

“Thinking about Appraisal”: Defining Appraisal Frameworks As a Continuum Type

JOSHUA KITCHENS

Abstract:

Appraisal is an important part of the work of an archivist. We each approach this work differently. As a profession we question how to appraise and what’s the best approach. Better said we ask what’s the right approach. This is a constant concern many of us have because this fundamental activity is so fraught with complexity. We live with the specters of Jenkinson, Schellenberg. We are challenged by our post-modern understandings of power relationship and calls to diversify the voices in our collections. Often differing approaches are presented as superior to others. For years, the positivist perspective of Jenkinson that believed creators were the ones most capable of determining what was archival was rejected, but now the voice of the creators is being consulted again as archivist deal with community archiving practices and electronic records.

Maybe there’s a common thread to all appraisal theory that would demonstrate that appraisal theories are interconnected. This presentation will attempt to define how appraisal theory is connected in a continuum. A continuum suggests that all parts are an equal part of the same whole. Therefore this continuum model doesn’t suggest that one approach is better than others, but it provides a framework for thinking about appraisal that could help archivist work through the appraisal process with a complete toolkit of approaches instead of focusing on one framework at a time. While there is no one perfect approach to appraisal, there is no need to dismiss approaches that arrive from the same sources.

About the Author:

Joshua Kitchens is the Director of the Clayton State Archival Studies program. Josh previously served as an Archivist for Special Collections at the Georgia College Ina Dillard Russell Library. There he was responsible for digital collections, the library’s institutional repository known as the Knowledge Box and university archives. He holds a BA in history from Georgia College and a MA in Applied History from George Mason University, and a Masters of Archival Studies from Clayton State University. Josh is currently working on a Phd in History at Georgia State University. Joshua is also a certified archivist.