

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ARCHIVES

Guide to the Records of the

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD
1949-1994**

Record Group 11: Libraries

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**GUIDE TO THE RECORDS OF THE
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ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

On May 31, 1950, the County Council passed the County Library Law of 1950, which created a Department of Public Libraries administered by a professional librarian and advised by a Library Board. The Library Board was appointed by the County Council and assumed its duties in February 1951. By July 1, 1951, when the Department officially began its operations, seven of the nine independent Montgomery County libraries agreed to hand over administrative control to the new system in exchange for improved library service. The Bethesda Library Association transferred its facility and collections to the County in 1952, and the Rockville Library joined the system in 1957.

In order to expand service to the rural and suburban population of the County, the Department began operating three bookmobiles in 1952. The Department and Library Board in conjunction with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission formulated a system of regional and community libraries in order to meet the needs of both densely and sparsely populated areas. During the early 1960s, the Library Board and Director began anticipating the growth of the system through annual "Facilities Master Plans." By 1965, the County system was comprised of 14 branches. The modernization of the system continued in the 1980s with the addition of a computerized circulation system and the expansion of the system to 24 libraries. The Department maintains a comprehensive collection of materials and now provides a full range of services available at its 19 library sites, including information services for adults and children, an online Public Access Catalog for access to indices and full text sources, regularly scheduled programming for preschool children, and meeting rooms. Service to those groups with the greatest needs, such as recent immigrants, the disabled, seniors, and preschoolers, is emphasized.

Library Board members are volunteers appointed by the County Council. The Board approves specific policies of the Library Department, provides advice to the County Executive and Department, testifies before the County Council on library matters, particularly the budget, and coordinates the testimony of other library supporters. It meets each December with the County Executive in order to provide advice on the budget and lobbies the County Council through testimony and the media in support of library funding.

However, unlike the other Library Boards in Maryland, which all have powers similar to those of the Board of Education, the Montgomery County Library Board has not been invested with the power to prepare the library budget, to hire the Library Director, or to provide an annual assessment of the Director's performance. The relative powerlessness of the Montgomery County Library Board is reflected in the decline in library service in the County.

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Board members are appointed for three year terms, renewable once. Vacancies are announced by the County Executive. The Director and the Deputy Director of Public Libraries meet with the Board for three hours every month except August. The Board maintains Library Advisory Committees at each branch, and this network ensures that the concerns of the community are expressed to the management at all levels of the library system. Other committees have at various times included Planning, Legislation, Budget, Book Sale, Library Policies and Practices, Facilities, and Minority Services. Montgomery County Friends of the Library are represented on the Board, and activities of that organization are coordinated with those of the Board.

See also the records of the Department of Public Libraries.

PROCESSING PROCEDURES

General processing procedures consisted of discarding duplicates, unnecessary binders, and routine transmittals. If records contained oversized documents and photographs, they were removed from the original location in their assigned series and placed in separate containers. Separation sheets would then be inserted in the original location within the folder to indicate the new location of any records placed elsewhere.

Preservation copying of newspaper clippings was performed whenever feasible. Records in folders were arranged, unless otherwise indicated, in forward chronological order, with undated records appearing at the end of the folder.

PROVENANCE

These records were transferred from Rockville Regional Library.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records of the Montgomery County Library Board comprise 5 cubic feet of material dating from 1949 to 1994. They include annual reports from 1950 to 1965, correspondence, memoranda, meeting agenda and minutes, reports, and pamphlets, brochures and other library ephemera.

The records are divided into six series:

Series I: Reports
Series II: Legislation
Series III: Budget
Series IV: Correspondence
Series V: Committees
Series VI: Minutes

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I: Reports, 1950-1971 (3 folders)

This series consists of annual reports from 1950 to 1965, and two additional reports.

Series II: Legislation, 1949-1951 (2 folders)

This series contains correspondence, reports, clippings, notices, statements, and copies of bills relating to the proposed legislation to establish the Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries, and documents the efforts of the League of Women Voters to secure its passage. It also contains a transcript of a testimony to the County Council surveying seven public libraries and libraries of other local institutions.

Series III: Budget, 1952-1979 (1 folder)

These records consist primarily of statements delivered by Library Board members before the County Council in support of funding for the Department of Libraries.

Series IV: Correspondence, 1962-1980 (0.20 cu.ft.)

These records consist of correspondence, memoranda, and reports primarily from or to the Board and its committees regarding the conditions and needs of branch libraries, funding, and administrative matters.

Series V: Committees, 1975 (1 folder)

This series consists of correspondence, reports, and proposals developed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Music for a plan to establish a collection of musical scores at either the Bethesda, Wheaton, or Little Falls branch.

Series VI: Minutes, 1950-1994 (4.6 cu.ft.)

This series consists of Library Board minutes for the years from 1950 to 1994; however, except for minutes from February and March 1979, there is a large gap between January 1969 and January 1982. Beginning in 1984, the records also contain the handouts presented by Library Director Agnes Griffen at the meetings. These nearly always included Director's reports; newspaper clippings and articles relating to libraries in general and Montgomery County or Maryland public libraries in particular; agendas; press releases; newsletters from the Department, its staff, and the Friends of the Library; and Intellectual Freedom Reports, which document complaints from the public regarding library materials or displays as well as the library's responses.

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The records also contain correspondence, reports, memoranda, motions, notes, budgets, appointments, statistics, statements and testimony, resumes from Board candidates, samples of questionnaires and surveys, and library handouts such as brochures, pamphlets, bumper stickers, bookmarks, posters, and calendars of events. Significant topics include new technologies, expansion of service, ethical and First Amendment concerns, the opening of various branches, site and materials selection, and funding. The records also document the budget crises of the early 1990s, when library funds were slashed, branches closed, and services radically curtailed. The Library Board rallied public and national support for the library system, and their efforts were instrumental in persuading the County Council and County Executive to roll back some of the cuts.

Folders for 1987 to 1988 do not always include meeting minutes but contain the other handouts. The 1994 meetings were recorded on micro cassettes, which were removed to Record Group 19, Audiovisual.

BOX INVENTORY

Series I: Reports

Box 1 (Located C6b)

Annual Reports, 1950-1962, 1965

Report of the Library Advisory Committee, 1950

Report on Facility Needs 1956-1961 by the Long Range Planning Committee, 1956

Series II: Legislation

(Box 1, Cont.)

County Library Bills, 1949-1951

Library Advisory Committee Council Testimony, 1950

Series III: Budget

(Box 1, Cont.)

Budget Testimony, 1952-1978

Series IV: Correspondence

(Box 1, Cont.)

1962-1980 (4 folders)

Series V: Committees

(Box 1, Cont.)

Music Committee, 1975

Series VI: Minutes

(Box 1, Cont.)

1977-1978

February-Jul7 1979

October 1950-December 1957

January 1958-January 1965

January 1966-January 1969

1982

1983

(Series VI: Minutes, Cont.)

(Box 1, Cont.)

January-March 1984

April-September 1984

October-December 1984

January-April 1985

May-June 1985

Box 2 (Located C6c)

July 1985-May 1987 (21 folders)

Box 3 (Located C6c)

June 1987-January 1990 (29 folders)

Box 4 (Located C6c)

February 1990-March 1992 (25 folders)

Box 5 (Located C6c)

April 1992- June 1994 (27 folders)