

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF APPRAISAL IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND THEIR APPLICATION TO BUSINESS RECORDS

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This is Part I of an edited version of a paper submitted to the Melbourne College of Advanced Education as a course requirement for the Graduate Diploma in Information Management (Archives and Records) in 1988. Part I examines the development of the principles of appraisal within the public archives tradition, including a discussion of the main theoreticians. It then considers how other archivists have interpreted appraisal criteria. A framework in which appraisal principles operate is drawn, which can apply to any institutional setting. Part II examines the application of government appraisal principles to business records within this broader framework.

1 Introduction

Archivists have historically been concerned with records of permanent value. In the public sector, their role has changed from that of passive receivers to active selectors of records for retention and often for destruction. This process of evaluating records has been defined as appraisal.¹ Appraisal determines what ends up in an archives. It has become a fundamental concern of archivists since they became involved in record selection.

The theory and practice of archival appraisal was developed by the United States National Archives in the 1950s, as a result of the need to select permanent value records from the huge bulk of records produced by government, particularly after World War Two. Records management was concerned with the evaluation primarily of temporary records. It

was expected to solve many records problems by creating and maintaining more efficient systems. The archivist could then concentrate on developing criteria for selecting records of permanent value. Major public archival institutions in Australia adopted the US terminology and methods of disposal of records, by way of disposal schedules, which listed categories of records to be retained or destroyed on a time basis. Appraisal was part of the procedure used to arrive at a disposal schedule and thus combined both the creating agency's and the archives' retention needs.² The appraisal process is quite different when applied to records transferred to archives which have already undergone administrative selection.

Archival appraisal of records in agency custody has led to a blurring of records management and archival functions in recent years and has had a strong impact on how the appraisal criteria are applied. Machine-readable records have led the archivist further into the records management domain, in the knowledge that appraisal of these records must be built into systems at the creation stage.

In order to evaluate the applicability of government derived principles of appraisal to business records, we need to understand the public archives tradition, how and why archivists became involved in appraisal and the terms they have adopted. The broad factors which influence archival appraisal principles are equally applicable in both a business or a government setting. Once the fundamental institutional differences are analysed, similarities can be extracted and re-defined to suit a particular archival context.

2 The Selection of Records for Preservation as an Archival Task—an Historical Overview

The French Revolution gave rise to the concept of government responsibility to preserve records for the people as well as for administration. It was not until the twentieth century that archivists established the principle that they should be consulted before any records were destroyed. After World War Two, the huge proliferation of records occurred as a result of the rapid expansion of government functions and the ability of machines to duplicate records. Large scale destruction of documentation became inevitable.³

Since the 1950s governments all over the world have developed legislation and records control programs to assist in the orderly transfer of records to archives. The public archivist thus became involved with both permanent and temporary records.⁴

In Great Britain, the Jenkinsonian tradition was the basis of the Grigg principle that appraisal should be delegated to the originating department and should not reflect the biases of academic researchers of a particular day.⁵ In the Grigg method there is a separation of the evaluation processes of administrative and historical values. A first review by the departmental

officer takes place five years after the record is closed. Some historical awareness does come into play and Public Record officers do provide unofficial advice on record values. It assumes a close relationship between current administrative values and continuing future research values, but distinguishes between the two processes. Records which pass the first review are reviewed twenty-five years later to determine the research value. This second review is implemented by the Public Record Office in conjunction with a departmental officer. Both administrative and research values are taken into account at this stage. In Great Britain's Public Record Office, appraisal is an archival activity at the second review stage when the potential research values are assessed.⁶

In the United States, the National Archives and Record Service (NARS) promoted records management in the 1940s and 1950s in order to facilitate the disposal of records before they reached the National Archives. In the United States federal system disposal/retention schedules are prepared by agency staff under archival supervision and permanent value records are appraised by archival staff.⁷ The American concept of appraisal is directed to the selection of permanent value records.⁸

In Australia, the Australian Archives, the Commonwealth's archival authority, was given authority under a 1966 Cabinet directive to control the destruction of Commonwealth records by means of authorised schedules. The *Archives Act* of 1983 provides a statutory basis for all archival activities.⁹ Appraisal is always part of the disposal process leading to a disposal schedule. Agencies prepared draft schedules on the basis of administrative criteria as well as providing an opinion on their informational/research value. However, the Australian Archives can reject the recommendations of the agency if a case for secondary reference values is found. Disposal authorities cover both permanent and temporary records and require mutual agreement to be authorised by the Australian Archives.¹⁰ The Public Record Office of Victoria, as the State archives of Victoria, also follows a joint agency/archives process in appraisal and disposal. However, it does not have detailed provisions for disposal in its Act. Instead, these are provided by standards issued by the Keeper of the Public Records.¹¹

The term 'appraisal' as used by Australian Archives and the Public Record Office of Victoria covers all aspects of disposal and touches on custody, retention, destruction and storage. It is the means of providing the authorities to destroy and the method of determining the value of records to provide for their proper disposal.¹²

3 The Development of the Principles and Theory of Appraisal in the Public Sector

3.1 Appraisal Theory

Appraisal literature deals either with the philosophical basis of appraisal

criteria or else with the techniques for implementing appraisal decisions. A body of appraisal theory such as that for arrangement and description of records has not been developed.¹³ However, the concept of records as evidence of the organic growth of the organisation which produced them, which gave rise to the way archives are arranged and described, also influenced the development of archival appraisal principles.¹⁴

Discussions on the rationale for appraisal decisions centre on whether objective criteria can be achieved and whether the archivist, because of his/her historical training, is in a position to judge the research values of records. This latter consideration has resulted in most of the literature written on appraisal principles.

3.2 Schellenberg's 'evidential' and 'informational' dichotomy

Theodore R. Schellenberg of the United States National Archives and Records Service is considered the most influential theoretician of archival appraisal. He provided the concepts of 'evidential' and 'informational' values of records as a framework for the consideration of the research values of records. In 'The appraisal of modern public records', a National Archives and Records Service bulletin produced in 1956, he provided the overview of his concepts as they had evolved in the National Archives. His book *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, published in the same year, reiterates and elaborates on these views.

Schellenberg's guidelines need to be evaluated in their historic context. He wrote when there was a pressing need to reduce public records. He considered that records management would assist in determining the quality of records selected and would work closely with archival management. The terms 'evidential' and 'informational' are based on the statutory definition of 'records' from the *Federal Disposal Act* of 1943:

All books, papers, maps, photographs or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any public or private institution in pursuance of its legal obligations or in connection with the transaction of its proper business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that institution or its legitimate successor *as evidence* of its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities or because of the *informational value* of the data contained therein.¹⁵ [author's emphasis added]

According to contemporary accounts, this definition of 'records' actually placed the responsibility for appraisal with the agencies. This definition was carried across to some State records legislation, but was considered too elaborate for small non-government bodies.¹⁶

Schellenberg synthesises European and American views on appraisal, as well as adding his own contribution. He sees two values in public records; the primary values for the originating agency and the secondary values for other agencies and private users. The primary values exist

for records created to accomplish the purposes for which an agency has been created; that is administrative, fiscal, legal and operating uses.¹⁷ They are evidence of the government's financial and legal commitments and also of value to the citizens served by government. The administrator must evaluate the continuing value of the records for the agency. The secondary uses are the values that exist beyond the record's current use and for other than current users. He believes that the archivist should evaluate these secondary uses because archives are preserved for reasons other than that for which they were created.¹⁸

The secondary values of the records are:

- the evidence they contain of the organisation and the functioning of the government body that produces them.
- The information they contain on persons, corporate bodies, things, problems, conditions with which the government deals.¹⁹

Schellenberg emphasises that his definition of 'evidential values' differs from Jenkinson's evidence that derives from unbroken custody of records. He is influenced by German archival theories on public records as evidence of the organic growth and functioning of public records. Records are considered in the administrative context and by the position of each administrative unit in the government structure. This is in fact how all archival activities are considered and places Schellenberg's appraisal approach within the traditional archival principles of original order and provenance, whereby all records are arranged and described in the order they were created.²⁰

In practice, the 'evidential' value refers to the same type of records that are of value to the administrator for both current and future purposes, as those retained by the archivist, *but for different reasons*. There is, therefore, an overlap in administrative and evidential values.²¹

Evidential values relate only to public records. The public archivist, 'as an agent of government', should first be concerned to preserve evidence on how the government was organised and how it functioned. Schellenberg considers the *use* of these records not only for the student of public administration, but essentially as a benefit to future administration, and as part of the government's accountability to the public for its actions.²²

The test of evidential values is considered an objective one, in which the archivist's historical methodology has taught him to use organisational development as the context for source records. The relationship between the record and the activity/function it documents is essential to its meaning.²³

Schellenberg considered certain factors required when applying evidential values to records. Individual pieces of information were not to be appraised, but the entire documentation of an agency. The value

of the records was affected by the importance of an office in the administrative hierarchy, the character of the functions performed by each office and the character of the activities carried on under a given function by each office in the administration and their interrelationship.²⁴

Informational values are derived from the information in public records on matters with which public agencies deal, including persons, places, and subjects. These are not appraised by considering the source of the records, but rather by looking at other documents that exist on the topic, that is the type of subjects researchers may be seeking. Subject specialists may need to be consulted and many users considered.²⁵

The tests or criteria for informational values are uniqueness, form and importance. First, there is *uniqueness* of the information and of the records that contain the information. All sources on a subject should be considered. The uniqueness of form relates to the physical duplication at various offices. In other words, the more information that exists on a subject the less valuable it becomes. He also distinguishes between records of different periods. These include 'historical records' of a period in which scanty records remain, and defining chronological dates before which all records are retained.²⁶

Form of the information in records and the form of the records is the second criterion of informational value. Form as applied to information relates mainly to the degree to which the information is concentrated. Concentration of information in records is the most suitable form for archival preservation. The physical condition of the records and the arrangement of the information in the series if it facilitates the extraction of information also relate to form.²⁷

The *importance* of the information he considered the 'realm of the imponderable'. Records in a collective form are usually more useful than as single items. In relation to persons and things, the importance of the individual is considered. However, the test of importance is applied only when standards of uniqueness and form have been met.²⁸

The importance of records about persons, both to the individual and to scholars, overlaps with residual legal values, for example citizenship and property.²⁹

Schellenberg saw his appraisal views as guidelines, not exact standards. He was aware of factors which would require a differing approach. These included different periods in time, different values for different institutions or countries, the need for outside advice and the cost-factor of the retention of records. His main writings refer to public archives. In relation to non-government records, particularly private collections, he considered only the research/informational value as a valid secondary value.³⁰

Schellenberg has been criticised for his emphasis on administrative

history and evidential values in appraisal by some US writers.³¹ However, the need for the public archivist to preserve records relating first to the origins of administrative policy and second people's rights and third informational values was reiterated by Meyer Fishbein, Director of the Records Appraisal Division of the US National Archives and Records Service.³² Christopher Hives, a Canadian archivist, on the other hand, believes that Schellenberg placed too much emphasis on research values and the archivist's role in interpreting this value. He claims that, by delegating administrative values to the records manager, Schellenberg effectively excluded the archivist from integrating appraisal with records management and of retarding the identification of permanently valuable records early in the life cycle of the record.³³

Michael Cook, an English archivist, finds particular problems with Schellenberg's terminology despite its wide use outside the United States federal archives. He considers evidential values as useful concepts for administrative history, particularly the way records are arranged and described, and that this reveals the significance of the informational content. However, Cook considers the informational content more relevant for appraisal than evidential, citing the example of case files as high in informational value but low in evidential value. Unlike the Grigg system, which requires an administrative value *before* an historical value, Cook believes the informational content value on its own should not be discounted in appraisal.³⁴

3.3 Norton's 'legal' value of records

Margaret Cross Norton, the Illinois State Archivist, writing in the 1930s to 1950s, was one of the earliest American archivists to formulate a set of rules for appraisal. Her definition of the 'legal' values of public records is referred to in archival appraisal literature. Her emphasis on the role of archivists as servants of government, providing administrative efficiency integrated with the administration, has been taken up by some writers of current appraisal literature.³⁵

Norton considered public records as a product of government activity and therefore primarily serving the government. The archivist's role is as custodian of the legal records of the state. Records are preserved as long as they are potentially useful for the protection of property or personal rights and take on an historical value only when this administrative value ceases.³⁶

The archivist's knowledge of research values assists the records manager decide on permanent values of records. Writing in 1944, the questions she poses for borderline cases are similar to appraisal guidelines today. The questions are:

- Is this the original, official copy of the record?
- Who made this record?

Who uses it?

What purposes does it serve?

What information does it give?

Who would be inconvenienced by its destruction?

Is the information available elsewhere and in what form?

Which is the most authoritative for court purposes?³⁷

She espouses two values in records: a primary legal value, and a secondary historical value. This view is summed up in a 1930s article:

The origin of governmental and of private business archives is the same—both are records of business transactions made and preserved because such records might be later required as evidence in lawsuits involving those transactions. It is only because the government touches the lives of relatively more people that its archives tend, as their legal use becomes less frequent, to take on a relatively greater historical significance than do private archives.³⁸

Her definition of the legal authenticity of records owes much to Jenkinson and the public archives tradition. It is based on the concept of the sovereignty of the people in a democratic system of government. Government records belong legally to the people and records documenting their rights are essential.³⁹

Norton's legal concept of record values does not relate to statutory retention periods for records. The value of the records as evidence in court is the main reason records are retained. This value overlaps with Schellenberg's 'evidential' value in that records which explain policy decisions as well as establishing rights of government and its constituents under law are retained by the administrator. Once they lose their legal value they may become of archival value. She makes rare references to the 'unthought of research value' in records destroyed by the administrator and is wary of using research trends for preserving records. Her appraisal process moves from administrative to legal to historical values.⁴⁰

3.4 Brichford's compendium of ideas and practices

Maynard Brichford's *Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning* was produced as part of the Society of American Archivists Basic Manual Series. As an introductory handbook for archivists, it took a practical approach to appraisal methods. Brichford uses Schellenberg's framework and describes the characteristics of records as the basis of the appraisal process. He draws on Norton and other American archivists' views as well as European archivists. Unlike Schellenberg, he does not separate the administrative values from other values but rather sees one flow from the other.⁴¹

Brichford refers to the stated goals of each archival program as the basic criterion for record evaluation and the necessity for documenting

all decisions.⁴² He describes appraisal as a process which requires the analysis of the origin and characteristics of record series, that is their age, volume and form, their functional, evidential and informational characteristics, a knowledge of the techniques for segregation and selection of records, an awareness of the development of research methodologies and needs and a *sequential* consideration of administrative, research and archival values.⁴³

Brichford's administrative values, like Norton's, may have archival values. Like other public archivists, Brichford considered that his first duty was to retain records for government continuity. He refers to 'financial' records of continuing administrative value which may need to be retained for audit or statutory purposes. They may take on an archival value, although Brichford does not elaborate on this view.⁴⁴

Another administrative value of Brichford's is 'legal' values. Brichford extends Norton's 'best evidence' rule to include specific statutory retention periods, statutes of limitations which determine minimum retention periods but which may ultimately be permanent; as well as possible litigation, using record evidence which may extend beyond the life of one person. In addition, the legal or civic rights of individuals to citizenship, property and employment benefits are all seen as public duties of an archivist.⁴⁵

Brichford uses the term 'research' values rather than 'informational' values. Administrative and archival values represent research values in that documents regarding government policies or individual rights may interest some researchers. Scholarly research is also a public goal of an archivist. He looks at the records as a whole collection of documentation in terms of research values. He includes particular attributes which extend Schellenberg's when considering research values. These include uniqueness, credibility, time span and accessibility. Other factors include the use of records by researchers, including the type/series and quality as well as considering recent users of archives, such as genealogists.⁴⁶

Finally, Brichford considers 'archival values'. It is not a category which stands alone but arises from administrative and research values. It is really a summary of all the previous considerations as well as the financial cost of preserving records indefinitely and the scarcity of information on a particular topic. Cost includes the processing, the description, the preservation and the storage which leads to a preference for small quantities of highly concentrated data being retained.⁴⁷

3.5 Appraisal principles and the development of objective appraisal criteria—selected viewpoints

Schellenberg's terminology and its interpretation is largely dependent on whether appraisal is delegated to the administrator or to the archivist. However, most archivists see their role as determining the research values for which objective criteria are the most difficult.

Thorton W. Mitchell, as Assistant Records Administrator for State Records, North Carolina, accepts Schellenberg's premise that the archivist, because of his historical training, is responsible for evaluating secondary values of records. He advocates considerations of the needs of a broad spectrum of users and suggests that the agency's views on preservation of particular records be given importance. Appraisal decisions should take into account the total documentation of the agency and outside sources, the scarcity of information on a subject, the form and nature of the data and the avoidance of generalisations such as considering all policy records more valuable than facilitative records.⁴⁸

Felix Hull, an English county archivist, believes that the primary administrative values are still the basis of permanent values and that Brichford's sequential process is the best method of developing selection criteria. He considers Schellenberg's secondary values as an addition to the administrative values. The primary value is the administrative needs of the agency. The archivist adds to the criteria by appraising all records including those discarded administratively. The real differences in appraisal depend on whether the responsibility for appraisal is moved totally to either the administrator or the archivist.⁴⁹

Morris Reiger, as Chairman of the Committee on Archival Development, of the International Council of Archives, attempts an objective basis for the appraisal of government records by defining the criteria. The criteria are applied to the secondary values of records, which he defines as the residual values that records possess once they have become non-current.

These are the continuing administrative, legal and/or financial values for the agency and/or other agencies, the 'individual rights' values, evidentiary or functional documentation values and informational values which are those that contribute to research and scholarship in any field of knowledge. The application of the informational value is based on subject specialisation by individual appraisers including a knowledge of current and future research trends.⁵⁰

Ake Kromnow, a Swedish archivist, in his report to the International Congress on Archives reporting on a study of contemporary records appraisal, considered international standards for government records difficult because each country's administrative processes and heritage differ. Only a general scheme can apply and in each case a specific plan is developed for each archives. He believes objective criteria can be developed for a state's political, administrative and judicial functions and its relationship with its citizens; however, the issue of retaining records about social, economic, medical or other conditions needed for modern research is not objective. It falls into the ambit of the cultural role of a government archives. For this reason most countries use an interrogative approach to 'informational' content, for example will it suit research in terms of its form and content.⁵¹

Kromnow's method of appraisal includes substitution which is based on the idea that the material destroyed must be duplicated elsewhere and the concept of uniqueness which is a subjective decision.⁵²

The influence of current and future research trends is, therefore, the least objective appraisal criterion applied by archivists and the one for which they are supposedly trained to implement.

Swedish archivist Nils Nilsson writes of the need to take future research trends into account when appraising by record content, by looking at such aspects as reliability of the material, quantity to make it a worthwhile study, availability of similar material, preservation costs and the density of the information.⁵³

However, German archivist Hans Booms believes records should represent the function and value within the environment which generated them. Historians must accept them as a reflection of the value system of the time. Both Nilsson and Booms believe that the archivist must consult with other archival institutions, experts in many fields and the administrator who created the records when appraising records.⁵⁴

On the other hand, American archivist Meyer Fishbein considers the analysis of changing research trends as a factor in appraisal. He sees the archivist's broader training in social and physical science and contact with researchers as a means of assessing the 'informational' value of records. He believes subjectivity comes into play even when 'evidential' values are applied, particularly in relation to how much to retain at particular hierarchical levels of an organisation.⁵⁵

Fishbein demonstrates how mass/aggregate data, which Schellenberg considered better retained in summary form, are now sought out by quantitative economists and social historians. In the past, much of this raw data was expendable because of the volume involved, but computer manipulation has made this material more viable for research. This indicates an increase in the 'informational' value of machine-readable records of the future.⁵⁶

Although the archivist's contact with researchers is considered invaluable in selecting records of 'informational value', despite the difficulty of anticipating future uses, it has also been argued that records which are preserved and rarely used should be reappraised and possibly destroyed. Similarly, records which are unlikely to be available for access, should not be retained, despite their informational value.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the failure to anticipate informational uses and retaining records on the basis of the evidential value to the creating agency were questioned in the Federal Bureau of Investigation files case in the United States in 1979. The National Archives and Records Service failed to convince the court that certain records were not worthy of preservation.

The court questioned the government's decision to place its needs before the general public.⁵⁸ Although a similar incident is unlikely to arise in Australia, the case demonstrates the government's dual function which must be reflected in its appraisal policies, that is its responsibility to the government and to the people.

The reliance on 'evidential' rather than 'informational' value is partly due to the difficulty of establishing anticipated future needs. A study of the pattern of archival use by social historians indicated that researchers managed to supplement gaps in sources with other sources and that individual appraisal decisions are often not as crucial as archivists are led to believe.⁵⁹

An attempt to develop an objective appraisal framework which is applicable in any institutional setting has been formulated by American archivists Frank Boles and Julia Marks-Young. Their model consists of three general categories of decisions which are interactive and cumulative. The institutional policies are central to their model. First there is the value of the information in terms of the circumstances of creation, the analysis of content and the use of the records. This falls into the traditional appraisal method of seeking the relationship between records and activities. Second there are the costs of retention in terms of storage, processing, conservation and reference which Brichford also covered, and third, the implications of appraisal recommendations, which cover such aspects as precedents for future appraisal decisions.⁶⁰

Frank Boles in a later article extends these ideas. His view is that once institutional needs are defined, 'informational' values become less subjective. Boles argues that appraisal has traditionally been tied to specific record evaluation and that there is a distinction, as well as a relationship, between institutional interest and document evaluation. He breaks appraisal activity into three parts. First there is institutional interest evaluation, that is what kind of information is desirable or important to an archival institution. Second there is the implementation of the record evaluation criteria which involves applying traditional criteria such as evidential or informational values, and third, the interaction of institutional interest and record evaluation. This provides a means of arriving at an appraisal decision. However, technical problems such as record media transcend institutional interest. Generally, institutional interests take precedence and rationalise the appraisal process.⁶¹

The need to refine institutional policies is important in a non-government archives where there is often no statutory definition of its purpose. Boles and Marks-Young write from a non-government viewpoint. Their ideas are therefore less applicable in a government context where objectives are usually clearly defined.

4 A Framework for Appraisal—Factors which Influence Appraisal Criteria

Administrative/evidential appraisal criteria have remained the main initial selection basis for most government archivists with historical/informational/research criteria as the secondary considerations. The major appraisal authors, Schellenberg, Norton and Brichford, all acknowledge a sequential approach. The principal differences derive not so much from the principles themselves but from the timing and the implementation of appraisal by the archivist or by the creating agency or the records manager. In order to develop specific criteria for any setting, whether it is government or business, certain factors come into play which largely determine the appraisal criteria most likely to apply. These factors do not operate in isolation and each one has an impact on the other.

4.1 The function/role of the archives

Records retention criteria are partly the result of individual institutional choices. Frank Boles has shown the link between records evaluation and institutional goals/policies/objectives. The link between policy and appraisal as a basic criterion for evaluation was already noted by Maynard Brichford.⁶²

Whether or not the archives sees itself as a cultural institution is an important factor in applying the research value to records. Various types of archives have features which identify their role and appraisal requirements. For example, government archives are obliged to retain records, usually as a statutory responsibility based on traditions that include improving government efficiency, as well as cultural factors, and personal information needs, such as individual rights and privileges. The balance between government accountability and public interest is both a source of conflict and a dual goal.⁶³ In a collecting archives records are often heavily culled by the organisation donating the records. Whether the archives collects business or other records, a collecting archives responds to research needs and appraises with an eye to completing holdings.⁶⁴ Business archives is a broad term and encompasses various legal entities. In Australia it refers to private sector enterprise, particularly the company. It can include such diverse areas as manufacturing, trading, retailing, banking, insurance, and professional businesses. In democratic nations the establishment of business archives is voluntary and, unlike governments, businesses are generally not compelled to retain records beyond legal requirements.⁶⁵ Their guiding force is to preserve what is of greatest benefit to the company/parent institution. Permanent records are usually kept for legal, promotional and, occasionally, research values. The outsider user is remote and there is little accountability to the public.⁶⁶

4.2 The position of the archives/the archivist in the organisation

Government or in-house archivists will be influenced in their appraisal decisions by their position and role in the organisation. If the archivist is part of the public relations department, records related to this function will be given prominence. Conversely, if an archivist is part of the information system of the organisation, a more broadly-based selection policy is likely. Where the archives is part of a government administration rather than a cultural resource centre, it will tend to retain records for government continuity.⁶⁷

4.3 The cost factor as an appraisal consideration

The main theoreticians of appraisal include the cost factor of preserving records as an important appraisal consideration. It is also closely linked with institutional policies.⁶⁸ As part of the evaluation process, the cost benefit analysis occurs as a final consideration, and includes the physical preservation, problems of the media, in addition to processing, storage and servicing. It can include the copying on to another format and thus deciding on the content value.⁶⁹ In the context of appraising electronic media, the preservation cost is an important appraisal consideration.⁷⁰ For some archivists the financial considerations should not apply to truly permanent value records.⁷¹

4.4 The timing and responsibility for appraisal in the life cycle of the records

Most appraisal literature emphasises the benefits of appraisal as early as possible in the life cycle of the records, that is either when the records are still in the office of origin or when they have been recently transferred into intermediate storage.

In the delegated approach, such as the British system, records are appraised first five years after they cease to be active on an administrative basis by the administrator, and then twenty-five years later on the basis of further administrative and historical values by Public Record officers. Administrative values remain the primary selection factor.⁷² In the direct approach to appraisal, as in the United States Federal archives system, where the responsibility for appraisal of administrative values is the record manager's and the long-term evidential and informational values are the archivist's, the processes occur at the same time or one shortly after the other.⁷³ This provides a more balanced approach to the values attributed to the records. In the Australia Archives approach, which is a hybrid of the British and American systems, administrative and archival appraisal occur simultaneously, even though a strong emphasis is placed on the agency's contribution to administrative evaluation. Nevertheless, in all cases the archivist retains control over determining the research value of the records. This is known as the concept of 'movable responsibility',

whereby the archivist takes over from the administrator/records manager at a particular phase in the appraisal process.⁷⁴

The context of the documentation is lost when appraisal occurs once records have been in secondary storage for some years. The only benefit of hindsight appraisal is the ability of the archivist to consider current user values and to appraise in the context of existing archival holdings or gaps.

In terms of electronic media, it is imperative that appraisal take place at the earliest possible stage, preferably built into the system, as disposal of machine-readable records occurs each time information is updated.⁷⁵

Whether it is a business or a government archives, the degree to which the archivist controls appraisal decisions will influence the relative importance of particular criteria and the ability to interpret the records in their organisational context.

4.5 Records management and the appraisal function

Flowing from the question of responsibility and timing of the appraisal process is the role of records management in the appraisal process. The disposal of records is a records management function. Depending on whether one writes on appraisal from an archival or records management point of view and the perception one has of the role of these professions, the interface between archives and records management regarding appraisal differs.⁷⁶ In an organisation where they are organisationally two distinct functions, records management is usually more concerned with the efficiency side of disposal.⁷⁷ Even a limited records management program which disposes of temporary material is carrying out appraisal activities.⁷⁸ In addition, archival involvement in records management can assist in developing record keeping systems which allow for permanent value records to be more easily segregated from temporary records.

Margaret Cross Norton emphasised the involvement of the archivist with records management to facilitate appraisal. However, she saw the records manager appraising the administrative value of the records with the archivist's scholarly perspective evaluating the permanent value of the records. Schellenberg also divided the role of archivists and records manager regarding appraisal.⁷⁹

Appraisal is, therefore, the bridge between archives and records management. The relationship also depends on our definition of appraisal. If we limit it to permanent value records then it is purely an archival role.⁸⁰ If we consider it as part of the disposal process then it is a combined records management/archival function. In terms of appraising machine-readable records archival cooperation in records management is critical in order to prevent the loss of potentially permanent data.

The trend to integrating archival and records management traditional roles into an information management function is seen by some archivists, particularly in the business context, as the only way to ensure that valuable records will survive.⁸¹ Others fear that the pragmatic economics-orientated information manager will destroy everything within legal limitations.⁸² W. Kaye Lamb predicted that the archivist's role in appraisal diminishes if there is systematic disposal and therefore a review or veto of records management disposal decisions should remain with the archivist.⁸³

The dichotomy of administrative and informational values derives from the separation of the appraisal process between records management (previously the creator of the records) and archives. Whether the two functions are separate or shared, either in a government or a business context, will affect the interpretation of appraisal principles.

4.6 Specific record evaluation factors

Although specific record evaluation factors interact with institutional objectives, most are equally applicable to all archival settings regardless of their mandates. The state of preservation and legibility of records as well as the format, arrangement and physical characteristics are important appraisal considerations. The records keeping systems themselves, particularly the need to segregate records into disposal classes within series or as series, are acknowledged as appraisal tools.⁸⁴ Brichford refers to the function of the records as the initial indicator of their value. Its relationship with other records and the function of the organisation which created them are widely accepted appraisal methodology for establishing the disposal status of the records.⁸⁵

The age and volume of the records also affect appraisal decisions. The age consideration usually involves establishing a cut-off point for record appraisal. The quantity may be affected by methods of reduction such as the transfer to other physical forms in order to retain the information.⁸⁶

The physical medium on which the information is recorded may be appraised by conventional appraisal principles but also technical considerations come into play. The long-term preservation of particular forms of records should be considered at the time of their creation. 'When' rather than 'how' in appraisal is particularly critical with special physical formats.

Machine-readable records, in particular, require a system-designed approach to appraisal which commences early in the life cycle of the record, so that information preserved is built into the system and informed judgements can be made when all the system documentation is available.⁸⁷ These considerations are also independent of institutional mandates.

The objectives of the archives as well as the parent agency's needs and the users as defined by the organisation, will form the basic framework

for appraisal. Record evaluation criteria such as evidential/informational values will be affected by the timing of and responsibility for appraisal decisions within the life cycle of the record. In addition, other evaluation factors, such as the function of the records, their relationship with other records, their age, volume and physical format, as well as the cost of preserving them, are well-developed methods of appraisal for all archival institutions even though they operate within the framework of institutional objectives.

FOOTNOTES

1. *A basic glossary for archivists, manuscript curators and records managers*. Compiled by Evans, Frank B., Harrison, Donald F. and Thompson, Edwin A., reprinted from *the American Archivist* Vol 37, No. 3, July 1974, p. 417.

In appraisal the monetary value is a secondary meaning applied in relation to the evaluation of gifts of manuscripts.

2. *ibid.*, p. 421.

Hart, B., Ellis, S. and Pritchard, I. 'The appraisal and scheduling of government records: a new approach by the Australian Archives'. *American Archivist* Vol. 50, Fall, 1987, p. 591.

In Australia 'disposal' unlike the US definition which is limited to destruction, refers to the custody, retention, destruction and storage of records. The US term 'disposition' refers to actions being taken with regard to non-current records following appraisal and is closer to the Australian definition of disposal.

3. Posner, E. 'Some aspects of archival development since the French Revolution', in *A modern archives reader*. Edited by Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, National Archives and Records Service: Washington DC, 1984, pp. 8-9.

Hull, F. *The use of sampling techniques in the retention of records*. A RAMP study, with Guidelines. Paris: UNESCO, 1981, p. 2.

Brichford, M.J. *Archives and manuscripts: appraisal and accessioning*, SAA Basic Manual Series. Society of American Archivists: Chicago, 1979, pp. 1-2.

Schellenberg, T. *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 133.

Peace, N. 'Deciding what to save: fifty years of theory and practice', in *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance*. Edited by N. Peace: Lexington Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1984, p. 10.

4. Bautier, R. 'The responsibilities of the archives and the duties of archivists', in *Modern Archives Administration and Records Management: A RAMP Reader*, compiled by P. Walne, Paris: UNESCO, 1985, p. 6.

5. Jenkinson, H. *A manual of archive administration*, revised 2nd edition, London: Lund Humphries, 1965, pp. 149, 152.

id., 'Reflections of an archivist', in *A Modern Archives Reader, op.cit.*, pp. 18-21.

Sir Hilary Jenkinson believed that only the administrator could destroy records. The historically trained archivist would be biased in his selection.

6. Cook, M. *The Management of Information from Archives*, Aldershot: Gower, 1986, pp. 51, 63-70.

The Grigg system arose from the 1954 report of the Committee on Departmental Records under the chairmanship of Sir James Grigg. It brought about the passing of the Public Record Act of 1958 which governs the procedures adopted by the British government for appraisal and selection of public records. Another committee chaired by Sir Duncan Wilson, appointed in 1978, recommended continuing the Grigg system.

- Gowing, M. 'British modern public records: a vital raw material'. *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 9, No. 2, Dec 1981, pp. 15-27
7. Ricks, A. 'Records management as an archival function'. *Archivum* Vol. 26, 1979, pp. 31-33.
 - Fishbein, M. 'A viewpoint on appraisal of national records'. *American Archivist* Vol. 33, No. 2, April 1970, p. 183.
 - Reiger, M. 'Modern records retirement and appraisal practice' in Walne, *op.cit.*, pp. 265-67.
- The National Archives and Records Service (NARS) in 1985 became the National Archives and Records Administration.
8. For various definitions of appraisal found in US usage, see
A modern archives reader, op.cit., p. 55
 Mitchell, T.W. 'New viewpoints on establishing permanent values fo state archives'. *American Archivist* Vo. 33, No. 2, April 1970, p. 163.
 Brichford, *op.cit.*, p. 1.
 Reiger, *op.cit.*, p. 263.
 9. Commonwealth of Australia. *Archives Act No 79 of 1983* s. 5(2).
 Smith, C. 'Australian Archives'. *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 8, No. 1, June 1980, pp. 33-40.
 10. Australian Archives. *Guide to records disposal procedures*, Australian Archives: Canberra, July 1978. Sections 3.3 and 4.12.
 11. Victoria. *Public Record Act of Victoria*, No 8418 of 1973, s. 12
 12. Hurley, C. 'Appraisal of records created by the new technologies' in *The National and International Environment*. Proceedings of the 6th Biennial Conference of the Australia Society of Archivists: Perth 1987, p. 93.
 Hart et al, *op.cit.*, p. 591.
- Reed, B. 'Acquisition and appraisal' in *Keeping Archives*. Edited by Ann Pederson. Australian Society of Archivists Inc: Sydney, 1987, p. 80. She emphasises the selection of permanent records in her definition because it is aimed at collecting as well as in-house archives.
- Smith, C. 'Glossary' in *Keeping Archives, op.cit.*, p. 356.
13. Peace, *op.cit.*, p. 1.
 Berner, R. *Archival theory and practice in the United States: A historical analysis*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1983, p. 7.
 Lutzker, M. 'Max Weber and the analysis of modern bureaucratic organisation: notes towards a theory of appraisal'. *American Archivist* Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 1982, pp. 119-30.
 14. Kimball, G. 'The Burke-Cappon Debate: some further criticisms and considerations for archival theory'. *American Archivist* Vol. 48, No. 4, Fall 1984, pp. 369-76.
 15. Schellenberg, *op.cit.*, p. 16.
 16. Mitchell, *op.cit.*, pp. 164-5.
 17. Schellenberg, T.R. 'Principles of archival appraisal' in Walne, *op.cit.*, pp. 269, 273.
 Schellenberg. 'The appraisal of modern public records' in Daniels and Walch *op.cit.*, p. 58
 18. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, p. 16.
 19. *ibid.*, p. 139.
id., *Appraisal, op.cit.*, p. 58.
id., *Principles, op.cit.*, p. 273.

20. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, pp. 135-9.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 135-40.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 140-41.
id., *Appraisal, op.cit.*, p. 59.
id., *Principles, op.cit.*, p. 273.
23. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, p. 141.
id., *Appraisal, op.cit.*, pp. 59-60.
24. *ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
id., *Principles, op.cit.*, pp. 273-77.
id., *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, pp. 142-48.
25. *ibid.*, pp. 148-9.
id., *Appraisal, op.cit.*, p. 62.
id., *Principles, op.cit.*, p. 277.
26. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, pp. 150-53.
id., *Appraisal, op.cit.*, pp. 63-4.
27. *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
28. *ibid.*, p. 66.
id., *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, pp. 153-59.
id., *Principles, op.cit.*, pp. 277-78.
29. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, p. 156.
30. Schellenberg, *Appraisal, op.cit.*, pp. 67-70.
id., *Principles, op.cit.*, pp. 271-73.
31. Steinwall, S. 'Appraisal and the FBI Files Case: For whom do archivists retain records?' *American Archivist* Vol. 49, No. 1, Winter 1986, p. 61.
Mitchell, *op.cit.*, p. 167.
32. Fishbein, M. 'The "traditional" archivist and the appraisal of machine-readable records', in *Archivists and Machine Readable Records*. Edited by C.L. Geda, E.W. Austin, F. Blouin Jr, Society of American Archivists: Chicago, 1980, p. 60.
33. Hives, C. 'Records, information and archives management in business'. *ARMA Records Management Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Jan. 1986, p. 4.
34. Cook, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-2, 81.
35. *Norton on archives: the writings of Margaret Cross Norton on archives and records management*. Edited by T.W. Mitchell. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University, 1975.
Christopher Hives quotes her writings as an example of an archivist serving the administration.
36. *ibid.*, pp. vii, 4, 56.
37. *ibid.*, pp. 232, 240, 249-50.
38. *ibid.*, p. 13.
39. *ibid.*, p. 26, 134-35.
40. *ibid.*, pp. 56, 81, 233, 241-42, 250-52.
Norton's overriding use of the 'legal' values of records has a basis in the development of modern archives since the French Revolution. It is interesting to note that the Doomsday Book was consulted as recently as 1956 for a legal precedent ('The Age', 23 July 1988).
41. Brichford, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

42. *ibid.*, p. 1.

This idea is further developed by Frank Boles in 'Mix two parts interest to one part information and appraise until done: understanding contemporary record selection processes'. *American Archivist* Vol. 50, Summer 1987, pp. 356-68.

43. Brichford, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

44. *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

Santen, V. 'Appraisal of financial records' *American Archivist* Vol. 32, No. 4, October 1969, pp. 357-61.

Financial records are usually retained permanently for evidential or informational value particularly for programs of major significance. Legal requirements which determine retention periods are usually of only temporarily value.

45. Brichford, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

46. *ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

47. *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

48. Mitchell, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-74.

49. Hull, F. 'The appraisal of documents—problems and pitfalls'. *Society of Archivists* Vol. 6, No. 5, April 1980, pp. 287-91, particularly pp. 289, 291.

id., *Sampling, op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

50. Reiger, M. *op.cit.*, pp. 259, 263-64.

51. Kromnow, A. 'The appraisal of contemporary records'. *Archivum* Vol. 26, 1979, pp. 45-54.

Peace, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-14.

52. Kromnow, *op.cit.*, pp. 47-8.

53. Peace, *op.cit.*, pp. 11-13.

54. *ibid.*, p. 10.

Kromnow, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

55. Fishbein, N. 'A viewpoint' *op.cit.*, pp. 178-86.

56. *ibid.*

Fishbein, M. 'Reflections on appraising statistical records'. *American Archivist* Vol. 50, Spring 1987, pp. 229, 233.

id., *Traditional archivist, op.cit.*, p. 58.

57. Close, C. 'Panel Comment. The archivist's dilemma. Retain or destroy?' in *Promoting the better use of archives in Australia*. Papers from the 1981 Conference of the Australia Society of Archivists. Melbourne: 1981. p. 242.

Lamb, K.W. 'The fine art of destruction' in *Essays in memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson*. Edited by Albert E.J. Hollaender, Chichester, Sussex: 1962, p. 52.

Rapport, L. 'No grandfather clause: reappraising accessioned records' in Daniels and Walch, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-90.

Kromnow, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

58. Steinwall, *op.cit.*, pp. 52-63.

59. Miller, F. 'Use, appraisal, and research: a case study of social history'. *American Archivist* Vol. 49, Fall 1986, pp. 371-92.

60. Boles, F and Marks-Young, J. 'Exploring the black box: the appraisal of university administrative records' *American Archivist* Vol. 48, No. 2, Spring 1985, pp. 121-40.

61. Boles, F. 'Mix two parts interest to one part information and appraise until done: understanding contemporary record selection processes'. *American Archivist* Vol. 50, Summer 1987, pp. 256-68.

62. *ibid.*, p. 357.
Brichford, *op.cit.*, p. 1.
63. Kesner, R. *Automation for archivists and records managers; planning and implementation strategies*, Chicago: American Library Association, 1984, pp. 13-20.
Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.
Cook, *op.cit.*, pp. 188-89. Cook gives the example of the Public Archives of Canada which has a selection policy based on records reflecting all social activity.
Pritchard, I. 'Panel Comment. The archivist's dilemma. Retain or destroy?' in *Promoting the better use of archives in Australia*. Papers from the 1981 conference of the Australian Society of Archivists. Melbourne: 1981. pp. 244-45.
64. Brunton, P. 'Retain or Destroy II' in *Promoting the better used of archives in Australia*, Papers from the 1981 Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists. Melbourne: 1981. p. 234.
Cook, *op.cit.*, p. 7.
65. *Business archives: studies on international practice*, Committee on Business Archives of the International Council on Archives, München: Saur, 1983, pp. 8-11.
A few countries include business records preservation in their public archives legislation.
66. Wheeler, D. 'Responsibilities III' in *Promoting the better use of archives in Australia*, Papers from the 1981 Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists. Melbourne: 1981. pp. 103-5.
67. Brichford, *op.cit.*, pp. 12-13.
Norton on archives, op.cit., pp. 4, 41.
68. Brichford, *op.cit.*, pp. 10-11.
Schellenberg, *Appraisal, op.cit.*, p. 70.
Boles, *op.cit.*, p. 365.
69. Kromnow, *op.cit.*, p. 46.
70. Dollar, C. 'Appraising machine-readable records' in Daniels and Walch *op.cit.*, p. 71.
71. Cook, M. *Archives administration*, Folkestone, Kent, England: Dawson, 1977, p. 71.
72. Hull, *Sampling, op.cit.*, p. 6.
Cook, *Archives Administration, op.cit.*, p. 64.
73. Kesner, *op.cit.*, p. 26.
Cook, *Management, op.cit.*, p. 69.
74. Hull, *Sampling, op.cit.*, p. 3.
id., *Appraisal, op.cit.*, pp. 288-89.
Reiger, *op.cit.*, p. 261.
75. Hurley, *op.cit.*, p. 95.
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76. Cook, *Management, op.cit.*, p. 43.
Hull, *Appraisal, op.cit.*, pp. 3-7.
77. Cook, *Management, op.cit.*, p. 68.
78. Dojka, J. and Conneen, S. 'Records management as an appraisal tool in college and university archives' in Peace, *op.cit.*, p. 27.
79. *Norton on archives, op.cit.*, pp. 53, 57, 73-5, 231, 254, 274.
Schellenberg: refer to section 3.2 of this paper.
80. Reiger, *op.cit.*, p. 263.

81. Hives, *op.cit.*, p. 4.
82. Fishbein, *Viewpoint, op.cit.*, p. 184.
Hull, *Appraisal, op.cit.*, p. 291.
83. Lamb, *op.cit.*, p. 54.
84. Boles, *op.cit.*, p. 360.
Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, op.cit.*, p. 26.
85. Brichford, *op.cit.*, pp. 4, 10.
Hurley, *op.cit.*, p. 95.
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86. Brichford, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-4.
87. Hurley, *op.cit.*, p. 98.
Roberts, D. 'Disposal and appraisal of machine-readable records—from the literature'. *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol. 13, No. 1, May 1985, p. 34.