

Thinking about Appraisal

Defining appraisal frameworks as a continuum

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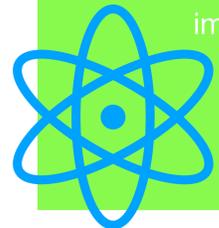
GETTING STARTED

Any appraisal process shouldn't preclude one approach over another. Thinking of various appraisal concepts as a continuum, or a part of a larger whole, allows for each approach to be viewed as equally valuable. This model was initially conceived as a tool to explain various methods and theories to archival students. It's tempting to tell students that there is one right approach, but this is rarely the case. As this model is further developed, it could be helpful to practicing archivists in making appraisal decisions.

Scientific

Overview

- Creator Focus
- Emphasis on objective approaches
- Archivists are passive and focus on information management
 - Records are impartial



Use Situations

- Large organizations
- Complex electronic record collections

Tools

- Marco Appraisal
- Functional Analysis
- Sampling

Scientific

Holistic

Pragmatic

Holistic



Overview

- Creator focused
- Focused on overcoming gaps in collections
- Archivists are active in the process, but allow the creator to be focus.
- Thinks in terms of story telling and narrative voice

Use Situations

- Filling gaps
- Marginalized and underrepresented groups
- Justification for oral history collecting

Tools

- Community Archivist
- Oral History Projects

COMMON THREAD

The ultimate goal of appraisal is to document authentic records of events and activities of an organization, person or occurrence. The difference is how we define authenticity. Each approach does this by examining the records and their creators. Each places different emphasis on the creator and their records based on their understanding of record bias, power relationships and the role of the archivist. Each approach provides a rationale for how to accomplish this goal.



Pragmatic

Overview

- Record Focused
- Emphasis on doing most good with and understanding of limited resources
- Archivist driver of the process
- Records have value

Use Situations

- Personal Paper collections
- Digitization Projects
- Situations where resources are limited and use is a driving factor

Tools

- Traditional collecting policies
- Functional Analysis



FURTHER DEVELOPMENT



This model is just in the infancy of its development. Terms could be adjusted to better reflect developments in appraisal theory. In addition to adjusted terminology, the model would benefit from decision trees to make it more useful to practicing archivists.