

Compounding the problem of a weak records program was the vast growth of records generated by the municipality. The large sums of federal money that flowed into Baltimore starting in the mid-1960s came with reporting requirements that compelled city agencies to compile mountains of reports, statistical summaries, grant applications, correspondence, legal documents, and a host of other record types. And as their work load increased, agencies expanded, added staff, and continued to operate without proper records management guidance.

Baltimore's municipal records situation improved in 1978 with the hiring of a professional archivist and reorganization of the program. The first four years were taken up with arranging and describing the various historical records previously collected. Since 1981, it has been possible to aggressively pursue extant historical records and implement improved records management procedures. While much has been accomplished, a great deal of work lies ahead.

Holdings of the Archives

The archives collects, preserves, and administers the official records of the Baltimore municipal government judged to be of historical significance. Available records date from 1729 to the recent past, although most of the material is less than 75 years old. While the primary focus of the records is the municipal government, many other aspects of Baltimore's past are covered as well. An extensive array of record types are present, including correspondence, minutes, financial material, legal documents, forms, publications, maps, reports, and working papers. A variety of indexes and finding aids facilitate access to the material, and a knowledgeable staff is ready to provide detailed reference service.

The holdings of the Archives represent only a portion of the records created by the municipal government. In many cases, city agencies have in the past routinely thrown away or carelessly stored older records without concern for the possible historical value of the material. In other instances, officials have taken records with them after leaving municipal employment. Some records have also ended up in the possession of other archival institutions. The end result of all this is that there are sizeable gaps in our collection. As our work progresses, these gaps are filled in whenever possible.