

WALKING THE HIGH WIRE: THE IMPACT OF CAMPUS TALES AND LEGENDS ON THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST

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ABSTRACT: College and university archives use outreach to showcase the history documented in their collections. When it comes to making history-based connections with students, alumni, and others, a common area of focus is the telling and retelling of favorite campus tales and legends. Yet beyond their use for outreach, these stories are also a major area of responsibility for the college or university archives. Campus tales and legends can be a source of positive attention and goodwill for the college or university archivist, but they can also be a source of embarrassment, factual error, or conflict. In extreme cases, a college or university archives can even find its existence as a repository for university history being challenged or undermined in ways that are painful and public. Using the University of Maryland Archives as an example, this article illustrates the positive and negative aspects of working with these popular stories and offers an approach for handling these tales to provide maximum benefit for other college and university archives.

Introduction

College and university archives engage in a variety of outreach activities designed to make people aware of the mission of the archives, encourage donations of materials, and foster a dedicated and growing user base. These activities can assume a number of forms, including exhibits, class lectures, alumni presentations, and campus celebrations. In recent years, the digital age has spawned an entirely new level of outreach. Digital exhibitions, blogs, wikis, and other social media have led these archives to redouble their efforts to connect with a user base increasingly accustomed to finding information online.

Using outreach to showcase the history documented in its collections is a central focus in a university archives. Connecting current students with their campus history can create strong attachments that last long after those students become alumni. Campus

development officers can attest that those connections create alumni with fond memories who will support the institution with welcome and necessary contributions, financial and otherwise. Frequently a college or university archives becomes a storehouse of “good feelings,” possessing the records, images, and memorabilia that make students, faculty, staff, and alumni think warmly of their alma mater.

These history-based connections often involve telling and retelling favorite campus tales and legends. Every campus possesses a myriad of these kinds of tales, from the spooky ghost stories told each Halloween to the most infamous campus pranks. Each is a touchstone, a way of harkening back to a different time, linking the campus community of today to that of yesterday. They can become a source of cohesion among generations and illuminate a past that is often very different, providing a window into how much a campus has changed over time. Telling these stories can become campus tradition, and traditions are powerful. Some believe that money, prestige, and even improved academic achievement have a direct correlation to how connected students (and later alumni) feel to their institutions.¹

The task of keeping campus lore alive is a major responsibility of college or university archives. Campus communicators expect archivists to quickly regurgitate these stories for a press release or newsletter. Campus tour guides often utilize them to help convey a sense of their particular campus community and its values to prospective students and their parents.² Development officers want interesting stories at their fingertips to make connections with donors. Alumni often enjoy rehashing tales at homecomings, commencements, or other campus events. Student users also contact the archives to learn about legends for school projects, newspaper or radio station stories, or just out of personal interest.

Often the college or university calls on the archivist to do more than just repeat a story. On many occasions, archivists are asked to assign some level of veracity to a tale or legend, parsing out the kernels of truth from the husk of an entire narrative. Sometimes this can be fun; at other times, however, the stakes in separating fact from fiction can be decidedly high. Archivists can even find themselves trying to catch up with a particular tale or legend that has taken off in the public’s imagination—the proverbial runaway train.

Ultimately, campus tales and legends can be a source of positive attention and goodwill for the college or university archivist. They can also be a source of embarrassment, factual error, or conflict. Archivists can lead the way in bringing these kinds of stories to light, but can also find themselves accused of keeping them from view. While archivists work diligently to document the truth behind these stories, they may find that many people will not listen, or worse, that the public prefers the fiction previously offered as fact. In extreme cases, a college or university archives can even find its existence as a repository for university history being challenged or undermined in ways that are painful and public. In short, campus tales and legends are a double-edged sword. Using the University of Maryland Archives as an example, this article illustrates the positives and negatives of verifying popular myths and offers an approach for handling patrons interested in these stories to provide maximum benefit.

Tales and legends teach us a lot about ourselves. Jan Harold Brunvand, preeminent folklorist who popularized the phrase “urban legend,” says that these kinds of stories

“reveal the motivations, hopes, dreams, fears . . . of the people among whom these ‘traditions’ circulate.”³ Brunvand believes that tales and legends are still prevalent in a society that considers itself both educated and sophisticated. This is true on a college or university campus; despite their lofty reputations, these bastions of academia are often hotbeds for legendary stories, from the almost plausible to the patently ridiculous. Nor have these tales abated as colleges and universities increase in size. According to folklorist Simon J. Bronner, “student needs for social belonging and a fear of losing personal control have given rise to distinctive forms of lore . . . and a striving for retaining the pastoral ‘campus feel’ of the old-time college.”⁴

College and university archives invest substantial time and resources into documenting these kinds of tales for several reasons. First, as Brunvand has indicated, they can tell us a lot about campus groups and their interests. This knowledge can help the archives reach out and make contact with these groups, raising its profile and helping establish relationships within the campus community. Second, the archives’ involvement is often practical; if repository staff are going to be asked about these tales, then they should be knowledgeable about them. Third, and perhaps often ignored, is the fact that alternative histories—legends told as if they are fact, rather than for fun—represent a corruption of the historical record that should not go unchallenged. Finally, these kinds of stories can, if left to fester in the public consciousness, impact the perceived legitimacy of the archives, especially when archivists try to correct popular, long-standing—but erroneous—legends.

Tales and Legends at the University of Maryland

The staff of the University of Maryland University Archives spends a lot of time considering, researching, and reporting on campus tales and legends. They have organized these stories into four types, with each representing more complexity for the archives: tales of the paranormal, tales of the individual, tales of the student body, and tales of the campus community. As one moves up the myth-making ladder, these stories have more potential to subvert or distort the historical record.⁵

Tales of the paranormal are “fun” legends that are more often than not harmless and can create good publicity for the archives. Attention to these tales is generally limited to certain times of the year (usually around Halloween), so a college or university archives expends relatively minimal effort to respond to these legends. Typically, stories of the paranormal center on campus buildings or people. At Maryland, several legends surround Morrill Hall, the oldest active academic building on campus. One tale claims that people inside the building can hear the marching feet of the campus corps of cadets who performed military drills in front of Morrill Hall in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other individuals claim to smell rotting flesh, an alleged holdover from cadavers used for instruction many years ago. Another legend is that smoky odors permeate parts of the building, supposedly a remnant of the fire that struck the campus in November 1912.

Typical of paranormal tales about individuals are those repeated about Marie Mount, dean of the College of Home Economics at Maryland from 1927 to 1957. Mount is

believed to haunt the building that bears her name, a story that may have originated in rumors that she had secret living quarters somewhere in the building and because she died while still employed on campus. Stories told include doors opening and closing on their own, spectral piano music audible on stormy evenings, and general feelings of unease. One particularly detailed legend states that a security guard patrolling the campus in the 1960s who stepped into Marie Mount Hall to light a cigarette in the dead of winter found his matches mysteriously extinguished several times and, upon deciding to flee, turned to discover the front door open and awaiting his departure.⁶

In the University Archives at Maryland, the archives' staff has participated in numerous media and student interviews relating to these paranormal tales, created and led ghost tours, and been connected with paranormal investigations of the campus by area "ghost hunters." All of these serve to raise the profile of staff as "experts" in this kind of legend. On the negative side, such publicity can diminish the credibility of archivists as keepers of the historical record by emphasizing their role as purveyors of creepy campfire stories. The opportunities to comment on such stories does not always allow for archivists to bridge that gap or expound on their more important duties to the campus.

The second type of tale is the legend of the individual. These stories are by their nature small in scale and relatively harmless, but because of their connection to people, they are often difficult to dislodge and can require considerable tact and discretion. One frequently encountered permutation comes from family genealogists who query the archives for information about an ancestor who was a "star" athlete, an "ace" student, or the "first" person to do something. These assertions of fame or status are often not true. The archivist can be placed in the unenviable position of trying to avoid hurting a researcher's feelings—or worse, appearing to question his or her relative's truthfulness—while simultaneously not perpetuating misleading or incorrect information. This kind of legend often requires the archives to conduct a substantial amount of research to see what can be found to corroborate or refute these claims. As a result, the costs to the archives in time and researcher relations are much greater than those connected with paranormal legends. Staff responding to these kinds of queries always inform the family or other requestor about the types of archival records that they consulted while researching the inquiry—yearbooks, commencement programs, media guides, and so on—so that the patron knows that a thorough search was done and what records were consulted. This often goes a long way to ameliorate any reluctance to accept the archives' findings.

The third category consists of legends that are student oriented in their focus or origins. Because of the size of the student body and the transit of these tales by word-of-mouth, these legends have tremendous staying power. Folklorists have many theories as to the origins of these stories: as rites of passage or initiations into adulthood; as ways for students to test their individual limits; or as methods of pursuing issues involving truth, fear, or rebellion.⁷ Many of these stories have the potential to cause embarrassment for the university and in some cases can even be physically dangerous for the students themselves.

One legend at Maryland posits the incorrect belief that students have the right-of-way everywhere on campus, whether they are in a crosswalk or not. This legend asserts

that students can step off the curb and expect motorists to stop, a power that the tale does not confer to any other campus group. The danger comes when pedestrians are actually struck by cars, as happened at Maryland in October 2011. In reporting on an accident that injured two pedestrians, the student newspaper carried the following quote from a student: “I usually just cut in front of cars all the time because we have the right-of-way, but this is really scary.”⁸ Luckily the pedestrians were not seriously injured, but even accidents have not dispelled this tale. In fact, this particular legend has morphed over time. One version stated that if a car hits a student then the driver had to pay the student’s tuition as compensation.⁹ After university officials publicly disavowed that notion, the story changed. The current and untested version holds that if a student is hit by a campus shuttle bus, then his or her tuition is covered.¹⁰ The existence of documentation stating that the story is not true did nothing to stop its spread—it simply morphed into a story not yet addressed by campus officials, allowing it to remain “plausible.”

Another student body legend at Maryland involves a particular spot on campus known colloquially as the “Point of Failure.” In reality, the “Point” is a compass inlaid in the sidewalk in the late 1980s to commemorate the 75th anniversary of a devastating 1912 campus fire. A plaque accompanies the compass describing where early campus buildings were located in relation to the center of the compass. In short order, the student body appropriated that space and created a new legend that states that any student who steps on the “Point” of the compass will not graduate in four years. As a legend that can be considered mildly embarrassing to the university (as well as obscuring the truth), it rivals another surrounding the university’s mascot, Testudo. That legend states that Testudo’s statue will fly away from its perch if any student graduates with his or her virginity intact. Whereas people laugh off the virginity legend as clearly ridiculous, many more enjoy repeating the “Point of Failure” legend.¹¹ Student tour guides recount this legend to visitors as they pass the allegedly fateful spot, and it even made its way into the university’s main *Wikipedia* page, initially presented as if it were fact.¹² In these days of open access to the Internet where many believe all they read, this was of deep concern at Maryland. Legends repeated on the web blur the line between fact and fiction on a much larger scale, as well as debasing the role of the archivist as expert. The “Point” legend brings us to a critical juncture, moving toward tales and legends that people desire or feel a need to be true.

The final category of legend consists of those that deal with the campus community, the most broad reaching and potentially divisive. They are tremendously popular across a range of campus groups, and their plausibility allows them to inhabit that fine line between fantasy and reality. Two such myths are deeply embedded in the racial history of the Maryland campus. Confronting them is fraught with the potential for serious political ramifications.

The first legend was brought to light when the campus Counseling Center wanted to name a room in its building after former Supreme Court justice and NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall. This grew out of a story that had been repeated for several decades: during a 1935 NAACP lawsuit to force Maryland to open its law school in Baltimore to African Americans, Marshall met with campus administrators in that building to

discuss the case. The Counseling Center staff asked the University Archives to verify the story prior to the room's dedication.

Counseling Center staff informed the archives that their source for the story was a well-known former history professor, George Callcott, the author of two books on the history of the campus and a former longtime faculty member. Confronting a legend of this nature confirmed by such a widely known and authoritative source is difficult enough, but the positive nature of the legend makes it even more so. The legend ties the university to a well-respected figure (Marshall) and provides a source of pride for several campus groups. It also illustrates how far the campus has come since the dark days of its segregated past.

But extensive research by archivists, both at Maryland and elsewhere, has uncovered nothing to verify the story. In fact, all of the circumstantial evidence uncovered by the University Archives' research overwhelmingly suggests that a meeting did not take place. Racial segregation was public policy at the University of Maryland during the 1930s and into the 1950s; as such, the university declared that there was nothing to discuss.¹³ The university had no reason to meet with those whom one campus administrator referred to as "agitators," other than to legitimize the grievance.¹⁴ No contemporary newspaper accounts of any such meeting exist. Furthermore, the law school, the NAACP offices, and the university's admissions and other administrative records subpoenaed in the case were all located in Baltimore, well away from the College Park campus. Finally, neither the University Archives nor the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis (the repository of the records of the state's attorney general who represented the university in the lawsuit) contain any evidence to support the story. Even the history professor who may have started this legend failed to mention it in either of his books on the university's history. When the archives presented its research findings to the Counseling Center, the silence was deafening. No one acknowledged the results, and the dedication of the room went on as scheduled, though without a public claim that Marshall had been there.¹⁵

An even more serious and damaging legend continues to cause controversy by claiming that slaves were used in the 1850s to construct some of the original buildings on the campus. Professor Callcott and others on campus are sources for this tale, which is also fueled by the campus's troubled racial past, its origins on land once belonging to its slave-holding founder, and contemporary efforts to encourage institutions with histories tied to racism or slavery to apologize for past acts. This legend has received front-page newspaper coverage; it has been the subject of debates and lectures; and it even served as the foundation for a year-long course offered by the university's History Department. The scrutiny of the claim is intense. Indeed, during the campus's 150th anniversary celebration in 2006, this legend was a major focus of attention, with many demanding to know why the university was not making this "fact" more public. The situation was exacerbated in a December 2006 *Diamondback* student newspaper article in which emeritus history professor George Callcott was quoted as saying, "I don't know really how many or how much" but "[slaves] were used" to construct the campus. The article stated that "according to Callcott, historical evidence shows that use of slaves on university grounds ended here in 1858," though no source for this evidence, or for Callcott's statements, was produced.¹⁶ Callcott's own histories of the

campus assert that “slaves were used in constructing the College buildings and for work on the farm,” though he cites no sources for this critical piece of university history.¹⁷

Despite the lack of concrete evidence to support this claim, the University Archives repeatedly encounters many who assert its truth. Indeed, the aforementioned year-long history class was developed in part as a response to the publicity created by the unsubstantiated assertions of slave labor being used on campus, and “most students were determined to find the smoking gun.”¹⁸ In other words, many students taking the course had predetermined the outcome and were looking for the evidence to support what they already believed to be true. To their credit, the report issued by the class concluded that “as far as is known, no slaves labored to construct the buildings.”¹⁹ Yet this did not stop the flow of misinformation or prevent the Office of Diversity and Inclusion from posting a historical time line that stated flatly: “The Maryland Agricultural College—as it was first known—opened in the 1850s with slaves constructing the college’s buildings and working on the farms.”²⁰ The rhetoric surrounding the question appears to be almost an attempt to obfuscate the issue, with another history professor proclaiming, “If slaves didn’t lay the bricks, they made the bricks. If they didn’t make the bricks, they drove the wagon that brought the bricks. If they didn’t drive the wagon, they built the wagon wheels.”²¹ This may be true, but it does not constitute proof. More recently, a student who works in the archives stated that both her history teaching assistant and professor offered the claim as fact during a course lecture with no new or conclusive evidence to support the assertion of slave involvement in erecting campus buildings. When asked about this, the professor stated that they did not remember making the claim, but admitted that they had heard it from others in the department.

What happened at Maryland in regard to this legend is not unique—people confuse facts with probabilities or likelihoods all the time. Is it accurate to say that the wealth that created what ultimately became the University of Maryland came from slave owners? Yes. Is it accurate to say that this wealth was largely derived from the back-breaking labor of slaves? Yes. Is it acceptable, if not accurate, to say that there is a strong possibility of slave involvement in the initial construction of the campus? Yes. But it is not acceptable to assert facts in the absence of evidence to support those facts. It is not acceptable to twist the historical record to fit modern-day desires or to right past wrongs, no matter how great or abhorrent. Historical scholarship requires documented proof, or it must be qualified accordingly. To accept less is to accept the erosion of fact-based discourse that is the cornerstone of academia and society at large.

Tales and Legends Toolkit

So how does a college or university archives counter such myths? The University of Maryland Archives uses a “tales and legends toolkit” based on four pillars: quality work and trust, perceived authority, public voice, and archival holdings. Each of these pillars is used to take actions designed to help publicize tales and legends when beneficial, or to combat those that are harmful or inaccurate. The first pillar, quality work and trust, is a cornerstone of archival advocacy, defined as “activities consciously aimed to persuade individuals or organizations to act on behalf of a program or institution.”²²

In doing this work of persuasion, perhaps nothing means more than demonstrating the quality of an archivist's work; without the public perception of such quality, almost anything the archivist does or says may be discarded. Lewis Bellardo, in his article "Observations on Thirty Years of Advocacy" argues that archives should never underestimate the importance of providing excellent service, as this builds a "major reservoir of good will" that can be called upon when needed and helps build trust in an archives' knowledge and integrity.²³ In other words, the first step to being seen as an authority in the realm of tales and legends is to be seen as competent, professional, and dedicated to the public good.

The second pillar is perceived authority: the belief held by others that the archives is expert in matters of campus history. Many college and university archives are not imbued with any direct authority; at Maryland, the archives not only competes for the title of "expert" with figures such as the above-mentioned history professor, but it also competes to be recognized on campus as the final repository for permanent records, lacking the authority to compel their deposit.²⁴ This could encourage more recalcitrant campus citizens to ask: if the archives is not trusted enough by university administrators to be given the authority to collect records, why should we then consider them experts when it comes to historical knowledge?

Yet the archives aggressively seeks to be viewed as the main source for both historical campus information and archival expertise. The mission of the archives to document, discuss, and disseminate campus history is continually publicized. The University of Maryland Archives almost never turns down a classroom lecture, public speaking opportunity, interview, tour, event invitation, or chance to set up a display table. Each of these activities raises the archives' profile as an authoritative resource in the minds of the public. Archivist Larry Hackman advises that "archives should try out as many of these vehicles as possible" and "design such outreach programs so that they also offer the archives opportunities to create personalized communications and then personal relationships with potentially significant allies and supporters."²⁵ Many students, faculty, staff, and alumni share enthusiasm for the history of the campus, and these people, once identified and recruited, become a network of cheerleaders, a key part of any successful archival program. Such external supporters can have numerous benefits to the archives, including financial and collection development assistance, publicity or media support, and the ability to "introduce the archives to their peers and to organizations that might help the archives."²⁶ For example, the student's report about her history professor and teaching assistant repeating the slavery legends in class gave archives staff the opportunity to make new contacts in the department. These can be cultivated and potentially used to provide more historical information in the future and on a wider variety of topics. Creating and nurturing the view of the archives as expert, even in campus tales and legends, creates opportunities for the archives to increase its standing in the community and can provide a platform to accomplish larger goals.

This leads directly into the third pillar: the archives' public voice. The University of Maryland Archives has become proficient in multiple forms of social media, using Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and WordPress to contact an ever-widening circle of people and to do so without another entity's filter. The staff also collaborates with many campus and departmental news outlets, building relationships and securing placement on each

entity's "experts" list. The University Archives also has a regular column in the alumni magazine and routinely provides information for various campus publicity pieces and projects, including articles in student and campus publications, images for campus brochures and websites, and supplementary materials for speeches and public events. Larry Hackman advises that starting "close to home" in terms of generating publicity is often the best way to begin asserting the archives' public voice, as "it's useful to control or heavily influence as much as possible the messages the archives wants to convey, and this is usually easiest in these" projects.²⁷ The archives staff actively participates in varied activities like campus governance and commemorations. They provide historical context to current events or proposed campus legislation and add background that makes past events relatable to the present. Simply put, the more people know the archives and recognize its role, the more power it has to focus the discussion on the evidence in the archival records, especially when the facts are unclear, and there are competing claims of uncertain provenance.

The final pillar pertains to the uses of archival materials: first as a way to confront legendary stories, and second, to instruct students in handling similar challenges themselves. In some of the most serious examples above, the University of Maryland Archives had to directly confront the public's desire to assume certain knowledge about troubling parts of the university's past. Archivists need to engage more actively this desire to "remember" or promote a version of history that is more desirable (for good or ill) or more palatable and work with it to foster more positive outcomes. Archivists should be sensitive to what one researcher calls the "effacement of memory," when society, either actively or passively, removes evidence of troublesome events from collective memory, whether it be a site, a group of artifacts, or the documentary record.²⁸ In the legends regarding slave labor and Thurgood Marshall, the public responded to what it perceived as the university's attempted effacement of the twin tragedies of slavery and exclusion from its historical narrative. It was up to the archives to reach out and convince the public that the staff cared only for the truth as reflected in the available historical evidence, utilizing archival record groups, historical newspapers, contemporary diaries and letters, and other primary source materials to make their case. In the case of Thurgood Marshall, the archives promised the Counseling Center that should any proof of a visit by Marshall come to light, it would be the first to know. In the slavery example, the archives worked closely with the students and faculty involved in the history course to actively demonstrate its commitment to finding the truth, as well as educating them on what was already known: that the "smoking gun" that "most students were determined to find" would not be easily uncovered, if it exists at all.²⁹ The University Archives has successfully encouraged people to correct public statements regarding Marshall's visit and the use of slaves to build campus buildings. This demonstrates the increasing trust that users are placing in the archives as expert in these matters.

The archives also uses archival materials in class instruction sessions on primary source research and to promote information literacy. Students are educated on how this type of research involves significant time and effort as they attempt to identify the relevant portions of the historical record using the archives. Students are instructed on how to interpret and verify source materials and how to appropriately qualify them

when they appear unclear. Examples from the university's history are used to demonstrate what kinds of records can be used to resolve or verify issues of fact. Students are taught that there are always gaps in the historical record and that these gaps affect what can be stated or proven. Finally, students are shown how "evidence" in the historical record can be open to multiple interpretations, with archives staff emphasizing how the meaning of a certain record can change over time, whether through shifting social and political conventions, the discovery of other materials, or simply due to the viewpoint and bias of researchers themselves.

Whenever the toolkit is put into action, staff take a measured and calm approach. First, the reality is that the archives lacks the resources to fix all of the incorrect information all at once, or probably ever. Staff prioritize what must be addressed and focus their energies on those issues. For example, the slavery legend was clearly a priority, whereas arguing over the veracity of a ghost story is not. Second, the archives must be vigilant. Legends are created often and evolve frequently, so it is important to keep an eye out for new tales as well as old ones wearing new clothes. In addition to reading numerous campus publications, staff keep tabs on the student population, asking questions of their student employees, students they teach, and campus citizens with whom they interact. Third is the need to be diligent to fix what can be fixed. Staff are quick to investigate and correct misinformation as soon as is practical, knowing that the longer that kind of information remains in the public consciousness, the harder it is to dislodge. Fourth, the archives is committed to persistence and staying with an issue, even when it takes time and resources to resolve. For example, at the University of Maryland, it took three years to correct historical inaccuracies on the Office of Diversity's website. Fifth, the archives seeks to collaborate with and enlist the aid of campus communicators who, through the example of past efforts, depend on the archives for its expertise.

Finally, archives staff recognize that taking unpopular stances may be required to address popular or sensitive tales. Archival professionals have an obligation to defend and explain the historical record wherever possible. At the University of Maryland, archivists were occasionally accused of colluding with the administration to keep the truth about slavery's role in the campus's history hidden because they had publicly stated that no historical documentation could be found to support the allegations. Yet, through efforts to highlight the staff's expertise, some opponents have become advocates of the University Archives and fellow keepers of the historical narrative. Lewis Bellardo argues that acting as though "every opponent is a potential ally" can result in "improved relations and effective cooperation," both of which are critical to archives where authority must be earned and re-earned constantly over time.³⁰ Further, if archivists choose not to challenge these tales and legends, who else will take on that role? Absence from these discussions might cause some to question the value of the archives entirely. Archivists are not only obligated to the historical record, but are also obligated to themselves as professionals to understand and value their role in the preservation and dissemination of the historical record for the public good. In that light, being an active campus participant, especially when it comes to discussing or correcting these kinds of tales, is a crucial way to communicate the archives' value and its role in campus life.

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NOTES

1. Margaret R. Yocom, "'What We Need Are Some Traditions!' The Role of the Northern Virginia Folklore Archive in George Mason University's Search for Traditions," *Folklore Forum* 35, nos. 1–2 (2004): 74–93, Indiana University Scholarworks Repository, accessed May 16, 2013, <http://hdl.handle.net/2022/2454>. Yocom worked on the Traditions Committee at George Mason, which was trying to enhance the school's attractiveness to students by publicizing campus traditions. Yocom argues that traditions created by smaller groups of students can have as much power and value as the larger, more well-known traditions, i.e. commencement, and that archives play a major role in the ongoing power and resonance of campus traditions.
2. Peter M. Magolda, "The Campus Tour: Ritual and Community in Higher Education," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2000): 24–46, JSTOR, accessed May 16, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3196269>. Magolda states that the tours use campus tales, among other pieces of information, to convey acceptable norms of behavior to incoming students, with both positive and negative consequences.
3. Dr. Jan Brunvand, personal website, accessed May 16, 2013, <http://www.janbrunvand.com/faq.html>. Brunvand also states, "The history of particular themes and plots in urban legends is itself a fascinating study, but behind it all is the wish to learn more about the human sources and carriers of the lore."
4. Simon J. Bronner, *Campus Traditions: Folklore from the Old-Time College to the Modern Mega-University* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), xiv, Project Muse, accessed June 11, 2013, <http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9781621036173>.
5. Strictly speaking, these tales are not myths; Brunvand states that myths "typically . . . deal with the activities of gods and demigods, the creation of the world and its inhabitants, and the origins of religious rituals." He acknowledges that "there is some difficulty in using these terms and distinctions since 'myth' has acquired other specialized meanings." Legends, on the other hand, can be sacred or secular and "generally have humans in the major roles." Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 99.
6. Deborah Koch, "So I Turned Around and Nobody Was There—A Look at the University's Haunted Buildings" (student folklore project, fall 1976), 23, University of Maryland Special Collections' Maryland Folklore Archive, Acc. 2001-113, Box 18.
7. Elizabeth Tucker, *Haunted Halls: Ghostlore of American College Campuses* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 4–6.
8. Erin Egan, "Two Students Struck by Car Outside CSPAC," *The Diamondback*, October 26, 2011, accessed June 5, 2013, http://www.diamondbackonline.com/news/article_5564fe0c-b406-5b26-8d9a-3e676df6fd0d.html.
9. Sarah Murray, "When Testudo Flies," *The Diamondback*, April 12, 2005, accessed June 5, 2013, http://www.diamondbackonline.com/article_cfd232b0-50ea-533e-a4d6-15352f6566b8.html.
10. This version was related to me separately by several current UMD students during the preparation of this article.
11. Elizabeth Tucker points out that Maryland's failure legends resemble those at Brown, Michigan, Louisiana State, and elsewhere. Similar virginity legends are celebrated at Cornell and Rutgers,

with Tucker noting that “there are so many statues and sculptures connected to students’ virginity that it is impossible to list them all.” Tucker, *Haunted Halls*, 26–29.

12. *Wikipedia*, s.v. “University of Maryland, College Park,” accessed June 11, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Maryland,_College_Park#The_Great_Fire_of_1912. Originally the text on *Wikipedia* described the legend without classifying it as such; the archives reported the problem to campus staff monitoring the page, and they made the appropriate corrections.
13. University president H. C. Byrd publicly espoused the doctrine of separate but equal, but was privately adamant that allowing African Americans into the university would be fought “right down to the last ditch,” and, if allowed, “would come pretty close to ruining us.” H. C. Byrd, letters to Dean of the Law School Roger Williams, July 9 and July 16, 1935, University of Maryland Special Collections, President’s Office records, Series VIII, Box N12, “Negro Students [1933–1939].” Ultimately, Byrd lost this fight, with the university forced to admit African Americans into the law school in 1935 and voluntarily admitting them into the undergraduate programs in 1951.
14. H. C. Byrd, letter to State Atty. Gen Herbert O’Conor, July 26, 1937, University of Maryland Special Collections, President’s Office records, Series VIII, Box N10, “Negro Education II,” Folder 1 of 4.
15. The University Archives reviewed the plaque that decorates the Marshall Room in March 2013 and objected to its stating that “It has been reported that on March 29, 1935, Thurgood Marshall visited campus and had a confrontation with Pearson/Byrd in Shoemaker,” as there is currently no evidence to support any kind of official visit or “report,” much less an exact date, the origin of which is entirely unclear. The director of the Counseling Center agreed to make the suggested change. Jason Speck, e-mail communication to Sharon Kirkland-Gordon, March 27, 2013.
16. Andrew Vanacore, “Campus’ History of Slavery Overlooked,” *The Diamondback*, December 12, 2006, accessed August 19, 2013, http://www.diamondbackonline.com/article_7bec699d-de35-55ad-8880-529585e795e3.html.
17. George Callcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1966), 158. Callcott’s 2005 volume adds the further detail that campus founder Charles Benedict Calvert brought his slaves to campus “to help the contractors,” which is also unsourced.
18. Students of History 429, “Knowing Our History: African American Slavery and the University of Maryland,” ii, accessed June 17, 2013, <http://www.newsdesk.umd.edu/pdf/KnowingOurHistory.pdf>.
19. Students of History 429, “Knowing Our History,” 26.
20. http://www.odec.umd.edu/div/timeline/1856_1906/1856_1906.html, accessed June 17, 2013. In March 2013, after more than three years of lobbying by the University Archives, the university’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion finally amended its historical time line, which now states that “no evidence has been uncovered to date” to support the assertion of slave involvement in building campus structures or working on the farms.
21. Students of History 429, “Knowing Our History,” 2.
22. Larry J. Hackman, ed., *Many Happy Returns: Advocacy for Archives and Archivists* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), vii.
23. Lewis Bellardo, “Observations on Thirty Years of Advocacy,” in *Many Happy Returns*, 86–106.
24. The history professor has his own legend: we often hear him referred to as “the campus historian,” because he published a history of the University of Maryland in 1966, several years before a nascent University Archives first appeared in the early 1970s. As such, for many years there was no other person or entity to serve as a resource for campus history, or to verify (or not) our legendary stories.
25. Hackman, *Many Happy Returns*, 16.
26. *Ibid.*, 20.
27. *Ibid.*, 31.
28. Kenneth E. Foote, “To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture,” *American Archivist* 53 (Summer 1990): 378–92.
29. Students of History 429, “Knowing Our History,” ii. In the last year, a cache of documents belonging to University of Maryland founder Charles Benedict Calvert and his family were discovered, and there was hope that the documents would contain new information that might help solve the slavery question. Unfortunately, the documents held little about the creation of the university and nothing about whether slave labor was used on the campus.
30. Bellardo, “Observations on Thirty Years of Advocacy,” 100.