

## FOREWORD

With limited staff, the *Maryland Manual* traces the origins, functions, and key personnel of State government agencies over time. To facilitate the annual review of the State budget, the same staff outlines the organizational structure of agencies through the *Organization of Maryland State Government*, prepared each summer for the Department of Budget and Fiscal Planning. Such basic information about local government offices, though necessary for their effective functioning, is not readily accessible.

The *Maryland Manual* provides a means for analyzing and evaluating State government. But the functions and budget of State government daily enmesh with those of local government. Thus, to understand and administer State government requires a base from which to learn more about local jurisdictions. A *Maryland Manual* volume on local government could constitute that essential base if funding were available.

Government, over time, creates community resources. They are evident in the organizational charts of local government introduced in this new *Maryland Manual*. They include institutions, such as schools and libraries; and facilities, such as parks and senior citizen information and assistance centers. These shared resources took much work and many years to create. As public investments, they are our strength. As public resources placed in the service of the community or nation, they should be noted for their excellence. In its own way, the *Maryland Manual* is such a resource.

Although we cannot predict how community resources will be used, we do know, from our experience, that they will be needed. In anticipation of that need, this year, the *Manual* takes another form. The *Maryland Manual, 1994-1995* is the first edition to be created and, soon, to be made available in a totally electronic format. This means that not only the text but also the digital image files created in-house will enable us to provide electronic access to the *Manual's* content. The *Manual* also will become available to Marylanders through computers via modems in their homes, libraries, or schools by means of the computer network—"Sailor"—assembled over the last year by the Division of Library Development and Services in the State Department of Education. With a new electronic *Maryland Manual* soon to be available, Maryland government information may travel easily through computers, via modems and compact disks to schools and libraries in Baltimore City, Western Maryland, the Eastern Shore, and every part of this State.

A resource tool like this may be used in unanticipated ways as well. For example, in addition to the direct value of the information presented to Marylanders in each edition, the *Manual* has been used overseas to illustrate the nature of Maryland government. In April 1994, Clarke R. Williams, a budget analyst with the Department of Budget and Fiscal Planning was chosen for a technical assistance mission to the Union of South Africa. There, the United States Agency for International Development sponsored management training for South African state and local government officials. During this two-week program, Mr. Williams helped explain the executive budget process. He distributed *Maryland Manuals* to the participants so they could relate the functions of government to fiscal administration.

Information is a public resource. But information created today and stored in electronic formats is highly fragile. We need to pay close attention to how it is maintained and managed, and provide for its conservation and preservation. This applies not only to daily information processing but to those records of government which have historical, legal, fiscal, administrative or other archival values. We need to ensure that permanently valuable records, including electronic records, are preserved and made accessible. If that information is to survive beyond this century—to become the resource upon which future generations will draw—we need to act now and allocate funds wisely for this purpose.

The State Archives, by law, is responsible for preserving and making accessible those records of government which have permanent value. In other words, we are charged with maintaining a public resource—the memory of government—for the benefit of this and coming generations. To preserve the historical record, the State Archives has no choice but to engage in the electronic world of information technology. We must ensure that machine-readable records will indeed be readable in the future.

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