

CIRCULATION

The Hall of Records experienced its most active year in the number of searchers who worked here and the quantity of material circulated. Ten years ago I reported that the revival of graduate studies after the war had not meant the revival of work in early American history. This is, fortunately, no longer true. Our records are now being used by scholars in every area of American history and culture. The figures below, covering the last three fiscal years, indicate how rapidly this new interest has grown.

Number of Searchers	
1955-1956	1,360
1956-1957	1,520
1957-1958	1,933
Items Circulated (including microfilm)	
1955-1956	7,726
1956-1957	9,714
1957-1958	10,698

As is shown in another part of this report, microfilm holdings at the Hall of Records are increasing more rapidly than any other type of archival acquisition. Several series of probate materials are complete for every county and we have started filming county land records from the beginning of each county up to 1949 when the film in the Land Office begins. The figures given here below indicate how much our circulation of microfilm has increased.

	Items Circulated (not including Microfilm)	Microfilm Circulated
1955-1956	6,874	852
1956-1957	8,788	926
1957-1958	9,384	1,314

The Research Room staff also gives assistance to searchers who are unfamiliar with our indexes. In addition, staff members answer queries sent by mail if extensive research is not required. Answering these queries is one of the most time-consuming services the Hall of Records performs. During the last fiscal year we received 1,317 queries, mostly genealogical in nature, from every state except Nevada and Rhode Island, and from three foreign countries.

We keep a daily record of all documents used by people who are not members of the staff. The list of documents used twenty times or more, given here below, shows that probate and land records are most in demand. Our collection of church records, however, is now of sufficient size to attract a considerable number of searchers. In addition, several projects in Maryland history have brought researchers interested in our unindexed collections of executive and administrative papers.