The University of Maryland University Archives was created within the University of Maryland Libraries in 1972.

But a query about preserving “old documents and various kinds of antiques” arose almost 40 years earlier. President Harry Clifton Byrd wrote to Maryland Attorney General Herbert O’Connor on May 27, 1936, seeking O’Connor’s advice about what to do with an offer from a professor to loan such materials to the university on a permanent basis “for the use of the library or for general educational purposes.” Byrd did not want to accept these items unless it was clear that the university would exercise reasonable and proper care for them, similar to other valuable items on the campus. Charles T. LeViness III, one of the assistant attorneys general in O’Connor’s office, responded to Byrd, encouraging him to specify that the items on loan would be placed “in the University’s fireproof building in cases, the keys of which are handled by a responsible person.” Whether this loan ever proceeded is unclear, but the concern for preservation of historical materials was clearly on the minds of campus administrators.

Thirteen years later, President Byrd received another query about preserving historical documents. Dwight H. Wilson, archivist at Fisk University in Nashville, TN, wrote Byrd in August 1949 on behalf of the Committee on College and University Archives of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). Wilson and his committee contacted universities across the country to determine if they had established archival programs and to learn what work these archives had undertaken.

After checking with George Fogg, his Director of Personnel, Byrd replied to Wilson: “The University of Maryland does not have an archival program for preservation of records. Each department maintains and is responsible for its own records.”

However, archival documents and university memorabilia began to make their way to the University of Maryland Libraries for safekeeping. The establishment of a Maryland Room in the new McKeldin Library made gathering the campus’ historical materials an even easier process, but progress continued to be slow. In 1969, Anna Urban, Head of the Maryland Room, noted in a report that the University Archives “will be held in abeyance until other projects are more nearly complete. As space becomes available, this collection will be gathered together, recorded, and arranged.” By the time consultant Elsie Freivogel surveyed conditions in the Maryland Room’s storage spaces in late 1970 as a precursor to the proposal for establishing a University Archives, she found the “records” there were in a deplorable state. Materials on the shelves were covered in dirt and were sadly out of order and undescribed. Provisions for preservation of the records were completely inadequate, and no mechanism existed for identifying records with permanent value.
After Freivogel’s survey, the need for a formal University Archives program was obvious to the Libraries’ administrators, and the quest to establish such a program began. On April 25, 1971, Dr. Robert L. Beare, Assistant Director for Collections for the UMD Libraries, wrote Dr. George Callcott, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs to extoll the capabilities of the Maryland Room staff. After review by Chancellor Charles Bishop and University President Wilson Elkins, Beare hoped that a statement of policy could be formalized by the Board of Regents at its May 1971 meeting and work on records surveys could begin over the summer months. Callcott, formerly a leading faculty member in the university’s History Department, well understood the need for more systematic preservation of the university’s historical records after the challenges he faced in assembling sufficient documentation to prepare his 1966 work *A History of the University of Maryland*, so he was an important ally to recruit.

No further activity on this topic is apparent in the university’s administrative files until February 1972, when Beare, with the endorsement of Director of Libraries Howard Rovelstad, wrote Robert Beach, President Wilson Elkins’s assistant, on February 16 that “For some time I have been considering how the Maryland Room might fulfill a more active role in the library and the University. One area in which we have done very little and yet is of great importance was the whole question of University records.” Beare encouraged Beach to bring this matter to the attention of the president because he felt that “no archival program can be successful without a statement from the President or the Board of Trustees or Regents.”

Beare had already hired Mary Boccaccio, who had previously served as an archivist for the Rockefeller Foundation, as head of the newly re-named Maryland and Rare Book Room. Boccaccio also had responsibility for manuscript collections and the University Archives. She was immediately involved in preparing a general policy statement and other sample documentation, including a proposed statement of approval for the Board of Regents, deeds of gift, and a retention/disposition schedule, that Beare submitted with his request. Beare’s arguments, and additional encouragement from Boccaccio in March 1972, persuaded Beach to write a formal letter of support to President Elkins on April 18 in which he requested that the Board of Regents “be asked to approve the establishment of an Archives and that the Archives be recognized as the official depository of University records…”

Elkins forwarded Beach’s letter to his Vice President for Academic Affairs, R. Lee Hornbake, asking Hornbake if this action should have “[Chancellor] Bishop’s blessing” and how such an activity would be financed. Hornbake investigated the request immediately and learned that the idea had been discussed with and presumably had Callcott’s endorsement. He agreed with Elkins, however, that the proposal should come through the chancellor of the College Park campus, Charles Bishop, since “space, manpower, and responsibility will center on the College Park campus.” On April 20, Elkins concurred and tossed the idea back to Beach, recommending that the request for formal establishment of an archives for the university come through the Chancellor’s Office.
Anxious for top-level approval for the archives program, the Libraries had essentially skipped a step in the chain of command and had gone directly to the administrator with the most power and the closest relationship to the Board of Regents. In early 1972, Bishop had only been on campus for a little over a year, and the duties and responsibilities of his position were still evolving. (Note to the reader: with the reorganization of higher education in Maryland in 1988, the position titles flipped. The position that Elkins held in 1972 is now equivalent to Chancellor, and the Chancellor for each campus is now called the President. We agree—it’s very confusing!)

While administrators argued over the pathway for official recognition of the University Archives, Mary Boccaccio continued to press for approval by the university’s Central Administration and Board of Regents “to preserve the integrity of the University records and to establish the principle of a university-wide records program.” She also noted that each campus should “fund, maintain and house its own Archives,” but that the Archives in College Park should handle the records for Central Administration and University College and serve as a resource for the archives at the other University of Maryland System campuses.

Since the push for official recognition had essentially been returned by President Elkins to the College Park campus, discussion of the proper avenue for approval for the archives program continued between the Libraries and the College Park Campus Senate Committee on Libraries. During these conversations, there was confusion over whether President Elkins and the Board of Regents would formulate a general policy establishing archives on all campuses of the university system and if that conflicted with attempts to establish an archives program in College Park.

On May 15, 1972, Mary Boccaccio submitted a formal proposal to the College Park Campus Senate Adjunct Committee on Libraries and Instructional Aids for a University Archives program to be administered by the Libraries. She stated that the Maryland Room of McKeldin Library acknowledged its responsibility for “permanent preservation of university records of legal, historical, fiscal, and administrative value” and outlined the steps the staff would take to identify, store, and provide access to these records. She also noted the major gaps that existed in the documentation of the campus’s history and the problems with how valuable records were currently being housed. Boccacio concluded her proposal with an appeal for the “support and cooperation” of the committee members in their official capacity as well “as members of departments and as individuals.”

This formal proposal resulted from a conversation between, Boccaccio, Library Director Howard Rovelstad, Assistant Director for Collections Robert Beare, and Walt Rundell, chairman of the Department of History. At this session, Boccaccio was informed that “the proposed archives program is informally approved by the College Park administration.” With this indication of administrative support, it was now time to move forward on formal recognition, while Boccaccio began work on records surveys across the campus.
To add even more complexity to the situation, a minor conflict arose between the Libraries and the Maryland State Archives, then known as the Maryland Hall of Records, in the summer of 1972 when state records managers visited the campus to begin work on establishing their own retention schedules. In a September 8 memo, Boccaccio asked the university’s legal counsel, Dennis Blumer, for an interpretation of sections of the Maryland Annotated Code to determine where responsibility for initiating a records management program and archives for the university lay. Boccaccio noted “The last time the Hall of Records was on campus for retention schedules was in 1956 and I do not believe that they included the academic and service departments as well as the administrative offices. There was at that time no archival program in evidence.”

Boccaccio and state officials finally agreed that she would do the records inventories and draft the schedules, submitting them to the Hall of Records for review and approval. The schedules were to “come out under the Hall of Records with notations were necessary that permanent records should be transferred to the University Archives after a certain date.” Boccaccio noted in a subsequent memo to Callcott that “This is a most agreeable solution for it insures that we maintain control of campus records and all requirements are met and checked.”

In December 1972, the Adjunct Committee on Libraries and Instructional Aids of the College Park Campus Senate began consideration of Boccaccio’s proposal for an Archives program to be administered by the library. The committee raised numerous questions and agreed to return to the proposal once it had an adequate response. Boccaccio continued to be frustrated by the lack of action and wrote in a February 26, 1973 memo, “The administration supports such a program and if it had not been for a foolish move last year a resolution approving the program would have been submitted to the Board of Regents at their last meeting in 1971/72.”

To assist the Adjunct Committee in continuing to review the archives proposal, Boccaccio prepared an extensive response outlining the value of archives, the current relationship to the Hall of Records, and costs of the program, which she transmitted to the committee on March 8. Her comments and responses to additional questions from the group at their meeting three weeks later satisfied all concerned, and they agreed to move the proposal forward to the Senate’s Committee on Educational Affairs. In the interim, work on records scheduling continued, and the Libraries began to acquire additional campus records.

The Senate Committee on Educational Affairs also approved the proposal, but it was returned to the Adjunct Committee on Libraries and Instructional Aids by the Senate Executive Committee, which raised multiple objections to the request for approval. The Executive Committee was unsure what action was required, since the archives program already existed, and continued to question whether the University Archives would be responsible for records from the College Park campus or the entire University system. The members also wanted to know what types of records would be maintained in the Archives. The committee could not determine the consequences of approving or rejecting the proposal and in the end, decided not to act.
The Adjunct Committee reconsidered the establishment of the Archives program at its October 15, 1973, meeting, and ultimately decided that resubmission of the Archives for approval would be of doubtful value and that it made more sense to begin publicizing the existence of the program and the benefits it provided to the campus.

Conflict with the Maryland State Archives arose again, four years after the UMD Archives’ tacit establishment. On January 22, 1976, Boccaccio wrote Vice Chancellor Donald O’Connell to inform him that Edward Papenfuse, the new State Archivist, was refusing to sign retention/disposition schedules because they indicated that permanent records were to be housed in the UMD Archives. Papenfuse did not want to endorse the building of an archives collection at the university. Boccaccio again requested formal approval of the UMD program, but there is no evidence of further discussion in the administrative files on this topic. The impasse was somehow resolved, however, as records schedules have been signed by the State Archives for since that time.

Once established, the University of Maryland Archives program sputtered along under a succession of archivists. The Archives and Manuscripts Department was formally established in 1977. Charlotte Brown followed Mary Boccaccio’s lead in the early 1980s and acquired additional university records to add to the collections. After Ms. Brown’s departure, the University Libraries hired Mr. Lauren Brown to serve as Curator of Historical Manuscripts and Archives in May 1984. Brown found that he could not devote the amount of time and attention to university records that he felt they deserved, so the Libraries decided to establish a separate University Archives unit in Special Collections, and Anne Turkos, Associate Curator of Archives and Manuscripts since January 1985 was named University Archivist in September 1993. Under Ms. Turkos, the size of the Archives’ holdings has dramatically expanded, and the Archives have worked tirelessly to increase their outreach efforts to make the campus aware of their services and to more broadly disseminate knowledge of University of Maryland history. Assistant University Archivist Jason Speck joined the staff in 2007, beginning work in the unit as a volunteer and progressing to a permanent position in 2009.

The University of Maryland Archives finally received official approval as a local archives, consistent with all the provisions of the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) section 14.18.03, from the Maryland State Archives in July 2013. This action solidified the tacit approval the UMD Archives had from the state and the university over the last 40-plus years and resolved any lingering questions about whether or not permanent UMD records needed to be sent to the State Archives. In his letter conveying the State Archives’ approval, Deputy State Archivist Timothy Baker noted that “in all respects, from operations and facilities, to staff professionalism and access, [the Archives] exceeds the requirements of the Code of Maryland Regulations governing local archives.” While this designation is a significant step forward for the UMD Archives, the goal remains to make all campus entities aware of the Archives and the services it provides.

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