

A Guide to the Virginia State Library, Office of the State Archivist, Records of the Public Records Act Study, 1973-1975;

Virginia State Library, Office of the State Archivist, Records of the Public Records Act Study, 1973-1975
1973-1975

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History

Processed by: Laura E. Drake

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Library of Virginia

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There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

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Transferred to the Virginia State Library, date unknown

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Biographical/Historical Information

For many years, The Library of Virginia had no definitive home. Valuable early records were kept at Jamestown as early as 1676 and were then moved to the College of William and Mary for a brief period at the century's end. By 1780, extant records were moved to the Capitol in Richmond.

Coincidentally, in 1779, the Virginia General Assembly was presented among its legislation, "A Bill for Establishing a Public Library" drawn up by Thomas Jefferson. The bill provided for 2000 pounds yearly to be expended to maintain a State Library in Richmond. The facility was to be a reference library only without books being lent for home use. Perhaps ahead of its time, the bill failed to pass.

The Virginia State Library was created by an act passed by the General Assembly on January 23, 1823, to establish a public library with funds derived from the sale of William W. Hening's *THE STATUTES AT LARGE*. From 1823 to 1828, the Library was under the control of the governor and council. In 1828, the General Assembly created a joint committee on the library (located in a room in the southeastern corner of the Capitol) to oversee its administration. Use of the State Library was restricted to members of the state government in a policy that continued until at least 1856. The Secretary of the Commonwealth served ex officio as state librarian from 1832 to 1903.

The growth of the State Library was somewhat erratic. Book holdings increased from 1,313 in 1828 to 17,480 in 1856. Lack of funds and politics frequently intermingled to slow library development. General W.H. Richardson, State Librarian in 1852, became embroiled in an effort to remove him "to make way for some politician of democratic principles." At the close of Reconstruction, Dr. George William Bagby, then State Librarian, was terminated and his position abolished at the hands of Readjusters.

Eventually, on May 15, 1903, the General Assembly passed an act that created a library board to administer the library, authorized the deposit of public records in the library, provided for the publication of historical records by the library, and established a library fund for the purchase of books and private papers. The Library Board, which was responsible for naming the State Librarian, was itself appointed by the Board of Education. The General Assembly passed an act on March 29, 1944, transferring the power to appoint the Library Board to the governor.

While many public records somehow survived the Commonwealth's early years, many losses occurred due to fires, the ravages of war and negligence. When the library was moved, for example, in 1895 to a building separate from the Capitol, "chutes were constructed from the upper story of the Capitol to facilitate the delivery of books to the wagons of the junk dealer who had bought them." The move was poorly planned and the library's contents suffered great loss at the hands of those very authorities assigned to protect them.

The new facility quickly was found to be inadequate and efforts were made both in 1910 and 1920 to construct a proper building for the State Library and its collections. Ground was broken for the current facility on December 7, 1938. At last, on December 23, 1940, the newly completed Virginia State Library was opened to the public.

The Virginia State Library adopted the name, the Virginia State Library and Archives, in early 1987 to more adequately reflect its mission and purpose today. In July 1, 1994 the name was changed to The Library of Virginia. It serves as a general reference and research library, as the official repository of state archives and publications, and as a repository of state and federal documents. It provides assistance and advice to libraries around the state, and it administers state and federal library funds. The Archives and Records

Division of the library administers the state records management program, arranges and describes records deposited in the division, and provides assistance and advice to state and local government agencies concerning the management of their records. Additionally, the agency produces many publications. The most notable among those regularly issued are the quarterly VIRGINIA CAVALCADE and the annual accession reports of the Archives and Records Division showing its most recent records and manuscript acquisitions.

Scope and Content Information

Contains documentation the Library's study of public records acts throughout the United States. The collection includes research notes and copies of public records laws of other states.

Arrangement

Each series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

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Scope and Content

Contains correspondence and text of public records laws of states around the United States.

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Series II: Research Notes 1973-1975

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Scope and Content

Contains notes regarding public records laws in Virginia and other states.

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