

# Archival appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs

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**Abstract** The quantity of government records has grown dramatically since the rapid development of information technology starting in the mid-twentieth century. This ever-expanding body of records has challenged the limited resources of government archives. Though U.S. government archivists constantly try to identify valuable government records among the geometrically increasing total, in order to justify spending public money on their preservation, little is known about how U.S. state archives and records management programs go about the process. The study discussed in this paper is the first to empirically investigate nationwide archival appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs. The study answered two research questions: How do U.S. state archivists and records managers conceptually define archival appraisal? How do U.S. state archivists and records managers practice archival appraisal of state government records? The study used an online survey and interviews for data collection and SPSS software and NVivo8 software for data analysis. This paper discusses the research topic and concludes with recommendations for practitioners and further studies.

**Keywords** Appraisal · Archives · Council of State archivists · Government record · Records management · State government

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Government records provide and protect the administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical foundation for the state and its citizens. By identifying and keeping those records, state archives play a pivotal role of not only preserving the nation's history and the rights of its citizens, but also making those records available and usable for citizens and government agencies.

The production of U.S. government records exploded during World War II. As information technology has developed since then, the quantity of government records has grown dramatically. This growth has challenged archives to use their limited resources to select and preserve valuable records, but it has also challenged users seeking specific records among thousands or millions. Many archival studies agree that, to meet these challenges, governments and other organizations need to dispose of records that are useless, as determined through archival appraisal methodologies. *Archival appraisal* is defined in Pearce-Moses (2005, p.22) as “(1) the process of identifying materials offered to an archives that have sufficient value to be accessioned; (2) The process of determining the length of time records should be retained, based on legal requirements and on their current and potential usefulness.” Moreover, Craig (2007) notes that it is “integral to the overall operation of the archives program or institution, at the very least, determining the shape and emphasis of its holdings through time.”

According to the Council of State Archives (CoSA), government agencies spend their time and taxpayers' money retaining records “just in case,” and destroying outdated records saves money and improves transparency and accountability (2013a, pp. 4–5). CoSA has indicated the necessity of sound archival appraisal in state archives and records management programs:

Good records management programs ensure that records are maintained in efficient and economical ways while they are still in active use. Tools like records retention and disposition schedules identify the small but critical body of records that are essential to current government operations and those that warrant permanent retention in the state archives, estimated to range between 2 and 5 percent of all records created. Records managers also ensure that the other 95 to 98 percent are retained only so long as they are needed and then disposed of according to properly enforced records disposition laws and regulations (Council of State Archivists 2013b, p. Context-1).

CoSA's 2007 report includes as part of the effective management of state government documentation, one of three core areas of responsibility of U.S. state archives and records management programs, the “appraisal of records to determine those appropriate for permanent retention by the state archives because the records have ongoing legal, fiscal, or administrative value for the state government (primary

<sup>1</sup> This paper expands on parts of the author's doctoral dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh, *Exploring the Relationship between Archival Appraisal Practice and User Studies: U.S. State Archives and Records Management Programs* (Rhee 2011).

value), or because the records are of permanent historical value for other purposes (secondary value)” (p. 9).

U.S. government archivists have made efforts to identify valuable government records among the geometrically increasing total and to justify spending public money on their retention (see, e.g., Bauer 1946; Schellenberg 1956; Rapport 1981; Greene 1998). However, little is known about archival appraisal in state archives and records management programs. Few previous works on archival appraisal in state archives have been written by state archivists about their experiences in their own institutions (e.g., Coker 1985; Turnbaugh 1990; Brett 2002). Furthermore, there have been no empirical studies of archival appraisal practice in all U.S. state archives or combined state archives and records management programs.

Most archival appraisal literature has examined the topic conceptually and theoretically (e.g., Cox 1994a; Cook 2004). Only a few authors have empirically investigated archival appraisal practice (e.g., Boles and Young 1991; Craig 2007). Though such empirical research methods to gather data have been under-used, they are expected to provide a new understanding of actual archival appraisal practice. Craig (2007) pointed out several benefits of employing the postal survey to investigate Canadian archivists’ appraisal experience. According to Craig, the survey not only would identify who really conducts appraisal and who does appraisal decision making, but it also could explore particular aspects of archivists’ appraisal experience and their understanding of how appraisal works and fits their working circumstance (p. 7). In the United States, Ernst Posner’s survey, published in 1964, and continuous surveys by CoSA since 1992 have been the only nationwide surveys targeting all U.S. state archives and records management programs, though they did not focus exclusively on archival appraisal (Posner 1964; Walch 1993, 1996; Council of State Archivists 2007).

The study discussed in this paper is the first to empirically investigate nationwide archival appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs. The study answers the following research questions:

- Question 1 How do U.S. state archivists and records managers conceptually define archival appraisal?
- Question 2 How do U.S. state archivists and records managers practice archival appraisal of state government records?

Little is known about if and how archivists and records managers collaborate on certain tasks. Because most states’ archivists and records managers are both involved with archival appraisal, it is appropriate to investigate these two groups together. This study provides an opportunity to reconsider the two communities’ relationship and collaboration.

## Literature review

Thorough and comprehensive research on this topic reveals that very few scholars have concentrated on state archival appraisal practices. To this end, this part of the literature review focuses on noticeable efforts of the state archives and records

management community toward the improvement of archival appraisal, to the extent that such information is available.

Although little attention was paid to archival appraisal in state archives programs before the 1980s, the disposal of useless records appeared as a major concern of government archives in the 1940s. Disposing of useless records continued to be an important issue in the 1960s, and state archives made efforts to solve this problem by utilizing disposal schedules. Posner's survey, the first comprehensive survey on state archives programs, reports that the legislation of twenty-nine states and Puerto Rico sanctioned the employment of disposal schedules at that time. It indicates that disposal of useless records was a serious concern, as evidenced by a cessation of record accession by a number of state archives programs due to shortage of storage space. Posner claims that for the appropriate selection and appraisal of records, archives programs and records management programs must merge into a single agency prior to retention scheduling and disposal decisions (Posner 1964, p. 364, 367).

In the 1970s, little attention was paid to appraisal in state archives. Only Mitchell (1970) contributed an article on appraisal principles and factors in state archives.

After the period of critical inactivity in the 1970s, several comprehensive surveys in the 1980s indicated serious problems and issues concerning state archival appraisal. Roy Turnbaugh's 1984 survey of state archives programs reported that appraisal was ranked as the most important function in the governmental archives program; however, in real practice, state government archives "virtually ignored appraisal" (Turnbaugh 1990, p. 563). This problematic situation was confirmed by self-assessment projects concerning government archives such as Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Reporting Projects. These project reports and some contemporary articles presented a number of problems, including lack of sufficient resources for appraisal work; inadequate documentation; the almost complete lack of coherent collecting policies; valueless paper records haphazardly stored at a high annual cost to federal, state, and local governments; the danger of losing historically valuable records due to the absence of provisions for identifying and preserving records of historical value; and fragmented and ill-defined responsibility for decision making regarding records and recordkeeping (Weber 1984; Committee on the Records of Government (US) 1985; Hackman 1986; Marshall 1998). Recognizing their inappropriate appraisal practices, state archives reconsidered their appraisal practices and made efforts to develop and test new appraisal methods, particularly documentation strategies.

During the 1980s and 1990s, state archives made cooperative efforts to share appraisal information and standardize appraisal documentation, although these efforts were inconclusive. The development and implementation of automated information systems for archival practices created interest in sharing information about archival holdings (Ruller 1992, p. 68). Moreover, the development and use of the Machine Readable Cataloging format for Archives and Manuscripts Control (MARC-AMC) provided a standard format with which to share descriptive information of archival records. This enabled the Research Libraries Group (RLG)

and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to try to share appraisal information of government records for cooperative appraisal.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding information sharing about appraisal of government records, the RLG conducted two projects: the *Seven States Project* (1986–1988) and the *Government Records Project* (GRP, 1988–1990). In both projects, the RLG tested the sharing of appraisal information among government archives by using its national bibliographic utility, the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) (Ruller 1992).

The purpose of the *Seven States Project* was not only for “constructing a database of descriptions of state and local government records from seven states,” but also for “testing its utility in an archival context” (Bearman 1989, p. 32). The results of the project showed the impracticality of sharing appraisal information in the RLIN. Project participants reported low quality of appraisal information and appraisal documentation, which were created in inadequate forms for information sharing with other institutions. As a result, the participating state archives provided information so tailored to their own organization that no one but the provider could comprehend it (Ruller 1992, p. 71).

Following the *Seven States Project*, the Appraisal Working Group of the GRP surveyed twenty-one federal, state, and local government archival agencies in order to investigate their documenting appraisal decision methods (Ruller 1992, pp. 69–73). The GRP supported the exchange of descriptive data and appraisal data on archival holdings by utilizing the MARC-AMC and RLIN (Evans 1986, pp. 11–12; Allen 1990, 1992, 1997).

The Appraisal Working Group’s survey reported appraisal documentation forms that were utilized in the 1980s and early 1990s. Analyzing the survey data, Ruller, a member of the group, categorized appraisal documentation as forms, forms with concise memoranda or reports, only memoranda or reports, and no documentation (1992, p. 70). As a result, the survey, despite its small size, revealed that institutions employed different kinds of appraisal documentation. This difference indicates a lack of standardized documentation appraisal that would enable appraisal data sharing among state archives. Unfortunately, since Ruller’s study there has been no study about how state archives document archival appraisal; hence, it is not known if documentation of appraisal in state archives has changed.

While the RLG led the *Seven States Project*, the NARA simultaneously led the *Intergovernmental Records Program (IRP)*. The purpose of the IRP was to “facilitate the exchange of information about government records that were divided or duplicated as a result of historical accident or because of parallel functions of government” (Allen 1997, p. 218). The IRP was implemented through two phases: (1) accessioned records described in the RLIN and (2) an intergovernmental cooperative appraisal program (Allen 1997, p. 219). In 1989, it extended its collaborative network by joining the *Government Records Project* of the RLG.

While appraisal and scheduling of records were not major subjects per se in the first phase of the IRP, they were the centerpiece of the second phase. In 1991, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

<sup>2</sup> The U.S. national archives’ name was changed from the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 1984.

(NAGARA) and the NARA formed a joint committee to guide intergovernmental cooperation. Their partnership for intergovernmental appraisal and scheduling was called the *Intergovernmental Cooperative Appraisal Program* (ICAP). The mission of the ICAP emphasized “regulatory reform and federal mandate reduction legislation of the last few years” (Lessner 1997, p. 3). This program proceeded through a project on appraisal and scheduling terminology review, the Food Stamp Records Project, and the Criminal Justice Records Project (CRIME). Despite these year-long collaborative efforts, the results of the IRP were not very influential on appraisal performance in individual state archives or in sharing appraisal information among state archives.

Information technology has brought new challenges to practicing appraisal. To meet these challenges, a series of advanced courses for continuing education of state archivists—“Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age: An Advanced Institute for Government Archivists”—offered a session on “Archival Appraisal and Electronic Records” (June 12–13, 1990).<sup>3</sup> The written evaluations of this institute indicated that the participants had concerns about appraisal and recognized the necessity of learning about appraisal. Responding to questions about what topics could be instructed as a workshop, the participants ranked appraisal first in the 1990 evaluation and second in the 1991 evaluation (Cox 1994b, pp. 180–181).

The advent of the World Wide Web has influenced appraisal practices in state archives. For example, with Web-based technology, the Oregon State Archives shifted “emphasis from description of the record series to description of records-creating agencies and programs,” expecting “the descriptions would provide an idea of the relative significance of records within an agency program and thus be a useful appraisal tool” (Turnbaugh 1997, p. 192). The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) faced a new challenge in appraising digitally created records that had been kept, accessed, and used only on websites. The working group for the WHS project developed new appraisal guidelines consisting of four analyses: motive analysis, informational analysis, technical analysis, and supplemental analysis. It reported that the whole appraisal process of web records had both similarities to more typical formats and differences (Brett 2002).

Literature on state archives indicates that appraisal practices vary among state archives (see, e.g., Crittenden and Hines 1944; Posner 1964; Mitchell 1970). The diversity in appraisal practices is probably caused by two factors: (1) the independent nature of state archives within the U.S. federal system and (2) each state archives’ own factors influencing appraisal practices.

The pluralistic nature of the U.S. federal system decentralizes and diffuses government records across the United States (Evans 1986, p. 7). This makes shared appraisal work difficult and diverse among state archives. Indeed, each state archives belongs to a state government that has its own structures, functions, histories, and legislations. As a result, each state archives has its own unique setting that consists of its own mission, policies, budget, program, operations, and complex

<sup>3</sup> The series was also called “Camp Pitt.” For more information about this Institute, refer to Olson (1997) and to University of Pittsburgh, School of Library and Information Science, Council on Library Resources, and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (1990).

relations with other state government agencies. Based on his experiences of two state archives in Illinois and Oregon, Turnbaugh claims that the specific setting of a government archives influences appraisal decisions. According to Turnbaugh (1990), appraisal decisions “necessarily reflect the setting in which a program operates, and each program functions in a unique setting” (p. 564). He further contends that the impact of an institutional context on appraisal practices results in “some of the lack of consensus about appraisal of public records” (Turnbaugh 1990, p. 564).

On the other hand, Ruller (1992) claims that government archival agencies have “striking similarity in the methodology of selection (p. 66)” despite the diversity in their operations, after analyzing survey data from twenty-one government archival agencies encompassing federal, state, and local institutions. He contends, “institutions *collect* similar information in the process of appraisal, but institutional differences in the way those decisions are recorded falsely reflect differences in appraisal methodology” (Ruller 1992, p. 66). Moreover, Ruller (1992) says, “Appraisal decisions are based on essentially the same factors, regardless of the institution making the decision” (pp. 67–68). However, he does not elaborate on what these “same factors” are or how they influence appraisal decisions. Therefore, his argument against the conventional wisdom that appraisal is conducted diversely among archives is not persuasive. In commenting on the conventional wisdom, Ruller cites Berner (1983).

Literature on state archives indicates that various factors influence appraisal practices. These factors can be divided into internal (institutional) factors and external factors. Internal factors originating from the archives’ institutional context include institutional mission; institutional policies (e.g., collecting and appraisal policies); institutional resources (e.g., staff, budget); space and facilities for its holdings; appraisal archivists’ background, interest, subjectivity, and personal bias; and user/use in a specific state archives (Mitchell 1970, p. 170; Turnbaugh 1990; Brett 2002). Factors external to an institution include changes in information technology, federal statutes and regulations, federal and state information policies, state and local requirements, and the approval of and relations with state and local agencies (e.g., state budget agencies, state libraries, state historical records advisory boards) (Crittenden and Hines 1944; Posner 1964; Mitchell 1970; Lowell 1987, p. 4; Turnbaugh 1990; University of Pittsburgh, School of Library and Information Science, Council on Library Resources and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators 1990, pp. 17–18; East 1992, pp. 145–147; Turnbaugh 1997, p. 185). These various factors collectively affect a state archives program and its appraisal.

Evans (1986, p. 7) explains diversity in appraisal practices between state archives using the concept of “corporate culture” as “a complex of inter-related factors: institutional bureaucratic placement, clientele served, relationships with libraries and other information agencies, staff resources, space and facilities available to store and maintain archival material, and, most importantly, the perceived mission of the institution.” Evans contends that the corporate culture of each institution must be a basis of appraisal method development in each institution. He further contends that appraisal decision making according to different appraisal standards allows the



archival community to preserve more diverse records than using a single appraisal standard (Evans 1986, pp. 7–8).

A review of the literature indicates that the archival community has consistently paid little attention to appraisal in state archives. Appraising records is conventionally acknowledged as a complex and mysterious process; however, two state archivists in different states, Thornton W. Mitchell and Roy Turnbaugh, disagree. Mitchell (1970, p. 173) contends, “Appraisal is essentially pragmatic: there is little that is mystical about it.” Turnbaugh (1990, p. 565) argues, “The how of appraisal is a reasonably straightforward process, driven by the configuration and direction, past and present, of our governments, by the needs of our users, and by our own common sense as archivists.” However, because of a paucity of investigations of state archives’ appraisal processes, it cannot be said whether they are simple and plain.

The lack of attention given to archival appraisal in state archives has resulted in poor knowledge of this community’s current state of archival appraisal. Existing surveys of state archives (e.g., Posner’s survey in the 1960s, surveys conducted for the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects in the 1980s) give an indication of the historical status of archival appraisal in state archives. Unfortunately, CoSA’s ongoing nationwide surveys, started in the 1990s, do not provide information on contemporary appraisal. Even CoSA’s 1996 report, which concerned the challenges that state archives and records management programs faced when changing from paper to electronic systems, does not address appraisal of records (Walch 1996). Though CoSA’s 2007 report mentions appraisal in its description of core responsibilities of state archives and records management programs, the FY 2004 and FY 2006 survey questionnaires used in the report only ask if state archives and records management programs have authority to approve retention and disposition schedules (for the legislative branch, judicial branch, state colleges and universities, and local governments). The FY 2012 survey used for CoSA’s 2013 report asked about the level of service survey respondents provide in (1) assisting local government in preparing records schedules, (2) writing schedules for local government records, and (3) approving schedules for local government records (CoSA 2013b, p. Main Survey Form -11). It also asks if state archives and records management programs have authority for approving retention and disposition schedules (for the executive branch, legislative branch, judicial branch, and local governments).

CoSA’s 2007 report presents issues identified by state archives and records management programs as their top priorities for the period of 2006–2008, and issues related to appraisal did not appear. Only archives programs in four states (Michigan, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) even described issues of retention scheduling. Though the report does not provide information about appraisal, it does at least demonstrate that appraisal was not regarded as a significant issue in state archives programs during that time. The question then becomes whether state archivists give archival appraisal so little weight because they do not actually experience problems in conducting appraisal or because archival appraisal is so low on their list of concerns.



## Research methodology

### Data collection

The author conducted three preliminary studies over three different time periods over 3 years and adopted different approaches to create more valid and effective survey and interview questions. The survey questions, survey answer choices, interview questions, and operational definitions were all developed based on information obtained from a review of relevant literature and preliminary studies. With the developed questions in hand, the author conducted a pretest study and then a full study.

The full study targeted the whole population of interest: all U.S. state archives and records management programs and the archival and records management program (officially called Office of Public Records) for the District of Columbia, all listed in the *Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs* on the CoSA website. This full study excluded only the three state archives and records management programs that had participated in the pretest study.<sup>4</sup> Potential participants were staff members who had practiced appraisal of state government records for more than 3 years in their institution. Because state archivists and records managers collaborate on contemporary appraisal practice in most states, this study sought as participants not only state archivists but also state records managers.

The online survey was conducted from February 22, 2010, to March 30, 2010. The survey's questions, and participants' responses to them, are a subset of a questionnaire given in the author's dissertation research, which explored the utilization of user studies in archival appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs (Rhee 2011). The first section of the full survey questionnaire investigated how the target population conceptualized and practiced archival appraisal. The second and third sections investigated the collection of user and use information and its utilization, along with user studies, in the appraisal practice of the participants' own programs: state archives programs, records management programs, or joint state archives and records management programs. The fourth section elicited the participants' attitudes on the feasibility and value of utilizing results of user studies in the appraisal practice of U.S. state archives and records management programs. The last section identified participants' professional functions. The participants' responses to the first and fifth sections of the survey were excerpted for this paper. These two sections are shown in the "Appendix," though their organization and format were different in the online user interface presented to participants.

In total, forty-seven (78.3 %) of sixty invited state archivists and records managers, from thirty-three (68.8 %) of forty-eight states, participated in the online survey. However, two responses from two states were excluded. One response was incomplete. The other response was excluded because the respondent's appraisal experiences had not occurred in the required 36-month period before receipt of the survey.

<sup>4</sup> The state archives and records management programs are joined in these three states.

Survey respondents who had agreed to follow-up interviews were interviewed either over the phone or in person between March 11, 2010, to April 27, 2010. The interviewees were twenty-eight (62.2 %) of forty-five survey respondents in twenty-one (67.7 %) out of thirty-one states.

### Data analysis

To reflect the complex organizational structures of state archives and records management programs and the diverse job position titles of their staff, this study analyzed survey data at four levels: individual, group, program, and state.

The individual level of data analysis was intended to identify each participant's professional functions, individual experience, and conceptual definition of archival appraisal. Because participants' role can affect their appraisal practices, the group level of data analysis categorized participants into three groups by their role in performing archival appraisal: (1) only a state archivist (AR-role Group), (2) only a state records manager (RM-role Group), and (3) both a state archivist and state records manager (ARRM-role Group). This level of data analysis was intended to identify similarities and differences among the practices and activities of participants depending on their role in conducting appraisal.

The program level of data analysis was based on the participating programs' core functions, which often did not match the programs' names. The programs were divided into three categories: (1) state archives programs (AR programs); (2) state records management programs (RM programs); and (3) joint state archives and records management programs (ARRM programs). The study analyzed data at the program level because the programs' different functions, appraisal practices, and staff roles could have affected the results.

This study used two participant sets. Participant set 1 comprised all forty-five participants, as shown in Table 1. Their responses were used to identify the individual participants' experience and conceptual definition of archival appraisal. Participant set 2 comprised only thirty-four participants, each representing a single program and state to avoid over-representing programs and states that had multiple respondents (see Table 2). In these cases, the response of the participant holding the highest position was selected for the analysis of current practices.

Data collected through the online survey was calculated and interpreted by statistical analysis with SPSS software. In total, forty-five responses from thirty-one states were used in the quantitative data analysis. NVivo8 software was used to analyze narrative survey data and twenty-eight respondents' interview data.

### Operational terms

The Research results, Discussion and Conclusions Sections generalize the findings of this study to the whole population, including non-participants, of U.S. state archives and records management programs and the archival and records management program for the District of Columbia. This paper uses some operational terms to differentiate the entire population of programs from participating programs, as shown in Table 3. For example, the term "AR programs" refers

**Table 1** Number of participants at each level of data analysis: participant set 1

Level of data analysis	Number of participants
Individual	45
Group	Archivist-only group (AR-role Group): 11 Records manager-only group (RM-role Group): 10 Archivist and records manager group (ARRM-role Group): 24
Program	Archives program (AR program): 12 Records management program (RM program): 10 Joint archives and records management program (ARRM program): 23
State	Total: 45 participants from 31 states

**Table 2** Number of participants at each level of data analysis: participant set 2

Level of data analysis	Number of participants
Individual	34
Group	Archivist-only group (AR-role Group): 8 Records manager-only group (RM-role Group): 5 Archivist and records manager group (ARRM-role Group): 21
Program	Archives program (AR program): 10 Records management program (RM program): 7 Joint archives and records management program (ARRM program): 17
State	Total: 34 participants from 31 states

Source: Rhee (2012: 467), Table 1

**Table 3** Operational terms for participating programs and for the whole population of U.S. state archives and records management programs

Participating program term	Population program term
AR program	State archives program
RM program	State records management program
ARRM program	Joint state archives and records management program

Source: Rhee (2012: 468), Table 2

to those participating programs that conduct only archival functions, whereas the term “state archives programs” refers to the whole population of programs that conduct only archival functions.

Also, this paper uses some operational terms to differentiate the general population of state archivists and state records managers from participating individuals, as shown in Table 4. For instance, the term “ARRM-role Group” refers to participants who perform appraisal as a both state archivist and state records manager, whereas the term “multi-role appraisal staff” refers to the overall population who do so. The term “state appraisal staff(s)” includes the overall

**Table 4** Operational terms for participants and for the whole population of U.S. state archivists and records managers

Appraisal role	Participant term	Population term
State archivist only	AR-role Group	Appraisal archivist
State records manager only	RM-role Group	Appraisal records manager
Both state archivist and state records manager	ARRM-role Group	Multi-role appraisal staff

Source: Rhee (2012: 469), Table 3

population of appraisal staff working for state archives and records management programs.

## Research results

The survey and interview questions asked participants to define archival appraisal, describe their own activities in the appraisal of paper state government records, and indicate who was involved in appraisal practice. These questions were intended to elicit participants' thoughts on archival appraisal generally as well as their actual, current situation of appraisal practice. The results of this study produced a snapshot of the state of appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs, as of when this study was conducted.

### Participants' states, institutions, and programs

State archives and records management programs have conventionally been either joint or split, as shown in Table 5. Even in split programs, state archivists and state records managers collaborated on appraisal practice to various degrees. This collaboration often caused the functions of split programs to overlap, meaning that a program's core function did not always reflect its organizational structure or name. Hence, the numbers of participating state programs by core function in Table 6 are different from those in Table 5.

**Table 5** Number of participating joint programs versus split programs

Joint versus split programs	Number of states
Joint state archives and records management program	23 (74.2 %)
State archives program only	6 (19.4 %)
State records management program only	1 (3.2 %)
A separate state archives program and a separate state records management program	1 (3.2 %)
Total	31 (100.0 %)

Source: Rhee (2012: 469), Table 4

**Table 6** Number of participating states according to their program's core function

Core function	Number of states
Joint archival and records management function	20 (64.5 %)
Archival function only	7 (22.6 %)
Records management function only	4 (12.9 %)
Total	31 (100.0 %)

Source: Rhee (2012: 469), Table 5

According to interviews, even when AR programs and RM programs were separate, the two programs collaborated for appraisal practice. As shown in Table 6, many participants reported the core functions of their programs as both archiving and records management. Many participants also reported performing appraisal as both an archivist and records manager. Archivists and records managers had collaborated for appraisal practice in many states regardless of their program's organizational relationship.

### Definitions of archival appraisal

One question was intended to identify participants' conceptual definition of archival appraisal, as shown in Table 7. Participants of all three groups had similar definitions of archival appraisal. The majority of participants selected "Identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives," a definition of appraisal in the SAA glossary. However, the other definition of appraisal in the SAA glossary, "Determining the length of time records should be retained," was the least selected by all three groups (Pearce-Moses 2005).<sup>5</sup>

Some survey respondents wrote their own definitions or thoughts on archival appraisal:

I believe ARCHIVAL appraisal also involves evaluating the structural and content characteristics of any accession to predetermine probably physical and intellectual steps to make the records readily accessible and understandable to patrons. (Survey comment: BQ1)

Identifying records already in the archives, not of value to be deaccessioned. (Survey comment: KK1)

Evaluating the potential archival value of records based on a repository's collection policy, the records' evidential and informational value, and a variety of characteristics including age, condition, uniqueness, credibility, etc. (Survey comment: JQ5)

In the truest sense of the word it ["Identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives"] is the first choice. However, in our reality it is analyzing/assessing/evaluating/scheduling records to determine records. (Survey comment: NN1)

<sup>5</sup> The Society of American Archivists (SAA) acknowledges Pearce-Moses' glossary as an official glossary.

**Table 7** Definition of archival appraisal by group

Definition	AR-role Group ( <i>n</i> = 11)	RM-role Group ( <i>n</i> = 10)	ARRM-role Group ( <i>n</i> = 24)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 45)
Identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives	10 (90.9 %)	7 (70.0 %)	21 (87.5 %)	38 (84.4 %)
Analyzing/assessing/evaluating/scheduling records to determine records disposition	6 (54.5 %)	4 (40.0 %)	12 (50.0 %)	22 (48.9 %)
Evaluating records to determine their retention based on administrative, legal, and fiscal requirements	4 (36.4 %)	1 (10.0 %)	13 (54.2 %)	18 (40.0 %)
Determining the length of time records should be retained	2 (18.2 %)	0 (0.0 %)	7 (29.2 %)	9 (20.0 %)

### Participants' appraisal experience

Table 8 shows the number of years participants had practiced appraisal in their current programs.

### Time spent in appraisal practice

Most participants performed several functions, not just archival appraisal, in their institution, as Table 9 shows. This finding was confirmed by interviews with participants and e-mails recommending eligible subjects for this study.

Comments in interviews, such as the following example, indicated that staff in most state archives programs performed several roles:

At the state archives, we don't wear one hat. I don't just run the appraisal program. I also work on our reference desk. I work down in accessions. I work at processing, and then I also run an education program. So within our archives' structure in our state, we wear many hats. We don't just focus on one program. And that's everyone in the building. (Interview: EQ 1)

### Appraisal activities

Beyond conceptual definitions, how do state archives and records management programs actually conduct appraisal practice? Table 10 shows the appraisal activities conducted by the three program types. One participant (MQ1) added

**Table 8** Years of conducting appraisal practice

Years	Participants
Less than 10	16 (35.6 %)
10–19	15 (33.3 %)
20 or more	11 (24.4 %)
Question not answered	3 (6.7 %)
Total	45 (100.0 %)

**Table 9** Approximate percentage of time spent in appraisal practice

Percentage of time	Participants
20 % or less	23 (51.1 %)
21–40 %	11 (24.4 %)
41–60 %	7 (15.6 %)
61–80 %	3 (6.7 %)
81 % or more	1 (2.2 %)
Total	45 (100.0 %)

**Table 10** Appraisal activities by program

Appraisal activities	AR program ( <i>n</i> = 10)	RM program ( <i>n</i> = 7)	ARRM program ( <i>n</i> = 17)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 34)
Reviewing/approving records retention schedules	10 (100.0 %)	7 (100.0 %)	16 (94.1 %)	33 (97.1 %)
Making appraisal decisions	10 (100.0 %)	4 (57.1 %)	17 (100.0 %)	31 (91.2 %)
Making reappraisal decisions	8 (80.0 %)	2 (28.6 %)	14 (82.4 %)	24 (70.6 %)
Creating records retention schedules	3 (30.0 %)	7 (100.0 %)	12 (70.6 %)	22 (64.7 %)
Documenting appraisal	6 (60.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	13 (76.5 %)	20 (58.8 %)
Developing/evaluating acquisition/ appraisal/collection development/records retention policies	6 (60.0 %)	3 (42.9 %)	10 (58.8 %)	19 (55.9 %)
Applying/evaluating appraisal methods (e.g., functional analysis)/techniques (e.g., sampling)	5 (50.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	9 (52.9 %)	15 (44.1 %)
Planning/evaluating appraisal practice	3 (30.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	10 (58.8 %)	14 (41.2 %)
Developing/evaluating appraisal criteria/ standards/checklists	4 (40.0 %)	2 (28.6 %)	8 (47.1 %)	14 (41.2 %)
Requesting/justifying resources for appraisal practice	2 (20.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	7 (41.2 %)	10 (29.4 %)

another activity, not shown in the table: “Destruction of non-permanent records.” Overall, these results show that even though the participating programs all conduct some or many of the appraisal activities listed in Table 10, they all have their own way of conducting archival appraisal.

More than 94 % of all three types of programs reviewed or approved records retention schedules, and many interviewees also reported that state archivists and state records managers collaborated on records retention schedules. Interviews also indicated that records retention scheduling is at the center of appraisal practice:

We have a separate records management section, as opposed to the archives section. And our retention schedules are drawn up initially by the records management section along with the agency in question. [...] Once it is drawn up, they consult with us in the archives. My role, I’m actually a processing archivist. It goes directly to the senior reference archivist who then calls me,



and we both sit down and look over the retention schedules to see if we have any problems with what either the agency or the records analyst has decided. And we usually agree. We have different backgrounds. I have a library science background and the reference archivist has a history background. And I'm also a genealogist and we have a lot of genealogy patrons. So we usually agree, but a few times we've had differences and we've always come to an agreement about which way we want to go. But then, once we have had our input, it's signed off by the agency and goes to our [State] Historical Records Advisory Board for final approval. And so they can also make changes at that point. And that's how our retention schedules are made. And, you know, I've been here 9 years and a lot of retention schedules were done when I came, some come up for review, so I haven't been involved in a lot of them. But just recently they have been doing some revisions, so I've been a little more active in that. I'm actually more active when records are not on retention schedule, which does happen. So then I have a more active role in [deciding] should we keep it or should we not keep it. But...the majority of what I do [concerns] already established series that are already on retention. So that's kind of our program and how I relate to it. (Interview: BB2)

I oversee the records management division. And what the management division does is three things: first of all, we create all the records retention schedules for state government, for counties—which is local government municipalities. And so we have analysts that go out in the field and actually do records surveys. And then they do a lot of research—from legal research to organizational research—so they can learn about the records an agency creates. The schedules they put together are filed as a rule. And they list all their record series descriptions and retention periods. They go before the commission of public records for approval and are filed as a rule. So...we do all the schedules, we do a lot of records and information management training, and then we also work with archives. [...] Our archivists have input into reviewing our schedules to see about the value of records, to see if anything should be permanent or historical and be transferred eventually there.... When it comes to updating record schedules, we try to, every 5 years, touch base with agencies. Records retention schedules for agencies are on a five-year cycle. So when they hit that five-year mark, we try to touch base back with the agency to see if we need to do another update, see how things have changed. (Interview: HH1)

All participating programs appraised their state government records at the series level. Many of them appraised their records at different levels as well (see Table 11). Appraisal levels did vary slightly among the three types of programs. Unlike the AR programs and RM programs, the ARRM programs appraised their state government records most often in the order of series, box, folder, sub-series, and items. Fewer than half of the ARRM programs appraised state government records at the sub-series level, whereas more than half of the AR programs and the RM programs appraised their state government records at the sub-series level.

**Table 11** Level of appraised records by program

Program	Series	Box	Sub-series	Folder	Item
AR programs	10 (100.0 %)	5 (50.0 %)	7 (70.0 %)	5 (50.0 %)	3 (30.0 %)
RM programs	7 (100.0 %)	2 (28.6 %)	4 (57.1 %)	2 (28.6 %)	3 (42.9 %)
ARRM programs	17 (100.0 %)	12 (70.6 %)	7 (41.2 %)	8 (47.1 %)	6 (35.3 %)
Total	34 (100.0 %)	19 (55.9 %)	18 (52.9 %)	15 (44.1 %)	12 (35.3 %)

**Table 12** Agents involved in appraisal practice by program

Agents	AR program (n = 10)	RM program (n = 7)	ARRM program (n = 17)	Total (N = 34)
Archives staff conducting appraisal practice	10 (100.0 %)	5 (71.4 %)	15 (88.2 %)	30 (88.2 %)
Staff in records-creating agencies	7 (70.0 %)	7 (100.0 %)	13 (76.5 %)	27 (79.4 %)
Records management staff conducting appraisal practice (e.g., records analysts)	6 (60.0 %)	5 (71.4 %)	15 (88.2 %)	26 (76.5 %)
Archives staff processing records	6 (60.0 %)	5 (71.4 %)	12 (70.6 %)	23 (67.6 %)
Archives staff providing reference services	6 (60.0 %)	2 (28.6 %)	7 (41.2 %)	15 (44.1 %)
Records users	2 (20.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	4 (23.5 %)	7 (20.6 %)
Subject experts within the institution	3 (30.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	2 (11.8 %)	6 (17.6 %)
Subject experts outside the institution (e.g., historians)	2 (20.0 %)	0 (0.0 %)	3 (17.6 %)	5 (14.7 %)
Records management staff providing reference services	0 (0.0 %)	1 (14.3 %)	3 (17.6 %)	4 (11.8 %)

### Agents involved in appraisal practice

Different types of agents were involved in appraising state government records (see Table 12). Exactly 60 % of the AR programs involved records management staff conducting appraisal practice in their appraisal practice, and 71.4 % of RM programs involved archives staff. This result indicates collaboration between the AR programs and the RM programs. Table 12 indicates the relationship each type of program has with each kind of agent. For example, the RM programs collaborated more with staff in records-creating agencies than did the AR programs and the ARRM programs. All RM programs involved staff in records-creating agencies, implying a close relationship between the two.

Interviews indicate that several people were involved in and collaborated in the appraisal process. A few states even had a special committee for appraisal practice. For example,

The State Archivist along with the State Auditor, State Records Manager and a representative from the Attorney General's office review all new and revised retention schedules. So while we do not have records management within the archives, we are involved in it functionally. (Survey comment: KK1)

It [the appraisal committee] consists of the State archivist, who's in charge of the entire division; the head of records management, and one of his staff members; and then me. (Interview: WW4)

We only look for people who want to work with us, will ask us to assign a records analyst/archivist to their program or to their agency. They're required to have four subject experts on the team. The first subject expert is the business officer, the second subject expert is their records officer, all our agencies have records officers, the third subject expert is their legal counsel, and the fourth subject expert is their IT director. The way that we do that is they're all considered liaisons for the larger agency. (Interview: UU1)

## Discussion

This study found that many states' archives and records management programs are actually joined, their core functions often overlap, and the majority of participants perform appraisal as both a state archivist and a records manager. Such crossover indicates that knowledge of appraisal functions exists both in archives and in records management programs. This could very well be a sign of healthy, robust appraisal practice and advisory services. It also suggests that appraisal staff in programs whose core functions overlap can more easily collaborate than those in separate programs whose core functions do not overlap. This finding is in line with CoSA's 2007 report, which says that state archives and records management programs will likely conduct better appraisal when they are more closely linked, just as Posner claimed early in the 1960s (Posner 1964, pp. 364–365).

The majority of state appraisal staff members perform appraisal as both an archivist and a records manager, regardless of their official job title or even the titular purpose of their parent organization. These dual staff roles reflect the overlapping core functions of the programs themselves, whose names also do not completely represent their nature. Many state appraisal staff members in programs that did not participate in this study are probably in the same situation.

All participants conducting appraisal practice also perform other archival functions such as reference and processing. This result aligns with Craig (2007), who found that appraisal was not one of the top three activities in archival practice; the Canadian archivists in her study, like U.S. state archivists, seem not to conduct appraisal practice exclusively nor do staff in non-state archives and records management programs. As shown in Table 9 of the current study, appraisal seems not to be a top task for many state appraisal staff members.

In addition to appraisal decisions, many state archives and joint state archives and records management programs also make reappraisal decisions. In the 1980s, archival researchers debated the appropriateness of reappraisal for collection management (e.g., Rapport 1981; Benedict 1984). Since the 1990s, archival appraisal literature has tended to argue in favor of reappraisal (e.g., Ericson 1992; Wojcik 2002); however, before the current study, it was not well known if state archives and records management programs even conducted reappraisal. As the

number of state government records increases, reappraisal will be more necessary and significant.

Making reappraisal decisions, along with making appraisal decisions, creating records retention schedules, and reviewing or approving records retention schedules are the four most common appraisal activities; however, the frequencies of these activities among the three program types (AR, RM, ARRM) vary (see Table 10). Regardless, these four activities probably are the most frequently conducted in non-participating state archives and records management programs.

Though programs perform similar appraisal activities, including the four most common activities discussed above and others, it is conventionally known that appraisal practices vary among state archives, as described in the literature review and as supported by this study's interviews. The unique settings of the different institutions, among various other personal and professional factors, lend diversity and complexity to appraisal practices, both in the United States and elsewhere: a study interviewing UK archivists reported that archives' organizational setting had a large impact on their appraisal practices (Williams 2007). Though it is beyond the scope of the current study to identify all the factors affecting differences in the practices of U.S. state archives and records management programs, the findings do suggest that these differences derive primarily from two broad influences: (1) the independent nature of state archives and records management programs within the U.S. federal system and (2) factors internal to each program, which seem to include staff formation, appraisal custom, appraisal work environment, and training on appraisal and records retention scheduling. Interviewees also mentioned institutional resources (e.g., budget, number of staff members, staff time) having an impact on appraisal practices.

Different appraisal processes and methods, as well as different combinations of agents involved in appraisal practice, also seem to have a diversifying influence. The input of records creators, records users, and subject experts from outside state archives and records management programs seems to broaden and refresh the programs' perspectives on appraisal practice. Agents involved in appraisal practice seem to communicate through informal dialog, official appraisal committee meetings, and records retention schedules. Records retention schedules in particular are probably useful as an objective communication channel among records creators, appraisal records managers, and appraisal archivists. Indeed, this study indicates that most state archives and records management programs already create, review, and approve records retention schedules.

One aspect of archival appraisal and records retention management common to all participating programs is evaluation of state government records principally at the series level. However, many participating programs also appraise records at lower levels. Notably, ARRM programs appraise state government records more often at the box level than at the sub-series level, though AR and RM programs do the opposite; the reason for this difference is not known.

The dominance of records retention activities, the multiple roles of most appraisal staff, and the joint nature (either in name or in core function) of most archival and records management programs might suggest that the concept of records analysis should be added to the definition of appraisal. This change would

bring the definition of appraisal into line with the current practice of appraisal. Building on the definition in the SAA glossary (Pearce-Moses 2005), presented in the Introduction to this paper, the expanded definition would define appraisal as (1) the process of identifying materials that have sufficient value to be transferred to and retained in an archives and (2) the process of analyzing, assessing, and evaluating records and determining the length of time they should be retained. This definition would codify the significance of collaboration between appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers. Moreover, it might imply that it is necessary to educate appraisal staff members in both appraisal theories and methods as well as records analysis.

This expanded definition would constitute a continuum approach to appraisal that reflects the continuity—indeed, the frequent overlap in structure, core function, and staff roles—between state archives and state records management programs and between their records retention and appraisal work. The continuum approach is already used in Australia, though the proposed continuum approach for U.S. state programs differs: in Australia, appraisal occurs before a record is created, not after. This difference, and any others, are likely caused by differences in culture, tradition, and custom. In particular, different organizational structures and relationships, as well as appraisal methods, would likely lead to different continuum approaches in state archives and records management programs.

## Conclusions

### Recommendations for practitioners

Archival and records management organizations, such as NARA, CoSA, and SAA, should develop concrete and convenient guidelines for conducting the subjective, abstract, and complex activity of appraisal. There is a definite need and desire for guidelines and tools to help concretize the abstract concept of archival value and to make subjective appraisal and reappraisal decision making more objective.

CoSA's periodic surveys need to investigate appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs. As mentioned in the literature review, CoSA's periodic surveys have not adequately investigated archival appraisal, one of the fundamental archival functions. This study demonstrated the difficulty of investigating appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs because of their diversity in organizational structures, budgets, and relationships between archival programs and records management programs, archivists and records managers, and records managers and state government agencies. Nevertheless, CoSA's identification and publication of information on appraisal practice might remind the programs of the practice's significance, support appraisal staff members' requests to management for enhancements to appraisal practice, and encourage collaborative appraisal projects between states.

State archives and records management programs themselves bear some responsibility for directly sharing their information on appraisal practice with each other. Despite having similar records, users, issues, circumstances, operations, and

tasks, programs participating in this study showed a lack of communication and information sharing. Most interviewees in this study wanted to know how other state archives and records management programs practice appraisal, and they wanted to share their own experience and knowledge. It is worth reconsidering the collaborative appraisal of state government records. As described in the literature review, state archives tried to share appraisal information during the 1980s and 1990s to facilitate appraisal decision making; however, these efforts were inconclusive. This study indicates that most state archives and most joint state archives and records management programs make appraisal decisions, and their staffs share similar appraisal difficulties and desires to make appraisal decisions more effectively. Corresponding state government agencies in different states produce many of the same or similar records series because they perform the same or similar functions, so states could benefit from sharing information on their records retention schedules.

All state archives have their own website, webpage, or information system. The development of the Internet and search engines will permit state archives to use more flexible descriptions of appraisal information and to search and access other state archives more conveniently. The simplest way to share state records for collaborative appraisal would be for each state archives to put its appraisal information on its website. However, for more effective collaborative appraisal, CoSA should develop minimum requirements for shared appraisal information and develop a database or a website to incorporate and share appraisal information among all state archives.

State archives and records management programs should involve diverse agents in appraisal practice and have diverse appraisal committees. Archival appraisal is subjective, and appraisal staff cannot know enough about all subjects to appraise all records. Many archival researchers have promoted the consultation of subject experts in appraisal practice, which is a traditional approach in the archival field. The appraisal methodologies (institutional functional analysis, documentation strategy, and Canadian macroappraisal) appearing since the 1980s commonly involve diverse agents (e.g., subject experts, records users, and records creators) in appraisal practice in the hopes that their extensive knowledge, experiences, and perspectives will enhance appraisal practice. State archives and records management programs can and should more actively involve diverse agents, including subject experts outside of state archives and records management programs. Furthermore, each state archives and records management program should have an appraisal committee, such as those already operating in a few programs, to relieve appraisal staff members of the burden of appraisal and reappraisal decision making. Appraisal committee meeting minutes could also document the committee's decision making and themselves become appraisal documents.

State archives and records management programs can use their websites to help conduct good appraisal practices. When determining a records series' retention period and transference to archives, state appraisal staff members could consult the websites of other institutions for appraisal information on the same or similar records series. Websites and other networking technologies seem to be good tools for sharing appraisal information among appraisal staff members regardless of

geographical separation. They would also help diverse agents to participate in appraisal practice, including subject experts and users outside state archives and records management programs. Such external agents as well as internal staff members could give useful information for appraisal decision making, validate such decisions, and communicate with each other. Incentives provided by state archives and records management programs could encourage external agents' active participation in appraisal practice.

Another use for the websites of state archives and records management programs is to promote the public advocacy, accountability, and transparency of their appraisal practice. In particular, appraisal documents, including records retention schedules, should be put on a program's or an institution's publicly accessible website. If state archives and records management programs publicly document how they appraise their records, they can advocate for the significance of appraisal practice, demonstrate their accountability for it, show their concern for the public and for government agencies, justify the public's tax expenditure for their administration and programs, and keep the public's trust.

#### Further studies

The purpose of this study was to investigate some general characteristics of archival appraisal practice in all U.S. state archives and records management programs. Further studies could conduct case studies of particular programs to investigate their appraisal practices in greater depth. Such case studies could encompass the institution's appraisal processes. Other studies could investigate the similarities and differences in how staff members of a single program conduct appraisal practice and the factors behind those differences.

This study suggested factors of organizational setting that affect differences in appraisal practices. Further studies could investigate additional factors springing from aspects of individual appraisal staff members' backgrounds, such as appraisal education and past appraisal work experiences. Further studies on factors affecting appraisal practices would improve appraisal knowledge, skills, and practices.

Longitudinal studies investigating changes in how state archives and records management programs conduct appraisal over time would indicate what factors affect appraisal practice, how appraisal methods change, and other long-term developmental aspects.

Further studies should empirically investigate archival appraisal practice in diverse contexts of archives and records management programs. U.S. state archives and records management programs exist in a unique setting. For instance, they have close relationships with the state government agencies that create the records, and they strictly follow relevant laws and regulations. Non-state archives and records management programs (e.g., museum and university archives) have different holdings and circumstances and may value the historical aspects of their holdings more highly than other aspects, such as administrative, fiscal, and legal. Different contexts might induce diverse appraisal practices.

Further studies could also investigate more deeply a continuum approach to appraisal in U.S. state archives and records management programs. How can they



employ a continuum approach effectively and systematically? It would be interesting to compare the continuum approaches of the United States and Australia. Are they complementary? How and why are they different? What are the influences of differences in culture, traditions, and practice customs?

Another branch of further studies should focus on appraisal methods and techniques. For example, what appraisal methods and techniques are actually applied in real appraisal practice? Why and how? What appraisal methods and techniques are thought to be useful for appraisal and why? Such studies would help improve current appraisal methods and techniques and develop new ones.

Further studies on appraisal education would need to investigate whether current appraisal curricula facilitate the conduct of appraisal practice, and if so, how. Such findings would help archival educators reconsider and perhaps improve current archival appraisal curricula. Does every archival program have an archival appraisal class? What content does the class syllabus include?

At the same time, studies empirically investigating current appraisal staff members are needed. What do they wish they had learned about appraisal in graduate school? What do they want to learn from appraisal workshops, institutes, and conferences? It would also be worth studying the profession of archival appraisal from the institutional perspective. For example, analyzing job descriptions of archival appraisal positions would show what capabilities archival institutions expect from their future staff.

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## Appendix: Survey questions

Participants' responses to the first and fifth sections of the full survey, conducted from February 22, 2010, to March 30, 2010, were excerpted for this paper. The survey questions in these two sections are presented below.

- Section 1 of the full survey questionnaire investigated how the target population conceptualized and practiced archival appraisal.
- Section 5 identified participants' professional functions.

### Section 1: Archival Appraisal Practice

1-1) How would you define archival appraisal? (Select all that apply.)

- Identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives
- Determining the length of time records should be retained
- Evaluating records to determine their retention based on administrative, legal, and fiscal requirements

- Analyzing/assessing/evaluating/scheduling records to determine records disposition
  - I don't know
  - Other (please specify):
- 

This survey defines the following terms:

- **INSTITUTION:** The entire organization including state archives and/or records management, possibly among other programs
- **PROGRAM:** The smaller unit where you are employed within the institution: an archives program, a records management program, or a combined archives and records management program.
- **STATE ARCHIVES PROGRAM:** Any unit whose primary responsibility is to preserve and protect state government records when they are no longer in active use and to conduct archival functions for its state agencies.
- **STATE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:** Any unit whose primary responsibility is to maintain state government records in efficient and economical ways while the records are still in active use.

For example, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records **is an institution. This institution includes the** Arizona History and Archives Division, a state archives program, and the Records Management Division, a records management program. That is, the two programs are joined within a single institution.

- 1-2) What is the core function of your own program? If you operate within a smaller unit of a larger institution, please respond regarding your unit only.
- Archives only
  - Records management only
  - Both archives and records management

This survey defines the following terms:

- **RECORDS:** Documentary materials created or received in the transaction of official business.
- **(ARCHIVAL) APPRAISAL:**
  - (1) the process of identifying state government records that have sufficient value to be transferred to and retained in a state archives and
  - (2) the process of analyzing/assessing/evaluating state government records and determining the length of time the records should be retained.

\* Please consider only state government records. Also, except where noted, please consider only paper records, not records in other media.

1-3) In the past 36 months, what activities have typically been part of the archival appraisal process in your own program? (Select all that apply.)

- Creating records retention schedules
- Reviewing/approving records retention schedules
- Making appraisal decisions
- Making reappraisal decisions
- Documenting appraisal (e.g., appraisal reports, database, etc.)
- Planning/evaluating appraisal practice
- Developing/evaluating my program's acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies
- Developing/evaluating my program's appraisal criteria/standards/checklists
- Applying/evaluating my program's appraisal methods (e.g., functional analysis, etc.)/techniques (e.g., sampling, etc.)
- Requesting/justifying resources (e.g., staff, facilities, etc.) for appraisal practice
- My program has not conducted any appraisal activities in the past 36 months
- Other activities of the appraisal process (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

1-4) In the past 36 months, at what level has your own program typically appraised state government records? (Select all that apply.)

- Series
- Sub-series
- Box
- Folder
- Item
- Other (please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

This survey defines the following term:

**REFERENCE SERVICES:** Services that help patrons locate and access records.

- 1-5) In the past 36 months, who has typically been involved in the appraisal of state government records? (Select all that apply.)
- Archives staff conducting appraisal practice
  - Records management staff conducting appraisal practice (e.g., records analysts, etc.)
  - Staff in record-creating agencies
  - Archives staff processing records
  - Archives staff providing reference services
  - Records management staff providing reference services
  - Records users
  - Subject experts outside my institution (e.g., historians, etc.)
  - Subject experts within my institution
  - Other (please specify):
- 

#### Section 5: Your Professional Functions

- 5-1) In what capacity do you perform archival appraisal?
- As an archivist only
  - As a records manager only
  - As both an archivist and records manager
- 5-2) Approximately what percentage of your time do you spend on archival appraisal?
- 20 % or less
  - Between 21 and 40 %
  - Between 41 and 60 %
  - Between 61 and 80 %
  - 81 % or more
- 5-3) Since what year have you conducted archival appraisal in your current program?

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