

inquiry indicated that users, too, had only a vague idea of what they wanted, except that some method should be devised to permit the answering of all questions fully, definitely, and quickly. With the thought in mind that it is time to state our position quite clearly (1) so that the members of the Hall of Records Commission might offer criticism of present practices and suggestions for improvement and (2) so that directors of other depositories might have something in print to guide them in pursuing this problem, whether they find our practices desirable or not, the writer decided to include in this Annual Report a statement of the problem and an account of what we have done so far to meet it.

In the first place, we have long since found it necessary to divide the users of our records into two main categories: agencies of Maryland government, statewide and local, and individuals. For the users of the first category we are willing to exhaust every potential of mechanical finding aids, of staff knowledge and time. Our reason for this is that undoubtedly the government should come first because its interests are those of all of the people of the State, or all of the people of one of its subdivisions, while the interest of the individual is that only of himself, of his client, or of his group. Moreover, since the Hall of Records is a part of the government which does not govern or regulate any part of the life of the people, its function must be that of an agency which assists those other parts of the government whose business is to govern or regulate. In so far as Maryland is concerned, our obligations to the other agencies of government are especially binding because the State does not support an Historical Commission, a Publicity Commission, or any other clearing house for information relating to the government, the history, the description, or the resources of the State. All of these functions, as well as those of Public Record Examiner and custodian of non-current records, have therefore fallen to the Hall of Records. In my tenth annual report I pointed out that the Hall of Records was not intended to play so diverse a role, nor is it equipped to do so, but that so long as the State