

Report on The Baltimore City Archives
Rob Schoeberlein, Acting City Archivist
May 2016



Background

The Maryland State Archives, under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Baltimore, has administered the Baltimore City Archives since July 1, 2010. A new MOU extends state presence at the facility until July 1, 2018.

Goals for the City Archives were, and still remain, to enhance public accessibility to the archival holdings, expand the Baltimore City records program, and educate the records managers of City departments. Partially supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the initial phase of this work allowed for the integration of Baltimore record group descriptions into the State Archives' *Guide to Government Records* online catalog.

Staffing

Staffing levels have decreased, largely due to the expiration of grant funded positions, from a high of twelve (in 2010) to the current level of three.

Records Management

The first months of 2016 witnessed the continuation of outreach efforts through departmental or site visits. In February, we visited the Office of Civil Rights to assist their staff as they revise their retention schedules and prepare their historical files for transfer. The Office administers the Civilian Review Board, "*an independent agency in the city through which members of the public can issue a complaint against officers of various law enforcement units.*" In May, we met with Ms. Kimberly Morton, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor, to discuss the transfer of the papers and the digital images of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake's administration. We were happy to learn that some material relating to Mayor Martin O'Malley still resides at City Hall and that it too will be transferred. There has been no regular transfer of mayoral papers since 1999.

We continue to work with Department of Public Works (DPW) on a department wide scale as they attempt to reactivate their records management program at all levels. We have met with Department of Public Works (DPW), Water Wastewater Engineering, with records transfers relating to City infrastructure drawings. Initial discussions and meetings with the Department of Finance, Bureau of Revenue Collections and the Department of

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Finance, Accounts Payable, have been held. Lastly, Gerald Roberts met with the Department of General Services, Central Garage, for a review of their retention schedule.

In addition, transfers were made to the City Archives of some 206 cubic feet of record material. The departments represented include Retirement System, Housing, Public Works, and Health.

Historical Collections

Processing initiatives focused upon the description of the Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke Papers [BRG 9, Series 44], the Maryland Architectural Drawings Collection [BTR 31] and the Neighborhood Design Center Archives [BMS 44]. Thirteen boxes of Mayor Schmoke administration agency-related correspondence have been cataloged with more to follow. This series contains letters and memorandums sent from department heads to the Mayor. A subject aid will also be produced. The Drawings Collection, on loan from the Maryland Historical Society, requires some additional description. Forty-one boxes of the Design Center archives is being added to the catalog presently. Staff, but largely volunteers, are now engaged in these cataloging activities.

Outreach

We continue to publicize our holdings and build public support for our efforts. Our social media presence has expanded as we continue to feature images from the BCA holdings upon our Facebook page. We have, however, cut back on our number of weekly postings due to other projects. Our homepage "likes" have grown, largely through image-driven posts, from 699 at the beginning of February 2015 to 5177 as of the 10th of May, 2016.

The Acting City Archivist spoke at Clifton Mansion on the 16th of April under the auspices of the Civic Works presentation series. He shared his original research and addressed the audience about the contributions of Baltimore's African Americans and women during the Civil War. Thirty-five people were in attendance.

We hosted two Records Management/Emergency Preparedness training workshops, in conjunction with Maryland State Archives staff, geared to municipal records managers. Our first took place on the 31st of March; the second on the 26th of April. We had twenty-eight attendees in total. Some departments represented included Public Works, Transportation, General Services, Baltimore City Circuit Court, and the Office of the Mayor.

Special Meetings

March 11, 2016: The City Archives hosted a meeting of the Maryland Historical Records Advisory Board.

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April 27, 2016: The City Archives hosted a board meeting of the Baltimore City Historical Society. Rob Schoeberlein delivered an update on the status of the archives and its more recent activities.

Researcher Services/Digitization

From January to April 2016, the Archives has had 237 registered visitors and 51 research appointments. We have been working directly with Law Department attorneys relating to work performed in the 1970s on the Hanover Street Bridge. Some general researcher topics investigated included Public Housing (Flag House Courts), Chizuk Amuno Synagogue architectural drawings, Liquor Board (licensed establishments located on Pennsylvania Avenue), Police Commissioner meeting minutes, and family research using the WPA indexed papers. Thirty-Five scanning work orders, mostly in fulfillment of City Agency requests, have been processed during this time.

Interns and Volunteers

In January, we hosted seven Stevenson University student interns for three weeks and engaged them in general processing duties, such as organizing records and rehousing them. Under the guidance of Glenn Johnston, History Chair and University Archivist, and Rob Schoeberlein, the Acting City Archivist, the students were taught the principles of archival science, document handling, and basic processing of documents. It was a rewarding experience for all. One of the interns will be returning to us this summer for an 120 hour practicum.

We placed a call for volunteers to assist us in general processing and cataloging in May of 2015. We have also been actively recruiting individuals since that time. Several volunteers have come forward to date. Many have prior library or archives experience. Sarah Cotner, MLS, Yanghoon Jang, MLS (a former archivist at the University of Seoul), Jeni Spamer, MLS (digital archivist), Nancy Perlman (former Special Collections Head, Loyola-Notre Dame Library), and Julia Nicoll (digital transfer technician) are all assigned projects to suit their talents. Donna Hollie and Noreen Goodson, professional family historians, are undertaking the task of indexing all African American individuals appearing in the City tax assessment rolls of the nineteenth century. Judy Arnold, our longest serving volunteer, continues to index the Law Department case files

Challenges - UPDATE

The City Archives had an ongoing issue regarding the disposal of non-permanent City records containing personal information. This issue has now been resolved. We have brokered an arrangement with the Department of Public Works. On the 23rd of March, a 22 ft. roll-off dumpster was delivered to the Baltimore City Archives. The already

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prepared, palletized boxes were then placed within the dumpster by a six member crew from Maryland Correctional Enterprises (paid for by the Maryland State Archives). On April 5, 2016, the material was transported from the Archives to the Wheelabrator incinerator in Westport, Baltimore City. The contents comprised 792 cu. ft.; the weight was 9.89 tons. The cost of this project, including the hired labor, was less than \$450, a substantial savings over the expense of shredding.

The lighting in our main record storage area remains inadequate with certain areas in almost complete darkness. Action on this matter has now begun. The plan to upgrade and re-light the area has been approved by the Board of Estimates and electricians have recently visited the City Archives. Work should commence the summer.



Non-permanent records for destruction, April 2016