

From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-Appraisal*

CATHERINE BAILEY

RÉSUMÉ Cet article traite du modèle de tri à grande échelle utilisé aux Archives nationales du Canada depuis 1991. Après un examen des concepts de la théorie supportant la stratégie documentaire et le modèle de tri archivistique à grande échelle, l'article présente l'approche planifiée des Archives nationales pour trier à grande échelle les archives du Gouvernement du Canada. Les forces et faiblesses du modèle sont discutées à l'aide d'une analyse détaillée de quatre projets de tri à grande échelle réalisées dans le domaine de la santé et des services sociaux.

ABSTRACT This article examines the application of the macro-appraisal model, which has been practised at the National Archives of Canada since 1991. After a conceptual review of the theory behind documentation strategy and the macro-appraisal model, the article outlines the National Archives' "planned approach" to the macro-appraisal of records of the Canadian federal government. Through a detailed analysis of four appraisals in the field of health and social welfare, a number of strengths and weaknesses of the macro-appraisal model are discussed.

Introduction

Few archivists would deny that appraisal is the cornerstone of archives. How an archivist decides which records from a vast body of available information are of lasting value to society ultimately determines the historical record left to succeeding generations, as well as the record left for all subsequent archival activities such as arrangement, description, preservation, reference, and outreach. Numerous articles and books have been written on many aspects of appraisal; yet because all archivists are products of the society in which they live, no two archivists will approach an appraisal in exactly the same way. Moreover, until recently, archival appraisal has lacked the solid theoretical base which should be present in such a key activity. In 1975, Gerald Ham wrote in "The Archival Edge" that

[o]ur most important and intellectually demanding task as archivists is to make an informed selection of information that will provide the future with a representative

record of human experience in our time. But why must we do it so badly? Is there any other field of information gathering that has such a broad mandate with a selection process so random, so fragmented, so uncoordinated, and even so often accidental?¹

In the last ten years, two new appraisal strategies, each with their own theoretical underpinnings, have emerged in the North American archival community: documentation strategy, pioneered by Helen Samuels; and macro-appraisal, developed by Terry Cook. Both have sought to approach this most important of archival functions in a systematic and logical fashion in order to create a better archival record. While there have been several articles written on the application of documentation strategy, there has been a lack of similar works published on the applicability of macro-appraisal theory.

This article examines the application of the macro-appraisal model, which has been practised at the National Archives of Canada since 1991. Through detailed analysis of four appraisals conducted for federal government records created in the field of health and social welfare, a number of strengths and weaknesses of the model will be revealed and analyzed.

The Development of the Documentation Strategy

One of the key criticisms which Gerald Ham levels at the practice of archival appraisal is that for many archivists, the “archival endeavour is primarily a custodial one,” and that the continuing influence of this custodial tradition “has not only been a major factor in the archivist’s failure to deal with acquisition policy on a coherent and comprehensive basis, but has resulted in an obsession – with the ‘nuts and bolts’ or craft aspects of our work.”² As a result of this traditional outlook, he argues, archivists have been tied to the service of academic research interests, acting in a passive role which led them to concentrate on the end result of the process—the records used by researchers—rather than the task of documenting societal activities. Noting that as a result archival holdings too often reflected “narrow research interests rather than the broad spectrum of human experience,” Ham argued that in light of massive changes in society, the increasing bulk of records, the vulnerability of certain types of records, and the increasing effects of technology, archivists needed to take a more active role in documenting society. More importantly, archivists needed to devote a significant portion of their intellectual resources to developing the proper strategies and guidelines to support the appraisal function. “Conceptualization must precede collection,” he urged, for “if we cannot transcend these obstacles, then the archivist will remain at best nothing more than a weathervane moved by the changing winds of historiography.”³

Ham’s call for conceptualization to precede collection was answered in part with the publication in 1986 of Helen W. Samuels’s seminal article “Who Controls the Past?,” which introduced the concept of *documentation strategy*.

Building upon the work carried out by herself and others at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology documenting the records of modern science and technology,⁴ Samuels observed that once archivists accept appraisal responsibilities, modern society, with its increasingly complex interactions and its vast sources of information, forces them to re-examine their role as selectors of information. "Archivists are challenged to select a lasting record," she says, "but they lack techniques to support this decision making."⁵ In proposing documentation strategies as an answer to this problem, Samuels notes that traditional archival appraisal principles elucidated by Theodore Schellenberg and others focus on the need to understand thoroughly the bureaucratic structure of whatever institution is being documented, and place more emphasis on the form of the record (i.e., textual paper, electronic, or photographic) rather than its substance. Yet complete familiarity with a particular institution, its structure, and its records is now inadequate for archivists to make informed appraisal decisions because of increasingly complex interrelationships between institutions, which leads to the integration of the information those institutions create. In order to make suitable appraisal decisions, therefore, archivists need to examine documentation in a comprehensive manner, ignoring the restrictions imposed on it by institutional boundaries and the form of the records.

Samuels's documentation strategy, which is designed not to replace but to augment traditional appraisal methods, is the third level of collecting strategy, the first being the collecting policies of individual institutions and the second being collecting projects. A documentation strategy is "a plan formulated to assure the documentation of an ongoing issue, activity or geographic area;" its development involves records creators, archivists, and users, and it is carried out through "the mutual efforts of many institutions and individuals influencing both the creation of the records themselves and the archival retention of a portion of them."⁶ The strategy is therefore composed of four activities: choosing or defining a topic to be documented, selecting the advisors and establishing a site for the strategy, structuring the inquiry and examining the form and substance of the available documentation, and selecting and placing the documentation.⁷ Each of these stages requires detailed research and close analysis at a high level before actual groups of records are examined for appraisal and selection.

Samuels's work, which argued for a thematic subject focus for the appraisal process rather than an assessment based completely upon organizational structures or functional realities, was followed by a number of other articles exploring the concepts of documentation strategy through the application of its framework to model situations,⁸ as well as through examinations and critiques of its theoretical underpinnings. In *Archival Methods* (1989), for example, David Bearman examines four fundamental activities of archives, including selection and appraisal, for their adequacy in handling modern records and

record creators and their possible adjustment and refinement. Noting that for traditional archives evidential and informational values to known or anticipated researchers are the main reasons that records are kept beyond the period of their administrative life, Bearman goes on to state that “the theory of values has serious shortcomings as a tool for making appraisal decisions within an institution, and is fatally flawed in helping to make broader appraisal decisions.”⁹ Like Samuels, he argues that one of the main problems with the modern appraisal process is that it is carried out in an institutional context, “isolated from either a meaningful knowledge of the ‘universe of documentation’ or from the appraisal activity of other repositories.”¹⁰ He supports the focus of documentation strategy on the appraisal of activities and functions rather than records, and further contends that “we will only be able effectively to appraise larger volumes of records if we focus our appraisal methods on selecting what should be documented rather than what documentation should be kept.”¹¹ However, despite his support for the concerted, cooperative efforts of documentation strategy versus less systematically organized institutionally-based appraisal, Bearman contends that the strategy is flawed in two ways: through a lack of methodologies defining what constitutes an appropriate subject for a documentation strategy, and through the “excessive manpower requirements” necessary to carry it out.¹²

Bearman’s reservations are echoed to a certain extent by Terry Cook in a number of works on appraisal which appeared in 1991-92. Beginning with *The Archival Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information: A RAMP Study With Guidelines* (1991), Cook describes the “primitive” state of existing archival theory, with its dependence upon taxonomic processes (i.e., the descriptive categorization of various values of records such as evidential and informational and then the search for such values in the records to be appraised), and its lack of research into the concepts of societal dynamics, which leads to the appraisal function being carried out in isolation and without benefit of a proper theoretical model.¹³ Noting that documentation strategy is “a very promising conceptual approach to appraisal,” he praises its efforts to place appraisal in a broader context, incorporating and at the same time transcending both traditional records evaluation criteria and existing institutional acquisition policies and practices and therefore documenting the main themes in society. But just how *do* teams of archivists and their advisors choose which of society’s activities are worthy of appraisal and preservation? Cook notes that despite the promising conceptual framework of documentation strategy, which integrates an analysis of official government/institutional sources with private manuscripts and special graphic and published material, there is also, “unless applied on a very narrow and local basis, the threat of enormous overlapping of themes or functions and thus the real possibility of duplication of archivists’ research work and records acquisition.”¹⁴ He later notes in his 1992 article “Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal” that “the themes or

subjects chosen, given the *a priori* nature of the approach itself, will always be in dispute.”¹⁵ Although not stated directly, the implication of Cook’s concerns about the potential duplication of effort in documentation strategies is that the most important element of a documentation strategy, that of determining the scope of the topic or theme for the project, lacks a solid theoretical underpinning and therefore ultimately undermines the end results.

At the same time, however, Samuels herself was refining the originally stated concepts behind documentation strategy, notably in a paper given at the Association of Canadian Archivists’ annual conference in Banff in May 1991.¹⁶ As Cook noted in his commentary on the paper, the original proposal for the session had focused on the dichotomy between Samuels’s original statements on documentation strategy, which argued for a strong thematic or subject focus for appraisal and a key role for users in forming appraisal decisions, and his own assertion that appraisal required an institutional-functional or proveniencial focus.¹⁷ That original dichotomy was nearly erased with Samuels’s addition of institutional functional analysis to the original documentation strategy concept, an analysis which was more fully elucidated in her subsequent monograph *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (1992). She argues in the “Rationale for the Functional Approach” that selection activities must start not with an examination of the specific records, but with an understanding of the context in which those records are created, including detailed knowledge of the creating institution and its functions. This knowledge of institutions and their functions has been used extensively by archivists in the appraisal process in the past, but it has been “synonymous with a structural analysis [where the] question archivists have asked is what is the function of a given office?” To make functional analysis really work in appraising the vast quantities of modern records in ever-changing organizations, it must be turned around from this original orientation to analyzing the functions themselves and documenting where they occur, regardless of structure.¹⁸

While the introduction of the concept of institutional functional analysis does greatly reduce the initial criticisms of documentation strategy’s strong subject/thematic orientation, it does not completely erase them. *Varsity Letters* examines seven functions carried out by colleges and universities, but apart from noting that the categories and terms were “derived from a careful examination of the literature on higher education and particularly the vocabularies the academic community uses to describe and evaluate itself,”¹⁹ the methodology for determining these particular functions is not explained. What exactly is the “literature on higher education?” Are the seven functions part of the official mandates of the institutions as set out in legislation or other legal documents? Are they the product of archivists interviewing academics to determine their work patterns? Or, as Cook puts it, “are they chosen arbitrarily and artificially—as seems to be the case—by the documentation strategy team members?”²⁰

The Macro-Appraisal Model

To counteract the vacuum or flaws he perceived in both existing archival theory and in the documentation strategy, Cook turned to an examination of European archival literature and a discussion of the need for archivists to understand how a society functions and creates records long before actually carrying out an appraisal of records.²¹ In "Mind Over Matter," he argues that appraisal theory

seeks to specify the generic attributes, interconnections, and points of special intersection or conflict between creators of records (structures, agencies, people), sociohistorical trends and patterns (functions, activities, programmes), and the clients, customers or citizens upon whom both structure and function impinge, and who in turn influence both function and structure, directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly.²²

North American appraisal theory, he argues, is unplanned, taxonomic, random, and fragmented, and has "rarely embodied" the concepts of institutional and societal dynamics which would lead archivists to a working model that could allow them to appraise, in Gerald Ham's words, "the broad spectrum of human experience." Therefore, the goal of a new "macro-appraisal" theoretical model that would reflect all of these concepts is not a search for research value in records, which Schellenberg and his successors placed at the heart of appraisal, but rather "the articulation of the most important societal structures, functions, records creators, and record-creating processes, and their interaction, which together form a comprehensive reflection of human experience."²³ In a nutshell, the focus of appraisal needs to shift from determining the value of the actual records for research purposes to assessing the functional-structural circumstances which led to their creation; in fact, an examination of the importance of their context of creation, or their provenance. For Cook, provenance is not so much a characteristic of the origin of archival records as it is the determining principle or mechanism for determining what becomes an archival record.

The macro-appraisal model which Cook proposes is based on a "top down" approach, which focuses on the key process(es) through which a particular function is expressed by interacting with structures and individuals.²⁴ Like documentation strategy, macro-appraisal requires a planned, logical approach which is supported by carefully executed research and detailed analysis, so that archivists embarking upon appraisals are equipped with an understanding of the numerous factors which will influence their examination of the physical records: the history of the record creator(s), its mandate and function(s), its structure and decision-making processes, the way in which it creates records, and the changes to these processes over time.²⁵ The model therefore has two parts: criteria to assign priorities to record-creating structures within the functional context of society;²⁶ and variables to determine the nature and impor-

tance of the interaction of individual citizens with those structures and functions.

The assigning of institutions to priority categories based on these criteria not only allows the archivist to focus first on the activities of the most central, complex, and important institutions, but also to identify quickly and clearly any obvious overlapping of functions between institutions, especially between more junior or reporting institutions, thereby avoiding the potential duplication of appraisal efforts which Cook argues characterize documentation strategy and virtually all traditional "research values" appraisal. Records disposition should therefore be more efficient and ultimately faster, as key sites of the records of highest archival value will be preserved early in the process.

The benefits of this strategic approach to appraisal are both theoretical (identifying the important functions in society which should be documented) and practical (the ability to focus appraisal activities on records of the highest potential archival value). They are equally applicable at lower levels, particularly for large government departments responsible for functions such as health, welfare, employment benefits, immigration, and national defence. For these reasons, the same strategic analysis that was used to determine the priority between parent institutions is also carried out for each institution's internal divisions and branches in order to determine their relative functional importance as record creators within the larger agency.

Once the ranking of the individual institution and its internal structures and functions is complete, the macro-appraisal model proceeds to its second part: assessing the nature and importance of the interaction of three factors: the programme (function); the agency (structure); and the client (citizen). The model suggests a number of variables which need to be applied to each of the three factors in order to reveal the nature and location of an "image" of society that should be preserved in some fashion.

The programme, which Cook defines as the "purpose, intent, idea, even the theory or ideology, defining a particular institutional function" is the site of policy and decision making, often documented through laws, regulations, guidelines, and directives. Through these sources, the programme reflects a certain amount of its societal context and presents its ideal expression. Most programmes are not, however, completely free of variations that result in differences or gaps between the formal articulation or intention of the programme and how it operated in practice, variations which may be reflected in the interaction of programme and individual and the records such interactions create. If the programme is one that has been determined to have a significant impact on society, based on evidence found in the record-keeping systems, then this may well affect the appraisal decisions made on the records it creates.

The agency and the citizen also have a number of factors that may affect their roles in the interaction of function, structure, and citizen. Cook observes that the administrative structures created to carry out programmes often have their

own inherent biases, such as the operating culture (the degree of initiative, interpretation, discrimination, and determination allowed to the staff), and the structure of the record-keeping systems themselves. In a similar way, the nature of the behaviour of individual citizens may also have an impact on the three-part dialectic; it may vary in its completeness and accuracy, the length of time the interaction with the agency is carried out, and most importantly, the way in which the citizen is allowed to have direct, conscious input to the agency through freedom of expression.

After applying the macro-appraisal model to identify and isolate the key areas where the best archival records are *likely* to be found, the actual records themselves are then assessed, in a process which Cook refers to as “micro-appraisal.” It is at this point that many of the more “traditional” factors commonly associated with Northern American appraisal practices are found—what time span do the records cover, how complete or authentic are they, how much is there, and what legislative requirements affect them. Practical considerations of conservation, space availability, or processing costs are also weighed and may have an impact on the final appraisal decision; there are numerous tools which exist to assist archivists in performing appraisal of actual records.²⁷ Within the macro-appraisal model, even the micro-level appraisal proceeds in a planned fashion, through a nine-step appraisal methodology which Cook developed; devised to test the macro-appraisal research and hypotheses by looking at categories of records in a logical order, this methodology was formally approved by the National Archivist and is practised at the National Archives of Canada.²⁸ Ultimately, however, macro-appraisal remains the strategic, conceptual approach to the entire appraisal process.

But does the macro-appraisal model work in practice, and what does practice reveal about the model itself?

Macro-Appraisal and the “Planned Approach to Records Disposition” of the National Archives of Canada

Since 1991, the National Archives of Canada (NA) has been applying the principles of the macro-appraisal model to the records of the Canadian federal government. The National Archives’ “Government Wide Plan” (GWP), which seeks to evaluate and schedule records from each of the 156 institutions²⁹ governed by the *National Archives of Canada Act*, is characterized by a number of changes from past records disposition activities.³⁰

Prior to the implementation of the Government Wide Plan, the National Archives did negotiate many records schedules with its client departments and carried out numerous appraisals of records; however, the process was a passive and ad-hoc (“on demand”) one over which the NA exercised little control. Federal institutions willing to cooperate in the process prepared records schedules at their own initiative and presented them to the NA for approval, where

they were accepted, rejected, or modified before an appraisal was carried out. This process was very time consuming and inefficient, partly because the initiative for the preparation of schedules rested with the institutions. Schedules generally covered large amounts of case file material or other voluminous records which were causing storage problems, while records from the higher echelons of the institution, which were clearly judged to be important to their creators and therefore better preserved, were not addressed, nor were electronic records, other media of records beyond paper files, or regional and field office records, with few exceptions. Appraisal of federal records was therefore often carried out "from the bottom up," resulting in the acquisition of many records (possibly of dubious archival value) in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion. The process also often made it necessary to carry out at least two appraisal decisions on the same records: one at the time of the initial schedule, and one when the material was ready for transfer to the permanent holdings of the NA or even worse, had become part of its accessioned backlog. For example, large case file series were usually assessed as having a certain archival value, but were so voluminous that the NA could not possibly acquire all of the records. The approved schedule therefore noted that a sample of the records would need to be taken prior to their transfer to the NA, more often than not through a methodology to be determined at a later date. When the records in question were at the end of their retention periods and ready for transfer, the receiving archivist then had to assess the records (essentially re-appraise them) to determine what that sampling method would be. Because of the large volume of records and the need to focus limited archival resources on the appraisal of newer material, the end result of this process was the acquisition of large quantities of records of low archival value which remained in the processing backlog.

The institution-driven system also meant that it was next to impossible to predict or plan the workload in any given portfolio, and greatly reduced the ability of the NA to respond to its clients' needs. At any given time, one archivist whose responsibility included a large department with an active records management programme and many large series of records could have had upwards of twenty records schedules awaiting appraisal and approval, while another archivist in a different portfolio may have had only a few or even none at all. Naturally, this created tensions between the NA and its clients: institutions wanted their schedules approved quickly to solve their records management problems, and the NA had to expend its energies appraising records that were known to be of low archival value.

The National Archives, through its Records Disposition Division (RDD), now takes an active role in determining what records will be the focus of the records disposition process, through the application of the macro-appraisal model at the levels of both the entire government and individual institutions, and by planning the disposition work through direct negotiations with its client

institutions. Each federal institution has been assessed using the first part of the macro-appraisal model and assigned to one of four priority categories, often referred to internally according to the year in which the institution will be approached by the National Archives to begin negotiations (e.g., Category One or “Year One” institutions, etc.).³¹ Following a second macro-appraisal applied to the internal functions or structural divisions of the institution itself in order to determine the key archival priorities, the NA initiates negotiations with the institution, which result in a list of disposition priorities agreed to by both parties and formalized in a document known as a Multi-Year Disposition Plan (MYDP). The MYDP details the order in which the various bodies of records will be approached; the Implementation Timetables which accompany the Plan show the expected time frames for completion of records disposition submissions (the package prepared by the institutions to describe the records holdings for which they are seeking disposition authority from the NA) and the resulting archival appraisals and records disposition authorities.

In this new planned approach, the inclusion of records in other media is actively sought throughout the process. Earlier schedules were media specific and generally focused almost entirely upon paper records, with occasional efforts to address the growing issue of electronic records. While efforts were made to schedule both paper records and electronic systems, the appraisal process was carried out by archivists in two separate divisions, fostering media isolation. Records in other media (i.e., audio-visual, documentary art, photography, maps, plans, and drawings) were rarely, if ever, appraised through the scheduling process and were dealt with instead through direct contact between media archivists and institutions. Now, instead of individual media specialists working in isolation, appraisals are carried out by teams of archivists headed by a lead archivist from the division responsible for the bulk of the records within the submission (usually the archivist responsible for paper and electronic records, but sometimes an archivist from the media division). This means that, wherever possible, submissions, appraisals, and authorities cover all records created by an institution or one of its parts, (i.e., paper, electronic, audio-visual, photograph, documentary art, plans, drawings, and maps) for headquarters, regional or field offices, and all hierarchical levels from Assistant Deputy Minister or Director General to the front-line employees delivering the service(s).

In developing the macro-appraisal model, Cook stated that this new approach to appraisal “evidently requires a whole-hearted commitment to research by archivists into the process of records creation and, more important, into the operational functions animating that process. **Appraisal is a work of careful analysis and of archival scholarship, not a mere procedure**” (original emphasis).³² This emphasis on initial research and careful analysis is quite evident at the National Archives. Through extensive research into institutional history, mandates, functions, and other factors necessary to prioritize federal government institutions and their internal divisions for the purpose of acquisi-

tion, archivists are now generally much more prepared to undertake appraisal because of their detailed knowledge of the context of record creation.³³ This allows for the easier application of the “top down” principle outlined by the macro-appraisal model and reiterated in various internal tools and guidelines,³⁴ and ultimately results in the acquisition of a better archival record.

Since 1991, the planned approach to disposition has resulted in the signing of approximately eighty Multi-Year Disposition Plans, and has greatly increased the number of appraisals and records disposition authorities completed by the NA. One of the earliest MYDPs was signed with the former Department of National Health and Welfare (NHW), an institution designated as a Category One institution in the Government Wide Plan. The National Archives has also signed an MYDP and completed a single, comprehensive authority for a related Category Three institution, the Medical Research Council of Canada (MRC). As the responsible archivist for both of these institutions, and having been involved in the planned approach over the six years it has been operating, I have had the opportunity to apply the macro-appraisal model and its related functional appraisal methodology to four large appraisals: social welfare records created by the Social Service Programmes Branch and the Income Security Programmes Branch of NHW; policy, subject, and grant files of the MRC; and policy, subject, approval, and monitoring records created by the Drugs Directorate of the Health Protection Branch of Health Canada (a successor agency to NHW). Analysis of the appraisal process and its conclusions, detailed in appraisal reports completed over the full six-year span of the planned approach, reveals a number of interesting observations about the evolution of appraisal at the NA and some of the strengths and weaknesses of the application of the macro-appraisal model to the records of a large organization, namely the Government of Canada.

*The Social Service Programmes Branch*³⁵

Under the original Multi-Year Disposition Plan signed by National Health and Welfare and the National Archives in 1992, the first priority was the completion of a Records Disposition Authority covering the records of the Social Service Programmes Branch (SSPB). The Branch, which was later split in two parts during the reorganization of the federal government in 1993 and assigned to the newly-formed Department of Human Resources Development (HRD) and the re-named Department of Health, ensures the maintenance of the “social safety net” for Canadians by supporting the provision of social assistance to persons whose economic circumstances are inadequate to meeting their needs, or whose social circumstances expose them to the risk of poverty, isolation, or dependency. The major components of that safety net were originally provided by the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), a federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangement created in 1966 by which the federal government contributed

funding to the provinces to defray the costs of provincially-organized social assistance programmes. In addition to the provisions of CAP, which was rescinded by the federal government in 1995, SSPB and its successors provide grants and contributions to promote and maintain the continued participation of Canadian senior citizens in the community and to develop and demonstrate new, innovative, and effective community social services. The Branch also advises federal and provincial officials, voluntary organizations, and consumer groups on a variety of issues such as adoption, family and children's services, community development, and rehabilitation.

The records disposition submission for SSPB, which was completed in December 1992, marked the first time that the National Archives had received a single, comprehensive submission from NHW; this fact alone demonstrates the value of a planned approach to disposition and appraisal. The submission covered approximately 975 linear metres of active paper policy and subject files and twenty-nine computer systems or electronic databases, as well as photographic, audio-visual, and documentary art records held both at headquarters in Ottawa and in ten regional offices across Canada. The *Terms and Conditions for the Transfer of Archival Records* which accompanied the approved authority included provisions for the transfer of a wide variety of the paper files, as well as electronic systems and documentary art records; to date, the National Archives has received nineteen accessions from this authority totalling 140 linear metres.

The appraisal report for the SSPB authority, which was approved in 1993, marks the transition period between the former traditional method of archival appraisal and the application of the macro-appraisal model, with its emphasis on functional appraisal. As well, it shows the contrast between the two approaches. Prior to the implementation of the planned approach, I had completed appraisals in five unrelated areas of NHW, four of which had been sent to the NA primarily to address various records management concerns of the department.³⁶ Only one, that of the Medical Services Branch Central Registry, was initiated because of archival priorities; the registry was stored in unacceptable conditions that threatened the preservation of valuable records dating back to the late nineteenth century which documented the earliest activities of the department. Each of the five earlier appraisal reports justified the preservation or destruction of all or portions of the material based heavily on the value(s) ascribed to the records—evidential, informational, legal, etc.—and an assessment of their potential use as sources by researchers (what Terry Cook refers to as the “taxonomic stage” of archival appraisal).³⁷ While the assessment of the records was linked directly to the mandate and functions of the particular organizational entity to which the records belonged, usually through a summary of the its administrative history, there was little analysis of the broader context in which the records were created outside of that organizational structure, and hence little if any discussion of where related records were created

and preserved in other agencies. The appraisals did result in the transfer of records of archival value to the NA for permanent preservation, but they did so in a piecemeal fashion which left other rich records (such as those created by the high-level policy-making areas) outside of the control of the NA.

SSPB differed greatly from these earlier appraisals. Extensive background research prescribed by the macro-appraisal model needed to be completed in order to conduct negotiations with NHW to agree upon the priorities which would form the first Multi-Year Disposition Plan. The research placed SSPB in an appropriate context within NHW and the federal government as a whole and clearly indicated that despite its relatively small size within the department (approximately 270 people out of a total departmental staff of 8,729), it was responsible for administering programmes (most notably the Canada Assistance Plan) which had a potentially high impact on the lives of individual Canadians and might therefore produce records which would document key aspects of Canadian society. Furthermore, the fact that the Branch had always maintained a relatively stable record-keeping system and had few obvious storage problems led to the situation that despite the existence of three previous records schedules, this branch was almost completely undocumented in the holdings of the NA, apart from a few feet of very early records. Following this research phase, therefore, I embarked upon the appraisal with a detailed understanding of the history, structure, mandate, functions, and activities of SSPB, all of which I expected to see reflected in the records themselves.

As this was the first appraisal in the health and welfare portfolio undertaken since the implementation of the planned approach, the goal was to provide the best source of documentation for the most important functions of SSPB following the criteria outlined in the second part of the macro-appraisal model, that is, evidence of the different interactions of programme, agency, and client. The appraisal was therefore begun in the area where the initial research had determined the records relating to the most important function (administration of the Canada Assistance Plan) should be found, and then proceeded to examine each of the other lesser functions in a roughly descending order of importance; to clarify, this meant the "importance" to the functioning of the record creator, not importance to future researchers or themes in Canadian history. Throughout the assessment of the records, there were continual attempts to make a clear link between the records and the functions that they supported, in order to recommend that only the best records at the highest level that reflected those functions most clearly be preserved.

What actually emerged in the final report was in essence a hybrid appraisal, one which combined remnants of the traditional values-driven taxonomic appraisal process with an initial and somewhat incomplete attempt to link records more closely with both the functions that they supported *and* the intellectual processes that created them. The appraisal maintained a very traditional, structurally-oriented outlook in which the records were described

and assessed predominantly within the framework of the organizational entity or entities that created them. For example, the report is physically divided into eleven sections, one for each of the formal operational divisions within SSPB. Each section begins with a short administrative history of the programme and its functions, which focuses primarily on the dates of key organizational changes. After a description of the records and their physical and intellectual arrangement, appraisal justifications are given for the preservation or destruction of each separate body of records based on the nature of the functions carried out by the division and which particular records would best reflect those functions. Most of the recommendations follow this pattern of a direct correlation between functions and specific records; they began with statements such as "There are two main functions within the National Welfare Grants programme..." or "The Child Care Programmes Division has three main functions..." proceeded to enumerations of the specific functions, and concluded with statements on the nature of the records which must be preserved in order to document the functions most clearly and succinctly. Yet at the same time that recommendations were made to preserve records on the basis of their link to the functions of SSPB, the preservation of other records in the appraisal was clearly justified through a more traditional method, that of their evidential/informational value and potential use as sources for research, rather than as the best reflection of the interaction between programme, agency, and client. For example, in appraising the electronic system which supported the tracking of federal payments to the provinces under the Canada Assistance Plan and recommending those records for preservation, it was noted that:

Anyone seeking to research the history of CAP payments ... could construct a more than adequate overview ... using the ... figures available in published secondary sources, ... [However, for the later period], the researcher has the added benefit of having the data used to produce those macro and middle level statistics already in a manipulable electronic format.³⁸

While this first application of the macro-appraisal model showed some of the difficulties of abandoning completely the traditional, values-based approach to appraisal that was practised in the past, or, more optimistically, that the National Archives allowed for a transitional period between the "old" and "new" approaches, this "bare bones" functional appraisal—with its focus on the basic question of "What is the function of this division and what records must be preserved to document it?"—nonetheless provided an approach which clearly identified common functions across divisions and allowed for a rationalization of appraisal decisions. As the assessment of the records created by each of the operational units of the SSPB was carried out, it became apparent that all of the organizational divisions responsible for administering the various grant programmes operated in a similar fashion regardless of the specific

details of the grants that they were awarding. This observation led in turn to the formulation of a common approach to the appraisal of these records so that their preservation or disposal was recommended in a consistent fashion throughout the report. Ultimately, this initial manifestation of common functions suggested a plan of action that was to be of immense value in the next project, the appraisal of a related social welfare organization, the Income Security Programmes Branch.

*The Income Security Programmes Branch*³⁹

The Income Security Programmes Branch (ISPB), initially part of the Department of National Health and Welfare and now part of the Department of Human Resources Development, is the main federal entity responsible for promoting and preserving the social security and social welfare of Canadians and their families. It administers (or administered) income support or benefit programmes in two main areas: assistance to families with children under the auspices of the *Family Allowances Act* and the eligibility portions of the Child Tax Benefit Programme;⁴⁰ and retirement or disability payments to Canadians under the *Old Age Security Act* and the *Canada Pension Plan Act*. ISPB is also an excellent example of Cook's assertion that "the central flaw of the taxonomic approach to appraisal is that there are altogether too many records 'at the bottom' for archivists to appraise,"⁴¹ and a perfect candidate for the application of the macro-appraisal model because of its size, complexity, and numerous functional links to other government agencies. Legislation, regulations, and policies developed at ISPB headquarters in Ottawa are administered by a network of sixty-nine full-time and 208 part-time field offices and Client Service Centres across the country employing approximately 2500 people. During 1991-92, the ISPB made 120 million payments to 9.4 million clients across Canada and around the world. By the year 2000, the aging of the Canadian population is expected to result in a twenty-two per cent increase in this client base to 11.5 million persons.⁴²

Unlike the Social Service Programmes Branch, which had been largely unknown to the NA as a record creator prior to the macro-appraisal research carried out for the MYDP negotiations, the Income Security Programmes Branch had been a focus of attention for the NA's records disposition activities since the mid 1980s.⁴³ Early scheduling efforts were concentrated on the treatment of client case files, said to number near fifty million, which were causing storage problems for ISPB all across Canada. Foreshadowing the contextual approach that was later articulated in the macro-appraisal model, the archivists responsible for electronic and textual paper records soon recognized that adequate appraisals of the client records (in particular, those from the Family Allowance programme) could not be conducted in isolation. They noted that in order to make appropriate recommendations for the vast amounts

of client case files and their related electronic records, the entire information universe, from the highest level subject and policy records to the most routine case files, would have to be appraised at the same time. Unfortunately, the inclusion of the related subject blocks in a records schedule covering client files and electronic records proved to be an impossible task under the constraints of the pre-MYDP records scheduling process.

In 1992, therefore, initial MYDP negotiations with NHW focused on ISPB, since the macro-appraisal research showed that in the scope of its activities ISPB is undoubtedly one of the portions of the federal government most closely involved with the lives of individual Canadians and most centrally located in the broader "social portfolio" of government in terms of pieces of legislation, number of offices, size of budget, etc. A records disposition submission, prepared through the combined efforts of staff of NHW and the NA, was presented to the NA for appraisal in the fall of 1994. The submission covered forty-five linear kilometres of textual subject and client case files, five very large mainframe computer systems (Old Age Security [OAS], Canada Pension Plan [CPP], Family Allowance/Child Tax Benefit [FA/CTB], and International Benefits) which had been in operation since the late 1960s, five microcomputer systems, numerous individual computer statistical data files, and assorted collections of audio-visual, photographic, and documentary art records created all across the country. It also included documentation on the existence of extensive operational linkages between ISPB and other government institutions, particularly Revenue Canada/Taxation and the former Department of Employment and Immigration, as well as inter-departmental activities with other agencies such as Justice Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In keeping with the desire to be comprehensive, the authority that resulted from this submission was intended to replace ten existing authorities dating from the late 1950s, none of which had covered more than a fraction of the programme or their records, and most of which focused predominantly on the reduction of storage problems through the "stripping" of files or the destruction of routine forms and correspondence following microfilming.⁴⁴

The appraisal of the Social Service Programmes Branch records had revealed the existence of certain common functions across divisions and therefore allowed for a rationalization of appraisal decisions for a particular type of record (i.e., grant files). The macro-appraisal research that was done for the MYDP negotiations showed that, as with SSPB, the Income Security Programmes function appeared to carry out common activities, often across divisional boundaries: the development of underlying legislation and policy to determine the eligibility requirements for each of the three programmes (CPP, OAS, and FA/CTB), and the three functions directly related to the administration of the programmes (assessing eligibility, determining the amount and type of benefits, and administering the payments). Several other supporting functions, such as the detection of fraud, appeals of decisions, and communications

to the public, were also readily identified. The research and analysis to identify these functions, combined with information on the existing structures within the Branch, led to the articulation of a detailed appraisal hypothesis, which was described in the first part of the appraisal report. Based in part on a number of existing assumptions resulting from the Archives' earlier disposition efforts in ISPB (i.e., that the electronic data was of archival value and would be preserved, and that the huge numbers of case files would require the development of a detailed method of sampling), the appraisal hypothesis suggested where the records of highest archival value should be found, what they should document in the way of the interaction between the programmes, structures, and clients of ISPB, and therefore what might be preserved by the National Archives.⁴⁵ Since all of this macro-level analysis was completed before a single record was examined in the Branch, the subsequent appraisal was, in essence, the confirmation, modification, or rejection of that initial hypothesis. This two-step process—macro-level functional research to form an hypothesis and the testing of those tentative conclusions against actual records in a logical order—is, in fact, the formal “Appraisal Methodology” that Cook advocates as the essential third phase of the macro-appraisal approach (the first two being cross-government and cross-institution research and analysis).

The appraisal report for the Income Security Programs Branch was completed in May 1995, two years after the completion of the SSPB appraisal. Unlike the SSPB appraisal report, where bodies of records supporting a wide variety of diverse functions were described as being closely linked to the organizational structures that created them in an almost one-to-one relationship with little or no overlap, the appraisal of ISPB showed a much greater tendency to resolve itself into a true functional analysis not closely tied to individual structures. This was due in large part to the straightforward nature of the Branch's mandate—the development and delivery of benefit programmes as defined by legislation—and resulted in the observation that specific functions were often documented through records that supported shared activities or goals across organizational lines. The report, which was designed in a structural fashion to follow the information provided in the records disposition submission (which was arranged according to operational entity), often traced related records for a single function through several different descriptions of internal divisions. For example, the function of determining the eligibility of clients for particular benefits would be developed in the Policy and Legislation Division, interpreted in the Programme Policy Application Section, codified within the Programmes Manuals and Directives Sections, applied in Client Service Centres (CSCs), investigated in the Controls Programme, and appealed in the Appeals Programme.

This meant that the overall appraisal of each group of records could not be undertaken in isolation, but had to be assessed in a rational order based upon the nature of the information flow or business processes within ISPB (i.e., from the

development of the policies and procedures, through their implementation, subsequent evaluation, and possible appeal). The need to assess the bodies of records in this fashion meant that a number of the assumptions on which the appraisal hypothesis had been based were somewhat flawed and could be corrected. For example, the appraisal of the records created by Policy and Legislation showed that significant amounts of detailed statistical information on client benefits were already being produced by the agency itself, and that the NA would therefore not need to preserve extensive amounts of the client data in the electronic systems. The end result of the report was the acquisition of a far smaller amount of records than was originally anticipated, because of a better understanding of the context in which the records were created.

The appraisal of the Income Security Programmes Branch demonstrated that the development of a sound, detailed appraisal hypothesis based upon macro-level functional research and then confirmed or modified through examination of the records and their interrelationships is a most effective method to ensure the acquisition of the best archival records. The success of the approach to this appraisal contributed greatly to the formulation of the appraisal hypothesis and methodology for the next approved disposition authority, that for the Medical Research Council of Canada.

*The Medical Research Council of Canada*⁴⁶

In 1994, an MYDP was concluded between the National Archives and the Medical Research Council of Canada (MRC). The Council, which traces its existence to the Associate Committee of Medical Research formed within the National Research Council of Canada in 1936, is composed of a President and twenty-one member representatives of the scientific and lay communities supported by a Secretariat of approximately sixty-five people. The MRC promotes and assists biomedical research through the administration of an extensive programme of grants and awards designed to provide financial support to researchers located primarily in universities, health care institutions such as teaching hospitals, and research institutes. The MRC also acts as an advisor to the Minister of Health on all health science/biomedical research issues and serves as the liaison between the federal government and the private sector for a wide variety of initiatives, including joint funding or sponsorship of projects.⁴⁷

The MRC had had a records schedule approved by the NA in 1979 (Authority 79/006), which covered a significant portion of their paper textual files, predominantly grant and award case files. Under the terms of this authority, all grant and award files were to be transferred to the NA upon the expiry of their retention periods. Since the appraisal which led to the 1979 authority had isolated the grant and award files from the context of all other supporting records, it was agreed during the MYDP negotiations that the existing records

schedule would be replaced with a single, new, comprehensive authority for the entire agency. To that end, the submission report contained detailed information on all aspects of the MRC's records, approximately 170 metres of textual subject files, 240 metres of active grant/award case files (approximately two-years' worth), eight computer systems, and a collection of audio-visual, photographic, and documentary art material.

The macro-level research carried out prior to the start of the appraisal for the MRC revealed a number of key points which led to the formulation of the appraisal hypothesis. Both published documents (such as the *Main Estimates of the Government of Canada*) and the submission report itself noted that the MRC expended approximately ninety-seven per cent of its budget on grants and awards, and that the vast majority of the records they created were individual grant and award files. Of the 332 metres of MRC records transferred to the National Archives from 1979 to 1995 as a result of Authority 79/006, some three hundred metres were grant or award files (approximately ninety per cent). An assessment of the case files already held by the NA showed that the grant and award files do provide some evidence of the MRC's functions and programmes, and that they were also relatively homogenous in their structure. The assessment of these holdings, combined with knowledge of secondary sources of information on the MRC (such as detailed annual reports, publications, and summaries of research grants) and the existence of supporting electronic records systems within the agency itself, led to an appraisal hypothesis which stated that "while the grant and award files show some evidence of the MRC's functions and programmes by demonstrating the approval process as it related to a specific application, they were neither the records of highest archival value, nor all of equal importance, and should therefore be considered as candidates for sampling or selection."⁴⁸

Because of the small size of the MRC, examination of the records quickly revealed that the appraisal hypothesis was sound. The policy and subject files, which made up roughly ten per cent of the MRC's holdings, revealed "a wide variety of information on the nature of the MRC, its programmes, their operation and the interaction between the MRC, other agencies/partners, and the biomedical research community."⁴⁹ The grants and awards themselves were shown to be the end result of a detailed, peer-reviewed process which made use of a network of five thousand external referees (all volunteers), twenty-nine grant and eleven awards committees divided into subject areas and comprising a membership of four hundred working scientists (drawn from universities for their knowledge, expertise, and experience), and the Executive Council of the MRC itself, which approves the recommendations of the committees.⁵⁰ The key documentation of the interaction of all of these various elements was not found within the grant/award files themselves, but in the general policy files and the operational files for each grant/award committee, as well as the overall summary data on each grant/award application held in the supporting computer

systems. Closer examination of the various categories of grant/award files also showed that several smaller groups of files relating to awards to scientists of particular merit (such as the MRC Career Investigators or Distinguished Scientists) tended, because of the nature of the award or grant, to contain more detailed information about the entire career of the scientist, rather than focusing on the specific grant. Files for grants to specialized groups of researchers (such as the Network Centres of Excellence) also demonstrated a body of documentation which differed from the standard information found within the other types of grant/award files. This meant that grant and award files were in fact *not* all of equal archival importance or homogeneous in character, as had been suggested in the earlier records schedule.

The appraisal report concluded that while there was “no doubt that the case files are the single richest source of detailed information on the projects which receive funding from MRC programmes ... it is not necessary to retain each and every grant or award case file in order to document the existence, functions and results of projects.”⁵¹ It was therefore recommended that in addition to all policy and subject files, and the tombstone data from the three computer systems, the NA preserve all grant and award files for categories where the MRC’s stated eligibility requirements cite the need for the recipient to be a highly-respected/distinguished/outstanding individual making significant contributions to the biomedical research community, files on unique research groups such as the Network Centres of Excellence, and a selection of files from other grant and award categories.⁵²

The appraisal of the records of the Medical Research Council demonstrated once again the importance of the comprehensive approach to records disposition that is the hallmark of the macro-appraisal model. Without the detailed understanding of the agency, its programmes, and its interactions with its clients, as well as an examination of the methods by which the records demonstrate each of these factors, the resulting records disposition authority can all too easily lead to the preservation of large quantities of records which do not have the highest archival value. Like the archival recommendations made with regards to the Income Security Programmes Branch, the decision not to preserve the majority of an agency’s records also underscores the need to make hard archival decisions when faced with an overload of information, an aspect of the macro-appraisal model which was further tested in the appraisal of the records of the Drugs Directorate of Health Canada.

*The Drugs Directorate, Health Canada*⁵³

The Drugs Directorate of Health Canada traces its roots to the federal government’s first attempts to impose controls on the purity of food and drugs with the passage of *An Act to Impose License Duties on Compounders of Spirits ... and to Prevent the Adulteration of Food, Drink and Drugs* in 1875. The enactment

of the *Food and Drug Act* in 1920, the subsequent refinement of the *Act*, and the development of its accompanying regulations further solidified the federal government's control over the safety, purity, and quality, as well as the labelling and advertising, of all food, drugs, and cosmetics sold in Canada. Today, the Drugs Directorate, through its six bureaus, is responsible for the protection of the health of Canadians through the assessment and management of the risks and benefits associated with the availability and use of drugs and cosmetics. It performs a number of related functions: establishment of legislation, drug quality standards, and control regulations; review and/or approval of drugs and cosmetics for sale in Canada through pre-market evaluation or notification; laboratory research to identify and resolve problem areas, and to provide background information on medical, scientific, or technical concerns; post-market surveillance of new drugs, cosmetics, and adverse reactions; regulation of narcotic, controlled, and restricted drugs; inspection of licensed pharmaceutical manufacturing plants and audits of all licensed dealers, pharmacies, and hospitals; and enforcement of regulations concerning drugs and cosmetics.⁵⁴

The submission prepared by the Drugs Directorate covered a wide variety of records, including approximately 2,347 metres of textual subject files, 14,126 metres of drug evaluation case files for the more than 20,432 drugs available for sale in Canada, eight mainframe computer systems, twenty-eight micro-computer systems, a shared file server that functions as an electronic registry system, and various audio-visual records. While the majority of the records are held at the Directorate's headquarters in Ottawa, the surveillance and compliance functions are carried out in five regional offices across Canada.

Of the four appraisals described here, that of the Drugs Directorate adapted most readily to the application of a functional appraisal. As was the case with the Income Security Programmes Branch, the initial research that preceded the appraisal of the Drugs Directorate identified a number of key functions, some of which apparently crossed organizational boundaries. The research also indicated that these functions, particularly the pre-market evaluation of new drugs, are based on a highly-structured legislative base designed to ensure the health and safety of the Canadian population. Interestingly, the attempt to trace each of the functions through the records created in the individual bureaus quickly revealed that each of the Directorate's functions was in some way interconnected, and that, therefore, the proper appraisal of the records which supported a function often could not be completed until the records of another bureau were assessed. Appraisal of the case files which supported the pre-market evaluation leading to the approval of new drugs, for example, could not be completed until the records supporting the monitoring and analysis of adverse reactions were examined. Furthermore, attempts to describe both the functions and the records which supported them in a traditional appraisal report based on the organizational structure of the Directorate were soon stymied;

assessing each body of records according to its organizational placement required the repetition of much information related to operational context. For example, the Bureau of Human Prescription Drugs and the Bureau of Non-Prescription Drugs, though carrying out separate activities in the overall function of drug evaluation, shared a single, intermixed record-keeping system. This system was not easily split; many files contained a mixture of documentation supporting the activities of both bureaus. In order to describe such common records based on their organizational entity, they had to be described twice.

The end result was a different style of appraisal report. It presented the mandate and history of the Directorate, described each of the seven functions, and proceeded to describe all records supporting these functions in turn, regardless of their organizational or physical location. There were several benefits to this tactic. Apart from a reduction in the repetition of information to provide context, the most notable benefit was the ability to make consistent appraisal decisions on large bodies of similar records controlled by different bureaus, such as the 14,126 metres of drug evaluation records. This, of all the health and welfare appraisals completed since 1992, most clearly demonstrates the theory and principles behind macro-appraisal.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Macro-Appraisal Model

Comparing these four appraisals reveals a number of strengths and weaknesses of the macro-appraisal model. The greatest overall strengths of the model stem from its requirement for a planned, rational, and logical approach to appraisal, an approach which is supported by detailed functional-structural research at almost every step and proceeds "from the top down." From the initial assessment of the value of the record creator itself within society, the ranking of those creators, the determination of the archival priorities within organizations based on their functional centrality to the mandate and law, and, finally, the appraisal of the functions and activities and their supporting records within each such priority target area, the detailed research which precedes each of these steps gives archivists a far greater understanding of the entire context of records creation. Research also allows archivists to begin comprehensive appraisal projects by concentrating their professional expertise on areas of records creation which they know through experience to be the sources of the highest potential archival value: central, high-level organizations that define the programmes and structures with which ordinary citizens interact. Ultimately, macro-appraisal research does reduce the potential for the duplication of appraisal efforts for which Cook criticized the documentation strategy approach.

Research and planning are complementary activities within the framework of macro-appraisal. When the National Archives of Canada adopted research-

based macro-appraisal, it also undertook the development of the Multi-Year Disposition Plan process at the same time in order to become more active in acquiring records from institutions which were believed to create valuable records but had not made any such transfers to the National Archives. The addition of a formal plan (the MYDP) to macro-appraisal gives the NA more control over the disposition process to ensure that the appraisal efforts highlighted by research findings are well-directed. More control over the process in turn allows the NA to respond better to the records disposition needs of their clients. Throughout the negotiations within the disposition planning process, archivists, backed by the findings of their research, can avoid the traditional trap of responding strictly to their clients needs for records disposition authorities which address records at the bottom of the pyramid (e.g., copious amounts of case files) by identifying record-creating areas of a higher potential archival value that should be assessed first. Thus, the NA acquires a better archival record, and the client institution receives a more comprehensive and workable records disposition authority to suit its needs.

The appraisals of the Medical Research Council and the Income Security Programmes Branch contain a number of good examples of the strengths of having completed proper research prior to appraisal, particularly for case files. For example, the initial appraisal of the MRC grant and award files in 1979, largely in isolation from their relationship to the policy files and the operational files of the peer review-based committees, resulted in the acquisition of more records than were necessary to provide adequate archival documentation of the agency's functions and interactions with their clients. The latest appraisal, by focusing first on the policy and subject files and related electronic systems, allowed for the refinement of the appraisal recommendations and the significant reduction in the numbers of grant/award files transferred to the National Archives.

In the Income Security Programmes Branch, as outlined earlier, initial disposition efforts prior to the MYDP focused almost entirely upon the millions of paper client files that the Branch wanted to destroy to alleviate their storage problems, in isolation from the related subject and policy records and electronic systems. Without the background research into the Branch which identified the activities of policy development, interpretations, and appeals in the Policy and Legislation Directorate and the Appeals Programme, or the existence of extensive links between the computer systems of ISPB and those of Revenue Canada/Taxation and Employment and Immigration Canada, the archival assessment of the client case files would likely have resulted in the preservation of a sample of client files; given the size of the programme, even a small sample of such records would have resulted in the acquisition of a huge quantity of files of little or no archival value.

Another example illustrates the importance of both research and careful implementation planning to a successful appraisal. ISPB's millions of textual

paper case files were supported by five large electronic systems, which had been in operation since the 1960s. As was described earlier, the National Archives' early involvement with ISPB's electronic records systems had led to a number of assumptions about the potential archival value of their records, namely, that the electronic databases would be of archival value and would be preserved in whole or in part as an alternative to preserving large amounts of paper case files. Prior to the appraisal, some research had been carried out showing the relationship between the ISPB electronic systems and those at Revenue Canada/Taxation (responsible for collecting data on pension earnings and contributions) and Employment and Immigration Canada (responsible for assigning Social Insurance Numbers and tracking employment for pension contribution levels); however, the information was pitched at a very global level. Rudimentary information was also available about the link between the paper case files and the supporting electronic systems.

In planning the implementation of the ISPB appraisal, I had carefully assessed how much time would be needed for the "micro-appraisal" of the records in each organizational area based on what was known through prior research and how much information was contained in the submission. The concern was that the entire appraisal project was so large, if any problems occurred the deadline for completion would be missed. Thus, because of the importance of the systems to the ISPB and their potentially high archival value, I had allowed a large amount of time to appraise each system. At the same time I had also determined through macro-level research that the Policy and Legislation Directorate was a source of many key records of high archival value that would undoubtedly be preserved by the National Archives. However, the possible time constraints led me to rely upon the macro-level appraisal for Policy and Legislation and leave the actual examination of its records to the end of the appraisal project, where they could be appraised quickly because of their high value.

The detailed appraisal of the electronic systems took several weeks, and involved a number of elements: close examination of the documentation provided in the submission and made available in the Branch; numerous interviews with systems analysts, data entry clerks, and other users to determine the work flow and computer processes which supported the system; secondary research into the mandate, functions, and record-keeping practices of the related agencies; and analysis of the relationship between the paper and electronic client records. The initial hypothesis for the electronic systems had suggested that sampling the systems would be a suitable alternative to acquiring large amounts of paper client files; the micro-appraisal of the systems showed that the hypothesis was valid, and led to the development of draft terms and conditions for transfer which would detail the appropriate sampling criteria to be used.

However, while reviewing my notes on the systems' existing ability to

produce samples of data files or other statistics which might be of archival value, I realized that the macro-appraisal for the Policy and Legislation Directorate showed that it contained two divisions whose sole purpose was to create from the client databases the electronic statistical information the Branch itself required to make policy changes, report on their client base to external agencies, and provide retrospective views of their programmes. I immediately suspended my appraisal of the electronic records, completed the micro-appraisal of the records in the Policy and Legislation Directorate, and determined that the records which should be preserved were either already in the public domain through publications, or were in Policy and Legislation, and not in the electronic systems themselves. Appraised in their proper context, the electronic systems were thus revealed to be of lower archival value, *contrary* to the appraisal hypothesis. As a result, no data from the electronic systems was recommended for preservation by the National Archives. The deviation from the macro-appraisal model's maxim of "from the top down" through the failure to assess the Policy and Legislation Directorate records prior to the systems appraisal was clearly a mistake, and one which cost me much time and effort.

The importance of the "top down" approach is further demonstrated in the appraisal of the Drugs Directorate. Because of the highly-structured nature of the legislative and regulatory base within which the Directorate operates, it is imperative to understand the development process associated with that framework before embarking upon the assessment of the records which support its various functions. Having learned from the ISPB experience, I began the appraisal with an examination of the records created at the highest level of management (the Office of the Director General, Drugs Directorate) and then proceeded to the Bureau of Drug Policy and Coordination (BDPC). The detailed appraisal of the records created by these two areas not only showed the development of the Directorate's legislative and regulatory foundation, but also revealed a number of common elements in the activities which made up the rest of the Directorate's functions; since these elements were often coordinated through the Office of the Director General or the BDPC, the appraisals of related records in the operational bureaus were carried out much more quickly and with a better understanding of the context of their creation. Not only did the top-down approach provide this necessary context, but it also contributed greatly to the early realization of the truly functional nature of the Directorate's records. It also prevented the acquisition of many records from large series of dubious archival value, such as routine licensing or inspection files, which had been acquired through a previous authority that recommended preservation of all records in anticipation of the development of suitable selection criteria.⁵⁵

Apart from the overall strength derived from its research-based, top-down, planned approach, the macro-appraisal model has several other elements which recommend it to archivists. My own early experience with appraisal has shown that the assignment of values to records (evidential, informational, etc.) is very

easy to accomplish, as every record is evidence of some action, and every document contains information of value to someone other than the creator. Thus, this traditional, taxonomic method of appraisal makes it much easier to recommend the preservation of material rather than its destruction, and can lead to the acquisition of many records of little or no value. The macro-appraisal model's clear definitions of each of the three factors of the citizen-state interaction (programme, agency, and client),⁵⁶ allows a sharper focus to be obtained more quickly in the appraisal of any government or institutional record. The codification of the appraisal into an identification of the sharpest "image" or reflection of that interaction, combined with its use of the broader concept of societal dynamics giving rise to record creation and the interrelationship of records in different agencies, provides a rational approach which actually gives archivists a stronger basis for making appraisal recommendations, particularly for recommendations which call for the destruction of large quantities of records.

Another key strength to the macro-appraisal model is that it does not preclude the practice of "micro-appraisal," but even encourages it at the appropriate final stage as a means of confirming, rejecting, or refining a macro-appraisal decision. Cook notes the importance of the micro-appraisal of records in the conclusion of "Mind Over Matter," and in fact has developed a number of tools or specific criteria to extend the methodology behind macro-appraisal to the assessment of the actual records. Other archivists have also noted the need to incorporate both levels of appraisal in their work. In his article "Macro-Appraisal and Duplication of Information: Federal Real Property Management Records," Jean-Stéphane Piché, a National Archives of Canada colleague practising this new approach, explores the development of a macro-appraisal hypothesis designed to incorporate both "front-end appraisal" and backlog reduction of a large body of similar records used by several different institutions to manage federal government real property. He notes that while it is possible to develop a suitable macro-appraisal hypothesis to apply to a function which crosses many organizational boundaries, resulting in better appraisal decisions and a reduction in the duplication of information, such a hypothesis "remains to be confirmed using methodologies that look at the actual records – to ensure that the nature of the records matches the conclusions of the macro-appraisal functional analysis."⁵⁷

This is important to stress, since not all of the institutions which practice macro-appraisal believe that it is necessary to complement the process through the exercise of micro-level appraisal. At the same time that documentation strategy was being developed in the United States and the National Archives of Canada was developing both its acquisition strategy and the Multi-Year Planning process designed to implement the macro-appraisal model, the National Archives of the Netherlands was developing the "Logic Model" used for their PIVOT project. The Logic Model, which is designed to allow for a systematic

inventory of government functions, tasks, and processes, focuses on the selection of the government “act” which leads to records creation, rather than on the assessment of collections of government records.⁵⁸ Once those acts have been identified and ranked in an acquisition priority, all of the related records for selected functions are transferred to the archives. As Richard Brown notes in his extensive discussion of macro-appraisal theory and its conceptual relationship to public record creators, the PIVOT Logic Model makes no provision for an archivist to examine the records they are to acquire, it applies predominantly to policy records, and the elimination of the assessment of actual records has transformed archival value into strictly evidential value.⁵⁹ He notes that neither the macro-appraisal model conceptualized and practised by the National Archives of Canada nor the documentation strategy and functional analysis being advocated in the United States “would entertain any premise that conceives to remove entirely the evaluation of the record from the prospect of archival appraisal.”⁶⁰

My own experience demonstrates that both Piché’s support of micro-appraisal of records to confirm macro-appraisal decisions and Brown’s critique of the Dutch approach are quite valid. In each of the appraisals I have conducted following the macro-appraisal model, the examination of the actual records has resulted in some modification to the original appraisal hypothesis, as Cook anticipated in developing the two-phase appraisal methodology. In the Income Security Programs Branch, the appraisal of the high level policy and subject records which directly supported the client benefit process, combined with an examination of the contents and context of the millions of paper client files, showed that the original hypothesis was correct: the records of the highest value were the subject records, and a small sample of client benefit files captured through the appeals process would provide suitable documentation of the routine interaction between ISPB and its clients. However, the actual appraisal of the electronic systems and the policy records also revealed that the electronic records did *not* have the high archival value that was originally ascribed to them through macro-appraisal and did not warrant preservation by the National Archives. Likewise, the detailed contextual review of the contents of the grant and award files for the Medical Research Council not only confirmed the hypothesis that they were not the records of the highest archival value produced by the Council and should therefore not be preserved in their entirety, but also that several categories of files *were* of higher value and should be preserved. Finally, the initial macro-appraisal hypothesis for the Drugs Directorate suggested that the drug evaluation files were potentially of very high archival value; the appraisal of the records in their proper context showed that while they were important operational records, they were not of sufficient archival value to be acquired in their entirety by the National Archives. All of these cases have convinced me that any macro-appraisal model which is used to appraise records must never lose sight of the ultimate goal of the exercise—the

acquisition of archival records—and that it will only be successful if it can be integrated with the appropriate use of micro-level appraisal of records.

An assessment of the role of micro-level appraisal within the context of the macro-appraisal model also highlights the issue of appraisal of records for secondary use. Because of the lack of a solid theoretical basis (i.e., a broad societal context), the earlier, taxonomic appraisal process was more prone to result in appraisal decisions which were “in the grey zone” between high and low archival value. This often left the archivist to rely upon his or her knowledge of the potential secondary use of records for their informational value as a means of finalizing an appraisal recommendation. The strength of the macro-appraisal model and its acknowledgement of the importance of the role of micro-level appraisal is that it reduces the number of occasions on which the archivist is left in that “grey zone.” Research leads the archivist to determine well in advance where the records of potentially high archival value should be found, and subsequent micro-appraisal confirms or rejects that initial hypothesis, without the need to speculate on the potential uses of the resulting archival records by historians or anyone else. It is also interesting to note, however, that the macro-appraisal model does not necessarily preclude the micro-level appraisal of records strictly for their informational value or potential secondary use. In several of the tools developed to carry the principles of macro-appraisal to the micro-appraisal level, Cook notes that there is sometimes a “pragmatic or political decision” which will force an archives to acquire records based upon their potential secondary use, but that this secondary use must not be confused with the appraisal decision which identifies records as archival.⁶¹

I have further observed that regardless of whether one examines records within the macro-appraisal framework or, more traditionally, strictly for their secondary value, the research prescribed by the macro-appraisal model makes it particularly suited to the appraisal of government agencies which create large amounts of case file material in the course of delivering easily identifiable, product-oriented programmes such as benefits or grants. In appraising case files it is easy to ascribe a higher value to the records if they are not examined in context, resulting, usually through the development of a sampling methodology, in the acquisition of more records than are necessary to document a programme. For example, an earlier appraisal of the Income Security Programmes Branch’s Canada Pension Plan disability medical files determined that they were of sufficient value to warrant the preservation of a sample of the records.⁶² Over a ten year period, the NA acquired 382.5 metres of these records. In 1990, following a selection project which had re-appraised the records received by the NA, a further appraisal of the Pension Appeals Board (PAB), the highest level of appeal under the Canada Pension Plan, revealed that approximately eighty-five to ninety per cent of the cases appealed to this level were applications for medical disability pensions. More significantly, when a case file was opened by the PAB, the first documents filed on it were complete

copies of the entire original application file and all of the succeeding documentation created by the intervening levels of appeal. The PAB case file was therefore a complete record of a client's interaction with the Canada Pension Plan programme from his/her initial application to the final appeal. By acquiring archival records from the PAB rather than at the programme level in ISPB, the National Archives would be preserving essentially an operational selection of the client records created by the Canada Pension Plan programme, which was a more complete record than could be provided by the CPP disability operational area. The knowledge gained from the selection project and the PAB appraisal became part of the macro-appraisal research carried out for the ISPB project and contributed greatly to the decision not to acquire any routine client records below the level of the highest appeal. The result was a stronger archival record that clearly documented not only the routine interaction of programme, agency, and client, but also the situations in which that interaction deviated from the established parameters and created so-called "hot-spots" of disagreement, adjudication, and even revision of procedures and processes.

While the planned nature of the macro-appraisal model and its "top down" approach does allow an archives to avoid the potential duplication of appraisal efforts and results in the acquisition of a better archival record, there are some overall constraints to its use which stem from the same factors that are its strength. The model requires extensive, detailed supporting research to ensure complete success. If for whatever reason that research is not completed prior to embarking upon a macro-appraisal project, then some of the benefits derived from the model's top-down approach are lost. Furthermore, the model also presupposes that the government institution will have created some of the supporting information that the archivist needs to carry out his or her research. The model's reliance upon research therefore not only places a heavy demand on an archives' resources, but can also reduce its ability to respond to large scale changes within record-creating organizations, such as the recent "downsizing" activities of the Canadian federal government. These activities, which are affecting the operations of the National Archives as well as its clients, mean that since there are fewer resources at the National Archives, less time can be spent on large amounts of detailed research to prepare for an MYDP or an appraisal in a new area. Unfortunately, this comes at a time when the rest of the federal government's agencies are undergoing such massive re-structuring that they are in need of *more* rather than fewer records disposition authorities, and at a time when more detailed research at the early stages might be able to produce those authorities faster through the high level appraisal of functions rather than the micro-appraisal of their records.⁶³ In fairness, however, this is not a limitation of the theory behind the macro-appraisal model itself, but an implementation constraint that will vary from institution to institution over time.

What can be more of a problem, however, is when a record-keeping system cannot keep pace with the organizational restructuring of its creator. Take as an

example once again the downsizing of the federal government, particularly the larger or "most affected" departments and the impact on traditional record-keeping systems. Programmes are being merged, altered, reduced, or cut outright, often with concomitant changes to the personnel who ran them. Traditionally considered a low priority for most organizations, records management personnel are often the first to feel the effects of reduction. Fewer records staff means that they must focus on the most basic tasks to support their ongoing activities, and cannot devote the necessary time and resources to document fully the context of the records. Such routine but important tasks as re-classifying files transferred from another system, updating the descriptions within the file classification systems, or even just re-folding files are not done because of lack of resources. The end result is the shifting of large quantities of records, sometimes through several intermediate steps as a programme winds down, with little or no documentation covering their movements and therefore their provenance. This can make the task of linking functions with the records which support them very difficult, if not impossible in some cases, both for practitioners of macro-appraisal and more traditional appraisal methodology. Traditional record-keeping systems are often now themselves in a state of transition, moving from organizationally-based, subject-oriented systems towards ones based more on the functions or business processes of the agencies they support. Since core functions change much less frequently than organizational structures, the trend to more functionally-based record-keeping systems should provide support for the use of the macro-appraisal methodology in the future; for now, however, archivists will continue to face constraints in applying it to more traditional systems.

Apart from the considerations of the impact of administrative change on the macro-appraisal model, there are other constraints to applying the macro-appraisal model and functional analysis which are revealed towards the end of the appraisal process and have a more direct impact on a successful implementation. At the NA, the end result of an appraisal is the creation of a records disposition authority which will allow an agency to dispose of its records in a timely fashion and ensure that records of archival value are transferred to the custody of the archives. At the National Archives, this is accomplished through a formal agreement between the NA and the client agency, which is signed by senior officials from both institutions and accompanied by a detailed document titled "Terms and Conditions for the Transfer of Archival Records," listing the specific records which must be transferred to the National Archives at the end of their retention periods or maintained on an indefinite basis by the agency and monitored by the NA. It is at this point that the archivist must make clear the connection between the programmes and functions assessed in the appraisal and their manifestations, the records.

This is not necessarily as simple a task as it may appear. When completing the terms and conditions for the Social Service Programmes Branch appraisal,

I carried the principles of the macro-appraisal model and functional analysis into the terms and conditions document that would apply to the Branch's organizationally arranged, subject-based record-keeping system. Instead of preparing a long list of specific file numbers which had to be transferred, as had been done in the earlier days of records scheduling, the document described the nature of the files which were recommended for preservation in terms of the functions/programmes which they supported, for example, "all files containing documentation on the development of the payment process for the Canada Assistance Plan" or "files pertaining to the administration of the National Welfare Grants competition process." These terms and conditions were intended to be flexible enough that they would serve the disposition needs of the Branch for many years to come by identifying key functions rather than specific files, therefore allowing them to apply the authority to records which had not been created at the time of the appraisal.

However, consultation with the records management staff at Health Canada at the draft stage quickly revealed that this format was not practical or workable in the present "transitional" environment. They observed that while the narrative descriptions developed using functionally-based macro-appraisal techniques *were* accurate in describing certain identifiable blocks of records, they were not conducive to making a definitive "yes/no" decision on whether the specific subject-based file from a particular organizational entity was destined to be transferred to the National Archives. Records office staff, who are still predominantly file classifiers or clerks, would be required to open each file, read the contents, assess their nature, and then determine if they were the records described in the terms and conditions. In essence, they would be performing a second appraisal, a task for which they were not qualified.⁶⁴ Even if they were, high staff turnover and the lack of time and resources necessary to carry out such a file-by-file review would make the consistent application of such terms and conditions impossible. Therefore, as a result of our discussions, the terms and conditions had to be altered to provide a more specific link between the functions and activities to be preserved and the actual records which supported them. That link was the specific file block and file numbers which were arranged according to that portion of the filing system which supported a particular organizational division, the same block and file numbers which might have been identified in the past using traditional appraisal methods. This also meant that to preserve the long-term flexibility of the authority, a caveat was added: "Within these terms and conditions, file block titles, file block and file numbers, and file titles are provided for *guidance* only. In the event of revision of the file classification system, these provisions should be carried forward into any new system."⁶⁵

A related problem arose in the crafting of the terms and conditions for the Income Security Programmes Branch. Early in its history, ISPB had worked with a traditional central filing system. The documentation found on each

subject-based file in the system was contributed by all organizational entities across the Branch, meaning that there was one file covering one topic which might be needed by several parts of the organization at the same time. If the file was charged out by one division when a need for it arose in another division, the information was not available. As this caused difficulties in operations, particularly when staff occupied many widely separate physical locations, staff began to make less use of the official filing system and instead turned to keeping copies of records within their own divisions. The result was a huge proliferation of “user held” systems, which were usually arranged in alphabetical order by a natural language subject title assigned by a particular individual. This also meant that there was a high level of duplication between records of several operational areas that often blurred both organizational distinctions and functions. In the absence of a formal filing system with assigned file blocks, it became clear during the appraisal that it was almost impossible to isolate key *original* documentation of certain functions without carrying out a detailed file-by-file analysis of each and every system. The end result, therefore, was a terms and conditions document that contained either the condition to transfer “all records held in the ... system,” lists of specific file titles, or even, in one case, the direction to transfer files in a specific file cabinet drawer that was marked with a label during the appraisal.⁶⁶

These two situations are examples of some of the problems the National Archives is encountering during the transition period between traditional appraisal methodology and macro-appraisal. Technically, neither the problem of function-based terms and conditions or the problem of user-held records are flaws of the macro-appraisal theory itself. While the macro-appraisal model provides a theoretical basis for appraisal, it does not deal with the actual acquisition of records. In the conclusion to “Mind Over Matter,” Cook discusses the role of micro-appraisal within the model, and touches on a number of specific “traditional” factors (such as authenticity, completeness, extent, etc.) or practical preservation concerns which may affect the appraisal decision, noting that all of these factors “merely underline that appraisal does not equal or lead to acquisition for every initially positive appraisal decision.”⁶⁷ However, the method through which the archivist communicates the results of an appraisal decision to effect a transfer of archival records is crucial to the entire process of acquiring archival records. Terms and conditions for transfer must be tailored to the record-keeping systems in the individual institution. Above all, they must be clear and unequivocal, and easily applied by staff unfamiliar with both records management and archives and the particular records in question. If appropriate terms and conditions cannot be crafted, the benefits derived from the entire macro-appraisal exercise will have been wasted, as the archivist will be forced either to re-appraise badly selected records upon their arrival at the archives, or not to acquire archival records at all. Yet an assessment of the model’s deficiency in addressing the implementation of appraisal

decisions through the crafting of terms and conditions suggests a more serious weakness of the macro-appraisal model and functional analysis: the difficulty which sometimes exists in making the connection between specific functions and the record-keeping system which supports them.

This weakness becomes most noticeable in dealing with the appraisal of traditional central registries such as those used by large government departments such as Transport Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs.⁶⁸ Files in a traditional central registry system are subject-based and multi-provenancial rather than functionally or organizationally oriented and, as such, often contain records from a number of different creators which document a large number of specific topics related to a broader theme. Unlike a modern block numeric filing system, which imparts a certain importance to files based on their location in the hierarchy of the primary-secondary-tertiary structure, traditional central registry systems reflect the subjects they contain without ascribing a value to their placement. A new file in such a system merely takes the next available filing number in the appropriate block, so that files of widely differing contents are placed next to each other intellectually and physically. At the same time, however, the files are closely interrelated because they document many related functions, and derive a significant portion of their archival value from their contextual relationships to other files within the system, in much the same way that the contents of an individual file are interrelated. While such highly-centralized systems may be increasingly rare, those that exist do create a problem.

The nature of the traditional central registry means that while the macro-appraisal model's precepts of research, establishment of context, planning of targets, and development of appraisal hypotheses are all still valid, the methodology begins to break down during the micro-appraisal process itself, where the archivist attempts to identify the actual records which support specific functions. If macro-appraisal requires the isolation of the interaction of programme, agency, and citizen in order to make an appraisal decision, then the appraisal of a central registry file must be carried out a number of times depending upon the function being assessed. This suggests that the application of true macro-appraisal to central registry files will result in a duplication of appraisal efforts as the functions of various agencies are carried out. The solution may be to follow the functions themselves, but if one were to follow specific functions through a number of interrelated files within a central registry, which may or may not be linked to organizational entities, there is clear duplication of effort.

So how can an archivist faced with the appraisal of such a central registry system avoid the potential duplication of appraisal efforts and identify the sources of the most significant documentation? The appraisal process must include detailed examination of the records, which remain the ultimate manifestation of functions and activities. One example of this is the solution that was

used in the archival appraisal of the Policy and Coordination Group of Transport Canada. This appraisal was conducted by another National Archives colleague, Ann Martin, and later analyzed and presented as a case study in the article on macro-appraisal theory by Richard Brown which I mentioned earlier.⁶⁹ The appraisal combined the research precepts of macro-appraisal with more detailed examination of the functions of the institution as revealed through the contextual information contained within the records themselves (i.e., detailed and structured micro-appraisal) which made use of the concept of the Office of Primary Interest (OPI).⁷⁰ From Brown's "archival-hermeneutic perspective," this methodology allows for the macro-appraisal of a central registry system through gaining a "significantly different view of records creation by concentrating on the process of its records, rather than on the latent and formal structures designated by creators to contain and report upon the fields of their functional activity."⁷¹

Conclusion

Earlier, I asked if the macro-appraisal model worked in practice, and what that practice would reveal about the model itself. I believe that the practice of macro-appraisal, at least that demonstrated by the various appraisals to which I have applied it, shows that for the majority of cases within the context of large, programme-oriented organizations such as those within the Government of Canada, the macro-appraisal model provides a sound theory and methodology for the acquisition of a high quality archival record. Some appraisals under the model during its earlier transitional stage at the NA may still have retained vestiges of the earlier "taxonomic" methodology; there have also been problems in applying function-based appraisal decisions to existing subject and organization-based record-keeping systems. The appraisals created using the macro-appraisal methodology are, nonetheless, generally more contextually oriented, and thus result in stronger disposition recommendations.

Yet there are a number of constraints to using the model. The need for large amounts of supporting research, potential difficulties in coping with massive and rapid changes to the record creator, and the challenges of dealing with central registry systems which blur the distinction between functions—all of these may be cited as weaknesses in the model itself. And there are other questions which need to be answered. How well does the macro-appraisal model adapt to non-government creators? Can it be applied successfully to non-textual records such as audio-visual, photographic, or cartographic records which have generally been preserved outside the control of the traditional record systems on which the model is based? There are no single answers to any of these questions, nor can there yet be a definitive assessment of the value of the macro-appraisal model, because we lack a large body of solid evidence. To be able to pronounce on the model's value, archivists need to continue to apply

it to a wide variety of situations and test its principles rigorously, indeed to its breaking point. It is safe to say that even the model's creator is continually adapting and modifying it to new record-keeping challenges.

However, even at this early stage of investigation, it is clear that, despite some need for adaptation to unique circumstances, the macro-appraisal model provides an archivist with a sound and logical base to explain why some records are assessed as archival and preserved forever, and others are not. While the model's dependence on large amounts of research may be a constraint in certain situations, the need for such research and analysis throughout the appraisal process is also its most important strength. The alternative would be to suggest that poorly informed archivists should make the most crucial and important archival decision: appraisal. Careful, analytical research throughout the process provides the intellectual rigour and cross-institutional functional perspective which was missing in earlier appraisal methodologies which preceded macro-appraisal. This intellectual rigour means that an archivist is in a far better position to explain or indeed defend his or her appraisal decisions not only to the archival community and its immediate clients, but also to the larger society which archivists serve. And that, it may be argued, demonstrates the growing maturity of the archival profession.

Notes

- * I wish to thank Ann Martin and Terry Cook for their assistance and comments throughout the development of this article. The views expressed herein are my own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Archives of Canada.
- 1 F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," in Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, ed., *A Modern Archives Reader* (Washington, 1984), p. 326.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 328.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 329.
- 4 Joan K. Haas, Helen Willa Samuels and Barbara Trippel Simmons, *Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).
- 5 Helen W. Samuels, "Who Controls the Past?" *American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1986), p. 110.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 116–22.
- 8 These included: Phillip Alexander and Helen W. Samuels's hypothetical documentation strategy for the Boston ring road computer industry entitled "The Roots of 128: A Hypothetical Documentation Strategy," *American Archivist* 50, no. 4 (Fall 1987), pp. 518–31; Larry Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett's examination of a conceptual model of documentation strategy and a case study of the Center for the History of Physics ("The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and A Case Study," *American Archivist* 50, no. 1 [Winter 1987], pp. 12–47); and Richard Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist* 52, no. 2 (Spring 1989), pp. 192–200. These articles are addressed in some detail in Terry Abraham, "Collection Policy or Documentation Strategy: Theory and Practice," *American Archivist* 54, no. 1 (Winter 1991), pp. 44–52.
- 9 David Bearman, "Archival Methods," *Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1989), pp. 9–10.

- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 13 Terry Cook, *The Archival Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information: A RAMP Study with Guidelines* (Paris, 1991), pp. 5–6.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 15 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, 1992), p. 48, hereinafter *Mind over Matter*.
- 16 Helen Samuels, “Improving our Disposition: Documentation Strategy,” *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp.125–40.
- 17 Terry Cook, “Documentation Strategy,” *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992), pp. 181–82.
- 18 Helen W. Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, N.J, 1992), pp. 1–6.
- 19 Samuels notes that the functions are: confer credentials, convey knowledge, foster socialization, conduct research, sustain the institution, provide public service, and promote culture (*Ibid.*, p. 6).
- 20 Cook, “Documentation Strategy,” p. 187.
- 21 Archival records, regardless of their subject, are the products of the activities of their society, reflections of what German archival theory calls “the image of society.” The most clearly articulated view of the role of the archivist in society is found in Hans Booms, “Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources,” originally published in 1972 and appearing in translation in *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987), pp. 69–107.
- 22 Cook, *Mind Over Matter*, p. 40.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 24 The macro-appraisal model is described in detail in Cook, “Mind Over Matter,” pages 52 to 56. In presenting the model, Cook uses terminology relating to government records, referring to the interaction of *citizen* and *state*. While this does result in the macro-appraisal model being most obviously applicable to government records as presented, it was not meant to imply that it cannot be applied equally to other, non-government creators. Cook first notes his focus on government records in note 11, and gives a more complete explanation for this focus in note 31: “I am adopting the terminology of the *citizen* interacting with the *state*, which is appropriate to government records. I do this *only* [original emphasis] to save the reader excessive qualification at each point I believe that the model may be applied equally well to other institutions, where the terminology might more appropriately be the university and the student, the business and its clients, the church and its parishioners, the union and its members, etc., rather than the citizen and the state. I hope that this terminological short-cut will not be forgotten, or lead to accusations that the model is exclusively for government records, or unduly statist, or susceptible to political interference.”
- 25 Cook, “Mind Over Matter,” p. 47.
- 26 The application of criteria to assign priorities to record-creating structures should result in the division into priority categories of all agencies for which an archives is responsible. Regardless of the number of categories, the criteria used to categorize an institution should include: its relationship within the government as a whole (i.e, is it a central agency, a “line department,” or “staff” administration); the diversity and breadth of its functions throughout history; its formal leadership within a function (i.e., is it a focus for inter-agency activities); the number and complexity of the pieces of legislation for which is responsible; the existence and level of rank for its head; the size of its budget and discretionary spending; its staff, and its client base; its internal administrative complexity, including regionalization and field offices; the existence of any major gaps in the archival records holdings; and any known threat to the records in the institution (*Mind Over Matter*, pp. 53–54).
- 27 Two of these tools are the companion pieces to this macro-appraisal model, *The Archival*

- Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information: A RAMP Study With Guidelines*, which was noted in footnote 13, and his subsequent article "Many are called but few are chosen: Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 25–50. Both of these works take the macro-appraisal model outlined in "Mind Over Matter" and apply it at a lower level to large series of case files to assist archivists in determining which kinds of information need to be kept or how to reduce the bulk of large series through sampling.
- 28 The appraisal methodology is articulated in Terry Cook, "An Appraisal Methodology: Guidelines for Performing an Archival Appraisal," Government Archives Division, National Archives of Canada, 31 December 1991, typescript.
 - 29 Due to government downsizing since 1991, this number has been reduced to 103 as of August 1997.
 - 30 Although the bulk of this section is based upon a summarization of a number of internal National Archives documents and my own experiences in working with the new planned approach since its inception, readers interested in a single detailed overview of the processes may wish to consult an excellent article by Bruce Wilson, "Systematic Appraisal of the Records of the Government of Canada at the National Archives of Canada," *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994), pp. 218–31. The failure of the earlier system of government records acquisition practices is also outlined in Bryan Corbett and Eldon Frost, "The Acquisition of Federal Government Records: A Report on Records Management and Archival Practices," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983–84), pp. 201–32, and later reaffirmed in Eldon Frost, "A Weak Link in the Chain: Records Scheduling as a Source of Archival Acquisition," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991), pp. 78–86.
 - 31 The process used to determine the priority assigned to federal institutions is found in Terry Cook, "Government Wide Plan for the Disposition of Records, 1991–1996," Government Archives Division, National Archives of Canada, October 1990, typescript.
 - 32 Cook, "Mind Over Matter," p. 47.
 - 33 One key result of the increased importance of initial research for acquisition purposes at the National Archives is the creation of the Institutional Profile (IP). Designed as single, comprehensive source of information relating to a government agency and the records that it creates, the IP is created by the lead archivist for the agency with information contributed by several other members of the archival team, such as the responsible information analyst and media archivists. It consists of several sections: detailed information on the administrative history, mandate, and functions of the agency; analysis of its record-keeping practices and existing schedules; analysis of its internal divisions as sources of records of potential archival value; the nature of existing National Archives holdings for this agency; and notes on any other concerns (such as access, security, custodial, or conservation problems).
 - 34 One of these internal tools, Terry Cook's "The Appraisal of Case Files: Sampling and Selection Guidelines for the Government Archives Division, National Archives of Canada," (internal report, January 1991), was based partly on his RAMP study (note 13) and later modified and published as "Many are called, but few are chosen" (note 27).
 - 35 This section is based upon the author's "Archival Appraisal Report on the Records of the Social Service Programs Branch, Department of National Health and Welfare" for Records Disposition Authority 93/040, which was approved by the National Archivist in March 1994 (Records Disposition Division Registry File, Records Disposition - Government Institutions - Records Analysis and Archival Appraisal Reports [hereinafter cited as RDD file] 6243-50/H2-93/040).
 - 36 The five appraisals included: nine hundred feet of central registry files from the Medical Services Branch of Health and Welfare; all records created by the federal government Office of the 1988 Olympic Winter Games (89/024); the policy and subject files of the Senior Advisor on the Status of Women in Health and Welfare (89/014); operational records relating to Prosthetic Services, which were transferred to provincial jurisdiction (90/021); and the case files created by the Pension Appeals Board for appeals under the Canada Pension Plan (90/023).
 - 37 For example, in Authority 89/024, which was issued for the Office of the 1988 Calgary

Olympic Winter Games, the archival appraisal notes that "The records in this office are a rich source of information for anyone interested in the planning and staging of a major international athletic and cultural event. ... [F]ederal government officials and private citizens will find these records invaluable for their planning and organization. ... Historians of sport could use them to trace the evolution of the modern Olympic Games ... [p]olitical scientists might find them useful to document various issues in foreign policy, such as boycotts, disputes over possible security problems, and perhaps even domestic issues such as native land claims" (Archival Appraisal Report, Office of the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games, pp. 3–4, on RDD file 6243-50/H2-89/024).

- 38 SSPB Appraisal Report, p. 10.
- 39 This section is based upon the author's "Archival Appraisal Report on the Records of the Income Security Programs Branch, Human Resources Development Canada," for Records Disposition Authority 95/019, which was approved by the National Archivist in March 1996 (RDD file, 6243-50/H6-95/019).
- 40 The *Family Allowances Act* was repealed in 1992 and replaced with the Child Tax Benefit Programme, which was later transferred to the responsibility of National Revenue/Taxation in 1995.
- 41 Cook, "Mind Over Matter," p. 42.
- 42 ISPB Appraisal Report, pp. 2–3.
- 43 The National Archives had taken part in the early phases of the development of the Family Allowance computer system (known as the FA Redesign Project) in order to ensure that proper archival retention and disposal considerations were built into the new system at the design stage, following the processes espoused at the time by the former Machine Readable Archives Division. FA Redesign was intended to be a pilot project or model, allowing for the future scheduling of similar records from the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security programmes following the redesign of their computer systems. Initial scheduling efforts therefore focused strictly on the electronic records and, to a lesser extent, their connection to the paper client case files held in numerous locations across Canada.
- 44 Of the ten authorities, nine dealt only with records in paper format, and only three stated *directly* that they applied to records outside of ISPB headquarters, while five others were worded so badly as to *imply* that they applied to records throughout Canada. Generally speaking, the authorities allowed for the destruction of individual documents, either through the practice of "stripping" files (i.e., removing all transaction documents such as changes of name or address) or the destruction of material after microfilming. Others granted approval to destroy the bulk of a large series of case files provided that a small "sample" of the original files was sent to the NA, or contained the provision that the Archives would continue to receive "1) all policy files 2) any case files or routine files of interest to the NA 3) files for which earlier volumes were sent to the Archives..." (ISPB Appraisal Report, pp. 1–2).
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–7.
- 46 This section is based upon the author's "Archival Appraisal Report on the Records of the Medical Research Council" for Records Disposition Authority 95/020, which was approved by the National Archivist in December 1995 (RDD file 6243-50/M2-95/020).
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3 and 7.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 52 *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
- 53 This section is based upon the author's "Archival Appraisal Report for the Records of the Drugs Directorate, Health Canada." At the time this article was written, the appraisal report had been approved by the Director of the Records Disposition Division, but had not received final approval from the National Archivist.

- 54 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.
- 55 The appraisal report for the Drugs Directorate noted that these kinds of records, created predominantly by the former Bureau of Dangerous Drugs, were covered by Authority 75/021 and its five amendments, the archival limitations for which required the transfer of all but one type of file (pharmacy sales monitoring reports) to the National Archives for selective retention. Since the approval of 75/021, the National Archives has received approximately 323 metres of records through this authority, and was slated to receive *at least* an additional 707 metres in the future. It further noted that a prior appraisal conducted for Authority 75/021, Amendments Two and Three, which focused on the BDD textual records in isolation, noted their potential for sampling or selection, saying that “Insofar as much of this material is of a routine and repetitive nature, it will probably have to be heavily selected upon its transfer to the Federal Archives Division. Moreover, once acceptable sampling procedures are developed in the next years, the routine reports and forms will be sampled. Now, however, we have no option but to protect all the records.” Appraisal memorandum, Federal Archives Division to Dominion Archivist on RDD file 6243-50/H2-75/021.
- 56 There are many ways to express the relationship between the records and their creators, based upon the nature of the record which is being appraised. See my earlier discussion in note 24 of Cook’s conscious choice to use terminology relating to government records throughout the macro-appraisal model as a “terminological short-cut.”
- 57 Jean-Stéphane Piché, “Macro-Appraisal and Duplication of Information: Federal Real Property Management Records,” *Archivaria* 39 (Spring 1995), pp. 47–48.
- 58 M. Beekhuis and H.G. Oost, “[PIVOT] Logic Model: Institutional study” (The Hague, Netherlands, July 1992, typescript), p. 4.
- 59 Richard Brown, “Macro-Appraisal Theory and the Context of Public Records Creator,” *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), pp. 126–28 and note 15.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 61 Cook, “The Appraisal of Case Files: Sampling and Selection Criteria for the National Archives of Canada,” p. 18.
- 62 This authority (74/027) recommended that the National Archives acquire an “F” sample of the records or a terminal digit five. This means that for files arranged in alphabetical order by name, all files for surnames beginning with the letter “F” are selected; for files arranged by Social Insurance Number (SIN), the sample consists of each file where the last digit of the SIN is a five. See Terry Cook, “Many are Called but Few are Chosen,” p. 34, for a discussion of the limitations of non-probability sampling, such as the “F” sample method.
- 63 It must be said, however, that the reverse situation can also be true. In cases where past archival activities have created a strong research/knowledge base within an archives, responding to downsizing activities can be accomplished more quickly using the macro-appraisal model than the traditional values-based method of appraisal. For example, the radical downsizing of Transport Canada from a large organization of approximately 24,000 employees to a regulatory agency of about 3,500 in less than two years resulted in the need to create over twenty records disposition authorities very quickly. Without the extensive research-based knowledge of several experienced archivists within the NA, these authorities could not have been produced with such precision or speed.
- 64 This raises an interesting observation about the present transitional environment which may well have an impact on the future successful application of the macro-appraisal functional model. More and more, records management is shifting its focus from an emphasis on records disposition, traditionally carried out largely by file clerks and classifiers, to one of much more active and complete management of information through all the phases of its use from creation to disposal. This change in emphasis can be seen in the development of a new “information professional,” a records manager well-versed in the study of business processes and functions and with the ability not only to incorporate those processes and functions into record-keeping systems, but also, perhaps, to apply quickly and effectively any archival terms and conditions

that are developed for broad functions rather than specific file blocks. This trend, combined with the shift towards function-based record-keeping systems, should in the long term provide more support for the application of the macro-appraisal model.

- 65 "Terms and Conditions for the Transfer of Archival Records, Records Disposition Authority 93/040," p. 1, on RDD file 6240-50/H2-93/040.
- 66 "Terms and Conditions for the Transfer of Archival Records, Records Disposition Authority 95/019," p. 16, on RDD file 6240-50/H6-95/019.
- 67 Cook, "Mind Over Matter," p. 58.
- 68 For this section, I am most indebted to my colleague Ann Martin, the archivist responsible for the transportation portfolio in the Records Disposition Division of the National Archives. Her extensive experience with the central registry system at Transport Canada and the application of macro-appraisal techniques to its records has provided me with a number of insights which did not come up in my own records.
- 69 Brown, "Macro Appraisal Theory," pp. 152–58.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 157.