Diverse Influence: An Exploration of Australian Appraisal Practice. Part One

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Techniques and methods of appraisal are bound to the context of the theory or traditions of archival practice in which they take place. There are several different traditions of appraisal from European approaches to the UK approach to North American approaches. Australian practice has evolved within the context of these inherited approaches and formed a hybrid model, never fully articulated, in which inherent tensions have never been completely resolved. In recent years, in common with overseas colleagues, Australian archivists have further evolved our appraisal practice to a functions-based model.

This article is the first of a two-part exploration of archival appraisal. From an analysis of the concepts critical to an understanding of the appraisal process, this first part examines the historical archival traditions which influenced the development of appraisal practices in Australia.

Part 2 will examine in detail the current functions based Australian practice, discussing its antecedents in Australian recordkeeping practice and comparing it to functional approaches in other appraisal traditions. It will look at the tensions which arise and the criticisms of this practice, exploring the issues raised for attention and offering some thoughts towards their resolution.

Introduction[1]

Appraisal is a predominantly twentieth century professional recordkeeping function of applying a conscious process to determine what 'records to keep'. It emerged as a major consideration during the twentieth century as a result of the overwhelming bulk of modern documentation, fluid organisational structures, electronic records and the niggling concern that everything can be of value to someone. Appraisal has been the subject of constant professional discussion, as archivists strive towards methodologies that meet objectives, are coherent, timely and cost effective.

Techniques and methods of appraisal are bound to the context of the theory or traditions of archival practice in which they take place. There are several different traditions of appraisal from Europe, United Kingdom and North America which have influenced Australian practices. Of these the European appraisal tradition has been less immediately accessible to Australians, its influence largely dependent on translations into English. From these traditions Australian archivists have borrowed appraisal thinking and practices which have been implemented with home-grown twists.

Australian recordkeeping traditions are clearly based on the influence of Jenkinson. This influence was paramount in developing the practices of the Archives Division of the National Library and its successor, the Commonwealth Archives Office from the 1940s.[2] However, there was also a substantial influence from the American traditions articulated by Schellenberg, specifically in the management of the appraisal/disposal process, an area where Jenkinson was unable to assist Australian archivists in developing methods of dealing with their essentially twentieth century records. Tensions between the two traditions reverberate in the published writings on appraisal issued by the Commonwealth over the years, and that the tensions were a constantly problematic can be traced in the willingness of the institution to experiment with alternative methods.[3] At least three 'new approaches' to appraisal have been discussed in the professional literature in the past 15 years.

Rather than outline the detailed approaches, this article focuses on underlying assumptions in appraisal as a framework within which to place Australian practice.[4] The article seeks to examine the underlying assumptions involved in:

- the purpose of an archival institution and archives

- the positioning of an archival institution

- roles and responsibilities for appraisal

- objectivity/subjectivity of the appraisal decision

- the basis on which decisions to retain records are made, and

- techniques and appraisal practice.

This article addresses legal mandates and legislative requirements for recordkeeping only in passing. This is not to diminish the importance of the law/recordkeeping nexus in affecting appraisal practices, but it is not the focus of this article.[5] The aim of the article is to provide the necessary background for an examination and discussion of current Australian functions based appraisal practices in the subsequent article.

Underlying assumptions about the purpose of an archival institution and archives

What archivists think archival institutions and archives do is often difficult to uncover. Yet this shapes the way we go about our business. While there is little debate about the broad objectives to maintain a reliable and authentic record over time, the problem comes with how this is conceptualised: a problem which is perhaps twofold.

The first area of conceptualisation involves the relative weights given to the two integral roles of archival institutions – those of administrative importance and cultural importance. The balance between these two roles shifts over time, being dynamic rather than static. Schellenberg identifies the major themes in reasons for archival establishments as firstly 'improving governmental efficiency', secondly 'a cultural one', thirdly 'one of personal interests' (meaning, it is clear in his expansion of this statement, that archives 'are the ultimate proof for all permanent civic rights') and fourthly 'an official one' which is expanded to indicate that 'records...are needed by a government for its work'.[6] He asserts that the establishment of the Public Record Office in England was primarily driven by the first reason, that the National Archives of the US was primarily driven by the second reason and that the National Archives of France was primarily driven by a combination of the second and third reasons. This characterisation of Schellenberg's analysis is somewhat simplistic in that the interrelationship between these elements is clearly stressed in his writing, however it does allow us to differentiate between motivating factors and thus to begin thinking about diverse archival traditions and practices.

The second area of conceptualisation is about what archives are. In the British and (at least some of) the European traditions records are archives and archives are records. There is no conceptual difference. Recent experience in translating the ISO 15489 Records Management, clearly indicates that creating a distinction between records and archives caused problems for many of the non-English speaking countries. Definitions are always tedious, but there is a major issue of substance here. Schellenberg cited the Prussian archivist Adolf Brenneke whose definition

clearly indicated that archives are those records 'intended for permanent preservation', and asserted to be archives, materials must be preserved for reasons other than those for which they were created or accumulated'.[7] However, in Australia Ian MacLean in 1962 wrote 'We in Australia agree with Jenkinson when he states that 'records' and 'archives' are really the same thing' and 'For my part I take the view that documents achieve 'record' or 'archive' status when they are *made part of the record*, whether they are eventually preserved permanently or not'.[8]

These issues are fundamental to the way we develop our archival practices and determine 'what to keep'. Do we define, eliminate, select or evaluate? This articulation may seem to be a pedantic distinction, but it underpins an exploration of the primary motivations and articulations of our practice. If the primary motivation is the administrative role of ensuring governmental efficiency and official use, emphases in our appraisal practices and resource allocation will be influenced towards definition and elimination, and perhaps selection. If the primary motivation is addressing a cultural role, the emphases will be focused more towards selecting and evaluation and the language of 'collection' and service to the broadly defined research use of the archives will possibly apply.

In Australia the two equally important roles of an archival institution – the administrative and the cultural – cannot seem to sit in harmony. The pendulum swings between the two extremes and the articulation of our practice, whether that be in appraisal or access or any other recordkeeping activity is filtered through the lens of privileging one role over another[9] and this despite the clear statement of both roles in many archival mission statements.[10]

The positioning of an archival institution

The role presumed to be primary to the archives institution is reflected in where the archives is positioned in its broader organisational context, which in turn affects how well it is able to carry out the dual role. While this section is couched primarily in governmental terms, the same argument applies to the organisational position of corporate or in-house archives.[11] It is rarely archivists who determine the positioning of an archives in a broader organisation, rather positioning reflects how well our messages have been received by those who determine organisational structures. Periodically this lands archival institutions with strange bed fellows, and can alter the way messages about the institutions are delivered to suit a broader political agenda.[12]

Beyond these, essentially transient, issues of positioning there is a more fundamental notion to be explored relating to where the boundaries of responsibility are drawn. Where do the boundaries of 'the organisation' begin and end? For a government

archives, the higher entity is the notion of 'the state', or 'the Crown'.[13] Through legislative intent government archives are provided with their terms of reference and statement of functions. The legislative intent raises the role of the archives above responsibilities to the particular government of the day. In the words of W. K Lamb: '...public records are the property of the people, not of civil servants nor of whatever administration happens to be in power...and that the Archives should be one step removed from the Civil Service and political control and from restrictions that might result from it'.[14]

The public archival institution is, however, also an instrument of government. It implements legislation which expresses the intent of the government in relation to recordkeeping. In this role, it is responsible for determining what records are managed over time on behalf of the government – traditionally by taking records into archival custody for the ongoing preservation of these records. In doing so the archival institution is often enabled to regulate recordkeeping in other agencies of government. They may have a policy setting role and an oversight/monitoring role. Other agencies of government are, under legislative mandate, required to comply with these policies and guidelines, and are thus agents of the whole of jurisdiction entity – the government. But they are equally independently responsible for recordkeeping within their own domains.

That these issues impact upon the appraisal activity and its attendant disposal process, can be clearly illustrated by two quite infamous cases within recent Australian archival history. The first is the, yet to be completely told, story of the dismissal of the Keeper of Public Records in Victoria arising out of questioning, during an election campaign, the illegal destruction of a report into mishandling of travel expenses of a senior Victorian Government official (Bob Nordlinger, the head of the Victorian Tourism Commission), and the subsequent attempts by the Government to 'substitute a purely custodial ('heritage') role for one in which the PRO's cultural role was combined with, and was supported by, a properly conceived and executed records management program'.[15] The second case, the now notorious Heiner Affair in Queensland, used the existing focus of the Queensland State Archives at the time, as being primarily responsible for determining the cultural value of records to justify the severe limitation of the role of the State Archivist when exercising the role of authorisation of disposal of records. This specific case involved the destruction of papers 'accumulated by retired magistrate, Noel Heiner, who had been appointed by the outgoing Cooper Government to investigate alleged inmate abuse at the John Oxley Youth Centre (JOYC). We now know that Noel Heiner was beginning to uncover testimony concerning serious abuses and inappropriate responses by the JOYC staff'.[16]

Destruction or release of records to public scrutiny has long been a political tactic of governments and organisations, as Ian Wilson describes it, 'deliberate destruction of records has been the constant companion of war, revolution, politics and social aggression.'[17] Institutional placement can be political representation of perceived importance and orientation of the recordkeeping role. Records and appraisal practices can be political tools, over which we have little control, but how the role in relation to appraisal is articulated can affect placement and authority of the archival institution.

Roles and responsibilities for appraisal

For appraisal practice (and recordkeeping practice more widely), determining where the responsibilities for the recordkeeping function of appraisal sits is a critical issue.

Different traditions embody different approaches to this aspect of appraisal. Luciana Duranti, tracing the major ideas of European archival theory in relation to appraisal, notes that selection of which documents were superceded by others or which were destroyed was embedded in procedures undertaken as routine by record creating bodies and in more modern times by regulations established by Committees established for this purpose. 'No evaluation was involved, and therefore no appraisal. Rather the traces of all facts were preserved...'.[18] Within this, some forms were seen as requiring more secure protection and were removed for safe keeping outside the records creating body. Duranti traces these idea through the writings of German, Spanish, French and Italian archivists. She argues that the presence of records in the archives repositories creates a web of relationships between the records which in itself constitutes meaning. The archivists' role was not to select, but to protect these records and their context. Archivists actively involved in selecting within these designated records risk destroying the archival bond and alienating the characteristics of authenticity and reliability.

Similarly, within the British tradition, as articulated by Sir Hilary Jenkinson, the impartiality of the archivist with physical and moral duties to the record is stressed. Jenkinson recognises 'the question of the bulk of present day Archives is a new and serious matter'.[19] In his Manual he warns against active involvement of archivists in destruction which can equate to the archivist and/or historian having a role in records creation and at risk of imposing a personal value judgment. This negates the principle of impartiality of the archives and involves the archivist in the tricky territory of determining the historical record. Jenkinson's view places the appraisal processes including disposal decisions with the individual agency/ office of origin.[20]

Practice in the UK post Jenkinson modified the position of the Public Record Office. Following the recommendations of the Grigg Report of 1954,[21] the PRO implemented a system of regulated life cycle reviews which comprised the basis of their practices from the 1950s to the 1990s. The practice was based on a network of departmental record officers responsible for working sequentially with records creators and Public Record Office Inspecting Officers to undertake a series of reviews at different points of time each with a predetermined point of view.[22]

In American practice, responsibility for appraisal decisions was distributed. Agencies were responsible for the determination of the primary value (that is the 'values for the originating agency itself') and archivists in an archival institution were responsible for the determination of secondary values (that is 'values for other agencies and private users').[23]

Australian appraisal practice is varied. Descriptions of the practices of the (then) Archives Office of NSW prior to 1977 shows a reactive process of appraisal based solely on response to agencies proposing material that they wished to dispose of, at which time a specific one-off process of appraisal was undertaken on those records proposed. Reforming these practices initially involved staff of the Records Management Office creating disposal schedules on behalf of agencies and carried out in conjunction with survey work. Problems with that practice, including lack of departmental involvement and commitment to the end product, resulted in the practice of agencies preparing disposal schedules under guidance of the Records Management Office. 'Archival appraisal' was still regarded as separate, conducted by a different part of the organisation, focused on 'the administrative, legal and research values of the records which determines their retention', a position assisted by the existence of Guidelines in the Appraisal of Public Records for Retention as State Archives'.[24]

The practice in the Commonwealth was different. A very activist involvement in regulating current recordkeeping was a feature of the Commonwealth Archives Office from the mid 1950s, particularly through the implementation of the Registrar's scheme. In the early years, 'The appraisal of material...carried out as far as possible in agencies by well-trained agency staff'[25] was accompanied by an active survey role to identify all records, regardless of 'archival value' maintained by agencies. Appraisal however, ceased to be actively pursued in the Commonwealth, perhaps with the demise of the Registrar's scheme, resulting in the establishment of a Disposal and Appraisal Unit in Central Office in 1975 and a subsequent 'shift in emphasis from the need to justify the destruction of records to a requirement involving the critical appraisal of material to justify its permanent

retention'.[26] Still later, Australian Archives staff were asserting 'that too much is made of the "judgment of the professional archivist"...officers from general clerical backgrounds have to make the basic appraisal decisions. The archives role is to facilitate and, where necessary, assist in that process, and to make sure that all relevant interests have been accommodated and current accountability standards met'.[27]

Thus different traditions of practice determine who will undertake appraisal decision making. The role of the archival institution is, in all cases, to approve the appraisal decision making, if not to undertake the decisions in their entirety. The extent to which the responsibility for determining the appraisal propositions, often embodied in disposal schedules, is distributed is different in the various practices. In some jurisdictions the archival authority issues guidelines and standards against which agencies make appraisal decisions which are then reviewed and approved by the archival authority. The issues which arise are whether agencies can be 'trusted' to make appraisal decisions – whether they are acting in partnership with the archival authority in ensuring that appraisal decisions are made appropriately, the degree of involvement of the archival authority in ensuring that the decisions are made properly, and the role of the archival authority in applying another layer of appraisal decision making – ostensibly to serve the 'cultural' objective (beyond administrative use) of their role.

Objectivity/subjectivity of the appraisal decision

The aim of much of traditional appraisal practice was an attempt to achieve objectivity in decision making. Recognition of the inherent subjectivity of appraisal decision-making is clearly expressed in Jenkinson's Manual.[28] In his rejection of the conscious decision making by archivists, Jenkinson proves no assistance in dealing with the reality of twentieth century records and their tremendous bulk. His approach, which is essentially that such interference with the record compromises the archive as a whole, may be theoretically correct, but it is not tenable as an approach to appraisal. His conclusion that reassertion of greater control in the making of records is one with which Australian archival practice has much sympathy, although Maclean, in interpreting Jenkinson in the light of Australian practice states 'The solution seems to us in Australia to depend, in particular, on careful control of the content, construction and titling of the files, and in general, on relating the filing systems not so much to the formal functional or organisational pattern of the office, as to the actual flow of administrative work in the office'.[29]

None the less, some form of selection must be undertaken. Rather than find guidance in the British tradition, Australia turned to the experience of America in dealing with similar issues. The work of the Americans of the 1940s and 1950s

introduced for the first time the development of appraisal taxonomies and introduced 'value'. Explicit attention to records thought to be of interest to the future researcher was a significant and influential result. Such issues were contrary to the European tradition as embodied in Jenkinson. The Commonwealth Archives Office, none the less, adopted the methodology of appraisal criteria derived from Schellenberg.[30]

While archivists were applying the taxonomies of value originally proposed by Schellenberg, albeit refined for specific application, there is no doubt that the application of these criteria to records was still subjective, particularly when interpreting the 'informational' value criteria.[31]

The issue of the inherent subjectivity of appraisal decision making was well known in European archival discussion. The efforts of Prussian archivists to reject the laissez faire *fingerspitzengefuhl* (finger in the wind) methods of determining appraisal were reported in 1937,[32] resulting in more defined appraisal criteria based on an analysis of the relative functions and positioning of the creating body. Reacting against these notions of privileging particular administrative bodies, Hans Booms in 1971 explored the relationship of social values and archival standards in relation to the archivist's role of formulating documentary heritage.[33] His essay specifically outlined the social context of appraisal and appraisers which determine their decisions thus rejecting the notion of a scientific, objective method of appraisal. He also argued for the articulation of a directly interventionist content-oriented approach to 'formation' of the archives.

The basis on which decisions to retain records are made

The criteria by which the various Australian archival institutions undertook this appraisal decision making were not clearly articulated. The appraisal regime was, in general, ad hoc.[34] Decisions were negotiated with agencies, with concessions on both sides, to determine the records that were to be retained for the long term. The expediency of the transfer process often took precedence over attention to more than a basic appraisal. The skills and experience of long serving and responsible archivists, who had accumulated knowledge across government, was really the primary source of consistency in decision making, where the archival institutions were essentially reactive, receiving schedules (and often records/archives without schedules) as agencies allocated resources to complete the tasks. Multiple layers of review within the archival institution itself assisted in providing additional checks, but the process was still reasonably ad hoc. Decisions, embedded in recommendations embodied in disposal schedules, were often authorised by an advisory committee of some kind which involved a broader cross section of interested stakeholders – historians, administrators and sometimes representatives of the judiciary.

Many archival institutions were also in the business of providing temporary storage for agencies within their domain, which further clouded the transfer/appraisal nexus. This was in an era of relative resource affluence which now has largely ceased. But this abundance of space and fuzzy appraisal decision making criteria led to a risk averse 'retain unless beyond all doubt/just in case' culture, erratic sentencing and a view that resources, including for building and maintaining repositories, would always be found'.[35]

Once inside the sanctity of the archives institution, just how did the taxonomic values get applied? There is very little evidence in the published record of how these values were applied. To those outside the archives institution the processes for applying additional evaluative appraisal criteria were completely unknown. Within the archives institution, hopefully, fully developed appraisal reports were created to support decision making. But the process was completely unaccountable. Destruction recommendations might be reviewed by an external advisory body, but for most archives institutions, the process of determining what to keep was completely invisible to the outside world. Reliance on the assertion of superior skills of the archivist applying magic criteria leaves the archival profession vulnerable to criticism.[36]

Techniques and appraisal practice

Early British appraisal criteria were, in 1943, providing guidance on what records to be kept[37] and, as discussed earlier, the phased review approach was adopted.

In Germany, a more function/structure based approach was developed to combat subjectivity in appraisal decision making. The Prussian archivists were concerned primarily with the 'quality' of the record for historical research. Selection schedules determining what should be retained for permanent preservation were issued as early as 1833. The archivist was involved in determining what should be retained once the material was no longer needed for administrative purposes. In 1926 Karl Otto Muller proposed a division of records according to administrative level – central, intermediate and local authorities – with the proposition that central agencies of government would create more valuable records than local ones.[38] This subsequently developed into the 1950s proposition that rather than looking at the record level, the agency as a whole could be defined as being 'more or less worthy of permanent preservation' and that agencies could be ranked according to their importance. The administrative level of the agency and the degree of independence in decision making were factors in the ranking.[39] The German practice also strongly argued that records could not be appraised in isolation but must be placed in their administrative context.[40] These ideas were not particularly well translated into practice at the time.[41]

The practice of the National Archives of the USA is encapsulated and expounded in Schellenberg's *Modern Archives* of 1956. This work built on practices already in place within the institution articulating criteria for appraisal work based on the distinction between 'primary' (or values to the originating agency) and 'secondary' (values for other agencies and private users). Records having secondary values were broadly categorised as having 'evidential' and 'informational' value. Schellenberg defines these categories quite broadly although they have been misinterpreted as narrow or conflicting concepts.

The technique of disposal scheduling derived from American practice of the late 1930s–40s.[42] This tool can be seen as an extension of the lists of material to be destroyed or regulations routinely developed by the administration in the British tradition. It introduced a technique to list records and records series with retention periods suggested by the administrative bodies, subject to review and approval by the National Archives. Essentially records staff in agencies were responsible for determining administrative use (sometimes misinterpreted as the 'evidential values') and archives staff added the larger cross agency dimensions to the analysis as well as considerations of research potential (again sometimes narrowly assumed to be the 'informational values').

The development of records management as a separate but related professional group in America at this time also affected the implementation of appraisal. Records management was initiated to stem the tide of records flowing into archival repositories. The Hoover Commission of 1949 included recommendations on records management with a primary focus was 'on the sizeable reduction of existing holdings in departmental offices'.[43] This was the responsibility of the Records Officers in departments with advice from the Records Management Division of the US National Archives. Intermediate repositories were established for storage purposes.

The development of formalised criteria against which records were to be measured or evaluated is one of the lasting legacies of these American approaches and its far reaching influence can be seen in the Australian articulation of appraisal criteria well into the 1990s.[44] Features of the appraisal practices evolving from the techniques described above are:

- an emphasis on the record itself – in methodological steps including survey/inventory; scheduling of records series and examination of individual records through sentencing;

- some emphasis on the form of the record – minutes for example were generally regarded as more important than other records;

- an emphasis on the management and policy development layers of organisations rather than those documenting the implementation of policy;

- a tendency towards a passive approach where archival institutions institute appraisal processes in reaction to proposals by agencies for disposal schedules or transfer of records; and

- a tendency to appraise records in isolation of other records created by the agency or other agencies.

Seeking ways of evaluating records

Inherent in the notion of evaluation of records is the notion of framing or shaping the form that the archival record will take for future generations. The evaluation appraisal criteria introduced by Schellenberg contrasts to the more passive notions of accumulation or elimination of the valueless which is the characteristic advocated by the Jenkinsonian approach. But the subjectivity that this approach introduces requires models to frame practices for active documenting and it is these models which are absent in the Australian archival landscape. There is however, a history of attempts to address this issue, and the influence of the collecting traditions become particularly important in this regard.

By 1957 in Germany there was a call to 'cease the practice of simply disposing of valueless records and to adopt instead the principle of selecting valuable records'.[45] The East German archivists were actively experimenting with appraisal during the 1970s and beyond. Their practice was based on the proposition that 'the value of archives is determined by the social importance of the events, activities and subjects it refers to'[46] and that 'documents got their value through their importance for fulfilling of the manifold tasks a socialist society sets itself for carrying through the historic mission of the working class. Furthermore it was declared that the function and the place of an administrative body defines essentially the information potential and relevance of its documents...and thereby their value'.[47]

Hans Booms, writing in 1971, rejects the notion that administrative structure and positioning is the appropriate basis for appraisal. He argues for a much more socially situated approach to 'the formation of a documentary heritage' focusing on the content of the records to reflect social processes. This requires a comprehensive view of the total societal development process and an interpretation of the way in which society has actually developed to form a documentation model from which the archivist forms the documentary heritage.

East German attempts to implement Booms' ideas during the 1980s resulted in the development of a list of some 500 events which ought to be documented. Angelica Menne Haritz warns of the problem in this approach which 'fits the records into a politically desirable image of history',[48] references great difficulty in implementation and warns, 'As important decisions are delegated to authorities outside the profession, archivists are reduced merely to executing guidelines that we cannot investigate, even if they cause us to act as instruments for political purposes. we would not support as individuals'.[49]

A related notion of active and targeted documenting arose in the US in the 1980s with the concept of documentation strategies. In essence a documentation strategy 'is a plan to assure adequate documentation of an ongoing issue, activity, function or subject'.[50] Reports on one of the projects which attempted to faithfully follow the theoretical proposal concluded that the methodology is 'to supplement rather than replace the traditional methods of archival appraisal'. The idea of the documentation strategy is in the tradition of the documentation plan articulated by Hans Booms and also has echoes in the collaborative collecting of library institutions. Now seen as something of an unachievable aim, the concepts have had some influence, most notably in focusing attention on under represented areas of collection and cross institutional cooperation. In Australia, we could see the work of the Australian Science Archives Project as a variant of the documentation strategy.[51]

During the 1980s, particularly in America, collecting archives borrowed from the library tradition of collection development.[52] A response to limited and contracting resources and to an expanding universe of responsibility saw collecting archives attempt to rationalise and define boundaries for their collecting activity. Such plans or policies tend to be defined at unrealistically large levels, and are often determined by boards rather than by working archivists. The scope of the collection so defined is by their very nature extremely broad and unachievably large, a problem well understood by collecting archives.

The recent trend for Australian archival institutions to define their 'collecting policies' is clearly in this tradition. It is inherently a custodial approach and one that seeks to establish very broad parameters against which appraisal decision making can take place. In reality, however, these criteria are too broad to be useful for actually making appraisal decisions and the gut appraisal decision (the *fingerspitzengefuhl* of the German archivists) can easily be retrofitted into any one of a number of the broad appraisal/selection criteria.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1980s problems with traditional appraisal practice in Australia, as in other countries, were becoming quite clear. The inherently reactive, records-centric approaches were not able to keep pace with the demands placed upon the profession. The tensions in the Australian appraisal practice between the Jenkinsonian adherence to the reliable and authentic record and the application of evaluation criteria with no clear models was becoming visible with the strain on archival institutions to conduct their dual role of administrative and cultural organisations.[53]

Australian archivists entered the 1990s profoundly confused, resulting in a period of introspection on the nature of records. What emerged from that period of reflection was a clear reassertion of the characteristics of records which has enabled us to become proactive and creative in addressing electronic recordkeeping. What is still required is a model to address the necessary selection activities to determine what records to keep. The second part of this article explores the emergence of the Australian functions-based approach to recordkeeping, revisiting the underlying assumptions about appraisal discussed in this article and examines how they are applied in current Australian appraisal practice.

ENDNOTES

1   This article had its genesis as a conference session presented to the Australian Society of Archivists, Sydney 2002. The brief for that session was a ten minute overview of the history of the theory and practice of appraisal, published in the Conference Proceedings. The invitation to rework the presentation as a journal article soon revealed the inadequacies of that framework for the issues that I wished to discuss. I have Glenda Acland to thank for editorial expertise in dissecting the huge initial draft into two discernible and hopefully coherent parts.

2   The importance and reliance on Jenkinsonian approaches to records and archives can be seen in the published writings of Ian Maclean, the first Commonwealth Archivist. Schellenberg's Preface to *Modern Archives* also attests to this: 'My views are derived in part from the Australian archivists, whose knowledge of the principles expounded by Sir Hilary Jenkinson...served to bring these into sharp focus for me' T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives Principles and Techniques.* The University of Chicago Press, 1956 p xi ; or more colloquially , 'In my professional work I'm tired of having an old fossil cited to me as an authority in archival matters. I refer to Sir Hilary Jenkinson, former Deputy-Keeper of Records at the British Public Record Office, who wrote a book that is not only unreadable but that has given the Australians a wrong start in their archival work' Letter from Schellenberg to Albert Schwarting, a family friend in 1954 quoted in Michael Piggott 'Schellenberg and the Study of Australian Archival History'.

3 Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, Inc, Hobart 1989 – Beverley Hart, Stephen Ellis, Ian Pritchard, 'The appraisal and scheduling of government records: a new approach by the Australian Archives', *American Archivist*, Fall 1987; S. Abrahamaffy, K. Dan, M. McCarthy, G. O'Shea, K. Scott and S. Stuckey, 'Disposal in the Australian Archives – New Challenges and New Direction', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol 18, No 2 November 1990; R. Kelly, 'The National Archives of Australia's New Approach to Appraisal', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol 29, No 1, May 2001.

4 Coherence of practice across the whole archival sector in Australia cannot be assumed, and as most of the published accounts and discussions reflect the dominance of government archives in our profession, so too does this article. An effort has been made to include the practice of collecting archives.

5 Australian writing on legal mandates for recordkeeping have been explored primarily by Livia Iacovino in many works and by Chris Hurley. See (for example) Livia Iacovino, 'The Nature of the Nexus Between Recordkeeping and the Law' *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol 26, No 2, November 1998; Chris Hurley (unacknowledged author), 'From Dustbins to Disk-Drives: A Survey of Archives Legislation in Australia', Appendix 2, in (Eds) S. McKemmish and M. Piggott, *The Records Continuum. Ian MacLean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years*, Ancora Press in association with Australian Archives 1994, pp. 206–233.

6 Schellenberg, op cit, pp. 8–10.

7 ibid, p.13.

8 Ian Maclean, 'An analysis of Jenkinson's 'Manual of Archive Administration' in the Light of Australian Experience' (originally published in 1962) republished in (eds) P. Biskup et al, *Debates and Discourses Selected Australian Writings on Archival Theory, 1951–1990*, Australian Society of Archivists Inc, Canberra 1995

9 A example of the distortion brought about by selective filtering can be found in the view of public access developed by Paul MacPherson 'Theory, Standards and Implicit Assumptions: Public Access to Post-current Government Records', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol 30, No 1, May 2002.

10 For example, the National Archives of Australia explains its role as:

> [promoting] *best practice in the management of government records from the point of creation for as long as they are required to support the needs of government and the people. The Archives selects and cares for the most valuable records and makes this rich resource available to all. We develop, manage and promote a visible, known and accessible national collection that engages and informs the community, and we foster appreciation of the role of archives in society.* (From the NAA's service charter, online at www.naa.gov.au/about_us/service_charter/service_charter.html.)

State Records NSW defines its vision as:

That people and Government in NSW have ready access to records which illuminate history, enrich the life of the community and support good and accountable government. (From State Records NSW corporate plan, 2002–05; online at www.records.nsw.gov.au/about/cplan/visionand purpose.htm.)

11 This point is best made by Chris Hurley:

In the discussion which follows, it may seem that government recordkeeping alone is involved... Even in the arena of recordkeeping practice, however, it is clearly a misconception... An archives law, regulating the internal activities of government is no different, conceptually, from a directive of the board of the CEO of a private sector organisation. Conceptually, the business units of the private corporation stand in exactly the same relationship to such directives as government departments and agencies do to archives law. (Chris Hurley, 'Recordkeeping, Document Destruction and the Law (Heiner, Enron and McCabe)', *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 30, No. 2, November 2002, p. 20.)

12 Thus, for example, in 1979, Australian Archives was clearly defining itself as 'a service agency of the Commonwealth Government, to whom it is accountable for its operations'[12] and its larger administrative placement from the years 1974 to 1994 can be seen to vary between Departments focusing on delivering services to government and those that emphasized arts and cultural activities of government. Dianne Easter 'Records Disposal in the Australian Archives' *Archives Conference 1979. Papers Presented to the Second Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, Sydney May 18-20, 1979* Supplementary Volume p 37; for the organisational positioning of the Australian Archives, see the controlling agency links of CA 1720 (Australian Archives Central Office) in the National Archives of Australia RecordSearch at www.naa.gov.au/the_collection/recordsearch.html

13 This question was raised slightly obliquely in the interchange between Gerald Fisher and Peter Scott over the record group/record series as the basis for descriptive practice. In the words of Bob Sharman, 'Fisher concluded that Scott was principally concerned about 'embarassingly long-lived series' and that what Scott was really suggesting was that the entire records of the national government of Australia constituted one record group' Bob Sharman, 'Introduction' in 'Debates and Discourses. Selected Australian Writings on Archival Theory 1951–1990', Australian Society of Archivists, Canberra, 1995, p. 7–8.

14 Quoted in Michael Saclier, 'The Lamb Report and Its Environment', *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 5, No. 8, November 1974, pp. 201 and 212.

15 Public Records Support Group Newsletter, Vol. 3, No, 5, 30 August 1992.

16 Chris Hurley, op cit, p. 7.

17 Ian Wilson, 'The Fine Art of Destruction', see online at www.archives/ca/06/0609_e.html, May 2000.

18 Luciana Duranti, ' The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory', *American Archivist,* Vol. 57, No. 2, Spring 1994, p. 332.

19 Sir Hilary Jenkinson, A *Manual of Archive Administration*, Percy Lund, Humphries & Co, London, 1966. (Part III, 'Modern Archives', p. 148.)

20 '...for an Administrative body to destroy what it no longer needs is a matter entirely within its competence and an action which future ages (even though they may find reasons to deplore it) cannot possibly criticize as illegitimate or as affecting the status of the remaining Archives; provided always that the Administration proceeds only upon those grounds upon which alone it is competent to make a decision–the needs of its own practical business; provided, that is, that it can refrain from thinking of itself as a body producing historical evidences'; ibid, p. 149.

21 Margaret Gowing, 'British Modern Public Records: A Vital Raw Material', *Archives and Manuscripts,* Vol. 9 No. 2, December 1981.

22 At the point when records were no longer required for current business, they were moved to remote storage. Five to seven years after their movement to remote storage they were reviewed by administrators 'to determine whether the organisation needs the records for its own administrative purposes...interpreted broadly to encompass issues such as continued accountability.' While originally there was an assumption that records would have no research value, modifications to the methodology over time introduced a consideration of research or informational value. Once the first review was completed, the remaining records continued to be stored in remote storage until 25 years after the creation of the record. A second review by departmental officers accompanied by a Public Record Office Inspecting Officer was undertaken at this time on a file by file basis with the primary consideration the research value of the records. The records determined to possess this value were transferred to the Public Record Office. See Elizabeth Honer and Susan Graham, 'Should Users Have a Role in Determining the Future Archive? The Approach Adopted by the Public Record Office, the UK National Archive, to the Selection of Records for Permanent Preservation', *Liber Quarterly*, 11, 2001, pp. 382–399.

23 Schellenberg, op cit. Chapter XII, *Appraisal Standards*, p. 133.

24 Olga White and Baiba Irving, 'Appraisal and Disposal of NSW Public Records', Archives Conference 1979. Papers Presented to the Second Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, Sydney, May 18–20, 1979

25 Steve Stuckey, 'Keepers of the Flame? The Custodial Role of Australian Archives – Its History and Its Future' in (eds) S. McKemmish and M. Piggott, op cit, p. 44.

26 Dianne Easter, op cit.

27 Beverley Hart, Stephen Ellis, Ian Pritchard, 'The appraisal and scheduling of government records: a new approach by the Australian Archives', *American Archivist*, Fall 1987.

28 Jenkinson, op cit: 'The person or body in our times who is entrusted with the task of destruction has to exercise choices not on the grounds of what is useful for the practical purposes of Administration, but of what is worth preserving in the interests of History: and it is rare, as we have said, not to find him or them attacked sooner or alter either for the choice itself or for the manner in which it has been carried out', (p 140) and '...the difficulties that arise when the Archivist and the Historian are given what amounts to a

share in the creation of those Archives which it is their true business only to keep and to use respectively...' (p. 149).

29 Ian Maclean, op cit, p. 76

30 Hart et al, op cit: 'To date archivists have necessarily been working with a largely inherited appraisal taxonomy, devised for the most part by Schellenberg (a visiting advisory to the Commonwealth Archives Office in 1954), if somewhat developed for local application.'

31 'The standards that apply to informational values are thus not absolute, but relative both as to time and place... Complete consistency in judging informational value is as undesirable as it is impossible of accomplishment... Diverse judgments, in a word, may well assure a more adequate social documentation.' Schellenberg, op cit p. 149.

32 Ole Kosrud, 'The Evolution of Basic Appraisal Principles – Some Comparative Observations', *American Archivist.* Vol. 55, Winter 1992, p. 31.

33 'If it is true that individuals exist only as human beings in so far as they belong to a group, a community, a society, and that consequently they are unable to separate themselves from the socio-historical conditions of their existence, it follows that they are also not able to avoid the specific posited values which are part of these conditions. This social context is all the more circumscriptive since individuals are unable to provide an absolute answer to the question of what they, in their daily lives, consider valuable or meaningful (unless of course, they operate under ideological statements or philosophical creeds). They can only answer by referring to popular conceptions, ideas, or opinions which are deemed worthy by their social environment. Individuals share their esteem for such opinions with others in their respective life circles, which is why a person's origins, education, and social situation play such a significant role in determining to what extent an individual is influenced by the dominant values of a society...human value judgements must always be founded upon experience. The individual's horizon of experience provides the framework of reference that is epistemologically necessary for human evaluation' Hans Booms, 'Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Source', *Archivaria,* 24, Summer 1987, p. 74 (translation of Booms' article published in *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 68, 1972).

34 The practices and pressures facing appraisers in one institution, National Archives of Australia, have been recently the subject of discussion on the Aus-Archivists listserv in the context of a discussion of reappraisal. Glenda Acland describes it: 'Anyone who worked for the National Archives in the 70s and perhaps early 80s will know the pressure to transfer vast quantities of records to alleviate the problems of office storage space and to cater for the multiplicity of administrative changes that occurred during that period... Apart from clearly permanent or clearly temporary activities, the great majority of these records, regardless of whether they were given arbitrary review dates or deemed permanent at the time of transfer to ensure appropriate repository conditions, were in effect unappraised as we understand the term today.' View online at www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/asa/aus-archivists/msg00787.html.

35 Adrian Cunningham, listserv posting in the context of a discussion on reappraisal, 15 May 2001, at www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/asa/aus-archvists/msg00817.html.

36 This indeed was one of the problems when the profession was asked to make submissions in relation to highly political events such as the Heiner affair. Where were the uniform standards to which we could authoritatively refer to assert professional competence? This was one of the motivations for the ASA President Stephen Yorke in proposing a collaborative process of developing an appraisal statement for the profession in March 2002.

37 Schellenberg, p. 137, lists these as:

- To show the history of the organization concerned;

- To answer technical questions regarding its operations; and

- To meet possible scholarly needs for the information that is incidentally or accidentally contained in the records.

38 Ole Kolsrud, 'The Evolution of Basic Appraisal Principles – Some Comparative Observations', *The American Archivist,* Vol. 55 Winter 1992.

39 Georg Wilhelm Sante in 1956–57: *Archivists must make their selection with a view to the function of the departments and the significance attached to that function. They must begin by analysing the functions of the individual agencies, and only thereafter can the records produced by these agencies be appraised.'* Quoted in Hans Booms', 'Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources' (originally published in German in 1972), *Archivaria,* No 24, Summer 1987, p. 97.

40 T. R. Schellenberg, op cit, *Appraisal Standards,* p. 137.

41 However these ideas clearly influenced Schellenberg, through the translation of the lectures and papers of Adolf Brenneke, cited in the Introduction to *Modern Archives.* Similarly, the work of Brenneke is referenced in early Australian discussions on appraisal, quite possibly as a result of exposure to these works following Schellenberg's 1954 visit to Australia. These ideas similarly had an influence on the work of Hans Booms in the 1970s and indirectly through Booms on Terry Cook in the 1990s.

42 'The review of the annual lists of disposable records was quite time consuming for the staff of the National Archives. In a memorandum of July 30, 1938, I therefore proposed that schedules be developed for the records of the Department of Agriculture, which were my especial concern at the time... The procedure of developing disposal schedules was recommended to the Federal agencies as early as 1925 by the Interdepartmental Board on Simplified Office Procedures... The procedure of preparing disposal schedules was prescribed for all Federal agencies in the Records Disposal Act of July 7, 1943.' Schellenberg, pp. 100–101

43 Hoover Commission on Organisation of the Executive Branch of the United States Government. Discussed in *The Registrar's Handbook,* The Public Service Board, ACT (c1960).

44 Barbara Reed, 'Acquisition and Appraisal' in *Keeping Archives,* 1st edition, Australian Society of Archivists 1987, and Barbara Reed, 'Appraisal and Disposal' in *Keeping Archives,* 2nd edition, Australian Society of Archivists 1993.

45 ibid, p. 95. This interesting concept reverberates through a number of traditions of appraisal. Ole Kolsrud (op cit) in discussing the 1981 Wilson Report reviewing the Public

Record Office UK's appraisal system writes, '...it suggested that the time had come to concentrate more on preservation than destruction'; similarly in Australia, Dianne Easter in 1979 (op cit) wrote, 'The Australian Archives records disposal policy in 1979 shows a shift in emphasis from the need to justify the destruction of records to a requirement involving the critical appraisal of material to justify permanent retention'.

46 Angelica Menne-Haritz, 'Appraisal or Documentation: Can we Appraise Archives by Selecting Content', *The American Archivist,* Vol. 57, Summer 1994.

47 Kolsrud, op cit, p. 33.

48 Menne Haritz, op cit, p. 536.

49 ibid.

50 The strategy is ordinarily designed, promoted, and in part implemented by an ongoing mechanism involving archival documentation creators, records administrators, archivists, users, other experts, and beneficiaries and other interested parties. The documentation strategy is carried out through the mutual efforts of many institutions and individuals influencing the creation and management of records and the retention and archival accessioning of some of them. The strategy is regularly refined in response to changing conditions as reflected in available information, expertise and opinions. Strategies may be developed at levels ranging from worldwide and nationwide to statewide and community wide'. Larry J Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, 'The Documentation Strategy Process: A model and Case Study', *The American Archivist,* Vol. 50, Winter 1987.

51 This project has as its focus the documentation of Australian science and encompasses a cross institutional view, identifying repositories in which such papers as come to the specialist scientific-archival attention would logically reside while creating a guide to the virtual archive.

52 Terry Abraham, 'Collection Policy or Documentation Strategy: Theory and Practice', *The American Archivist,* Vol. 54, Winter 1991.

53 Australians are not alone in this. Luciana Duranti has clearly identified the tensions inherent in the two approaches in her article, 'The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory', *The American Archivist,* Vol. 57, Spring 1994. However, the conclusion that appraisal (meaning determination of value) has no part in archival theory, being inherently contradictory to that theory, presumes a definition of appraisal that is wholly derived from the American tradition. Her preferred terms of 'selection' and 'acquisition' seem equally problematic, but the distinctions are drawn from the argument developed in her article. The conclusion that 'archival methods need to be developed that allow for selection and acquisition to maintain intact the characteristics of archival documents, and this will require much study and research', is pursued further in Part 2 of this article.