

SI 632
Appraisal of Archives
WINTER TERM 2007

Tuesdays 9:00 to noon 311 West Hall
Prereq.: SI 580 or Permission of Instructor

January 7, 2007
Subject to Additions and Revisions

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Overview

Archivists have spilled more ink over the topic of appraisal than any other. The topic of appraisal remains one of considerable controversy in archives. The archival literature includes (almost endless) debates over the definitions and indicators of long-term value, the purpose of appraisal, who intervenes in appraisal decisions, when in the information life cycle do they intervene, and which methods work for which types of records and which types of organizations. The literature is replete with tensions between the theory and practice of appraisal and between questions of universalism versus specificity (by type of record, media, type of organization, time period, country, etc.).

This course takes an unconventional approach to the topic of appraisal. First, in selecting readings for this course I have tried to reduce the number of readings that present *opinions* about various of theories appraisal rather than presenting theories or assessing their implementation. Second, my own opinions about appraisal are influenced heavily by eight years as manager of the appraisal function at the New York State Archives and Records Administration (1987-1995) and by my even longer concern with integrating electronic records into archival programs. One of the problems with the literature on appraisal is that there is a very weak research base and few methods for evaluating the feasibility or effectiveness of different appraisal methodologies. As a consequence, I will place considerable emphasis on the outcomes of different theories and methods of appraisal and on implementation of appraisal recommendations and decisions.

We will also look at appraisal and selection as a particular type of information problem, namely: how do archivists make decisions about what to keep in an environment of great uncertainty about supply (what else is out there) and demand (especially future demand).

Course Objectives

- Understand the methodologies and tools that archivists apply to develop archival collections and select records for inclusion in archives.
- Become familiar with appraisal and selection of archives in different organizational, temporal, and technological environments.
- Develop skills in research, organizational analysis, and presentation of appraisal recommendations.
- Learn how to document and implement appraisal decisions.
- Understand practical, legal, and ethical issues associated with appraisal and acquisition of archival materials.

Assignments/Expectations

Active and informed participation in class discussions (20%)

Case Study Evaluation and Presentation (20%)

Beginning in Week 4 there will be one or two case studies on a particular aspect of appraisal. Students will select one week and read the case materials and lead a discussion of the case in class.

Organizational Analysis Essay (15%)

Write an essay that compares two different types of organizational structures and the implications of these organizational structures for identifying records of enduring value. Due. Feb. 16.

Appraisal Evaluation (20%)

Students will receive documentation from an appraisal of an actual body of records. You will be asked to make your own appraisal determinations and justify your decisions. Due March 23.

Final Exam (25%)

Take Home. Due April 17.

READINGS: All readings are available on line via-CTools.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 Jan. 9: What is the Purpose of Appraisal?

In spite of cheap storage (and a shift from saving space as the primary motivating factor for appraisal) there are many reasons why appraisal remains a core archival function. This session will include an overview of the course and an introduction to key concepts.

Week 2 Jan. 16: Defining Value in Archives

Developing predictors of enduring value is one of the most challenging tasks that archivists face. This is due in part to the wide variety of factors that archivists consider during appraisal. This session will cover the development and evolution(?) of principles and guidelines for appraisal.

READ:

David Bearman, Archival Methods, Preface, Introduction, and Chapter One, Selection and Appraisal, Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, Technical Report #9 (1989); pp. 1-9.

REREAD/REVIEW

Terry Cook, What is Past is Prologue *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997): 17-63.

Week 3 Jan. 23: Appraisal Authority (law, policy, society)

The “right” to appraise records is enshrined in laws, policies, and in the legitimacy that societies lend to professionals who make appraisal decisions. At the same time, authority for appraisal sets parameters around the types of records or collections that fall within the domain of archival appraisal. This session will cover the overlapping web of appraisal authorities and discuss their implications for appraisal.

READ:

Laura Millar, “Discharging Our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada,” *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998): 101-146.

Society of American Archivists. A Guide to Donating Your Personal or Family Papers to a Repository. <http://www.archivists.org/publications/donating-familyrecs.asp>

Society of American Archivists. A Guide to Donating Your Organizational Records to a Repository. <http://www.archivists.org/publications/donating-orgrecs.asp>

Julian Masanès, Towards Continuous Web Archiving First Results and an Agenda for the Future, *D-Lib Magazine* December 2002 Volume 8 Number 12. <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/december02/masanes/12masanes.html>

Week 4 Jan. 30: Organizational Analysis

Records are a reflection of organizational functions and activities. But they are an imperfect reflection of what actually happens or gets done in real life. This session will examine disparities between formal organizational structures and recordkeeping practices. We will discuss the implications of organizational culture on appraisal.

READ:

David Bearman, "Diplomatics, Weberian Bureaucracy, and the Management of Electronic Records," *American Archivist* 55:1 (1992), pp. 168-91.

Barbara L. Craig, Rethinking Formal Knowledge and its Practices in the Organization: The British Treasury's Registry Between 1900 and 1950. *Archival Science* 2: 111-136, 2002.

Ciaran B. Trace, What is Recorded is Never Simply 'What Happened': Record Keeping in Modern Organizational Culture. *Archival Science* 2: 137-159, 2002.

Jana Diesner, Terrill L. Frantz, and Kathleen M. Carley, Communication Networks from the Enron Email Corpus "It's Always About the People. Enron is no Different" *Computational & Mathematical Organization Theory* Volume 11, Number 3 / October, 2005: 201-28.

CASE STUDY:

Peter Botticelli. "Records Appraisal in Network Organizations." *Archivaria* 49 (Spring 2000):161-191.

Week 5 Feb. 6: Appraisal and Collection Development

Appraisal is nearly impossible (or at least ill advised) outside of the context of explicit institutional (or individual?) collection development goals and policies. During this session we will discuss the elements of collection development policy and practice.

READ:

Frank Boles, *Selecting and Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*. Chapter 3: The Big Picture: Mission Statements, Records Management, and Collection Development Policies, Chicago: Society of American Archivists (2005): 43-73.

Faye Phillips, "Developing Collecting Policies for Manuscript Collections," *American Archivist* 47:1 (Winter 1984): 30-42.

Judith E. Endelman, "Looking Backward to Plan for the Future: Collection Analysis for Manuscript Repositories," *American Archivist* 50 (Summer 1987): 340-55.

CASE STUDY: Jennifer A. Marshall, "Toward Common Content: An Analysis of Online College and University Collecting Policies," *AA* 65 (Fall/Winter 2002): 231-256.

Week 6 Feb. 13: Macro-Appraisal; Functional Analysis

Macro-appraisal and functional analysis are two methods that have been developed to help archivists cope with the quantity and inter-connectedness of records. We will discuss what macro-appraisal is, how it is carried out, and whether it has been effective.

READ:

Terry Cook, Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics, and Implementation in Canada, 1950–2000, *Archival Science* 5:2-4 (2005) 101-61.

National Library and Archives Canada. "Appraisal Methodology: Macro-Appraisal and Functional Analysis (Part A: Concepts and Theory)

http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/061101_e.html

National Library and Archives Canada. Appraisal Methodology: Macro-Appraisal and Functional Analysis Part B: Guidelines for Performing an Archival Appraisal on Government Records. http://www.collectionscanada.ca/information-management/061102_e.html

CASE STUDIES:

Catherine Bailey, Macro-Appraisal: The Case of Income Securities Program Branch, IRMT Case Studies

Agnes E. M. Jonker, Macroappraisal in the Netherlands. The First Ten Years, 1991–2001, and Beyond, *Archival Science* 5:2-4 (2005), 203-218

Feb. 16: Organizational Assessment Due.

Week 7 Feb. 20: Documentation Strategies

Documentation strategies were developed in the 1980s as a method to ensure better planning of collection development and appraisal and as a means to encourage inter-institutional cooperation. We will discuss the concept of documentation strategies and some of the obstacles to their design and implementation.

READ:

Helen Samuels, Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategies, *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 125-40.

Richard Cox. "Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective." *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 11-36

Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992), pp. 181-191.

Margaret Hedstrom, An Introduction To The Documentation Strategy Concept: A ,Potentially Powerful Tool For Preserving The Botanical Record, paper presented at the XVI International Botanical Congress, August 7, 1999, St. Louis, Mo.

CASE STUDIES:

TBA

Winter Break (Feb. 24-March 4)

Week 8: March 6: Models for Appraisal Decision-Making

This session will cover various methods for making decisions about what to keep.

READ:

Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, "Exploring the Black Box: The Appraisal of University Administrative Records," *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985): 121-40.

Terry Cook, "'Many are called but few are chosen': Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 25-50.

Felix Hull, *The use of sampling techniques in the retention of records: A RAMP Study with Guidelines*. Paris: UNESCO, 1981.

CASE Study:

Ellen Scheinberg, "Two Perspectives on the Same Source: An Examination of Federal Deportation Case Files," *Archivaria* 57 (Spring 2004) 49-66.

Week 9 March 13: Implementing Appraisal Recommendations

Archivist invest a great deal of effort in appraisal records, but many of the recommendations do not result in transfer of records to archives. We will cover some of the methods necessary to turn appraisal decisions into acquisitions.

READ:

Society of American Archivists: Deed of Gift (Brochure).

http://www.archivists.org/publications/deed_of_gift.asp

Kären M. Mason, Fostering Diversity in Archival Collections: The Iowa Women's Archives, *Collection Management*; 27 (2) 2002, pp. 23-32.

Kathryn Neal, Cultivating Diversity, *Collection Management*; 27 (2) 2002, pp.33-42.

CASE STUDY:

National Archives and Records Administration, Inquiry into the Disposal of Records of the Naval Research Laboratory Stored at the Washington National Records Center, April 24, 1998. <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/policy/inquiry-records-disposal.html>

Week 10 March 20: Reappraisal and De-accessioning

We will debate the issues around reappraisal and de-accessioning.

READ:

Leonard Rapport. "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records." *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 143-50.

Karen Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives: A Reply to Leonard Rapport," *American Archivist* 47 (Winter 1984): 43-49.

CASE STUDY:

Sheila Powell, "Archival Reappraisal: The Immigration Case Files," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 104-116.

Susan D. Steinwall, "Appraisal and the FBI Files Case: For Whom Do Archivists Retain Records?" *American Archivist* 49 (Winter 1986), pp. 52-63.

March 23: Appraisal Exercise Due.

Week 11 March 28: User Needs and Appraisal

There is considerable debate over the question of whether users or potential users should have an opportunity to review and comment on appraisal recommendations. We will debate this issue and examine some of the mechanisms that have been put into place for user input.

READ:

Timothy Ericson, "Preoccupied with Our Own Gardens': Outreach and Archivists," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990): 114-22

Terry Cook, "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming, *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990): 123-34.

Week 12 April 3: Ethical Issues and Appraisal

READ:

South Africa, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, Chapter 8,
The Destruction of Records

Verne Harris, "They Should Have Destroyed More: ": The Destruction of Public Records by the South African State in the Final Years of Apartheid, 1990-1994

Week 13 April 10: Archival Appraisal in the Context of Cultural Heritage Institutions

We will examine archival collection development in the broader context of other cultural institutions.

Hugh Taylor. "Heritage Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Culture." *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 8-20.

Additional readings: TBA

Week 14 April 17: Summary/Wrap Up

Final Take Home Exam Due