each case, it is apparent that pursuant to [Section 17-7-330](#), a separate volume should be kept that could be turned over to the coroner's successor. Inasmuch as the referenced section dictates that certain information is required to be maintained in the volume and it would in most instances be burdensome to 'copy all inquests', perhaps such a book could take the form that is typically used by some clerks of court and registers of mesne conveyances to record those matters retained in their offices, i.e., volumes of xeroxed pages. This maintaining of a separate volume may involve in some instances a repetitive system but, as referenced, the maintenance of a 'Book of Inquisitions' is required by [Section 17-7-330](#).

With best wishes, I am
Very truly yours,

Charles H. Richardson
Assistant Attorney General

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