

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

At the close of the fiscal year on June 30, 1963, the Records Management program completed its first ten years of life. It seems appropriate, therefore, in this Annual Report to review the first decade of the program in the space normally reserved for a summary of the accomplishments of a single year.

The legislation enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1953, which established the program and assigned responsibility for its administration to the Hall of Records, applied only to State agencies. Earlier acts of the Legislature, however, required all public officials of Maryland to offer their records to the Archivist prior to destruction and to file a list of all records destroyed with the Hall of Records.

Under the authority granted by the Act of 1953 and these earlier laws, the Records Management Division has endeavored to provide assistance to agencies at both the State and local levels of government in all phases of records administration. These phases include: 1) Control of the creation of records; 2) Management of records while in current use; 3) Selection of material for retention or destruction; and 4) Retirement by transfer to records centers, to the archives, or by destruction.

In the initiation and development of such a program, however, it is seldom possible to begin intensive work in all phases at once. Emphasis must be placed on providing immediate relief for the agencies to be served. Because the proliferation of records had created a serious crisis in the procedures of many State agencies, emphasis first was directed toward bringing the records of these agencies under the control of records schedules. By doing this, those records which should be retained could be identified and preserved, while those of temporary value could be destroyed as soon as they were no longer needed. In addition to the space and equipment released by the destruction of unneeded records, the information gained in the surveys required to establish these schedules is of value in assisting these agencies in other phases of records administration.

The selection of current records for retention or disposal is never an easy task. Since those records representing vital interests of government or of the people and those adequately documenting operations of governmental agencies must be preserved, it requires knowledge both of the agencies producing the records and of the probable use to which they will be put. It further requires recognition of the public need to preserve records for other purposes, even though the records may no longer be of value to the agency which created them. The cost