Appraisal of Archival Materials:
An Annotated Bibliography

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INFO 522: Information Access & Resources
20 March 2013
Introduction and Scope

The following bibliography covers recent trends in the appraisal of archival materials. The articles presented here, published from 1990-2012, examine developments in both the theory and methodology of archival appraisal, based especially on the American and Canadian models of documentation strategy and macro-appraisal, respectively. Though multiple articles provide overviews of earlier foundational scholarship on archival appraisal, the majority of these sources explore the various benefits and detriments of such new appraisal models, developed in response to a number of contemporary issues in archival science that have arisen since the 1980s, including the expansive proliferation of government records, electronic records, and social history. One article on the appraisal of architectural records is included to demonstrate how the macro-appraisal model can be applied to very specific manuscript collection types in addition to the general universe of textual records. Additionally, several articles examine particular cases in which documentation strategy and macro-appraisal have been employed in recent years. Articles have been published in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and the Netherlands.

Description

Appraisal is the process by which archivists assess the value of records and schedule their disposition. Historically, appraisal is a relatively new concept. Through the early 20th century, records were created in small enough amounts that archives could conceivably acquire and preserve everything. Manuscript collections—archives that collect private papers or records related to specific topics—would acquire whatever was left to them by posterity. Institutional archives—those that house the records of their own institution or government—would likewise attempt to preserve whatever was available to them. After World War II, the proliferation of
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records, especially government records, required archivists to put greater emphasis on
determining the value of the records they acquire, since they could not effectively manage the
huge masses of records now being created. As the 20th century progressed, new concerns over
the documentation of underrepresented groups and the instability of electronic records prompted
archivists to develop progressive approaches to appraisal. Macro-appraisal and documentation
strategy are two such newer appraisal methods which stress a top-down approach, requiring
archivists to first prioritize institutional functions and societal concerns and then categorize and
assign value to records based on these functional analyses. These fairly new, often controversial
approaches, implemented to various degrees over the past twenty years, form the basis of the
literature presented here.

Summary of Findings

New approaches to archival appraisal, like macro-appraisal and documentation strategy,
evolved in the course of an ongoing professional debate that started in the 1980s about the
evolving nature of contemporary records. As archivists observed, institutions were creating too
many records for archives to appraise appropriately. Archives, increasingly facing huge backlogs
of unprocessed materials, could not afford to keep acquiring whatever they were given. Yet, they
also could no longer undertake intensive, time-consuming evaluations of collections from the
bottom up to determine their archival value. Issues like social history, fluid administrative
hierarchies, digital and non-textual record formats, and lack of resources have also complicated
archivists’ appraisal methods. While new strategies have developed to meet these needs, they
have met with a fair amount of criticism.

Much of the literature on appraisal in the past twenty years has concerned the merits of
these new appraisal strategies, usually based on the authors’ interpretations of existing archival
scholarship. Some, like Cox (1994), have attempted to reconcile new approaches in appraisal methodology with existing, accepted archival principles. Others, like Cook (1995), argue instead that each new appraisal method developed since the beginning of the 20th century has involved some degree of rebellion against former methods, noting especially how in the 1950s, Theodore Schellenberg’s emphasis on evidential and informational value in appraisal was a direct rebuttal of Hilary Jenkinson’s long-accepted assertion that appraisal decisions should be made exclusively by records creators and not at all by archivists. Yet, other contemporary scholars, like Duranti (1994), continue to follow Jenkinson’s line of reasoning and assert that any assigning of value to records through appraisal is fundamentally at odds with core archival concepts of authenticity and accountability. Cook’s 2004 article, written well over a decade after his macro-appraisal strategy was implemented at the National Archives of Canada, is in many ways still defending the soundness of his method. This vigorous professional debate demonstrates that, even as these new appraisal methods mature in practice, there is still no general consensus on their usefulness or compatibility with basic archival theory.

This ongoing professional debate has also incorporated concepts, like social history and post-modernism, imported from other fields. Lockwood (1990) examines the impact of social history on the appraisal practices of the National Archives and Records Administration, arguing in favor of more comprehensive policies reacting to this historical research trend. Such sensitivity to historical trends is exactly the kind of reliance on Schellenbergian appraisal methods that Cook (1995) so vehemently argues against when he asserts how basing appraisal value on research use results in uneven collecting policies and fluid standards. Nevertheless, Lockwood’s argument is picked up years later by Van Wingen and Bass (2008), who instead investigate how documentation strategy—an appraisal method which, like macro-appraisal, is based on institutional functional analysis—can actually better address social history issues than
traditional appraisal methods. Meanwhile, Brown (1995) argues for a hermeneutic approach to functional analysis, developed from an understanding of post-modernism. He insists that the close reading of records texts will better equip macro-appraisal programs to identify those institutional and societal functions that document underrepresented groups.

Scholars have also attempted to address the ever-changing nature of contemporary records, especially as records are increasingly created in multi-layered institutional contexts and in various unstable electronic formats. Cook (1996) points to the field of architecture as one that could especially benefit from a macro-appraisal approach, given the complex nature of architectural records and the lack of a general consensus on the actual nature of architecture and its role in society. He argues that macro-appraisal can allow archivists to identify the most important functions of architecture without getting bogged down in the inconsistencies and complexities of architectural theory. Dixon (2005) examines how Canada’s macro-appraisal approach to government records has largely ignored case files, which are the largest single body of records created by the Canadian government. Her reliance on Schellenbergian micro-appraisal strategies, such as identifying important informational and evidential value in individual records, suggests that a successful overall approach to contemporary archival appraisal may require the blending of both old and new methods together. Finally, Harvey and Thompson (2010) examine the criteria necessary to create an automated system of archival appraisal, concluding that at this stage, automation would only be possible as a tool in ensuring electronic records exist in stable formats. It remains unclear how such electronic automation could become a macro-appraisal tool in the future.

While much has been written about appraisal in recent decades, it appears that more work remains toward building a strong professional consensus on the effectiveness of macro-appraisal and documentation strategy. A number of archivists have critically examined the implementation
of macro-appraisal and documentation strategy approaches in their own institutions—including Bailey (1997) regarding macro-appraisal at the National Archives of Canada, Cunningham and Oswald (2005) on macro-appraisal at the National Archives of Australia, Loewen (2005) on accountability changes to the Canadian macro-appraisal model, Robyns and Woolman (2011) on institutional functional analysis at Northern Michigan University, and Williams (2012) on a documentation strategy for the London 2012 Olympic Games. However, there is a dearth of empirical research being done on the matter of appraisal, and such research may be the only way for the professional community to come to any real understanding of how these new models have actually improved appraisal, if at all. Craig (2008) presents the results of a postal survey of Canadian archivists, which offers a good starting point. Her findings suggest that archivists are largely preoccupied with other matters at their jobs, especially management, and that very few archivists are employed exclusively in appraisal roles. That most archives do not have dedicated appraisal staff suggests that perhaps the prolific debate over appraisal in scholarly literature has not had a dramatic effect on archivists in practice. Nevertheless, more research needs to be done to examine this and other possibilities. Though notions of archival value are particularly hard to quantify, and therefore research on appraisal may prove difficult to conduct, enhancing understanding of how appraisal works in practice can only serve to better develop and perfect the various methodologies at archivists’ disposal.

Bibliography

Entry 1:

Abstract: “This article examines the application of the macro-appraisal model, which has been practised at the National Archives of Canada since 1991. After a conceptual review of the theory behind documentation strategy and the macro-appraisal model, the article outlines the National Archives’ ‘planned approach’ to the macro-appraisal of records of the Canadian federal government. Through a detailed analysis of four appraisals in the field of health and social welfare, a number of strengths and weaknesses of the macro-appraisal model are discussed.”

Annotation: The author evaluates Terry Cook’s macro-appraisal model as implemented by the National Archives of Canada, offering an introduction of the model’s theoretical basis in contrast with documentation strategy and an examination of the model at work in four different government agencies. While the author provides more depth of study to the model’s successes (as shown in the examples), the article makes a valuable distinction between appraisal and acquisition, suggesting that macro-appraisal may not answer complex acquisition decisions related to traditional concerns like authenticity and preservation needs.

Search Strategy: I knew LISTA should contain articles relevant to my search, so I consulted the database’s thesaurus via EBSCOhost for subject terms relating to archival appraisal and found “APPRAISAL of archival materials.” I found this article after searching using this term.

Database: Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA) [EBSCOhost]

Method of Searching: Controlled Vocabulary

Search String: ss DE “APPRAISAL of archival materials”
**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The Association of Canadian Archivists publishes *Archivaria*. Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my EBSCOhost results to “Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals.”

*Entry 2:*


**Abstract:** “This essay is about the context of the public records creator and its conceptual relation to the appraisal of public records. Its primary purpose is to suggest an alternative way for archivists to understand, interpret, and represent institutional creator context in support of intellectual processes and practical methods leading to the identification of records for archival preservation.”

**Annotation:** The article presents an argument in favor of hermeneutics as a valuable way of assessing the institutional context of a record’s creation instead of relying upon existing bureaucratic and administrative constructs. This text-based approach to institutional functional analysis should allow archivists greater insight into the provenance, and therefore appraisal value, of records. While this article’s findings are too often couched in complicated post-modern terminology, its recommendation to rely upon archival reading of texts should be helpful to archivists looking to enact macro-appraisal models while also respecting the issues of representation brought up by social history. Additionally, the author gives some valuable insight on how a hermeneutic approach may also affect archival arrangement and description of records.
Search Strategy: Because Bailey’s 1997 article “From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-appraisal” offers a helpful overview of the macro-appraisal model, I thought that following some of the sources cited in her footnotes would offer more in-depth perspective on how the model developed.

Database: N/A

Method of Searching: Footnote chasing

Search String: Referenced in:


Scholarly/Refereed Status: The Association of Canadian Archivists publishes *Archivaria*. Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

Entry 3:


Abstract: “Traditional appraisal approaches popularized by Jenkinson and Schellenberg, and their many supporters, have serious shortcomings now that archivists are forced to cope with the voluminous and fragile records of complex modern organizations. This article analyses the history of appraisal thinking in this century, and concludes that there has been a fundamental paradigm shift for archives (and archivists) from serving the state to serving society, and from passively preserving the records judged to have value by the state to actively collecting the records reflective of society - a true 'archives of the
people.' The article also asserts that appraisal must in the first instance give way to macro-appraisal. Ironically, the last thing the archivist does in appraising records for use is to appraise records or consider use. Based on a model developed for the National Archives of Canada, and implemented there since 1991, the macro-appraisal concept focuses rather on appraising the key issues and trends in society and its key institutions, and then in turn their mandates, functions, programmes, activities, and transactions.”

**Annotation:** This article first traces the development of archival theory from the 19th century Dutch Manual, then to Hilary Jenkinson and to Theodore Schellenberg, examining how these theoretical models have all ultimately been undermined by ongoing changes in the nature of public records, especially in relation to the notion of public accountability and the overabundance of contemporary records. The author then presents the Canadian macro-appraisal model as one capable of providing an effective appraisal methodology that respects archival traditions while also refusing to be bound by them. Though the author does little to critically examine the success of macro-appraisal’s implementation in Canada, he effectively defends model’s theoretical foundation against some of the most common criticisms it faces from adherents of Jenkinson and Schellenberg.

**Search Strategy:** I knew LISTA should contain articles relevant to my search, so I consulted the database’s thesaurus via EBSCOhost for subject terms relating to archival appraisal and found “APPRAISAL of archival materials.” I found this article after searching using this term.

**Database:** Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA) [EBSCOhost]

**Method of Searching:** Controlled Vocabulary

**Search String:** ss DE “APPRAISAL of archival materials”
**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The South African Society of Archivists publishes the *South African Archives Journal*, now called the *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*. The journal’s website describes it as scholarly and refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my EBSCOhost results to “Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals.”

**Entry 4:**


**Abstract:** “The appraisal of architectural records is complicated by the many existing interpretations of the purpose and function of architecture: which buildings, which architects, what other social, economic, and governmental influences, and which interpretations of the architecture are to be documented? In dealing with these questions—and with the massive growth rate of current records—the traditional approach to appraisal based on present and future research value is of little use. Documentation strategy is a relatively new approach to appraisal, and stresses a macro-appraisal and selection of the functions, activities, and record creators that need to be documented for posterity. The understanding of records in their overall context provided by macro-appraisal will ensure a more complete documentary record, but will require archivists to become actively involved in determining which records survive, not passively waiting to appraise and select those records which find the way to archival repositories on their own.”
**Annotation:** The author once again recounts the merits of the macro-appraisal model he developed for the appraisal and retention of records at the National Archives of Canada. This time he frames his argument in the context of architectural records, which he believes exhibit the kind of complex, multi-institutional provenance that renders traditional models of archival appraisal untenable. In particular, he points to the lack of consensus on the role of architecture in society and the ongoing debate about the exact nature of architecture as reasons why macro-appraisal could help archivists better assess the value of architectural records. Instead of passively accepting architectural records or appraising them based on expectations of future research use, archivists should employ macro-appraisal as a method to build comprehensive, if less voluminous, collections based on functional analysis.

**Search Strategy:** Because other sources identified Terry Cook as one of the main proponents and developers of macro-appraisal, I wanted to find other relevant articles of his. I turned to Summon for this search, knowing that it searches a number of databases that index both *Archivaria* and *American Archivist*, two of the main publications in which Cook has written. I performed an author search for “Cook, Terry” and found this article.

**Database:** JSTOR [Summon]

**Method of Searching:** Author search

**Search String:** AuthorCombined:(Cook, Terry)

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The Society of American Archivists publishes *American Archivist*. Ulrich’s also lists *American Archivist* as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my search results on Summon to “articles from scholarly publications, including peer-review.”


Entry 5:


Abstract: “Macro-appraisal encompasses a new theory, strategy and methodology for doing appraisal, which was first adopted at the National Archives of Canada in the 1990s. After a summary of the broader concept of macro-appraisal, this article explores the ‘functional analysis’ that is the theoretical and methodological core of macro-appraisal. The argument suggests that archivists in appraisal should focus on issues of governance, thus going beyond trying to understand (and document) what a government (or other institution) does. It seeks thereby to put the ‘citizen’ back in the citizen–state relationship—and among the archival records identified through macro-appraisal for long-term archival preservation.”

Annotation: This article, written over a decade after the official implementation of a macro-appraisal methodology at the National Archives of Canada, examines how macro-appraisal, while based on institutional functional analysis, is not merely determined by administrative and bureaucratic organization. The author recounts ten main principles behind macro-appraisal as well as five core steps in its application and twelve criteria to use during functional analysis. This kind of methodological specificity provides a welcome retrospective of the model’s use in Canada, attempting to demonstrate how the model is still useful, appropriate, and effective after so many years. The article is written with particular concern for the role of post-modernism in examining archives’ need to document underrepresented groups rather than simply structures of power.
Search Strategy: Cunningham and Oswald’s article “Some Functions are More Equal than Others…” describes the implementation of a macro-appraisal model in Australia. In their article, they cite a number of sources fundamental to the ongoing development of the model, including this article by Cook.

Database: N/A

Method of Searching: Footnote chasing

Search String: Referenced in:


Scholarly/Refereed Status: Springer Netherlands publishes *Archival Science*. Its website describes the journal as an “independent, international, peer-reviewed journal on archival science.” Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

Entry 6:


Abstract: “North American archivists have recently witnessed an upsurge in writings about appraisal theory. This essay takes a different approach to this topic. It attempts to describe a set of basic principles, derived from the archival literature, that relate to the practice of appraising records. These principles bridge the gap between theory and practice, but they represent—in the author's view—something more than just methodology.
The essay also seeks to relate the decade-old discussion to the archival documentation strategy, showing how the strategy both emanates from such principles and is consistent with them.”

Annotation: The author describes the ongoing intellectual debate in the archives community between adherents to traditional appraisal methodologies and proponents of new models such as macro-appraisal and documentation strategy, concluding on a set of twelve principles of archival appraisal that are common to both sides of the debate and well-grounded in archival theory. These well-documented principles offer a clear picture of the state of archival appraisal, pointing to some of the most challenging contemporary issues that the documentation strategy and macro-appraisal models hope to address.

Though this article initially presents itself as a tool for creating more professional understanding and agreement, it ultimately argues in favor of the American documentation strategy model as one firmly in line with the most essential principles of archival appraisal theory.

Search Strategy: Documentation strategy, alongside macro-appraisal, is one of the most popular recent models proposed for the appraisal of archival materials. I wanted to find some sources that provided an overview of this concept, so I decided to search Summon, which pulls from databases that index Archivaria, American Archivist, and other leading scholarly archival publications. I found this article in the results for my keyword search of archives AND “documentation strategy”.

Database: Miscellaneous E-Journals [Summon]

Method of Searching: Keyword search

Search String: ss archives AND “documentation strategy”
Scholarly/Refereed Status: The Association of Canadian Archivists publishes *Archivaria*. Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my search results on Summon to “articles from scholarly publications, including peer-review.”

**Entry 7:**


**Abstract:** “This paper reports results of a self-administered postal survey of 450 Canadian archivists undertaken between 2003 and 2005. The survey of fifty-eight questions gathered information specifically about appraisal as a work process: how it is done by archivists in Canadian repositories; what resources they use; what problems and issues they have encountered; and in the light of experience, what tools, skills, and knowledge have proven to be important in doing this task. The paper reports the frequencies for eight sections of the survey. It situates the 313 responses (response rate of 70%) within their overall experience, institutional affiliation, and basic demography. The paper also discusses respondents’ opinions on the knowledge, education, and training needed to do appraisal, and assesses the sources for information they use and find useful. After reporting on the respondents’ approach to the task and the methods they use, the paper looks at the problems encountered in doing appraisal and discusses the ideas that archivists have about their accountability for decisions. Further analysis of data from the survey is proposed as the companion to the next phase of research on appraisal, interviewing archivists to explore ideas and issues in depth.”
Annotation: The author points to the remarkable surge in scholarly writings on appraisal in the archives community but recognizes that little of this writing has involved empirical research into the behaviors and opinions of archivists doing actual appraisal work. The findings of the author’s own study suggest that archivists mostly see management as their primary task and very few archivists are exclusively engaged in appraisal work, even though a great majority are involved in appraisal in some way. The survey results also suggest that archivists see on-the-job training and a developed instinctual sense of value as more important to appraisal work than a deep understanding of scholarly literature. While the article does not offer any major conclusions about the state of archival appraisal work, it provides a helpful starting point and indicates that further empirical research on appraisal is much needed.

Search Strategy: I knew LISTA should contain articles relevant to my search, so I consulted the database’s thesaurus via EBSCOhost for subject terms relating to archival appraisal and found “APPRAISAL of archival materials.” I found this article after searching using this term.

Database: Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA) [EBSCOhost]

Method of Searching: Controlled Vocabulary

Search String: ss DE “APPRAISAL of archival materials”

Scholarly/Refereed Status: The Association of Canadian Archivists publishes Archivaria. Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my EBSCOhost results to “Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals.”

Entry 8:

Cunningham, A., & Oswald, R. (2005). Some functions are more equal than others: The
development of a macroappraisal strategy for the national archives of Australia.

*Archival Science, 5*(2-4), 163-184. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10502-005-9011-1

**Abstract:** “In 1999-2000 the National Archives of Australia (NAA) adopted a functions-based approach to appraisal. Since that time functional appraisal projects have for the most part been conducted in cooperation with individual agencies. What has been missing is a broad whole-of-government or macroappraisal framework which might assist with the strategic prioritisation of projects, the allocation of resources and the identification of high-value functions, activities and record classes. This article describes a project commenced by the NAA during 2003-2004 to research and develop a functions-based macroappraisal framework for current and prospective appraisal and for retrospective application to records of the past 30 years of the Australian Government. The article compares the Australian approach with macroappraisal strategies pursued in Canada, the Netherlands and South Africa.”

**Annotation:** The article provides an in-depth examination of the implementation of a macro-appraisal strategy at the National Archives of Australia, drawing from macro-appraisal models already implemented in Canada and the Netherlands. The authors critically examine Australia’s agency-based functional approach and point to specific successes and failures of Australian and other national appraisal methods as lessons learned in the implementation of a new government-wide macro-appraisal strategy. Such critical evaluation of actual programs is sorely missing from much of the contemporary literature on new function-based appraisal methods. The Australian program ultimately elects for a strategy based on more specific value principles than the Canadian model.
The authors content that Library and Archives Canada has failed to sufficiently explain how it assigns value to different government functions, resulting in lack of consistency.

**Search Strategy:** I wanted to search ProQuest’s suite of databases for more sources on archival appraisal, specifically the concept of macro-appraisal, so I performed a keyword search in ERIC, LISA, and ProQuest Library Science for *archives* AND *appraisal* AND *(macroappraisal OR “macro-appraisal”).*

**Database:** ProQuest Library Science [ProQuest]

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** ss archives AND appraisal AND (macroappraisal OR “macro-appraisal”)

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Springer Netherlands publishes *Archival Science.* Its website describes the journal as an “independent, international, peer-reviewed journal on archival science.” Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

**Entry 9:**


**Abstract:** “Case files are voluminous and present challenges to archivists, government departments, and other institutions that are charged with the responsibility of managing these records either throughout or at various stages of their life cycle. To date, archivists and records administrators, both in Canada and worldwide, have recognized the case file challenge and are rethinking solutions for dealing with this persistent problem. This article argues that by building on our cumulative knowledge acquired through years of
applying macroappraisal and functional analysis to the appraisal of government records, and staking out a modern definition of 'case file records' based on their transactional characteristics, we indeed do have the skills and the expertise to tackle the problem and develop a new solution for case file records. Rather than taking a piecemeal approach or relying on sampling techniques, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Case Files Appraisal Working Group (CFAWG) demonstrates how to consistently make keep-destroy appraisal decisions for the disposition of operational case file records.”

Annotation: The author acknowledges that most macro-appraisal strategies, including the model used in Canada, have largely ignored the issue of appraising case files, by far the largest body of government records. The article examines how the CFAWG established a new working definition of “case file,” allowing them to more specifically identify such files. This provided a foundation on which CFAWG developed seven principles used to determine whether such files can be considered of archival quality. Though the author is writing in the context of the Canadian macro-appraisal strategy, the principles she describes are clearly based in the traditional Schellenbergian micro-appraisal model. This suggests that often the two strategies must exist in tandem and are not always necessarily opposed.

Search Strategy: I wanted to search ProQuest’s suite of databases for more sources on archival appraisal, specifically the concept of macro-appraisal, so I performed a keyword search in ERIC, LISA, and ProQuest Library Science for archives AND appraisal AND (macroappraisal OR “macro-appraisal”).

Database: ProQuest Library Science [ProQuest]

Method of Searching: Keyword search

Search String: ss archives AND appraisal AND (macroappraisal OR “macro-appraisal”)
**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Springer Netherlands publishes *Archival Science*. Its website describes the journal as an “independent, international, peer-reviewed journal on archival science.” Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

**Entry 10:**


**Abstract:** “In the last decade, appraisal has become one of the central topics of archival literature. However, the approach to appraisal issues has been primarily methodological and practical. This article discusses the theoretical implications of appraisal as attribution of value to archives, and it bases its argument on the nature of archival material as defined by traditional archival theory.”

**Annotation:** The author presents a Jenkinsonian view of archival appraisal, based in traditional notions of objectivity and public accountability. Though the article acknowledges the limits imposed by the abundance of modern records, it asserts that archivists cannot at once select certain records for retention (thereby assigning value to them) and at the same time uphold traditional notions of impartiality and authenticity. This argument is well founded in archival history dating back to Ancient Rome. The author asserts that North American archivists have largely ignored this historical development of archival theory in favor of exploring new methods of appraisal, suggesting that modern appraisal theory might be incompatible altogether with archival theory. Though this line of reasoning is well argued, the author offers no practical
solutions for addressing the actual problems such North American methodological approaches aim to fix.

**Search Strategy:** I wanted to search Web of Science’s SSCI for articles that more generally examined the role of appraisal in archival theory. My hope was that the most seminal articles on this topic would also be among the most referenced on Web of Science. A search for *archives AND appraisal* on SSCI led me to this article.

**Database:** Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) [Web of Science]

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** ss archives AND appraisal

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The Society of American Archivists publishes *American Archivist*. Ulrich’s also lists *American Archivist* as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

**Entry 11:**


**Abstract:** “This paper aims to investigate the requirements for automating aspects of the appraisal process for digital objects. It explores these requirements in the context of automating re-appraisal and questions many of the assumptions commonly made about appraisal and about automating the processes needed for life-cycle management of digital objects. The literature of digital preservation and curation and the experience of one of the authors in planning to implement a digital archive at the Wellcome Library are the basis of an exploration of issues. The development of automated appraisal systems and associated tools is a worthwhile endeavour, although the complexity and cost associated
with designing, developing and implementing them may be prohibitive in some situations. An automated appraisal system may, however, have only limited benefits in some contexts. The re-appraisal of technical attributes of digital materials, which is an essential part of their management, is a prime contender for some level of automation. The approach proposed has limitations which arise from such factors as metadata requirements and trustworthiness. The paper articulates assumptions made about automation and applies these in order to gain a better understanding of the requirements of automating aspects of appraisal in a digital archive.”

**Annotation:** This article examines the possibility of automating one or more aspects of the archival appraisal of electronic records, concluding that the only feasible aspect of appraisal that could be automated is the routine upgrading of electronic formats. Because electronic documents exist in formats that may be unstable, such automation would regularly re-appraise electronic records to ensure that their current format is stable and, if not, perform the necessary format upgrade. This kind of technical appraisal would need to remain separate from the regular initial appraisal duties that archivists perform in person. It remains unclear how such a separation would withstand macro-appraisal strategies or if archivists could successfully identify institutional functions suitable for automatic re-appraisal, beyond the specific format of electronic records.

**Search Strategy:** I wanted to search Web of Science’s SSCI for articles that more generally examined the role of appraisal in archival theory. My hope was that the most seminal articles on this topic would also be among the most referenced on Web of Science. A search for *archives AND appraisal* on SSCI led me to this article.

**Database:** Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) [Web of Science]

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search
Search String: ss archives AND appraisal

Scholarly/Refereed Status: Emerald Group (UK) publishes Library Hi Tech. Ulrich’s lists this publication as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, its website describes the journal as “a quarterly, peer reviewed, scholarly journal on computing and technology for library scientists.”

Entry 12:


Abstract: “The field of history has changed a great deal since Theodore Schellenberg wrote The Appraisal of Modern Public Records in 1956. Although trends in social history, Afro-American history, and women's history have suggested new subjects, themes, and periodization for historians during the last twenty years, archivists at the National Archives and Records Administration continue to rely primarily on Schellenberg's guidance in their appraisal of the records of the federal government. The author investigates the criteria used in making appraisal decisions at NARA, looks at some examples of appraisals that considered the new trends in history to greater and lesser extents, and concludes that NARA must take a proactive position on this issue to ensure that tomorrow's archival collection is a well-considered and useful one.”

Annotation: This article evaluates NARA’s piecemeal incorporation of trends in social history into its appraisal procedures. Because NARA maintains no single, comprehensive appraisal policy, most of the appraisal work rests on the judgment of individual archivists. This suggests that social history considerations may not be made for all
records acquired and raises important questions about how effectively NARA is retaining records related to underrepresented groups. The article also brings up the concern that relying too heavily on trends in history may cause archives to collect records in an uneven way that fails to emphasize their enduring value, though relying on historiography, as the author suggests, may only exacerbate such a problem.

**Search Strategy:** I wanted to search Web of Science’s SSCI for articles that more generally examined the role of appraisal in archival theory. My hope was that the most seminal articles on this topic would also be among the most referenced on Web of Science. A search for *archives AND appraisal* on SSCI led me to this article.

**Database:** Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) [Web of Science]

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** ss archives AND appraisal

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The Society of American Archivists publishes *American Archivist*. Ulrich’s also lists *American Archivist* as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

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**Entry 13:**


**Abstract:** “This article explains the re-engineering of the government records disposition program at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) in 2002-2004. The main point is that the framework of accountability has grown since the launch of the macroappraisal program (often referred to as the planned approach to disposition) at the (former) National
Archives of Canada (NA) in 1990-1991. The opportunity for building an expanded framework of accountability presented itself after 2000 when a number of "push" (internal to the disposition program) and "pull" (external to the program) factors coalesced to challenge a reduced program. The re-engineering exercise involved LAC government records archivists working together to develop the following new program documentation: Government-Wide Plan (GWP); Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); Appraisal Checklist; Terms and Conditions for the Transfer of Archival Records; Briefing Note for the Librarian and Archivist of Canada; and the Multi-Institutional Disposition Authority (MIDA) for Operational Case Files. Significant work also went into creating version three of the Records Disposition Authorities Control System (RDACS).

**Annotation:** This article provides another much-needed critical evaluation of a specific national appraisal program. In this case, the author examines how Library and Archives Canada restructured its macro-appraisal program in the early 2000s following an embarrassing Inspector General report that pointed out several fatal flaws in the Archives’ existing macro-appraisal program. The author points to the ongoing evolution of the notion of public accountability as one of the main reasons why LAC needed to develop more considered policies to ensure the actual transfer of records from individual agencies to LAC. These revised policies include a clearer list of principles used in determining the value of various government functions aimed toward creating a generally more robust framework of accountability. The policies outlined in this article point out helpful next steps in the actualization of macro-appraisal principles in specific settings.

**Search Strategy:** I wanted to search ProQuest’s suite of databases for more sources on archival appraisal, specifically the concept of macro-appraisal, so I performed a keyword
search in ERIC, LISA, and ProQuest Library Science for *archives AND appraisal AND (macroappraisal OR “macro-appraisal”).*

**Database:** ProQuest Library Science [ProQuest]

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** ss archives AND appraisal AND (macroappraisal OR “macro-appraisal”)

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Springer Netherlands publishes *Archival Science*. Its website describes the journal as an “independent, international, peer-reviewed journal on archival science.” Ulrich’s lists it as a scholarly journal and as refereed.

**Entry 14:**


**Abstract:** “The identification of recorded information with continuing value that documents corporate and cultural memory is one of the archivist’s primary tasks, and they accomplish this mission, in part, through the process of appraisal. But with options as diverse as documentation strategies, black boxes, functional analysis, macro-appraisal, and Theodore Schellenberg’s evidential and informational values, how does the “lone arranger” in an institution of higher education settle on an appropriate course of action? The Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives faced this decision when reconfiguring its process of appraisal and arrangement of archival records. This article details how the archives adapted elements of Helen Samuels’s concept of
institutional functional analysis and Terry Cook’s macro-appraisal into a model tailored for use in university and college archives with limited financial and human resources.”

**Annotation:** This article, examining the implementation of an appraisal scheme based on institutional functional analysis, points out the continued relevance of such a model over twenty years after archivists first explored its theoretical foundations. Importantly, the authors also use institutional functional analysis to remodel their archives’ arrangement and description system, suggesting that such a strategy may be applicable beyond just the realm of archival appraisal. The article also helpfully explores methods by which resource-poor archives and those with single “lone-arranger” archivists can successfully implement a macro-appraisal or documentation strategy approach to appraisal.

**Search Strategy:** Macro-appraisal is one of the most popular recent models proposed for the appraisal of archival materials. I wanted to find some sources that provided an overview of this concept, so I decided to search Summon, which pulls from databases that index *Archivaria, American Archivist*, and other leading scholarly archival publications. I found this article in the results for my keyword search of *archives AND “macro-appraisal”*.  

**Database:** JSTOR [Summon]  

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search  

**Search String:** ss archives AND “macro-appraisal”  

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** The Society of American Archivists publishes *American Archivist*. Ulrich’s also lists *American Archivist* as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my search results on Summon to “articles from scholarly publications, including peer-review.”
Entry 15:


Abstract: “This paper aims to explore the relationship between historiography and archival practices. It takes the new social history approach to history as a case study for examining how historians' changing theories and methods may affect solicitation, acquisition, appraisal, arrangement, description, reference, outreach, and other aspects of archival administration. The paper presents a review of the archival and historical literature since the late 1970s. The paper finds that many aspects of archival administration have been and continue to be affected by the new social history trend in historical scholarship. The paper suggests that archivists and archival educators be trained in historiography as a way to understand historians' craft and develop strong documentation strategies to anticipate future archival needs. The paper includes implications for the development of archival administration and education strategies. The paper draws from a range of literature to consider the impact of scholarly practices on professional archival work.”

Annotation: This article examines how the new social history of the late 1960s and 1970s has affected archival appraisal, and ways in which appraisal methods like documentation strategy can effectively address social history issues without forcing archival collecting policies to follow the mere whims of historical research trends. The authors identify social history as one of the key factors in the effectiveness of macro-appraisal and documentation strategy models, because such strategies, in looking beyond
simple administrative organization, aim to better reflect the whole of a society’s or organization’s functions. The article is a helpful reminder to archivists that no matter how much archives try to resist following research trends in their appraisal decisions, archives must also seek better awareness of their evolving role in the documentation and legitimization of specific historical narratives.

**Search Strategy:** I wanted to search Web of Science’s SSCI for articles that more generally examined the role of appraisal in archival theory. My hope was that the most seminal articles on this topic would also be among the most referenced on Web of Science. A search for **archives AND appraisal** on SSCI led me to this article.

**Database:** Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) [Web of Science]

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search

**Search String:** ss archives AND appraisal

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Emerald Group (UK) publishes *Library Hi Tech*. Ulrich’s lists this publication as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, its website describes the journal as “a quarterly, peer reviewed, scholarly journal on computing and technology for library scientists.”

**Entry 16:**


**Abstract:** “Much debated in the 1970s and 1980s, documentation strategy has since been variously tried and tested. This article reports on *The Record*, an initiative led by The National Archives designed to ensure a documentary legacy of the London 2012 Olympic
and Paralympic Games and the Cultural Olympiad. Without detailing the theory and development of documentation strategy, the article provides an overview of The Record which began as a collection strategy and since December 2008 has evolved into a practical example of documentation strategy in its scope, its reach and its intentions. The article makes no attempt to evaluate the success of The Record, as work continues to communicate its objectives and to encourage participation that will extend beyond the closing ceremonies. Neither does it provide a critique of documentation strategy nor of its applicability for The Record. However, it does raise some of the questions that will need to be answered to determine the success of the initiative in meeting its core objectives and the appropriateness of having belatedly embraced documentation strategy as its methodology.”

**Annotation:** This article provides a valuable lesson on the effective use of documentation strategy in appraising the records of specific events or topics, given that such topics often involve records created by multiple institutions. Because of the immense nature of the London 2012 Olympic Games, this article may not be applicable to many archives planning smaller documentation strategies, but it offers some necessary insight into the complications that arise when archivists seek to forge multi-institutional partnerships for the sake of developing an appraisal and acquisition plan. This article’s detailed account once again highlights the ongoing usefulness of documentation strategy in the context of contemporary records appraisal, though the scope of its particular project may place it outside the realm of feasibility for most archives.

**Search Strategy:** Documentation strategy, alongside macro-appraisal, is one of the most popular recent models proposed for the appraisal of archival materials. I wanted to find some sources that provided an overview of this concept, so I decided to search Summon,
which pulls from databases that index *Archivaria, American Archivist*, and other leading scholarly archival publications. I found this article in the results for my keyword search of *archives AND “documentation strategy”*.  

**Database:** Miscellaneous E-Journals [Summon]  

**Method of Searching:** Keyword search  

**Search String:** ss archives AND “documentation strategy”  

**Scholarly/Refereed Status:** Routledge publishes the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (UK), currently called *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* (UK). Ulrich’s lists this publication as a scholarly journal and as refereed. Additionally, I found this article by refining my search results on Summon to “articles from scholarly publications, including peer-review.”

**Conclusion & Personal Statement**

This assignment proved a helpful and rigorous demonstration of the various search tools we have been examining throughout the term. While weekly assignments have provided helpful introductions to the databases we studied, this final project more than anything else forced me to fully absorb the search principles we have learned. Because I was tasked with delving deep into scholarly literature on a topic of my own choosing, I was given a chance to embark on a “real-life” search scenario, which required me to call upon the full arsenal of search tools presented in this course. In many ways, this project was the ideal culmination of our work this semester, because it demonstrated how these newly acquired search tools could be put to use on actual research topics. It was also helpful to be motivated in this research by my own real interest in the topic, and I am sure that the knowledge I acquired by conducting this research will be helpful to my future studies in library and information science here at Drexel.
Regarding my use of particular databases and search engines for this project, I found that initially, I was being too reliant on ProQuest, which was the first database we learned about and the one with which I feel the most comfort using. Early on, I spent a remarkable amount of time searching ProQuest’s databases, often unsuccess fully, for articles related to my topic, when it should have occurred to me sooner that more articles relevant to my topic could very well be indexed elsewhere. It was a helpful reminder to me that sometimes, the failure of a search is not based on the quality of the search itself but rather on the relevance of the database. When I began to expand my search beyond ProQuest, searching services like Web of Science and EBSCOhost and chasing footnotes in articles I had already found, the quality of my search results began to dramatically increase. Because many of our weekly assignments involved searching for topics that were known to be included in the given database, I needed to reset my expectations for this final project and remind myself that database selection is key to a search’s success. For an information professional, it is as important a tool as the search string itself. I am grateful that this intensive assignment gave me a chance not only to learn more about a topic in archival science that deeply interests me, but also to actualize—and grasp the significance of—all of what we learned in INFO 522 this term. I know now that I am well equipped to handle such rigorous research in the future.