



APPRAISAL: THEORY and METHODS

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Aims

- ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION OF APPRAISAL THEORY AND METHODOLOGY
- REVIEW WORK ON APPRAISAL OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS OF InterPARES PROJECT

Topics: Part I

- DEFINITION OF TERMS
- THEORY, METHODOLOGY, and SCHOLARSHIP
- EVOLUTION OF APPRAISAL
- EARLY EUROPEAN IDEAS
- JENKINSON & SCHELLENBERG
- RECENT THINKING
- ISSUES OF THEORY & METHOD

Topics: Part II

- REVIEW OF LITERATURE
- THE InterPARES PROJECT
- THE APPRAISAL TASK FORCE
- ACTIVITY MODELS
- SUMMARY: HOW THE MODELS ADDRESS ISSUES

Defintions

- ARCHIVES AND RECORD
- APPRAISAL
- DISPOSITION/DISPOSAL
- PUBLIC ARCHIVES/RECORDS
- PRIVATE ARCHIVES/RECORDS
- PRIMARY VALUE
- SECONDARY VALUE
- HISTORICAL & LEGAL VALUE

Archives and Record

- Archives = the whole of the documents made or received by an organization, an agent of an organization, or a natural person in the conduct of practical affairs, and preserved (alias = fonds)
- record = a single such document (alias = archival document)

Appraisal

- = the process of evaluating archives/records for the purpose of continuing preservation
- Part of a larger process of selection and/or acquisition
- Involves gathering and *interpreting* relevant information to determine disposition of a given body of records

Disposition/Disposal

- = the destination of records as determined by their appraisal
- two terms are interchangeable
- why I prefer “disposition”

Public Archives/Records

- Public archives = archives produced in the course of conduct of sovereign government
- Public records = records produced by an agent of the sovereign power

•Private Archives

- Private archives/records = all the archives/records produced by organizations and persons not acting as agents of the sovereign
- difference in practice of appraisal for public and for private archives

Primary *versus* Secondary Value

- Primary value = the capacity of records to serve the purposes or needs of their creator
- Secondary value = the capacity of records to serve the purposes or needs of other than their creator

Historical and Legal Value

- Historical value = the capacity of records to serve the needs of research into the past
- Legal value = the capacity of records to serve the current and future legal needs and/or as evidence of it

Theory

- Theory is any scheme of ideas, whether normative or explanatory.
- Normative = from actor's point of view, embodies some idea of the good, correct, or appropriate
- Explanatory = from observer's point of view concerned with actual human action and the natural world
- need of unified theory

Archival Theory

- Archival theory is organized and articulated conceptual knowledge resulting from analysis of basic (archival) ideas.
- Example of a basic idea: the concept of the archival fonds

Archival Methodology

- acts as a bridge between theory and practice; ideas about how to work with archival material
- instrumentalizes theory, harnessing it toward concrete results in the world
- Example of methodological ideas: principle of provenance and original order

Archival Scholarship

- = examination of existing things in light of conceptions about reality
- Exploring the nature of a particular fonds (scholarship) versus exploring the nature of the fonds as a concept (theory) versus describing it in a standardized way (methodology)
- includes history of archives, etc.

Evolution of Discourse

- until recently mainly about methodology
- exception: discussion of goal of appraisal (an example of normative theory)
- lately, thinking about appraisal as a concept, the nature of the exercise of appraisal (explanatory theory) and its proper methodology

Main Questions

- What is the purpose of appraisal?
- Who should conduct appraisal?
- When should appraisal occur?
- What is the basis of decisions about disposition?

19th Century

- state assumes archival function
- connection with rise of modern nation state, and historicism
- regulations for disposition of public records
- emphasis on historical value
- opportunistic rescue of private archives, complementing public

Provenance-based Idea

- historicist organic theory adapted to appraisal (Meinert)
- goal: preserve original structure of archives as evidence of organic process
- free “the archival body” from the unnecessary or irrelevant to reveal essentials of creator’s functioning
- enhance its “clarity and useability” (Brenneke)

Jenkinson

- accepted classical provenance-based idea and its goal
- concerned to eliminate bias to preserve impartial quality of archives
- “impartial” because creators and official custodians are indifferent to future historical use as evidence
- records in state of completeness and order to carry on work of office

Schellenberg

- rejected Jenkinson's notion of sanctity of evidence
- accepted provenance-based analysis, & archivists' responsibility
- echoed German notion of assessing functional significance in the hierarchy (Sante and Rohr)
- emphasized pertinence for research purposes; therefore, context is "world of information"

Recent Thinking

- One stream concerned with formation of “documentary heritage” (Booms, Ham, Samuels)
- Another takes institutional perspective (Pivot, Cook); concerned with effective methodology in modern conditions
- A third, influenced by post-modernism, sees the archivist as “author of the record”

Booms

- aims at representative heritage
- concerned to lessen subjectivity
- principle of contemporary value=appraise on basis of socio-political values of time of creation
- value-neutral chronicle of events
- provenance “the immutable foundation of the appraisal”

Documentation Strategy

- aims at representative preservation in a determined sphere of human endeavour
- three steps (Samuels)
 - ◆ analysis of universe to be documented
 - ◆ understanding of records creators and records they produce
 - ◆ plan to assure adequate preservation

Cook

- aims to preserve records best mirroring societal functions and interactions
- 1. functional-structural analysis of records creators (macro-appraisal)
 - ◆ criteria to assign priorities to creators (importance)
 - ◆ variables to determine quality of state-citizen interaction (impact)

Cook continued

- 2. assessment of records (micro-appraisal)
 - ◆ extent to which they reveal
 - ☞ important functions
 - ☞ impact of activity on society
 - ◆ includes consideration of factors of time-span, completeness, volume, cost etc.

Pivot

- aim: to preserve information “to reconstruct critical functions ” (Bikson and Frinking)
- global analysis of spheres of activity/areas of policy
- traditional archival analysis of mandate, functions, procedures and relationships
- evaluate functions as objective guide to selection

Post-modernists

- appraisal “not a process of value identification, but of value creation and destruction” (Brothman)
- archivists acts as agent of society, their values embodying society’s values
- plea for recognition of archives as “proper object of historical and cultural analysis” in atmosphere of “critical cultural self-analysis”

Theoretical Issues

- goal of appraisal
- problem of bias/perspective
- nature of the process

Goal of Appraisal

- normative aspect of theory
- many views/assumptions
 - ◆ maintain the integrity of archives
 - ◆ articulate representative body of documentation
 - ◆ reduce archives to their essence
 - ◆ preserve records critical to continuity

Bias/Perspective

- familiar scientific problem - the participant-observer
- interpretive nature of appraisal: two views
 - ◆ discover immanent value
 - ◆ project value

Nature of appraisal

- Two questions for theory
 - ◆ What is the basis for reaching a decision?
 - ◆ What is the form of analysis undertaken to reach a decision?

Methodological Issues

- larger context of acquisition/selection (institutional policy and procedures)
- method of gathering relevant information
- identification of factors to be taken into account
- criteria for decision-making