

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES

LIS 2222

Instructor:

Office Number/Telephone:

Office Hours:

E-mail:

Website:

Archival Appraisal, Spring 2012 Term

Brian Cumer

SIS 605B

By Appointment

bcumer@gmail.com

<http://bcumer.wordpress.com>

Course Rationale

Archival appraisal is the most critical task facing the archivist. The archivist's process in determining continuing value affects all other archival functions, as well as makes an impact on individual, organizational, and societal memory. Since this is one of the most important responsibilities of the archivist, anyone intending to work as an archivist must be knowledgeable about appraisal. Because of its significance for both archival work and society, appraisal has been the function most debated and subjected to experiments with new methodologies and theoretical models. It is a function that is both intellectually stimulating and challenging, one fraught with problems and potential misunderstanding. Some contend, for example, that given the potential for saving everything in digital form, there is no need to worry about appraising documentary forms and systems. We will explore this issue throughout the course.

Archival appraisal, and the techniques and models that have developed to support this function, also represents one of the unique contributions of the archivist to the information professions -- the ability to determine what portion of information and evidence needs to be saved to document institutions, communities, society, and the people who make them up. The process involves not just thinking of historical issues or values, but also about the value of records for accountability and evidence. This archival function also brings into focus the critical and difficult area of the deliberate destruction of records and other documentary materials, reminding archivists that they are not just preservers but destroyers as well. Reflecting on destruction should remind archivists about how carefully they need to proceed with appraisal activities, seeking assistance from other experts when necessary and always with an eye on accountability to the public.

Archival appraisal, although it has tended to develop somewhat independently from the librarian's notion of collection development and the records manager's approach to retention or disposition scheduling, is closely related to these and other selection schemes concerned with information management. Students taking this course will learn about how the appraisal function relates and potentially enriches the selection or documentation efforts of other disciplines such as librarianship, records management, museum curatorial work, and knowledge management. The emphasis, in terms of comparison, will be on the relationship between archival appraisal and records management scheduling due to the

necessity of having fully integrated selection functions to support the concept of the records life cycle or continuum.

Course Objectives

The purposes of this course are to introduce students to the basic theories, principles, techniques, and methods that archivists use for identifying and selecting (appraising) information or evidence with continuing or enduring value and to enable students to compare and contrast archival appraisal to related activities in other fields, such as library collection management and development, artifact selection by museum curators, and the analysis of documentary evidence by historians. Students also will learn about how archives and records management processes must be coordinated in order to ensure that records in an organization are maintained for legal, fiscal, administrative, and research purposes.

The students will learn about:

- Various methods archivists use in making appraisal decisions
- Societal, legal, and organizational aspects affecting the appraising of records
- Different opinions held by archivists in conducting appraisal
- New and emerging approaches to appraising records
- How to evaluate any archives appraisal and acquisition policy and activities
- Different evaluation approaches used by records managers, librarians, and museum curators

The course will also:

- Further develop the writing and presentation skills of potential future archivists, librarians, and other information professionals

Grading and Course Requirements:

Pre-requisites:

The course is an elective open to LIS students who have taken LIS 2220 *Archives and Records Management* and students that are in the Archives Specialization program. Students not fitting either of these requirements may seek permission from the instructor to enroll in the course.

Assignments:

Students will be graded on the following assignments and criteria:

1. Topic Report – 30% of Final Grade

Students will select a topic related to one of the course themes, which are broken down by week. This assignment may be completed in pairs or individually. Be prepared to present for approximately ten minutes in class, and then lead a brief class discussion on their topic. Students should prepare two discussion questions to accompany their presentation. All presentations are required to utilize a PowerPoint slide show as part of the assignment.

2. Literature Summaries/Weekly Briefs – 20% of Final Grade

Students will complete a literature summary every week from Week 3 through Week 12. The purpose of this is to summarize the readings for the week (due in class or online day that the readings are due). Summaries are to be roughly a minimum of 250 words (one typed page) and a maximum of 500 words.

3. Final Paper – 50% of Final Grade

The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate students' to the basic theories, principles, and methods that archivists use in conduction archival appraisal. This assignment consists of making an extended, well-researched response to a question or issue to be handed out later in the term. Students should keep in mind some of the following friendly reminders: the various methods archivists use in making appraisal decisions; societal, legal, and organizational aspects affecting the appraising of records; the different opinions held by archivists in conducting appraisal. Students should not feel limited to these perspectives, and may want to consider other aspects of archival appraisal discussed in class in their response.

A detailed description (including expectations and grading criteria) of each assignment will be handed out on the date each project is assigned. Late assignments are lowered one letter grade for each day they are late. All reading assignments should be completed by the class meeting they are assigned.

Style Requirements:

All written assignments are required to utilize the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Failure to correctly utilize the *Chicago Manual of Style* will result in penalization as described in each assignment rubric (to be distributed during the term). Students might find Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* useful, as it is a shorter, and easy-to-use guide that follows the Chicago format. There is also an online version of the *Chicago Manual* available at <http://chicagomanualofstyle.org>.

Grading:

The following rubric has been adopted for the evaluation of student performance:

A Exceptional Work

Demonstrates an outstanding understanding – both theoretical and factual – of the materials both presented in class and assigned out of class. Displays original and creative thought that significantly exceeds expectations. Shows perfect command of English grammar and syntax. Exhibits a publishable and masterful use of sources while working exclusively within the assigned style.

A- Outstanding Work

Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of the course materials both presented in class and assigned out of class. Greatly surpasses course expectations by not only displaying skillful treatment of the assigned material but also contributing substantial originality to the work. Shows superior command of English grammar and syntax. Uses an expert approach to source work while functioning exclusively within the assigned citation style.

B+ Very Good Work

Demonstrates a better-than-average command of the course materials both presented in class and assigned out of class. Exceeds course expectations by revealing original ideas and by showing a solid grasp of English grammar and syntax. Shows understanding of the assigned citation style.

B Solid Work

Demonstrates expected command of the course materials both presented in class and assigned out of class. Meets course expectations by following the assignments, using sources in an acceptable manner and using the assigned citation style.

B- Marginal Work

Demonstrates and incomplete understanding of the course materials both presented in class and assigned out of class. Does not meet course expectations by inadequately following the assignment, showing and insufficient grasp of English grammar and syntax, by displaying lower-than-average approach to source work and misunderstanding the assigned citation style.

C Unacceptable Work in an MLIS Graduate Program

Fails to meet expectations by not following the assignment, using sources inappropriately, misunderstanding the required citation format and displays a poor command of English grammar and syntax.

F Failing Work

Literature Summaries

What is a Literature Summary?

For the purposes of this course, a Literature Summary is a miniature essay, one to two pages in length (250 – 500 words). This exercise is expository rather than critical: you will simply be explaining something that the authors have said. *Literature Summaries may not be turned in late and are due at the beginning of class.* Online students will submit this by midnight of the same day class is scheduled.

The point of this exercise:

- These exercises are meant to **develop your skill in reading**. Rather than waiting to hear about it in class, you'll have to struggle with the text on your own. I don't expect you to have figured it all out. What I do want to see in your writing is evidence that you have read the text critically.
- The Literature Summaries also **give you practice in writing**. Frequent, short assignments like these instill the habit of writing, and they develop the virtues of brevity and clarity. I expect the Literature Summaries to be clear, organized, and free from typos and grammatical errors.
- Perhaps most importantly: these exercises put you in good position to profit from **and contribute to the discussion** in class. Three hours is a *long* time to sit in a classroom. Writing your Literature Summary might not cause you to figure the readings out, but they will put you in a great position to talk about what you know, ask about what you don't understand, and – most importantly of all – critically discuss the positions defended in the reading. (For this reason, a late Literature Summaries will not be accepted.)

A Few Words of Advice:

- *Go slowly and carefully in your presentation: spell everything out. This is very difficult. But you probably won't realize what you haven't understood until you try to do this.*
- *Whatever you do, don't sit down at the computer, crack open your book for the first time, and try to answer the question. Read first. Then go back to the text with the question in mind. Then write.*
- You'll need to read the text more than once. But I do not recommend that you read the whole thing from beginning to end, over and over (as you might reread e.g. a newspaper article, or a novel). Read *a sentence* over and over, or *a paragraph*. When you think you've gotten a tentative grip on that one (and often this will require going back to reread an earlier one), proceed to the next.

Feedback

- Given the nature of these assignments, *I do not in general write many comments on Literature Summaries*. (However, I will pass out some examples of good Literature Summaries written by your classmates.) If your grades on the Literature Summaries are low, and if you don't know what you're doing wrong, **COME TO MY OFFICE HOURS**: I'd be glad to discuss your writing in detail.
- You write a brief and then come to class, where we will discuss, among other things, the topic of your writing. Students sometimes feel that they have begun to understand the topic only after it is too late to help them. Not so. What you should do is go back and look at what you wrote. Can you articulate the differences between that and what we discussed in lecture? Now go back and look at the chapter or article. Can you figure out how the class discussion fits with the text? Does what you wrote still seem to fit with the text? If not—and here's the crucial bit—*figure out what led you astray*. Apart from coming to my office hours, this is the best way to improve your Literature Summaries.

Course Materials:

Required Books:

Richard J. Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscripts Curators* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1996). (Courseweb)

Richard J. Cox, *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004). (Courseweb)

John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, LLC, 2009). (Not on Courseweb)

Helen W. Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992). (Not on Courseweb)

Recommended Books:

Frank Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).

Barbara Craig, *Archival Appraisal: Theory and Practice* (München: K. G. Saur, 2004).

Note: This is an expensive book, and it is recommended that you look for used copies or use the copy on reserve. Given the cost it is a recommended only text.

A copy of each book is on reserve at the library, and copies are available and the University Bookstore. Most readings will be made available through Courseweb, PittCatt's e-reserves system, and the Web. These readings are listed below in the course outline section. The Ridener and Samuels books will not be available online.

Class Policies:

Incompletes:

Incomplete grades will only be granted if there is an urgent need. Requests for incompletes will not be accepted after class on Week 8 except in extraordinary or emergency circumstances.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to comply with the *University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity*. Any student suspected of violating this obligation will be required to participate in the procedures, initiated by the instructor, as outlined in the University's Policy on Academic Integrity. Please note that plagiarism will not be tolerated:

Plagiarism - "To present as one's own work, the ideas, representations, or words of another, or to permit another to present one's own work without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources" (University of Pittsburgh Guidelines on Academic Integrity, p. 5).

Disabilities:

If you have a disability that requires special accommodation, you must notify the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the 2nd week of the term. Disability Resources and Services can be reached at 412-648-7890 (voice or TDD).

Important Notes on Submitting Assignments:

With the exception of reading summaries, all assignments are to be submitted using the **assignments tool** in Courseweb. *Do not use the digital drop box.* Do not email assignments to the instructor unless specifically instructed to do so. Failure to follow these instructions will be considered the equivalent of not handing in an assignment at all.

All assignment should be submitted as MS Word (or MS PowerPoint, where appropriate) utilizing the following naming convention:

LastName_FirstInitial_Assignment#.doc

For Example: Cumer_B_Assignment3.doc

Course Schedule at a Glance

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Notes/Reminders</i>
Week 1	Introduction to course, assignments reviewed	
Week 2	The Importance of Appraisal	
Week 3	The Historic Foundations of Archival Appraisal	Literature Summaries Begin
Week 4	What Do We Appraise For? The Appraisal Debate in the Archival Community	Topic Reports Begin

Week 5	Constructing and Deconstructing Archival Appraisal Policies	
Week 6	Documentation Strategy	
Week 7	Archival Appraisal and Records Retention Scheduling	
Week 8	Is Collecting Appraisal? Is Appraisal Collecting?	
Week 9	Documenting Communities	
Week 10	Academic Institutions and Appraisal	
Week 11	A Closer Look at Macroappraisal	
Week 12	Digital Collections and Appraisal	
Week 13	Cultural Heritage and Appraisal	Assignment 3 Due
Week 14	Final Thoughts	

Course Outline

WEEK 1

Topic: Introduction to course, assignments reviewed

Readings:

No readings required for today

WEEK 2

Topic: The Importance of Appraisal

Objectives:

- Students will familiarize themselves the basic concept of archival appraisal
- Students will also learn about the different stakeholders effected by archival appraisal
- Students will understand why appraisal is the most critical archival function, both for all subsequent work that they engage in and for the benefit of society and its organizations

Readings:

Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*, Chapters 1 and 2

Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards A New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), pp. 38-70.

Skim:

Craig, *Archival Appraisal*, Chapter 1

Richard J. Cox and Helen W. Samuels, "The Archivists' First Responsibility: A Research Agenda for the Identification and Retention of Records of Enduring Value," *American Archivist* 51 (Winter/Spring 1988): 28-42.

Due: Nothing due today

WEEK 3

Topic: The Historic Foundations of Archival Appraisal

Objective:

The student will gain an understanding of the historical evolution of the concept of the archival appraisal, from the late 19th century to the present, creating a framework for comprehending present debates, discussions, and experimentation.

Readings:

John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, LLC, 2009).

Due: Literature Summary

WEEK 4

Topic: What Do We Appraise For? The Appraisal Debate in the Archival Community

Objectives:

Students will learn about the variety of missions associated with the function of archival appraisal and also learn about the professional debates concerning the theory and practical application of appraisal.

Readings:

Cox, *No Innocent Deposits*, Chapters 4 and 5.

Terry Cook, "Another Brick in the Wall': Terry Eastwood's Masonry and Archival Walls, History and Archival Appraisal," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994): 96-103

Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*, Chapter 2.

Due: First Topic Presentations, Literature Summary

WEEK 5

Topic: Constructing and Deconstructing Archival Appraisal Policies

Objective:

Students will learn about the concept of intrinsic value and its role in appraisal decisions, the nature and process of preparing and using collection or acquisition policies, and how institutional archives (such as government agencies, corporations, and not-for-profit entities such as museums) follow appraisal processes.

Readings:

Cox, *No Innocent Deposits*, Chapters 9 and 10.

Timothy L. Ericson, "At the 'rim of creative dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 66-77.

SKIM:

Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, "Exploring the Black Box: The Appraisal of University Administrative Records," *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985): 121-40.

Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*, Chapter 3.

Due: Literature Summary, Topic Presentations**WEEK 6**

Topic: Documentation Strategy

Objective:

Students will learn about the needs for and challenges of cooperative approaches for archival appraisal, especially relating the scale of the documentary universe to the size and resources of the archival community.

Readings:

Richard J. Cox, "The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective," *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 11-36.

Richard J. Cox, "The Archival Documentation Strategy: A Brief Intellectual History, 1984-1994 and Practical Description," *Janus* no. 2 (1995): 76-93

Helen W. Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 125-40.

SKIM:

Craig, *Archival Appraisal*, Chapters 2 and 3

Due: Literature Summary, Topic Presentations

WEEK 7

Topic: Archival Appraisal and Records Retention Scheduling

Objective:

Students will learn about the relationship of archival appraisal and records management retention scheduling, especially building around the concepts of the records life cycle and the records continuum.

Readings:

Bryan Corbett and Eldon Frost, "The Acquisition of Federal Government Records: A Report on Records Management and Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84): 201-232.

Cox, *No Innocent Deposits*, Chapters 6 and 7

LOOK AT:

Boles, Chapter 4; Craig, Chapter 2

Due: Literature Summary, Topic Presentations

WEEK 8

Topic: Is Collecting Appraisal? Is Appraisal Collecting?

Objective:

Students will learn about the differences and similarities of collecting and appraising.

Readings:

Mark Greene, "The Surest Proof: A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal," *Archivaria* 45 (Spring 1998): 127-169.

Carolyn Heald, "Are We Collecting the 'Right Stuff'?" *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995): 182-188.

Thomas Wilsted, "Observations on the Ethics of Collecting Archives and Manuscripts," *Provenance* 11 (1993): 25-38.

Due: Literature Summary, Topic Presentations

WEEK 9

Topic: Documenting Communities

Objective:

Students will learn about the application of appraisal to the task of documenting localities, one of the most common missions of archival repositories.

Readings:

Richard J. Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscripts Curators* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1996).

Due: Literature Summaries, Topic Presentations

WEEK 10

Topic: Academic Institutions and Appraisal

Objectives:

Students will learn about how colleges and universities, institutions some believe to be the most heavily documented organizations of all, have approached the appraisal of their records and the documentation of all aspects of life in higher education.

Readings:

Helen W. Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992).

Due: Literature Summary, Topic Presentations

WEEK 11

Topic: A Closer Look at Macroappraisal

Objectives:

Students will examine the concept of Macroappraisal and its development in Canada in the 1990's

Readings:

Terry Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics, and Implementation in Canada, 1950–2000," *Archival Science* 5, 2-4 (December 2005): 101 – 161.

Terry Cook, "Macro-appraisal and Functional Analysis: Documenting Governance Rather Than Government", *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 25, 1 (Spring 2004): 7.

Terry Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts," *Archival Science* 1, 1 (2001): 3 – 24.

Due: Literature Summaries, Topic Reports

WEEK 12

Topic: Digital Collections and Archives

Objective:

Students will learn about issues that digital collections create in making appraisal strategies

Readings:

Michael Moss, "The Function of the Archive," in *Record Keeping in a Hybrid Environment: Managing the Creation, Use, Preservation, and Disposal of Unpublished Information Objects in Context*, (Oxford: Chandos, 2006), 227 – 243.

Cox, *No Innocent Deposits*, Chapter 8.

Due: Topic Reports, Literature Summaries

WEEK 13

Topic: Cultural Heritage and Appraisal

Objectives:

Students will examine the relationship between archives and cultural heritage. Is it possible to reconcile archival appraisal and cultural heritage?

Students will explore, through discussion, a working definition of cultural heritage that is usable and compatible with archival theory.

Students will become familiar with: digital heritage, virtual heritage, postmodernism's impact on cultural heritage, digital curation.

Readings:

Cameron, Fiona. "Beyond the Cult of the Replicant: Museums and Historical Digital Objects – Traditional Concerns, New Discourses." In *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage*. Cameron, Fiona and Sarah Kenderdine, eds. (Cambridge: The MIT Press) 2007. Pp. 49 – 76.

Cameron, Fiona and Helena Robinson. "Digital Knowledgescapes: Cultural, Theoretical, Practical, and Usage Issues Facing Museum Collection Databases in a Digital Epoch." In *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage*. Cameron, Fiona and Sarah Kenderdine, eds. (Cambridge: The MIT Press) 2007. Pp. 165 – 192.

Malpas, Jeff. "Cultural Heritage in the Age of New Media." in *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*. Kaly, Yehuda, Thomas Kvan, and Janice Affleck, eds. (London: Routledge) 2008. Pp 13 – 26.

WEEK 14

Topic: Wrap Up

Objective:

Students will discuss the course, the implications that appraisal has on the various stakeholders in research, and what they have learned about the function of archival appraisal and its implications for societal memory

Readings:

No Required Readings – discussion of the body of literature examined throughout the term.