

## **Preserving and Accessing Maryland's History**

Testimony before the Subcommittee on Public Safety and Administration  
House Appropriations Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates

by Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse, Jr., State Archivist  
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### **on the Proposed Budget for the Maryland State Archives for FY 2005**



Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

My name is Ed Papenfuse, Archivist of the State of Maryland, and Commissioner of Land Patents. With me this afternoon is Tim Baker, Deputy Archivist, and Van Lewis, Director of Fiscal Administration.

The presentation by Jim Stoops is a full and accurate assessment of the current state of the Maryland State Archives budget and of our request for FY 2005. We much appreciate Mr. Stoops's sensitivity to the public service role of the State Archives and have no quarrel with his analysis of our budget which is that we are not adequately supported by general fund appropriations. For example, our current request reflects that over the last three years, we have suffered a cost containment reduction in our general fund appropriations of \$475,363, as well as one unfunded mandated salary increment.

The Maryland State Archives Annual Reports and the Minutes of the Hall of Records Commission on our web site, <http://www.mdsa.net>, and our current Managing for Results submission, provide a good description of our mission and, I believe, speak well to our agency's goals and objectives.

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The MFR process has allowed us to bring sharp focus to achieving measurable results in those areas that are most important to fulfilling our mission.

I know that you have a very busy schedule, so I will confine myself to providing a brief overview of the Archives' mission and laying out some of the major issues and activities for Fiscal Year 2005 and beyond.

The Archives is the central depository for Maryland Government records, and certain designated private collections, of permanent value. The goals of our principal program DA10.01 respond to the core requirements of the Agency to:

- Serve as the custodian of the State's permanent records and collections;
- Describe government; and
- Provide intellectual interpretation.

Essential to fulfilling these requirements are the necessary prerequisites of space – both physical space for storage of permanent hardcopy records and electronic archival storage for security backup of certain records.

The Annual Reports, the MFR and Mr. Stoops's analysis provides some detail on physical and electronic storage capacity, so I will not go into specifics. Let me just draw a fine point on a couple of items. The total amount of warehouse space that we have available is inadequate to take material out of expensive office environments and put them into less expensive space because of a lack of funding for additional leased space. Just six months into this fiscal year, we have already received requests for transfers that exceed projections for the entire year. The bottom line is that more attention needs to be paid throughout State government to effective records management, especially in a time of fiscal constraint. To do this the Archives must be given the storage resources to support more efficient government through better management of paper and the electronic record. The present Archives building, still an archival standard emulated by other States and the National Archives at College Park, is out of space. We have been at capacity since the year 2000, and cannot provide the precious permanent records of the state accumulated since then with proper storage, temperature and humidity controls. Provision must be made in the capital budget to do better.

There is another essential prerequisite to achieving our goals: skilled archivists. We have at the Archives a staff that is one of the most dedicated and competent in State government. Two summers ago, we were forced to cut nine positions -- a very significant percentage of our total staff complement. These necessary actions, taken in advance of any DBM directive, have had a significant impact on our ability to provide core services. Fortunately our entrepreneurial efforts to preserve land records has provided temporary relief in that regard, *but* those MOUs run out in two years time. We must think to the future with regard to how we will maintain any reasonable level of public service.

How have general fund reductions impacted the Archives? Here are a few highlights:

- The current general fund allowance is scarcely enough to satisfy salaries, rent, allocated costs, and Treasurer master lease costs. Every other critical need will go unfulfilled unless special fund revenue can shoulder the burden;

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- There is no maintenance support for the IT infrastructure so critical to the day-to-day operations of government and the preservation of its vital electronic records;
- Funding for maintenance and printing of the *Maryland Manual* has been eliminated;
- There is no general fund support for the care and preservation of the State's important art collection;
- The Commission to Coordinate the Study, Commemoration, and Impact of Slavery's History and Legacy in Maryland was created by the General Assembly to support the preservation, cataloging, and presentation of cultural resources relevant to the history and legacy of slavery in Maryland. All funding for the Commission, with the exception of the salary for the Director, has been removed from the budget;
- All funding for research on the history of the legislature has been cut including our contribution to the papers of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a former president of the Maryland Senate and the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Our Legislative Analyst has described the Archives as existing in "survival mode." "Austere" is the term he has used to describe the Archives' budget. I concur with that assessment and even suggest that it is understated with regard to the long term implications of our budget.

Yet, we maintain focus on our goals. We have performed critical evaluations of services and functions. In some areas, particularly Reference Services, we have had to cut back considerably. Despite the fact that the public has come to expect exceptional service from our Reference Archivists, we have had to re-evaluate the level of service we are capable of providing. Our objective has been to accelerate efforts to place finding aides on line to allow the public to perform some of the research required to access public records.

An example of what I am describing here involves an initiative that we undertook last year to bring vital records on line. As of this week, our on line service for death records was bringing in sufficient income to justify the investment and to free our staff to concentrate on making other records in our care more readily accessible. We intend to do more, as long as resources permit, according to a posted schedule on the web which, to date, we have been able to meet.

Our two most prominent records initiatives, however, are <http://www.plats.net/> and <http://www.mdlandrec.net/>, both of which have been funded by the Judiciary as an effort to cut courthouse maintenance costs and to improve access to vital public records, and have been heralded by the Clerks and public alike for what we have accomplished to date. Attached is a project status report of what we will have received from the Land Records Improvement Fund by the end of FY 2004 and how much we will have spent in that same period on our partnership with the Judiciary. We are where we said we would be a year ago, and in fact our track record is even better than we predicted then. For example, for land records alone, we have 9.8 million images of indices and actual deeds on line, filling 1.2 terabytes of archival data storage. In Worcester County, on schedule, we placed all land records on line in a fully functioning retrievable system at the courthouse. This helped the Clerk provide an exceptionally high level of service to his land record constituents at a time when the sale and refinancing of property is at an all-time high. By July we will also have added Howard County to [http://www.mdlandrec.net](http://www.mdlandrec.net/) within this year's budget without requesting additional funds.

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As you might guess, I could go on at length about what we have been able to do with the resources allocated to us, the vast majority of which do not come from the general fund. Permit me to close with three examples that highlight the ways in which we are, like the story of the loaves and the fishes, attempting to stretch the general fund resources allocated to us.

Perhaps the most touching is the way in which, without solicitation, people who are aware of the good work we do, send us contributions, large and small, for the Archives Endowment. We use the interest to fund our internship and educational outreach programs. Recently I received a “contribution to the Archives’ Endowment fund in memory of Lieutenant Michael Lawlor who recently died on U.S. soil after his service in Iraq. This contribution is for unlimited use.”

It is the role of the Archives to be the conscience of State government and the protector of the collective memory of all those who have contributed to making Maryland the great State it is, from Lt. Lawlor, to those who operated the Underground Railroad in the years before the Civil War, to the ongoing list of public servants and citizen legislators like yourselves who give so much of their public lives to making life in Maryland worthwhile.

I suspect that very few people know that the State Archives is the recipient this fiscal year of a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education to produce a web site for research and study purposes devoted to documenting the history of the Underground Railroad in Maryland. Using the limited internship monies appropriated to us as matching funds, and the enthusiastic support of the new African American Museum in Baltimore, which will have a resource center where the web site will be accessible to students of all ages, we have begun to document every aspect of the resistance to slavery and the flight to freedom in Maryland. You can watch our progress at <http://www.mdslavery.net>. Attached is a printout from a power point presentation that our project director, Dr. David Taft Terry, recently gave on Prince George’s County which is representative of what we are doing for all Maryland counties and the City of Baltimore. One of the most interesting aspects of what we are trying to do with this project is to link the stories of slaves, their owners, and those who aided efforts of slaves to escape slavery, to historical maps, providing a graphic and near contemporary view of community (see attachment).

Finally, permit me to address what may be a sensitive subject, but one to which we do need to draw attention. As we close public facilities, especially public hospitals, we need to be sensitive to those people who may have died and are often been buried there. When the Eastern Shore Hospital was closed, the State did the right thing. Maintenance of the cemetery was made a covenant in the transfer of the property and today it is thoughtfully cared for, including a commemorative plaque that reads “in remembrance of the Residents laid to rest here from 1935 to 1962 “All God’s Children.”” As we continue to close public facilities, such as Crownsville, we need to ensure that the public records of that institution (including photographs, see attached examples) are properly preserved at the Maryland State Archives, and that the people who lived and died there are remembered. I suspect that most people do not realize, that two people who spent the last moments of their lives at Crownsville were little heralded, yet major heroes, in the struggle for civil rights. Their efforts to secure their right to vote made it all the way, successfully, to the Supreme Court. Let me briefly recount their stories (oral presentation).

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We can't forget John B. Anderson and William H. Howard, nor should we forget the thousands of other patients served by these public institutions. In selling off the land, we need to see that the graves of those buried there are preserved and well marked with remembrance.

The Maryland State Archives can and should be the conscience of State government, the collective memory of those people who either served government or were served by it. We are there to help us celebrate and remember important milestones, large and small. We remind you of this year's anniversaries, the hundredth of the State Flag, the century of your occupancy of the current House and Senate Chambers, the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Maryland Constitution that abolished slavery in our state, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, but most importantly we are there to maintain a clear and honest, reliable and accountable, record of our ongoing experiment in democracy.

In order to be effective in our role as the custodian of the written, visual, and electronic record of State government, we need a commitment of capital resources, both in people and in space. As our economy improves, I hope you and the administration will be able to see your way clear to better provide the general fund foundation necessary for us to emerge from this fiscal crisis with the ability to serve you and the citizens of Maryland well. It is in the best interest of all of us, present and future, for you so to do.

Thank you.

### **Attachments to testimony:**

<http://www.mdlandrec.net> - [Project Status Report](#)

[Sample pages](#) from <http://www.mdslavery.net> and a [powerpoint presentation](#) concerning current work on the Maryland State Archives Underground Railroad project funded by the U.S. Department of Education

Photographs from the as yet unaccessioned [photographic collection](#) of Crownsville Hospital