

# Thinking about Appraisal: Defining appraisal frameworks as a continuum

## Types of Appraisal Defined

### Scientific

Scientific approaches to appraisal are some of the earliest approaches to appraisal theory that archivists have defined. The record creator is considered the major authority on the records, and often, when scientifically appraising records the archivist takes a less active role in the appraisal process. Hillary Jenkinson saw the archivists as a believer in the “sanctity of evidence”. Margaret Cross Norton took this idea a step further and emphasized the legal nature of archival records. These two ideas can be understood to promote the evidentiary nature of the archival record. This emphasis closely ties to records management and information governance.

### Example Articles

- Pearce-Moses, Richard, and Joanne Kaczmarek. 2005. "An Arizona Model for Preservation and Access of Web Documents." *Dttp: A Quarterly Journal Of Government Information Practice & Perspective* 33, no. 1: 17-24
- DURANTI, LUCIANA. 2009. "From Digital Diplomats to Digital Records Forensics." *Archivaria* no. 68: 39-66.

- Rogers, Corinne. "Diplomatics of born digital documents—considering documentary form in a digital environment." *Records Management Journal* 25.1 (2015): 6-20.

### Pragmatic

Pragmatic appraisal theories and methods attempt to deal with the realities of limited funds, limited resources and limited skills in an archival institution. This type of appraisal approach could be described as utilitarian and focuses on doing the most good. In these approaches, the archivist is often makes decisions by focusing on the value of records and not the creator. These pragmatic approaches could be said to have their origins with the writings of T. R. Schellenberg.

### Example Articles

- F. Gerald, Ham. 1975. "The Archival Edge." *American Archivist* no. 1: 5
- Greene, Mark A., and Dennis Meissner. 2005. "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing." *American Archivist* 68, no. 2: 208-263.
- Cline, Scott. "Archival Ideals and the Pursuit of a Moderate Disposition." *American Archivist* 77, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2014 2014): 444-458.

### Holistic

Holistic appraisal asks the Archivist to be aware of what influences of the archival record. It thinks about social dynamics, power relationships, and other issues that may cause records to be created or not created. For approaches that are more holistic, often the creator’s understanding of their records is emphasized during appraisal. The archivist is an active participant in the documentation process but allows creators to tell their story without barriers. This area of appraisal theory includes discussions of critical theory, intersectionality and other theoretical frameworks from other disciplines. In many respects, this perspective begins with Howard Zinn and continues with today with the hash tag ArchivesSoWhite.

## Example Articles

- Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," *Midwestern Archivist* 2:2 (1977): 20-21.
- Verne Harris. *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007.
- Randall C. Jimerson. *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009.
- Hughes, Kit. "Appraisal as Cartography: Cultural Studies in the Archives." *American Archivist* 77, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2014 2014): 270-296.