Counterpoint

"The Surest Proof": A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal

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RÉSUMÉ L'article qui suit analyse le rôle de l'utilisation à des fins de recherche (valeur d'information) comme critère d'évaluation ou de réévaluation des documents d'archives sur le plan de la série. S'appuyant sur la « méthode Minnesota » en matière de tri et d'évaluation d'archives d'entreprises, telle que décrite dans une communication publiée dans *The Records of American Business*, l'article analyse et évalue les critères d'évaluation de cette méthode à l'aide de trois études de taux d'utilisation d'archives d'entreprises par des érudits et le grand public. À la limite, la validité de l'utilisation des archives comme critère d'évaluation se résume à la question fondamentale suivante : que sont les archives ? Toutefois, si, comme le dit Terry Eastwood, « les archives sont des créations sociales à des fins sociales » qui n'ont d'autre valeur que celle qu'une institution ou qu'une société leur donne, alors cette utilisation est la seule mesure que nous ayons de cette valeur (et du succès du travail en archives dans son ensemble). Après avoir soupesé le pour et le contre de cette utilisation comme critère d'évaluation ainsi que les résultats des trois études, l'auteur conclut que « l'utilisation des documents d'archives et la croissance de leur réputation » est « l'un des plus sûrs moyens de juger d'une évaluation archivistique judicieuse ».

ABSTRACT What follows is an analysis of the role of research use in making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the series level. Building on the "Minnesota Method" approach to selection and appraisal of modern business records as described in a paper published in *The Records of American Business*, this article analyses and assesses application of the Minnesota Method's appraisal criteria, using three studies of rates of use of business records by scholars and the general public. Ultimately, the validity of use as an appraisal criteria comes down to the fundamental question: what are archives? If archives are objectively identifiable evidence of business transactions then use is irrelevant as an appraisal consideration. However, if (as Terry Eastwood has said), "archives are social creations for social purposes" that have no validity aside from the value that an institution or society places on them, then use is the only measurement we have of that value (and of the success of archives operations as a whole). After examining the pros and cons of use as an appraisal criterion and the results of the three studies, the author concludes that "use of the archives and the growth of its reputation" is the "surest proof of sound records appraisal."

This article is an analysis of the role that information about patterns of research use can and should have as criteria in making appraisal and reappraisal deci-

sions at the series level, in particular as these choices apply to business records. In 1994 the manuscripts acquisition staff at the Minnesota Historical Society initiated a project to rationalize and describe acquisition and appraisal of twentieth-century Minnesota business records.[1] In 1996 the results of that project were presented to attendees of a symposium in St. Paul, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, on "The Records of American Business." In 1997 a refined version of the symposium paper was published in an essay collection of the same name. The approach to the selection and appraisal of business records presented in the symposium and book was dubbed the Minnesota Method (because, as was said then, "all the good names were taken"). The Minnesota Method encompassed a process for identifying, prioritizing, and ranking records creators, as well as suggesting various "levels" of documentation appropriate for records creators of different "rank." Analysis considered which types of series should be acquired at each level and, in general, which business functions should be documented. The weakest part of the Minnesota Method, however, was the rationale for defining and applying the different types and levels of documentation. This article presents an amplification, analysis, and justification of these appraisal criteria and of the value of research use as a primary criterion in records evaluation. Three studies of the use of business records by scholars and the general public serve as supporting evidence. It is hoped that this discussion will stimulate similar analyses of archival records in other subject areas – for example, culture, politics, and ethnicity.

A decade ago in *Archival Methods*, David Bearman pointed out that "the record of modern society is vast. It is created as a consequence of virtually every human activity and resides in every institution and with every individual. ... At ratios of 1 person year to 10,000 cubic feet of records appraised, it would require 450,000 man years to review the 4.5 billion feet of paper records created annually in the United States, to say nothing of the machine readable data, images, sound records, video tape and other media."[2] More recently, Tim Ericson lamented "unconscious assumptions" stemming from the past "age of scarcity," when collections were relatively hard to acquire. These assumptions, he said,

still distort our thinking. Most of our current acquisition policies are too broadly conceived to be realistic in the Information Age ... How can we even argue that it is possible for a regional archives to "document" comprehensively a particular geographical area – no matter how small – when one good-sized accession of business records would fill its shelves and occupy the attention of its staff into the next millennium? Archivists need to take a more realistic view of what we can actually hope to preserve.[3]

Despite lip service to having breached the transition to "an age of abundance," we as a profession have not devised or embraced a practical means of refining our acquisition and appraisal approaches to fit our goals and resources.

Perhaps the answer is as simple as becoming more realistic about our mission statements, which are often unrealistically broad. (Ours, for instance, proclaims its goal to "collect and preserve the materials and records of human culture relating to Minnesota and Minnesotans": politics, culture, society, business – in short, everything.)[4] But, while it may be possible to narrow mission statements at some repositories dramatically, for others it is wishful thinking: the requisite authority is not vested with persons equipped to formulate realistic goals. Mission statements, and even collecting policies, will for many repositories remain unreasonably broad so long as governing boards rather than archivists have the authority to define missions and policies. What archivists generally *do* have is authority to *implement* collecting policies – or decide *how* they are applied, which is more to the point. This authority includes deciding which records creators to solicit; which not to solicit (whether an active or passive decision); whether to accept records when unsolicited offers are made; and determining how many of the records are taken when a collection is acquired. But here, as in the creation of collecting policies and mission statements, we continue to be hindered by unexamined traditions and assumptions.

We have carried a conviction with us from the former age of scarcity that there are certain universals to appraisal and acquisition. To one extent or another, virtually all American archivists were taught that there are certain types of records that were inherently archival. Board minutes, executive correspondence, and annual reports would probably lead most lists. They also learned that certain types of records were inherently non-archival. Canceled checks and bank statements spring most immediately to mind.[5] The resulting mind set means that we virtually pre-define what an "archival" collection is, and consequently how big it will be – basing decisions on an abstract, objective ideal rather than a concrete and subjective assessment of what we want from the collection and what our resources will accommodate.[6]

There is, moreover, a tendency to assume that some sort of universal criteria exist defining what constitutes records creators whose holdings are "important" or "historically valuable." The most common criteria are, of course, antiquity and claims to some form of organizational primacy. Archivists frequently pursue – or accept – records of an organization or company because the newspapers have reported that it has reached its centenary (in the eastern United States, its bicentennial), or because it is the "first" in something (as in "first manufacturer of marble monuments in St. Paul").[7] We tend to do this even if the particular old or first institution or person is not as important or useful to our mission or clientele as other sources, and without giving much consideration, if any, to the cost in lost opportunities of pursuing or accepting such a collection. If an institution accepts, processes, and stores a 100 cubic foot collection for the state's first video store, it cannot give that staff time and shelf space to, say, acquiring 100 cubic feet of records documenting fifty years

of a younger, but potentially more important state or province-wide social ser-
vice agency. The problem is not that the video store or social agency is neces-
sarily more important, but that too often we do not consider what we are
discarding for posterity through acting on traditional notions of objective
value.[8]

Background: "The Minnesota Method" for Documenting
Twentieth-Century Business

At the Minnesota Historical Society, vague anxieties over acquisition prac-
tices were coupled with a very real problem. The MHS is the state's largest
historical repository. It holds 35,000 cubic feet of manuscripts, 48,000 cubic
feet of state and local government records, as well as large library, photo, map,
art, and museum collections. The ground breaking for a massive new building
for the Historical Society in 1990 and the accompanying campaign for capital
support dramatically increased the Society's visibility and unsolicited dona-
tions of collections.[9] Nevertheless, staff resources remained static. To staff, it
seemed inescapably clear that something had to change. What helped con-
vince our administration was that, ironically, *space* concerns also became
more acute. The new building contained about fifty per cent more storage
space than our previous facility, but it was evident that at our past rate of
acquisitions they would fill the capacity in less than half the time it took to
outgrow our previous building.

Concurrently, the Society was committed to using the occasion of the new
building to dramatically broaden and expand its already diverse clientele.
While genealogists and amateur historians have always formed a large per-
centage of the MHS' clientele, a publicly funded building in a prominent loca-
tion would bring new users with new needs and demands. Yet our past
acquisition and appraisal approach was shaped largely by what we perceived
to be the needs of our smallest group of users – academic historians. For many
reasons, then, we could not continue to select and appraise records in the same
way as we had in the past. A new method was required.

Any new method for manuscripts collections would naturally have to focus
on the institution's two largest bodies of records: its "congressional collec-
tions" (the papers of U.S. senators and members of congress) and its business
collections. With both projects we adopted a similar approach to ensuring that
the work got done, which entailed creating an internal team with *two* team
leaders, and occasional contact with outside experts.[10] We'confronted con-
gressional papers first,[11] then more recently, the business records. Strategies
for grappling with the acquisition and appraisal of business records have had
similarities to our approach to congressional papers, but have been broader
and far more complex. Minnesota has only eight congressional representatives
in addition to its two senators, so we could realistically acquire the entire del-

egation's papers, and concentrate our deliberations largely on deciding which series within congressional offices had the most historical value. Decisions relating to business records have been more complicated. All congressional offices generate essentially the same records (though they do not each organize them alike), so we could apply what was essentially a single blueprint in appraising series in each and every office. But the universe of businesses in Minnesota is far too vast for the Society to ever hope to acquire records from all companies; and different types of businesses (not to mention different size businesses) generate very different types and quantities of records. Thus, for the business records project we initially gave less detailed attention to series appraisal than to appraisal at the records creator level.

As with public affairs, the MHS has traditionally documented business aggressively. It is one of the two largest repositories of business records in the United States: we hold 21,000 cubic feet of business records, covering 520 separate collections. The business landscape in Minnesota is diverse. Minnesota boasts more Fortune 500 companies per capita than any state save Illinois. Minnesota was the seat of milling, lumber, and railroad empires in the nineteenth century and is home to major concentrations of banking, supercomputing, and medical technology in the twentieth century. Currently, there are 120,000 business establishments in the state,[12] and untold numbers of business leaders and trade associations. To address this rich documentary universe – and the documentation of all other aspects of human culture in Minnesota – the MHS employs two manuscripts acquisition curators![13]

The choices we faced, therefore, were those of most collecting repositories:[14] balancing one set of documentation needs (in our case, business records) against competing documentary needs, then deciding which organizations can and should be documented – and to what degree. As we set about to establish an approach for the MHS, we wound up defining an acquisition strategy – dubbed the "Minnesota Method." This is the topic of the essay in the book, *The Records of American Business* – a seventy-page analysis here summarized in a few paragraphs.[15]

As a basic stance the MHS decided that acquisition priorities exist and that choices necessarily get made either implicitly or explicitly. Ultimately, the collecting of one business's records necessarily means that the records belonging to some other business will not be solicited or acquired – or that the papers of an equally important social service organization will be forfeited to the shredder. Unless thoughtful, conscious priorities are set, priorities will be completely dictated by chance (what business went bankrupt this week, which business's Chief Executive Officer sits on the repository's board). Equally, restricting choices merely to which records should be acquired amidst the mass of records held by a business – micro appraisal – will not address the larger need for improved documentation of business sectors now dominating the state's economy. Therefore – to an extent following Canadian concepts of

macro appraisal – we decided that series appraisal was the last thing that should happen in an overall appraisal process and should follow a prior assessment of records creators and their relative value as documentary sources.[16]

Our appraisal of records creators occurred only after extensively analyzing our current holdings, studying the twentieth-century evolution of the state's economy, and consulting with scholars in several of the most interested disciplines. But we also did our best to take account of our current and predicted future resources in both staff and space; the needs of our non-academic users (who form the vast majority of our researchers); and our other documentary goals, priorities, and competing institutional program needs. In the end we wound up categorizing Minnesota businesses by industry, and then grouping the industries into eighteen sectors.[17] We ranked these into four tiers based on economic impact (using revenues and numbers of employees within the state), extant documentation, identification with the state, and the degree to which the industry was unique to Minnesota.[18] Still, each sector contained far more businesses (with far more records) than we could realistically acquire. So to further guide appraisal we identified and defined several additional factors reflecting institutional concerns and priorities. Along with tier ranking, these were intended to influence decisions about whether to seek documentation from an individual business and, if so, what.[19]

In our model the size of any single firm is less significant than the ranking given the firm's business sector. For example, our priority one sectors are agriculture, medical technology, and health care – but only one of Minnesota's top thirty employers is a medical technology firm and only two are agricultural, while eight are health care companies. When a sector becomes a top priority *all* businesses within that sector, regardless of size, become stronger, more attractive sources of extensive acquisition. Of firms in low priority sectors, only those firms that are among the largest employers in the state are, similarly, candidates for thorough documentation. As we discovered fifty years ago, when the records of virtually every lumber company in Minnesota were sought out and, if possible, acquired, there is a definite value to documenting an entire industry, both large firms and small – a value that exceeds that of the sum of the parts. While there are no sectors in the modern economy that have so few firms that we could hope to be that comprehensive, we do see a value to identifying a small number of sectors to document in breadth as well as depth. For those sectors, the smaller as well as the largest companies should be targeted to provide a better overall picture of the sector.

Nevertheless, more was needed. Deciding which sectors and which businesses to give high or low priority was difficult enough, but meant little if we could not go one step farther and define how these priorities would translate into the actual materials that would be acquired from any particular business. To do this we created five documentation levels (*"Do Not Collect,"* and levels D through A) in ascending order of comprehensiveness.

Do Not Collect

We start with the lowest level. *"Do Not Collect"* means just what it says: no records relating to the company will be accepted by the Manuscripts section of the Society.[20] This decision will not necessarily bind other collecting units, such as the Sound and Visual unit and the Society Museum.

Level D

D level documentation is an attempt to preserve minimal evidence of the existence and purpose of a company. Typically, the only records sought for level *D* documentation are annual reports, some product information (such as catalogs), company histories in print, film or video, and if no such histories exist, one or more photos of the main or best known company building. Depending upon the quantities of catalogs produced, only a sample may be sought and acquired. *MHS staff do not actively approach D level businesses for records.*

Level C

At level C, more records are acquired, including records documenting internal facets of corporate history as well as its more public, or externally oriented documents. Unlike practices at level D, internal features and functions of the company, such as planning, decision making, and employee culture, are documented – though at a much more summary level than at level B. But most attention focuses on documenting the basic chronology of the company (for example, through board minutes and annual reports) and its products and services – for instance, through complete sets of catalogues (one example of "public" documents). The types of corporate "archives" or "history files" often maintained by the public relations department as ready reference material may also be acquired if they exist. *Like level D businesses, businesses at Level C are not actively solicited by Society staff.*

Level B

Level B records acquisitions seek to document the internal life of a company (planning, decision-making, legal matters, product production, internal communications, facilities, employee training, staff culture, research and development, summary financial accounts, and so on) as well as external facets of its existence (marketing, community relations, products, stockholders, financing, and so on). But typically, documentation will occur only at the highest administrative rung so that subject files, project files, and correspondence belonging to the Board and Chief Executive Officer are sought and retained if of any

substance. Little, if any documentation is pursued below that level. Moreover, personal and family papers are typically neither sought nor accepted for purposes of documenting the business (although they may be acquired if they warrant preservation as social history). *As normal practice, businesses at Level B are still not actively solicited by Society staff.*

Level A

At the highest level of documentation, level A, acquisition activities seek to document both the internal and external facets of a company thoroughly. Documentation of internal communications, typically through such materials as letters and memoranda, is one of the most important distinctions between Level A and Level B. A second major distinction is that level A acquisitions typically include documentation of those individuals who most shape the evolution of a company; hence, extensive accessions of the papers of the founding families are sought and accepted. *Businesses at Level A are actively solicited by Society staff, as resources permit.*

Level D documentation is an attempt to address situations where some documentation may be justified, but only minimal evidence of the existence and purpose of a company – again, obtained through limited acquisitions restricted to such materials as annual reports, some product information such as catalogs, and company histories, again, involving no use of active solicitation. Basically, this level was designed to give us a way of responding to companies that we might otherwise choose to ignore totally but for the existence of mitigating circumstances – for example, political pressure from board members. At the highest level of documentation, Level A, we seek to see both the internal and external functions of a company thoroughly documented. This justifies active solicitation by Society staff, unless prevented by lack of resources.

Documentation levels C and D, where the Society will only seek and accept fairly minimal levels of material from a particular business, may seem contrary to traditional curatorial practice of acquiring the best documentation possible of any entity documented. This latter practice is not feasible because it presupposes that there are virtually no limits to facility space and staff time and that, as a result, time and space devoted to appraising, processing, and storing "complete" archives or the records of a low priority business will not prevent the repository from acquiring higher priority records from another source. To repeat what will increasingly be a familiar theme – in practical terms, archivists need to consider who will be using the records they acquire. The question for lower priority sources should be, which series will satisfy the most needs and users within the least space and with the least effort on the part of the repository?

In fact, it turns out that when we pay attention to what researchers actually

use in studying modern business, we find that traditional company records are far down the list. At the MHS our documentation practices attempt to strike a balance between the demonstrable needs of a relatively few scholars for detailed documentation across a broad range of functions at certain companies, and the increasingly well-documented use of well organized *summary* data by the majority of academics and amateur historians.

Shelves Crammed with Unused Material: Three Studies of Business Records Use

Published studies of the use of archives – what materials are actually requested or referenced by researchers – are few. All but two have been citation analyses. These have had the drawbacks of looking only at use made by academics, a small portion of archival users, and secondly, focussing exclusively on material receiving a formal citation rather than the larger body of material consulted by researchers in reading rooms.[21] Nevertheless, without exception, these studies paint a sobering picture of how frequently and how intensively archival collections are used. As the MHS approached the task of defining appraisal criteria for business records, we set out to gather specific data on the use of such collections.

During the period 1994–96, the MHS and the Hagley Museum and Library in Delaware were participants in the Records of American Business Project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The principal product of the project was the book of essays, *The Records of American Business*. In addition, the project stimulated or funded the creation of three separate studies on the use of business history sources. In the most ambitious of these, the Hagley Museum and Library sponsored an extensive analysis of scholarly citations; this provided substantive information about the types of businesses researched and records employed over the past twenty-five years in scholarly writing. The study's participants reviewed and categorized 79,000 footnotes. The Hagley study found a clear indication that, compared to internal and external publications, archival sources are not used heavily by business historians. Within the 79,000 footnotes, each of the following categories of material – trade publications, oral histories, company publications (annual reports, newsletters, and catalogs), government records, and published monographs – were cited far more frequently than all series of unpublished business records combined. The one exception was executive correspondence. Less than one per cent of citations were to financial records, and less than two per cent to company minutes.[22] **Figure 1** illustrates these findings.

A more limited study of the much more diverse set of users in the Minnesota Historical Society's reading room yielded the surprising result that non-academic researchers (who make up the vast bulk of MHS users) use unpublished primary sources more than do their scholarly counterparts – at least

Figure One
HAGLEY CITATION STUDY SUMMARY

	Journals % of Citations 12,336 total	Books % of Citations 67,235 total	Books & Journals % of Citations 79,571 total
PRINTED PRIMARY			
Annual Reports	2.0	2.0	2.0
Internal Publications	<1.0	1.5	1.5
Contemporary Articles	1.5	2.0	2.0
Contemporary Books	6.0	5.5	5.5
Instructional Material	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Trade Catalogs	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Trade Journals	11.0	10.5	10.5
Industrial Directories	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Government Documents	11.0	7.0	7.5
External Reports	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Newspapers	9.0	7.0	7.0
PRINTED SECONDARY			
Books	22.0	22.0	22.0
Articles	7.0	3.5	4.0
Unpublished Dissertations	1.0	2.0	1.5
Unpublished Papers	<1.0	1.0	1.0
ARCHIVAL: RECORD TYPES			
Minutes	1.5	1.0	1.0
Collected Papers/Misc.	1.0	1.0	1.0
Reports	1.5	1.5	1.5
Correspondence	14.0	17.0	17.0
Diaries/Memoirs	<1.0	1.0	1.0
Speeches/Addresses	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Audio-Visual	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Account Books	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
ARCHIVAL: DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS			
Financial	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Advertising/PR	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Personnel	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Research & Development	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Operations/Production	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Legal	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Engineering	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Executive	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Board of Directors	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Sales	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0
OTHER RECORDS			
Trade Association Records	<1.0	2.0	1.5
Other Orgs (Unions, etc).	<1.0	1.0	<1.0
Personal Papers	1.0	<1.0	<1.0
Oral Histories	1.5	2.0	2.0
Court Cases	2.0	1.0	1.0

within the realm of business and economic history. Assuming that a box of manuscript material and a single printed volume both equal one "source" (the best comparison possible for the moment), eighty-three per cent of business-related material used by these researchers consisted of manuscript as opposed to printed sources.[23] This may be compared to the Hagley citation study of academic users, where only 30.5 per cent of material cited was manuscript rather than printed. (Note how radically this differs from the long-held assumption among archivists that academics are the most prominent and appreciative, if not the most numerous users of archives and manuscript sources.) Overall, the most frequently requested sources in the MHS call slip analysis were (in order): executive correspondence, published monographs, executive-level subject files, and audio-visual material. Because we thought it likely that the use of the railroads records would be significantly different than that of other business records, we analyzed the two groups separately. In fact, the results were similar, especially at the top of the rankings. **Figure 2** shows (in its first two columns) the relative ranking of series and material type by use taken from the MHS call slip analysis and divided between railroad and non-railroad business records.

The third study took the form of a survey sent to business archives across the United States, asking them (among other things) to rank the sources used most frequently at their institution by internal clients and visiting researchers.[24] The rankings are presented in **Figure 2** (columns four and five). For internal clients those sources were (in order): audio-visual material, annual reports, internal publications, advertising and public relations material, personnel and bio-graphical files, legal records (which were tied with research and development material), product catalogs, board meeting packets (excluding minutes), annual financial reports (which were tied with the board meeting materials), and board, committee and other minutes. For external researchers the most fre-quently used sources were the same, but in a slightly different order: audio-visual material, annual reports, advertising and public relations material, inter-nal publications, personnel and biographical files, product catalogs, and research and development files. For ease of comparison, **Figure 2** also shows the relative ranking of sources in the Hagley citation study in addition to results from the business archives survey and the MHS call slip analysis.

If we instead look only at use of *unpublished* material and the relative dis-tribution of use across series, we can learn something about the comparative utility of certain types of unpublished archival records. **Figure 3** shows a com-parison of the relative use made of different series of *archival* records accord-ing to the three studies. (While **Figure 2** compares the use of both archival *and* published material, **Figure 3** is restricted to archival records.) In the MHS call slip analysis, correspondence, audio-visual records, and family papers drew fifty per cent of the requests combined from researchers using non-railroad business records. Legal records – particularly contracts and patents –

Figure Two
RELATIVE USE OF PRINTED AND UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

	MHS User Study/ Ranked Requests of:		Hagley Citation Study/ Ranked Use of Sources	Business Archives Survey/ Ranking of "Most Used" Sources by:	
	Business Sources	Non-Railroad Business Sources		Internal Clients	External Clients
PRINTED PRIMARY					
Annual Reports				2	2
Internal Publications		7		3	4
Contemporary Articles					
Contemporary Books	10	6	6		
Instructional Material					
Trade Catalogs	9	5		7	
Trade Journals			3		
Industrial Directories					
Government Documents		7	4		
External Reports					
Newspapers			5		
PRINTED SECONDARY					
Books	2	1	1		
Articles			7		
Unpublished Dissertations					
Unpublished Papers					
ARCHIVAL: RECORD TYPES					
Minutes				9	
Collected Papers/Misc.					
Reports					
Correspondence	1	2	2		
Diaries/Memoirs					
Speeches/Addresses					
Audio-Visual	4	3		1	1
Account Books		7*			
ARCHIVAL: DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS					
Financial				8**	
Advertising/PR				4	3
Personnel	6			5	5
Research & Development				6	6
Operations/Production					
Legal	7	6		6	
Engineering	5***				
Executive	3				
Board of Directors				8	
Sales					
Personal Papers	8	4			

  *Represents a single researcher's use of eighteenth-century fur trade ledgers and journals.
 **Represents annual financial records.
***Represents railroad technical drawings for rolling stock, capital facilities, and track.

eked their way into the double digits. So did financial records, due entirely to one researcher's intensive study of the account books of an 1830s Indian agent. Minute books received less than one per cent of requests, and not one request was received for daily financial records dating from after 1850. Within the railroad records, patterns of use were slightly different due to substantial interest among railroad "buffs" in engineering records and among genealogists in the extensive personnel records of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Even so, correspondence files, executive department files (which are primarily correspondence), audio-visual materials, and legal records were far more heavily used by researchers than minutes (less than one per cent), financial records and accounting books (less than one per cent), and operational records (which were never used). Notably, in the Hagley citation analysis correspondence was also popular, cited ten times more frequently than the next most cited archival source (fifty-five per cent to five and a half per cent). The third study, the business archives survey, reported that audio-visual, public relations, advertising, and personnel files (mostly biographical), were the most heavily used (in that order), notably by both internal and external clients. As a next, less frequent set of choices, internal clients also made use of annual financial reports, minutes, and legal files, while external clients went next to building plans and blueprints (which the table categorizes as engineering files for lack of alternatives) and to research and development files. Summing up, executive correspondence, audio-visual material, and personnel files were the most consistently popular materials, with respectable showings by legal records, engineering documents, and personal papers.

The question that logically follows any analysis of use is: do rates of use correspond at all to rates of resource expenditure within repositories? The easiest resource to measure, collection for collection and series for series, is space. So, does use correspond to bulk? Data here is even more limited than that for use. The Hagley citation study had no means of measuring the size of the holdings cited. The survey of business archives did not ask for numbers of cubic feet within series.[25] But we certainly know that a book (or even thirty years of an employee publication) is less bulky than a box of records. The three projects appear to confirm conclusions already suggested in citation analyses studies: that unpublished sources are not consulted in even remote proportion to their bulk when compared to published sources. We can, moreover, make direct comparisons, albeit limited, about use versus bulk at the MHS.

We can, for example, compare use of business collections to the percentage of space these collections occupy within our total manuscript holdings. Business manuscripts at the MHS comprise 21,000 cubic feet, which is nearly sixty per cent of the repository's total manuscript holdings. Of these 21,000 feet, 14,000 are the records of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroad, which therefore comprise almost forty per cent of the repository's manuscripts holdings, with the rest of the business records accounting for about

Figure Three
**RELATIVE USE MADE OF DIFFERENT SERIES AMONG *ARCHIVAL*
SOURCES CONSULTED**

	MHS User Survey/ Ranked Use of Record Types Within:		Hagley Citation Survey/ Ranked Use of Record Types	Business Archives Survey/ Ranking of Record Types Most Used by:	
	Railroad Collections	Other Collections		Internal Clients	External Clients
RECORD TYPES					
Minutes			4	4	5
Collected Papers/Misc			6	5	
Reports			3		
Correspondence	2	1	1*	6	
Diaries/Memoirs			5		
Speeches/Addresses					
Audio-Visual	5	2	1	1	
Account Books		5**			
DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS					
Financial					4***
Advertisement/PR		5	7	2	2
Personnel	4	5		3	3
R&D				6	5
Operations/Production					
Legal	6	4	8	5	
Engineering	2****				4†
Executive	1				
Board of Directors					
Sales					
OTHER RECORDS					
Trade Association Records			2		
Other Organizations (Unions, etc).			7		
Personal Papers		3			
Oral Histories					
Court Cases					

  *In the Hagley citation analysis, the number one ranking accounted for 55% of the citations
   from archival sources, the number two ranking accounted for 5.5%; in this sense the
   rankings are misleading, and it could be argued that correspondence was the only unpub-
   lished material cited to a significant degree.
 **Represents a single researcher's use of eighteenth-century fur trade ledgers and journals.
***Represents annual financial records.
****Represents railroad technical drawings for rolling stock, capital facilities, and track.
  †Represents blueprints and plans for capital facilities.

twenty per cent. The call slip study indicated that business collections repre-
sented thirty-nine per cent of all requests for manuscripts, as did railroad busi-
ness collections. Thus, sixty per cent of our holdings received, in this limited
study, only thirty-nine per cent of retrieval requests. The ratio is only very
slightly better for the railroad collections (26.5 per cent of use versus 40 per
cent of holdings) than for the rest of our business collections (12.5 per cent

Figure Four
COMPARISON OF USE VERSUS BULK IN RAILROAD RECORDS AT THE MHS

	Great Northern Railroad		Northern Pacific Railroad		Combined Figures*	
	% of Use	% of Record Group	% of Use	% of Record Group	% of Use	% of Record Group
RECORD TYPES						
Minutes	0	5	4	2	2	3
Correspondence	7	3	28	1	20	2
Audio-Visual	15	<1	4	<1	8	<1
Account Books	0	58	0	11	0	19
DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS						
Financial	2	7	0	5	<1	6
Advertisement/PR	3.5	5	0	<1	1	1
Personnel	<1	2	19	19	12	13
Operations/Production	0	7	0	<1	0	2
Legal	0	2	10	12	6	9
Engineering	22	<1	19	6	20	4
Executive	47	30	13	13	27	18
Board of Directors	0	<1	2.5	12	1	8
Sales [land records]	0	<1	0	10	0	7

*The GN records as a whole are about one third smaller than the NP records, and the mix of record types and series is very different.

use versus 20 per cent of the holdings). This is true despite the fact that, in addition to traditional scholarly and local history research, the railroad records – more than any other business collections – also draw use from railroad enthusiasts and genealogists. At least one other unrelated study, completed at the University of Wisconsin, indicated that a mere twenty per cent of manuscript collections there account for eighty per cent of use.[26]

As well as comparing use to bulk at the collection level, we can also compare use to volume at the series level, although at present we can do this for the railroad collections only – where the space occupied by major series can be estimated. What we found is that the percentage of use for correspondence, audio-visual material, executive department subject files, and engineering records is proportionately much higher than the percentage of space these series occupy within the total body of railroad records. Conversely, use of accounting records, other financial records, boards of directors' files (basically the records of the corporate secretary), and land records was proportionately much lower in relation to their volume (**Figure 4**). To be sure, the study covered two months only, and the percentages of space the respective series occupied within the holdings were merely estimated,[27] but this is the first time we have been able to go beyond conjecture and anecdote in analyzing use of MHS holdings.

Having done all this work, what conclusions can be drawn? It is probably a
surprise to no one that unpublished sources are used in relatively low propor-
tion to their bulk, though we now have hard evidence. So, given this new
information, can we apply it in appraisal and re-appraisal decisions? We can
and must. However, no matter how desirable, it is simply not possible to
declare that appraisal should be based on use and expect archivists to follow
that advice. Over the years, archivists have advanced various arguments
against making use a basis for appraisal. While in the end none of these are
completely persuasive, they are substantial enough to ensure that use-based
appraisal has been pursued with what might be termed true deliberate caution.
This caution is reinforced by failed attempts by proponents of use-based
appraisal to make their case: principal efforts to date have not entirely suc-
ceeded. Still – while blanket pronouncements both for or against can be found
wanting – the placement of use at the centre of what will necessarily always
remain an unscientific process is a pragmatic, utilitarian step.

The Arguments Against Use as a Primary Appraisal Tool, and Why they are Unsatisfactory

There are basically three arguments against making use an appraisal criterion.
These are that:

- archivists shouldn't do appraisal, period;
- use is a secondary and contingent characteristic of archival records, neither
  essential nor necessary, or "so much velvet" in Margaret Cross Norton's
  phrase;[28]
- practical value *is* characteristic of archives, but cannot be applied to
  appraisal.

Hilary Jenkinson's earlier formulation of the argument that appraisal is
"unarchival," which had been buried by the weight of archival writing since
1945, has recently been resurrected from the grave by Luciana Duranti.[29]
Frank Boles and I have responded at length to Duranti.[30] Nothing more will be
said here. Most archivists view appraisal as one of our primary functions, but
there is much debate over the criteria we use to make appraisal decisions.

Those who believe that use of archival records is highly desirable but has
no business serving as an appraisal criterion define other more or less objec-
tive qualities that make records "archival." They argue that these – not
whether anyone ever consults the records – are the only proper criteria in
determining whether something should be preserved. This stream has two
branches. One defines certain types of records as archival by simple virtue of
falling within certain records genres. The 1977 basic manual of the Society of
American Archivists on appraisal concluded by ranking material from "usu-

ally valuable" to "usually without value," basing this ranking purely on record type. (Minutes and surveys were among the sixty-five types in the "usually valuable" category.)[31] In this, the SAA manual summed up a long tradition[32] – one that finds distinct echoes today in some writing on documentation planning.[33] Basically, this is the "minutes must always be kept" approach to appraisal. That is, it truly does not matter what minutes are about, whether they tell us anything, or whether anyone is ever going to use them. They are minutes, and therefore they are presumed to be archival.

The second stream defines "archivalness" solely on the probative value of material – its function in providing evidence of business transactions or of the context of creation – those characteristics which, in this view, define its status as a *record*. Essentially, to be archival, material must constitute a record in this narrow sense. To quote Terry Eastwood, "the purpose ... of archival institutions is to preserve the integrity of archival documents as faithful and trustworthy evidence of the actions from which they originated."[34] Or, in Terry Cook's words (though Eastwood and Cook differ in other respects), archivists must "reorient ourselves from the content to the context, and from ... the artefact (the actual record) to the creating processes behind it."[35]

Both perspectives – one emphasizing here, in particular, analysis of context and the other, a record's value in documenting transactions – assume an objective definition of "archivalness" that has nothing to do with the potential or actual utility of the material. Moreover, even with a clear, evidence-based definition of value established, much difficult discretionary analysis is left to be done. The hard part remains of deciding which records creators and which of their actions, transactions, or functions are most significant from either an institutional or socio-cultural perspective.[36] Of course, archivists who focus appraisal on records' evidential value are not blind to practical considerations. All welcome, even encourage, active use of archival records by researchers. But neither evidence of past use nor assumptions about future use, they say, should influence appraisal: "archives should not be appraised and acquired to support use," period.[37]

The third objection to use in appraisal is not that it is antithetical to archival values, but that use cannot be measured or applied in analytical judgment in such a way as to make it a reliable criterion. One objection is that use measures *present day* values only. In 1975 F. Gerald Ham penned the most succinct critique of use in appraisal method when he lamented that "narrow research interests" had created a selection process that was random and fragmented – with the archivist "nothing more than a weather vane moved by the changing winds of historiography."[38] However, the most precise argument has been put forward by Karen Benedict as part of a 1984 critique of reappraisal. Her indictment of use is threefold. First, she writes, frequency of past use is no predictor of future use, because researchers' interests change so much over time: "There are records that will be of great value to future generations,

regardless of how much current use we make of them." Second, she says, "lack of use by researchers may be due to poor finding aids or a lack of knowledge of the records on the part of the reference staff rather than the intrinsic value of the records." Third, Benedict contends that archives' value to society is much less concrete and measurable than simple tallies of how many times a box get used.[39]

Ultimately, some arguments against applying use in appraisal come down to first principles – what *is* an archives and what is the role of the archivist? If, given the one objection, all appraisal is unarchival, so, too, clearly are use-based considerations. Moreover, use is equally irrelevant if, given the second interpretation, archives are objectively identifiable according to record type or evidential importance: if an archivist's first duty is to identify and preserve the probative purity of the objective record then he or she can give no thought – at least at the point of appraisal – to the uses to which anyone might put that record.

There is an alternative conception – a different set of first postulates. This is to accept, as Eastwood says, that "archives are social creations for social purposes," and that "they be appraised on the basis of an analysis of the use to which they are put by the society that created them."[40] Which conception of archives is right cannot be demonstrated in any objective, empirical, or wholly final manner, this being the inherent quality of first principles. Measuring use is empirical, but if use is not a *completely* trustworthy criterion for creating or assessing archives then, in some interpretations, measurement must remain moot. At the same time, alternative stances cannot lay claim to purity. After all, it is subjective human choice, rather than some objective scientific law, that determines that the recorded evidence of actions performed by juridical entities constitutes "records" and that, by light of further decisions, certain of these "records" are archival.

Distinctions have pragmatic consequences because the two conceptions of archives are fundamentally incompatible in practice as well as theory. For example, in an article in the *Midwestern Archivist* articulating the notion that records may be archival regardless of their utility, Roy Turnbaugh contends that "it is entirely conceivable that a record in the custody of an archives is rarely, if ever, used, and yet the clear responsibility of the archives is to preserve that record without regard for the occurrence of use."[41] The logic of "recordness" (material is archival only if it provides evidence of transactions or context of creation) leads both to the retention of vast amounts of unused material by archives and their failure to acquire and preserve much that could be truly useful. One obvious example of "non-record" material of high utility being rejected for archival preservation is provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation case file contretemps in the United States, in which the FBI decided that only certain types of files would be preserved by the National Archives and Records Administration. The FBI and as well, the National

Archives, by acquiescing in this decision, applied appraisal criteria very similar to those advocated by Terry Cook in his recent study on case files. That is, if the purpose of archives is to preserve evidence of functions then case files are largely superfluous except where they document divergence from the norm. But society's interest in the FBI case files had at least as much to do with the information they contained as the functions they documented or divergences they recorded; users successfully demanded that more files be saved.[42]

This, I believe, is precisely the logic of the social theory of archives: that "recordness" *not* be the sole determinant of archives. Measured by use, "informational" content is as important as evidential value. When business archivists queried each other about company use of archives to support decision making, one of the few examples that could be cited was a project by the Kraft Corporation to analyze the comparative advantages of building their business through acquisition versus "new product development." In support of the study, participants "conducted an extensive investigation into Kraft's history of growth strategies." "Our best resource turned out to be our oral history collection," they reported[43] – not records having a stronger claim to intrinsic value as evidence.

Clearly, arguments that in order to safeguard archival values no appraisal should take place or that appraisal should be based on assessing inherent qualities as "records" have no more objective claims on validity than arguments for appraisal based on use. Yet there are still more obstacles to be met before use can be safely declared a credible principal criterion for appraisal. Argument that use is an *unreliable* measurement are not easily set aside, even if use-based appraisal could or can be assumed to be valid in principle. The basic indictments by Ham and Benedict of use-driven appraisal are, indeed, to some degree true. These are that:

- appraisal based only on what is academically in vogue at a given moment will lead to preservation of an inconsistent and fragmentary record;
- we cannot predict whether records unused for 100 years might suddenly be useful as new needs emerge;
- records may have an unquantifiable importance above and beyond their use in research (for, according to Benedict, society places abstract values on "the maintenance of the records of its institutions");
- there are factors, over and above lack of interest or utility, that may prevent use of records and thereby distort conclusions as to their true value.

All of these issues are plausible and must be addressed in considering any use-based approach to appraisal. However, in the final analysis, none of them constitutes a sufficiently persuasive argument that use should not be adopted as an appraisal criterion.

Ham's objection to archivists being weathervanes of historiography is sound only up to a point. First of all, errors in historiographical prediction have a limited impact. Historians are not archives' sole clients; genealogical research, for example, is not particularly affected by changes in academic historiography and in the collecting patterns that result. Secondly, Ham implies that a ruthless intellectual consistency exists among all archivists that would lead all archives to make rigidly identical choices in acquisition. In fact, collecting is likely to be much more eclectic: there are too many dissimilarities between archives in terms of their missions and resources (not to mention in archivists' intellectual perspectives) for the weathervane analogy to hold up as anything more than appealing rhetoric. Thirdly, in the same article Ham champions the goal of an archival record that will be a true and complete "mirror for mankind."[44] That is something that no mortal formulation of archival appraisal can ever hope to do. Appraisal of any kind is, by definition, a matter of making choices and choices mean that the archival record will be incomplete and biased. The real question before us is, how do we make the choices?

Similarly, Benedict's contention that past use cannot predict future use is ultimately a rationale for not discarding *anything* – not doing appraisal – because much the same logic applies there as well: demanding that *all* records be kept for the sake of ensuring that *no* important records are lost. Admitedly, Benedict is undoubtedly correct to argue that archives have symbolic importance. But an argument that this importance will be undermined or destroyed by judicious choice does not logically follow. Certainly, some of the symbolic weight of archives is carried by their presumed "permanence," but as we should all know by now, the concept of permanence is and always has been an illusion.[45] She is on firmer ground when she notes that there may be obstacles to the use of records that make it difficult to judge researchers' demands for them accurately.

In fact, there *are* a number of impediments to use that have possibly influenced *which* records have been used. Each of these might lead one to question whether past use can serve as an accurate measure of potential value; the resulting findings could perhaps be skewed. It is worth dwelling briefly on some of the factors that can reduce access to records, possibly affecting rates of use.

Over the last ten years many archivists have raised fundamental questions about how well we as a profession provide current and potential users access to our collections. The Society of American Archivists' manual on reference service identifies three conditions which must be met before use of archival records can occur, stating that "to use archives, users need *intellectual, legal, and physical* access."[46] In the absence of any of these conditions, barriers to use can be created. For example, *legal* – and one might add moral or ethical – issues regarding user access have been the focus of vigorous, if unresolved, discussion of late. There seems to be a movement within the profession to

become increasingly protective of vaguely defined third-party "privacy rights" and restrict access to otherwise unrestricted collections.[47] The more restrictions that archivists impose, the more difficult it will be for patrons to use collections.

There is also the even more pertinent issue of users' *physical* access. Much of the literature has so far focussed on consistent hours of operation and accessibility to handicapped patrons.[48] Such discussions presuppose that researchers are able to visit the repository in the first place. It is well worth noting, however, that the Historical Documents Study report of 1992, *Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage*, suggests that inability to travel to archives is far and away the most significant factor preventing researchers' access to records. Sixty per cent of respondents surveyed – historians, legal scholars, public school teachers, and genealogists – gave inability to travel to the site as the primary obstacle to their using specific historical material.[49] This is unlikely to disappear as a barrier to records use.

Moreover, despite all the attention archivists have paid to *intellectual* access – particularly through standardized descriptive practices and on-line availability of records descriptions – we have done a poor job of monitoring whether this has truly improved intellectual access to archival holdings. Although now six years old, *Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage* has suggested that the vast resources we have put into on-line cataloging formats, standards, and systems may not be achieving the goal of greater intellectual access. The report notes that "only 9 percent of respondents to the survey selected computer data bases as an important way to find sources."[50] Will the same be true with Encoded Archival Description? The evidence to date suggests that our current paper finding aids are no more geared to user needs than our catalog standards.[51] If this is true for hard copy finding aids, it will not likely be different for automated finding aids. Add to this the fact that access to the Internet is still a minority privilege. Despite the spread of computer technology, by the end of 1997 only forty-three per cent of U.S. households even owned a personal computer, and only 57 million out of the 200 million people in the United States over the age of thirteen used the Internet the minimum of once a month (in itself a low rate of usage).[52] The likelihood that demonstrable improvements in intellectual access will come with EAD is at least debatable.

Clearly, impediments to use are likely to remain. Nevertheless, while access problems must be addressed in any use-based approach to appraisal, perfect access in an imperfect world cannot be required, in all fairness, as a pre-condition for appraisal based on use. Benedict's insistence that barriers to access be considered when employing past use to reappraise records does not negate the rational for use-based appraisal. It suggests instead that corrective, compensatory steps be considered.

The Arguments For Use as a Primary Appraisal Tool, and Why they are Unsatisfactory

Though the arguments against use as a primary appraisal tool are not conclusive, at the same time the writings of use-based appraisal *proponents* have generally been neither complete nor completely persuasive. Even Eastwood, though he has established a *conceptual* foundation for use-based appraisal, has provided us with no serviceable methodology through which implementation can occur.

Sadly, published discussions of the role of use in appraisal seem to have gone downhill after its first and best articulation in the 1940s. G. Philip Bauer, who is most known as an early proponent of cost-benefit analysis in appraisal, can also be credited with developing the most detailed and closely reasoned justification for use as the principal indicator of "benefit" in determining archival value. "Public value in records," he asserted, "is purely utilitarian." In a staff information paper for the U.S. National Archives, Bauer explained how an evaluation of users and records uses could be employed to guide appraisal. Here he presented a more nuanced and prescient approach to assessing utility than either Schellenberg, Dowler, Rapport, or Eastwood have provided in subsequent decades. Bauer was clear in observing that assessments of use required appreciation of gradations that exist in kinds of use and types of users. He noted, as well, that the volume of the records in question cannot be ignored as a factor in appraisal and that, ultimately, assessments are defined largely by the particular mission and clientele of an individual archives. Bauer seems to have understood all the right questions (regardless of whether one agrees with all his more specific conclusions). Unfortunately, his presentation was weakened by lack of data substantiating what he surmised about who uses what records for which purposes.[53]

Other analyses followed. According to Theodore Schellenberg, "the end of all archival effort is to preserve valuable records and make them available for use. Everything an archivist does is concentrated on this dual objective."[54] However, Schellenberg knew that predicting future use was a gamble, and suggested that, while archivists should solicit the opinions of potential users when appraising records, *potential* use could not serve as the sole or primary basis for a decision. Schellenberg contended that, "since the records that are useful for studies of broad questions usually consist of large series that are costly to preserve because of their volume, the archivist should actively explore the interest of groups of scholars in them. He should act as a catalyst to precipitate decisions on the fate of such records." But at the same time Schellenberg emphasized that in addition to considering "the extent to which it has already been exploited," documentary "appraisals should take into account the form in which the information is available in the public records ... and the extent to which it is available elsewhere."[55] Schellenberg provided

little detail on how this process should work; nor did he provide examples of the types of records that might be appropriate targets for consultation.

Thirty years later, new viewpoints appeared. The SAA's *Planning for the Archival Profession* called "the use of archival records ... the ultimate purpose of identification and administration."[56] Lawrence Dowler took up that challenge and proposed "collection use as the basis for archival practice." He realized that "all uses of archives ... are not the same, and archival policies and procedures ideally should recognize these differences." Dowler called for studies of who our users are, of "what information in archives gets used, and how ... the quantity of materials used and the intensity of use ... [can] be more accurately measured." Dowler also noted the influences that outreach, description, and reference activities have on use of archival material. However, like Eastwood after him, Dowler did not develop a specific appraisal methodology or cite specific examples of its application. And where Eastwood would abjure reappraisal – an apparent inconsistency – Dowler was also inconsistent. His approach placed great stress on including predictions of "potential" use and users which were not based on evidence of past use, but on a comprehensive intellectual understanding of the various types of "questions asked [and] ... methods used" by researchers within existing fields of archival research. Although equivalent to divining what users might one day decide to access, for Dowler this was "as important as knowing what actually gets used." However, this way of focussing on potential use ultimately provides untenable criteria.[57] As Bauer noted in the 1940s, "if we are to let our visions of possible use prevail, we may as well give up the idea of selection entirely. Anything is possible."[58]

Even one of the most recent analyses contains flaws. In "A Social Theory of Appraisal," Terry Eastwood terms his emphasis on use in evaluating records a "scientific theory," arguing in turn that their value as records lies in "the objective facts of archives" – their status as evidence of transactions. Eastwood suggests that, in appraisal, the "scientific analysis of the archivist" consists of assembling "evidence that any particular transactions endure in importance in society through continued recourse to evidence in them." Yet Eastwood's claim that his approach is "scientific" raises questions. For a theory to be scientific, its validity must be subject to testing and measurement. While one *can* measure records use, this is a far cry from making the leap and assessing the much larger, theoretical implications inherent in claiming the validity of use as an appraisal criterion. One cannot thereby deduce the validity of use as an appraisal criterion.

The tension between appraising use and assessing evidence results in seeming paradoxes (if not contradictions) in the Social Theory. Eastwood acknowledges that evidential records can be used for informational purposes, but rejects informational content as a consideration in appraisal. "The real thing being valued is evidence of transactions," he insists. He makes use the basis

for appraisal, but, paradoxically, rejects its application to reappraisal, averring that this would compromise objectivity. Choices would be "prey to the relative value judgments of each succeeding age."

Moreover, Eastwood's argument begs the question of how to *evaluate* use and if, indeed, it should even be done. Do we simply count the number of times a piece of evidence is requested, or do we try to determine the number of times it actually proves "useful" to the researcher? Is the *quality* of use to be weighed along with the quantity? Are some *users* more important than others? Such questions must have precise answers if current and past use are to provide "empirical grounds on which to rest our projections" of future use, and thus provide the basic foundation for appraisal.[59] However, Eastwood is not alone in ignoring the issues. In his article on use as a foundation for reappraisal at the U.S. National Archives, Leonard Rapport overlooks many of the same questions, although at least giving specific examples of the types of records he thinks should be destroyed due to lack of use.[60]

The Case for Use as a Principal Appraisal Criteria

Use can, should and must be a principal appraisal tool. If we acknowledge that archives do not have validity aside from the value that an institution or society places on them, then use is the only empirical measurement we have of that value, and significantly, of the overall success of an archives' various programs. This includes not only records appraisal decisions, but also arrangement and description, public access, and so on. The Minnesota Method, which focused on appraising records creators, was deliberately pragmatic, worried less about theory than about whether it was an effective way of getting necessary work done. In moving from appraisal of *record creators* to appraisal of *records*, the proposal is that we now embrace pragmatism's first cousin, utilitarianism, taking actions that result in the greatest good for the greatest number. That is, in appraising and reappraising records, what should be acquired from any source is that body of material that will provide the most use for the widest variety of users through preservation of the smallest quantity of records possible.

To be sure the utilitarian approach is neither precise nor scientific. This approach rests, admittedly, on a debatable and unverifiable premise: that (as suggested above) archives are social creations valued for social purposes. But this premise is no more or less true than any other "first principle" of archives. A mechanistic or formulaic application of the approach is not only unwise but impractical because, while use can be measured in certain ways, these measurements are not exhaustive and are open to multiple valuations. Society may not value all forms of use equally. A simple example is provided by asking whether the utilization of archival material that results in a citation in a book read by 1,000 people might not be considered more socially valuable than use made by a hobbyist, say, to construct a model railroad for his or her sole

enjoyment. This same example points to another difficulty: use cannot proba-
bly be defined solely on the basis of how many times a box is requested. Not
only might a single use communicate archival material to many other users
through publication, but also exhibits must be considered, as well as access to
materials in digital settings like the Internet. Hits on documents mounted on a
web site, in turn, remind us that lack of use may not in fact be evidence of lack
of utility so much as lack of accessibility. If we digitize two collections and
put them on the web and they each get 1,000 hits, can we logically conclude
that the contents of all our less frequently accessed hard copy collections are
therefore intrinsically less useful?

If use is not free from subjective judgments and problems of measurement,
neither is it free of at least one inherent bias. Utilitarianism can quickly morph
into simple majoritarianism, leaving the documentation of powerless minority
classes begging while we hasten off to collect more material relating to middle
and upper class educated whites, who are our most numerous users.[61] A good
case can also be made that there are also a *very* narrow range of truly vital
records, which must be preserved whether or not they are ever directly con-
sulted. These might include original copies of materials critical to document-
ing our basic rights as citizens. A couple of examples are immigration records
and birth records – records which are rarely accessed in their original condi-
tion. Other examples might be, for an institutional archives, minute books
forming the primary legal record of decisions taken, and for a college
archives, student records which document grades. For all these reasons use-
based criteria should not be applied mechanically or with foolhardy rigidity,
resulting in rules like "All correspondence files will be kept; no accounting
records will be saved." I have always agreed with F. Gerald Ham that
appraisal is ultimately more an art than a science, but also with Virginia
Stewart's caveat that "even an art form demands rigor, attention to detail, and
some rationale for the technique."[62] A utilitarian approach to appraisal is a
step toward making more rational and thoughtful choices – though neither
wholly scientific nor completely objective.

Moreover, even if use could be applied scientifically and with pure objec-
tivity, it could not stand completely alone as an appraisal criterion. Institu-
tional mission, some assessment of records content and of the completeness of
series in question, an evaluation of the relative importance of a particular cre-
ator (and hence of their records), and of course, political considerations (such
as a board member's particular interest in records being assessed) may all
have a bearing. To be sure, several approaches to appraisal have already made
either use or input from users a significant component, though one among
many, in appraisal decisions. These approaches are those most notably
described in Maynard Brichford's 1977 *Appraisal and Accessioning* manual,
the "black box" taxonomy developed by Frank Boles and Julia Young, and the
documentation strategy defined and popularized by Larry Hackman and Joan

Warnow Blewett.[63] Yet, even if reliance on use is not the autonomous and completely determinative scientific methodology Eastwood wishes to make it, the pragmatic and utilitarian approach introduced here raises it to far more than just one "module" among the many equivalent appraisal criteria identified, for example, by Boles and Young.

In the utilitarian approach, use becomes the presumptive determinant in appraisal or reappraisal. A basic assumption is, for example, that large series with low use will not be retained. The burden of proof, so to speak, falls on arguments for retention. Or, to borrow a phrase from the computer software industry (which has itself adopted language from archives), calculations of benefits versus cost – that is, the benefits of use versus the costs of appraisal, processing, space, and conservation – should form the "default" setting in series appraisal and reappraisal. Instead of assuming a universal set of values applicable to all specific measurements of use, it takes individual repositories' missions and clients into account. If adopted widely, this approach would give the profession a practical means to dramatically reduce the vast universe of records we are faced with cataloging and preserving, while increasing the usefulness and value of archives to those who support us.

Practical Application

With all these caveats, how would we apply a utilitarian method of appraisal in the real world? For this we can return to the studies made of business records use. A first observation is that with the exception of audio-visual material, the material in the MHS and Hagley studies found to be most frequently used does not overlap with that material similarly identified through the survey of business archives (**Figure 2**). This comparison strongly suggests that different groups of users have very different priorities. Albeit, if we shift from looking at the use made of *all* sources to use only of unpublished sources, some similarities appear among user groups (**Figure 3**). Nevertheless, this discovery does little to answer appraisal questions. *The conclusion must be that proper application of appraisal criteria can come only by considering the intersection of use, repository mission, and repository resources.* Based on these considerations, a repository which purposely serves a primarily scholarly clientele and has limited staff and space (and whose institution does not?) would choose pragmatically to save a different, and smaller set of materials from a given business than would a business archives or a repository serving a broad public clientele.

The materials having the greatest utility for the greatest number and variety of users seem to be found among company-produced material, annual reports, internal publications, trade catalogs and other advertising and public relations material, correspondence and executive-level subject files (so grouped because they are often difficult to differentiate), audio-visual material, and

personnel records. With the exception of correspondence files and personnel files, these are generally small series.[64] What this suggests for the MHS, for example, is that that we can serve scholars, lay researchers, and our donors (these last constituents corresponding roughly to the internal users at business archives) by acquiring and preserving all the series each group most uses – and *still* acquire smaller collections than we have traditionally accepted. Similarly, if a county historical society has room either for a company's minute books or for their annual reports and employee publications, analyses of use should incline them to the reports and publications. If a business archives has just enough budget to either microfilm deteriorating ledgers or hire someone to index company publications, studies of use should point them to the latter. Use should similarly inform reappraisal.

If comparisons of use versus bulk for the railroad records can be sustained for other business collections, it would be extraordinarily difficult to justify acquiring or retaining accounting records or any but the most summary financial records for business enterprises of the late nineteenth century and beyond: use is extremely low and bulk is very high. These records have long been avidly collected by archivists and their acquisition vigorously defended, even in the face of a widely acknowledged lack of use.[65] The Hagley citation study clearly shows that historians scarcely use accounting records from any twentieth-century business. The MHS call slip analysis confirms that lay researchers are just as uninterested. At the MHS, a full ten per cent of our entire manuscript collection consists of the accounting records of two railroads. These records are *not* used. The questions arise: why should we keep those records and why would we take more accounting records from more firms?

And what of minutes, that most traditionally archival of all record types? Their utility as *historical sources* seems slim, and for that reason the MHS has decided that they will *not* automatically be acquired from a business from which other records may be accepted.[66] While there may be reasons for accepting minutes in specific instances,[67] studies of use provide us with the basis for changing our "default" decision from "accept" to "question."

However, the institutional context within which a use-centred appraisal of records should take place leaves room for the MHS to acquire large, and what would be traditionally called "complete" sets of records from some select firms. The decision to do so is not be made on the basis of a neo-Jenkinsonian argument for preserving complete records, hence records in their full context. From a utilitarian perspective, the provision of extensive knowledge and evidence of context is at best a secondary responsibility; it matters only to some users some of the time and should therefore be the exception rather than the rule. To relate this to the Minnesota Method, documentary level A, where context becomes a definite goal, should be adopted only for those records creators at the pinnacle of a repository's priority list. Even then, the acquisition of such a complete body of records should be justified as much on the basis of our

knowing that some users will need a full knowledge of context as on the basis of what archival theory dictates. For most businesses that a repository documents, more users will be served in more ways by making appraisal decisions based on use rather than on preservation of context.

By definition, the application of use in appraisal must be based on assessment of the utilitarian value of extant holdings. Therefore, the most direct, safest application of the data is to the collections used to generate that information – that is, in reappraisal. Nevertheless, this is certainly not to say that this information should not be used to assess new acquisitions. *Statistics of use for late twentieth-century business records already in a repository can and should be used to define appraisal criteria for additional late twentieth-century business collections when a repository considers acquiring them.* Indeed, as a purely practical matter it is likely that a repository will employ use-based data more for appraisal than for reappraisal since (with the possible exception of massive series such as the railroad accounting records at the MHS) it would be hard to justify the staff time expended in terms of the space gained through a major reappraisal project. But simply saying that reappraisal may not be cost effective is not to say that it is unwise or unworkable. Eastwood's rejection of the application of use studies to reappraisal is impractical because it ignores the limits that past appraisal decisions place on current and future acquisitions. It is not only storage space that will not expand indefinitely: neither will conservation or media-conversion budgets. Hard choices must be made that include re-assessing appraisal decisions made before anyone did use studies and before the democratization of access to collections made their practical value to the public a more pressing concern.

A justification for declining or de-accessioning minutes, financial accounts, or anything else does not depend on *no one* ever having used or being likely to use such records – only on the recognition that we cannot do or save everything and on the utilitarian argument that deciding what we *will* do and save should be based on providing the most benefit to the most people at the least cost. Nor is it suggested that a few hobbyists' *probable* use of bulky railroad purchase orders is in itself less valuable than the many uses demonstrably made of correspondence files. The argument is simply that preserving correspondence files is of more benefit to more people and that secondly, by not saving the purchase orders we can instead preserve other materials that will serve more people. Hobbyists' use is not considered in any way illegitimate; indeed, it is exactly this user group's overwhelming use of the (also much smaller) set of railroad engineering records that defines the utility of saving those records. Needs are simply weighed against both the costs required to meet these needs and the likelihood of meeting more requirements at less cost by making other appraisal and retention choices.[68]

Indeed, a utilitarian approach must accept that accumulating traditional company files is not the only, or even necessarily the best means of document-

ing business. Four of the chapters in *The Records of American Business* look at non-traditional means of documentation. Timothy L. Ericson looks at "external" records – that is, materials such as government records, independent business publications, labour records, and the records of industry trade associations that are not generated by companies. James E. Fogerty examines the role of oral history in the documentation of business. Ernest J. Dick focuses on sound and visual records as business documents. And John A. Fleckner touches on the importance of artifacts, graphic images, and sound and visual material as sources for non-academic history.[69] All of these sources have long been accepted as *supplements* to traditional business records. What a utilitarian approach to appraisal suggests is that these sources – or collections of corporate publications such as annual reports and employee newsletters – should be frequently sought and accepted as *substitutes* for minutes, ledgers, and payrolls.

There is one final thought about use-based appraisal: it carries with it the implication that other aspects of archives administration – particularly processing and reference – should also be more user-driven. Some archivists have already begun to argue this position, suggesting modest to radical changes in reference procedures and records processing to make archival material more intellectually accessible to the majority of our users.[70] It is possible to accept a utilitarian approach to appraisal while rejecting similar approaches to processing (and vice versa), but they may well be two sides of the same coin. It would be inconsistent to do one but not the other. At the bottom of this issue is a set of fundamental questions about what archives are and who and what they are intended for.

Application to Other Record Types

Business records are not the only category of material to which we at the MHS have begun to apply utilitarian approaches in appraisal and reappraisal. As noted earlier, the MHS approach to business records was preceded by a roughly similar project to redefine our approach to appraising congressional collections. However, this did not include an evaluation of records creators as sources. The congressional appraisal guidelines focused almost entirely on series and function-level appraisal, since the Society has reaffirmed its commitment to attempt to collect material from the state's entire congressional delegation. As with the business collections, our congressional collections were, and still are huge, and were not receiving a proportionate share of use. In 1990 they totaled nearly 6,200 cubic feet, or approximately sixteen per cent of the Society's total manuscript collection.[71] A full ninety-five per cent of this 6,200 feet documents congressional activity since World War II, eighty-two per cent (5,000 cubic feet) since 1960 alone.

Historians and other users of congressional papers have admitted, often

against their will, that the size of modern congressional collections and, in particular, the ever diminishing ratio between content and quantity make them difficult and frustrating to use. At the same time, many researchers are becoming increasingly adept at using the wide range of other, less voluminous sources which also document Congress. In the words of one scholar, "congressional collections are far larger than they need to be in order to reflect the important issues and activities that they document." "Only by paring down these collections to their unique elements," she said, "will archivists succeed in making them useful to researchers and manageable for archives."[72] Results of a study in 1992 of patterns of use in nineteen repositories, including the MHS, found that case files and constituent correspondence files, which accounted for between forty to eighty per cent of each of our post-1960 congressional collections, received approximately fifteen per cent of total use.[73] These figures are even more approximate than those accumulated through the railroad record study because MHS fonds were not analyzed separately and because the figures for the use of constituent mail included the use of indexes and summaries. We have anecdotal evidence that indexes and summaries are used much more often than correspondence itself.

By 1993 we had developed new appraisal guidelines and began to implement them in evaluations of both new and existing accessions. The guidelines we developed took account not only of our holdings analysis and the rough statistics on use, but also of as much previous writing and discussion on the subject as we could gather.[74] Because there is much duplication among members of the delegation in terms of the issues and projects with which they deal[75] (as well as with constituents helped or heard from), and because the evidence was that the largest series receive the least use, our main conclusion was that the guidelines should reduce overlap by treating senators' records in a different manner from records acquired from congressional representatives. Several large series that had been traditionally considered archival would no longer be retained.

The most important step we took in reducing the bulk and complexity of collections was to reject *in toto* acquisitions of casework and constituent correspondence files from representatives, and to accept these series from senators only if they were microfilmed or could be sensibly sampled. As of the summer of 1998 we have applied these guidelines to five new collections (two from senators and three from representatives) and retrospectively to nine of our post-1960 collections of representatives' papers. This reappraisal has resulted in the destruction of over 1,200 cubic feet, with an average reduction of sixty-five per cent of a collection's original size.[76] There is, therefore, now 1,200 cubic feet of shelf space available for more useful material. Moreover, field staff have many fewer boxes to handle, sort, and appraise when new congressional collections arrive. All this creates time that can be usefully employed pursuing leads or appraising other collections.

Our decisions about congressional collections have been vigorously debated by our colleagues (less in print than through the mail and during the annual meetings of the SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable). As of the summer of 1998 we have still had no complaints from our past or present congressional delegation or researchers,[77] and a growing number of repositories have adopted these or similar guidelines. They have done so precisely because these guidelines reflect a more realistic understanding of repository resources and priorities than practices formerly employed.[78]

Conclusion

At least three things are glaringly obvious about the utilitarian approach to records appraisal. The first is that it is not perfect. Of course, if no archival theory or practice were allowed unless it was perfect, none would exist. Ultimately, the question becomes whether appraisal based on use is, granted its many imperfections, better or worse than the proposed practical alternatives. The second point is that its practicality and broad applicability depends upon an increasing number of use studies. Because every repository serves a somewhat different clientele, has a different mandate from its resource allocators, and must deploy different resources, in an ideal world every repository would do its own detailed use studies for every segment of its collections. These could be as simple as the MHS call-slip analysis, as complex as a process of user interviews, or as intensive as a citation analysis. The world not being perfect, most repositories will have to extrapolate from studies done by similar institutions regarding similar records. The third caveat is that use-based utilitarian appraisal is not a magic bullet. Utilitarian appraisal does not equal "easy" appraisal. Unless we abandon appraisal as an archival responsibility, we will never make appraisal simple because we can never make it mechanically exact or scientific. If the situation were otherwise, there would be no reason for archivists to exist. But a utilitarian method will provide a better rigour and rationale for appraisal decisions.

In the end, it is likely that making use a principal appraisal and reappraisal criterion will result in a broader rather than narrower historical record. It allows us to spend X amount of staff time and Y amount of stack space to save trade catalogs and correspondence from fifteen companies (or five companies, five civic organizations, and five churches) rather than the same resources to save the trade catalogs, correspondence, *and* accounting records and minutes for only two or three.[79] A utilitarian approach seeks not only to maximize service to our constituents, but also – and not coincidentally – strengthen our case with the sponsors from whom we receive our resources. ("Look," we can say, "we have increased use statistics while reducing our storage needs.") Otherwise, we wind up arguing that we need more space, and more staff, to store more and more dross that nobody actually uses. To use my favorite quote

from all archival literature: "Society," Gerry Ham once wrote, "must regard such broadness of spirit as profligacy, if not outright idiocy."[80]

Certainly we do not want to be viewed as profligates or idiots. Nor, I think, do we want to be seen as technocrats obsessing about the "recordness" of material about which nobody truly cares in the long run. The utilitarian alternative, admittedly, is not flawless, but I think it is better. Churchill is reputed to have remarked that "democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried." It may be this is all that can be said similarly of a use-based approach to appraisal. If, as it seems, it is demonstrably true that some archives are much better supported by institutions or society than others,[81] we might ask why – then seek the reason. Personally, I think Maynard Brichford had it right twenty years ago when he suggested that "use of the archives and the growth of its reputation" was "the surest proof of sound records appraisal."[82] Ultimately, it is not a bad foundation upon which to rest our profession.

Notes

1 Despite the vigorous (though to my mind not convincing) case being made by those who believe that the word "records" must or does refer only to "evidence of business transactions," the word is used here and throughout this article, except when placed in quotes or part of a direct quotation, in its more common understanding: "documentary materials ... regardless of physical format" (U.S.C. 3301). If placed in quotes, "records" (or the quality of "record") will refer to the narrower definition of documentation of a business transaction. The most notable and accessible writing urging this narrower definition of "record" can be found at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences, Functional Requirements for Evidence in Record keeping website, at http://www.lis.pitt.edu/~nhprc/

2 David Bearman, *Archival Methods: Archives & Museum Informatics Technical Report* 9 (1991), pp. 7, 11. Let me note at the outset that while I applaud Bearman for targeting many real and important weaknesses in archival methodology, I disagree with virtually every solution he has proposed.

3 Timothy L. Ericson, "At the 'rim of creative dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), p. 72.

4 From the Mission Statement of the Minnesota Historical Society's "Collections Management Policy," 1994.

5 The most enduring and influential testament of this conviction is the original SAA basic manual on appraisal and accessioning, which listed in an appendix those categories of records that were "usually valuable," "often valuable," "occasionally valuable," and "usually without value." Maynard J. Brichford, *Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 22–23. Brichford's manual was only the most influential expression of this, a very common approach to evaluating records. For other examples relating to appraisal of business records see Maynard J. Brichford, "Preservation of Business Records," *History News* 11, no. 10 (August 1956), p. 77; Ralph W. Hidy, "Business Archives: Introductory Remarks," *American Archivist* 29 (January 1966), pp. 33–35; Ralph M. Hower, *The Preservation of Business Records* (Boston, 1941); Arthur M. Johnson, "Identification of Business Records for Permanent Preservation," *American Archivist* 24 (July 1961), pp. 329–32; Jack King, "Collecting Business Records," *American Archivist* 27 (July 1964), pp. 387–90; David Lewis, "Appraisal Criteria for Retention and Disposal of Business Records," *American Archivist* 32 (January

1960), pp. 21–24; Robert W. Lovett, "Of Manuscripts and Archives," *Special Libraries* (October 1973), pp. 415–18. In looking at business records from the less traditional perspective of a labour historian, John C. Rumm ("Working Through the Records: Using Business Records to Study Workers and the Management of Labour," *Archivaria* 27 [Winter 1988–89], pp. 67–96) does not so much disagree with the records preservation demands of business historians as wish to add payrolls, discipline records, time and attendance sheets, and other employee records to their list.

6 To be sure, writing on functional analysis urges archivists to assess functions rather than records, but in the end merely substitutes one set of rigid assumptions for another: the literature of functional analysis implies, on the one hand, that it is necessary to document all functions of an institution, and on the other hand often resorts in the end to listing record types that contain documentation of the functions – lists that are remarkably similar to those in the old SAA manual. For expositions of functional analysis, see Bruce Bruemmer and Sheldon Hochheiser, *The High-Technology Company: An Historical Research and Archival Guide* (Minneapolis, 1989); Helen W. Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 125–40; Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Chicago, 1992); Joan D. Krizack, "Hospital Documentation Planning: The Concept and the Context," *American Archivist* 56 (Winter 1993), pp. 16–34; Krizack, ed., *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System* (Baltimore, 1994). Krizack ("Introduction" and "Documentation Planning and Case Study," in *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System*) coins the phrase "documentation plan" to suggest a middle ground between functional analysis and documentation strategy. She does make an important contribution by insisting that even institutional archivists ask hard questions about the place their institution holds in the larger universe of similar institutions, and she is cognizant of the fact that the level of available resources will shape the actual size and content of a specific archives (xv). However, Krizack defines extensive "core documentation" for a hospital – I count sixty-one series in her list (pp. 213–14) – and refers to this as "the minimum documentation that should be preserved" (pp. 211–218). She thereby implies the existence of a universal objective criterion for defining archival value. Samuels (*Varsity Letters*), too, claims that she is presenting "guidelines" rather than "directives" (p. 24), but expects that every function of an institution must be documented (though not to the same level). Her many sections on the "Documentation" of various functions use the adverb "must" with remarkable frequency. Bruemmer and Hochheiser's *High Technology Company* does a better job of distinguishing between observations on types of documentation and recommendations for retention, and does apply functional analysis in the setting of a collections repository.

7 This is different than the alacrity with which we pursue the papers of an organization favored by our governing board chair, because the need to please board members is practical and objective (though not necessarily palatable or a source of pride) while the necessity of documenting long-lived persons or institutions because of their age is quite suspect.

8 There is a similar issue created when we accept our billionth set of Civil War letters, caring little whether they tell society anything truly new or unique about the war, rather than spending the time trying to convince a potential donor to give us our first collection documenting a Latino businessperson. This is what Tim Ericson has labeled the "cow-shaped milk jugs" syndrome. As an example of archivists' tendency to thoughtlessly acquire endless sets of similar, though not strictly duplicate records, Ericson quoted a critic of museum collecting policies who referred to an institution with 200 eighteenth-century cow-shaped milk jugs "'ranged side by side on a shelf ... like some huge herd on a farm.'" When paper records were scarce, and the possibilities for collecting were few, such choices were not perhaps as critical as they are now in the age of abundance (Ericson, "'At the rim of creative dissatisfaction,'" p. 70).

9 For example, we received inquiries about donations from three Fortune 500 companies in the space of one year.

10 It is important to note at the outset that neither the congressional project nor the business project was supported by grants or other external resources. The one minor exception was the first phase in implementing the reappraisal of congressional collections (consisting of reappraising two of an eventual total of six collections), which was undertaken by an NHPRC/Mellon Fellow during the summer of 1995.

11 Some details of the congressional papers project are discussed just before this article's concluding section. For a complete account of that project, see Mark A. Greene, "Appraisal of Congressional Records at the Minnesota Historical Society: A Case Study," *Archival Issues* 19 (1994), pp. 31–43; Todd J. Daniels-Howell, "Reappraisal of Congressional Records at the Minnesota Historical Society: A Case Study," *Archival Issues* (forthcoming).

12 Bureau of the Census, "Minnesota," *County Business Patterns* (Washington, 1992), p. 3.

13 One of the two curators is the author of this essay, two of seven professionals who staff the Society's Acquisition and Curatorial Department. Of the other five, only the Sound and Visual Curator (Bonnie Wilson) and the Department Head (James Fogerty) are involved in any way with business records or any other major manuscripts collections. (The other curators are responsible for art, maps, and books.) In addition, the staff of five curators in the Society's Museum Collections Department are involved in appraising three dimensional artifacts of various types, including business products, packaging, and advertising. The MHS also employs four manuscripts processors.

14 For the sake of convenience, we use the term "collecting repository" to denote those institutions that acquire archives and manuscripts collections through deed of gift, as opposed to "institutional archives" which are sub-units of the creating agency and acquire fonds and series either through administrative directive or statutory authority.

15 Most of what follows is drawn directly or indirectly from Mark A. Greene and Todd J. Daniels-Howell, "Appraisal with an Attitude: A Pragmatist's Guide to the Selection and Acquisition of Modern Business Records," in James M. O'Toole, ed., *The Records of American Business* (Chicago, 1997), pp. 161–229.

16 Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Toward a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour Of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa, 1992) p. 53 (bold in original). On the other hand, macro appraisal presumes that a deep analysis of all individual records creating entities will emerge before prioritization takes place. In the Minnesota Method, preceding prioritization with such creator by creator analysis of the hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of businesses in a county, state, or region is impossible. A more plausible approach would be an intense analysis of every business sector or subsector, but this is likely a practical possibility only for special subject repositories. A repository dedicated to documenting the history of computing, for instance, would probably be able to insist that its staff develop a formidable understanding of the computer industry. But most regional, state, and local repositories, charged with documenting most or all the social, political, economic, and cultural facets of their geographic region would not have staff expertise, on any facet of business history. Staff within these repositories are jacks of all trades, masters of none. Again, this is not to say that a certain level of research and understanding is not absolutely necessary – only that the level of research and understanding envisioned by macro appraisal is not assumed by our method.

17 We consulted several internal and external sources, including the Standard Industrial Code (SIC), and finally settled on a hybrid based in large part on the SIC. We could not adopt the SIC sectors directly, because many sectors prominent in the Minnesota economy get grouped together in ways that are not meaningful to the MHS. For example, health care, hospitality and tourism, entertainment, and advertising were all grouped under the Services sector. Therefore, we chose to break out and rearrange some of these sectors to more appropriately define the Minnesota economy as we understood it from our sources. The internal sources used included the 1980 and 1993 MHS collection analyses and an early 1993 Manuscript section

draft list of business collection priorities. Other external sources included the St. Paul *Pioneer Press BTC (Business Twin Cities) 100* from 1994, and *Corporate Report Minnesota* from 1993. The final breakdown into eighteen sectors – each one further broken down into its various subsections as indicated by the SIC – does not claim to be scientific and made little or no reference to economic theory, but was tailored to the practical problems we faced in our state at this time.

18 The top priority sectors (what we now call "tier 1 sectors") are Agriculture/Food Products, Health Care, and Medical Technology. Not only the particular results, but the very basis of the prioritization itself was peculiar to the MHS. This should be understood. Many different specific approaches to prioritization are not only possible but sensible. Florence Lathrop, in her article "Toward a National Collecting Policy for Business History: The View From Baker Library," *Business History Review* 62 (Spring 1988), p. 142, has stated quite presciently that: "A number of criteria can be used to select industries [as the focus for a repository's collecting]: the centrality of an industry to the local or national economy in a particular time period; the size of an industry, measured in a variety of ways – its contribution to gross national (or regional) product, the number of firms involved, or the number of employees; the significance of an industry with respect to organizational structure, labor relations, technological innovation or transfer; the extent of an industry's impact on other components of American social and political history, such as ethnicity, family structure, or foreign relations."

19 Proceeding from the first to last question we ask about a firm, the "decision points" are: 1) Is it one of the state's top 25 employers? 2) Is it one of the five largest employers in its geographic region of the state? 3) Is it considered a leader in its particular industry (an industry being a subset of a sector such as health insurers and hospitals within the Health Care sector)? 4) Does it have a high degree of state or regional identification (one obvious example would be the late, lamented Hamm's brewery); 5) Can the particular firm serve as an illustrative example of a genre of businesses that we otherwise would not want to document fully? 6) Is the business "politically" important (for example, does its owner sit on the Society's executive board, or is she the sister of the chair of the state senate's appropriation committee)? In addition, at any one of these decision points, our interest increases if the company is minority-owned or has a particularly good set of records.

20 This decision does not necessarily bind other collecting units, such as Sound and Visual, or the Museum.

21 The published citation analyses of which I am aware are Jacqueline Goggin, "The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women's Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986), pp. 57–67; Frederic Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History," *American Archivist* 49, no. 4 (Fall 1986), pp. 371–92; Diane L. Beattie, "An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History," *Archivaria* 29 (Summer 1989), pp. 33–50. There have been two studies looking at what material was consulted in the reading room. One, examining the relative use of series within congressional collections, was published in Karen Dawley Paul, ed., *The Documentation of Congress* (Washington, 1992), pp. 131–43. This describes a model worth following. Its drawbacks are that, though it ran for a year and covered nineteen repositories, the study included only seventy-five users, mostly academics. The other reading room study tested a library science research approach to archival collection use. Though it has some methodological rough edges, William J. Jackson in "The 80/20 Archives: A Study of Use and Its Implications," *Archival Issues* 22, no. 2 (1997), pp. 133–45 presents evidence that in archives, just as in libraries, twenty per cent of the collections receive eighty per cent of use.

22 The citation analysis is summarized in Michael Nash, "Business History and Archival Practice: Shifts in Sources and Paradigms," *The Records of American Business* pp. 34–36. The Hagley was gracious enough to share the raw data from the study – done by Julie Kimmel and

Christopher McKenna – with the MHS. The study used four journals – *Journal of American History, Business History Review, Labor History,* and *Technology & Culture* – looking through every issue within a year every five years starting in 1945 and running through to 1990. These accounted for over 12,000 citations. The study also analyzed forty-one monographs published between 1962 and 1994; these accounted for more than 67,000 citations.

For additional evidence of the extensive use made of non-traditional sources by scholars, see Martha Lightwood, "Corporation Documents – Sources of Business History," *Special Libraries* (May-June 1966), pp. 336–37. Also see James M. O'Toole, "On the Idea of Permanence," *American Archivist* 52, no. 1 (Winter 1989). O'Toole argues that "refocusing [archivists'] attention on the permanence of the information in records rather than on the documents themselves will restore a broader view and will reemphasize the possibilities and the usefulness of preserving information in formats other than the original" (p. 24).

23 The study was undertaken by a volunteer, Don Gipple, under the direction of Mark Greene and Todd Daniels-Howell. Don reviewed all the reading room call slips for the months of April and July 1995. During those months, there were a total of 2,012 boxes of manuscripts retrieved, of which 784 were business-related (that is, records donated by businesses, papers of business people, and records of trade organizations); there were a total of 5,515 books retrieved, of which 159 were business-related. Unfortunately, this study could not include requests for photos or for newspaper articles, which the Hagley citation study did include, and does not account for the fact that some published material is found in manuscript collections.

24 Forty-seven corporate archives responded to a survey created by the MHS and distributed under the auspices of the Society and the Hagley as part of the Records of American Business Project. Respondents were asked to select from a list of thirty-nine record types and rank those used most heavily by both internal clients and external researchers. The record types were not identical to those used in the Hagley citation study, but have been correlated to the Hagley categories for ease of comparison. It should be noted that there were some variations in the ranking of most used sources by type of business, but though ranked differently, the top five sources were the same across all business types. Work remains to be done in analyzing how (if at all), use by internal clients changes depending upon the administrative placement of the archives.

The corporate archives who responded to the survey were: Aetna Life and Casualty, Aid Association for Lutherans, Alabama Power Co., American Express, Ameritech Corporation, Amgen Inc., Aramco Services Co., Augsberg Fortress Publishers, Boston Edison Co., Cargill Inc., Chicago Mercantile Exchange, CIGNA Corp., Corning Inc., Deere and Co., Digital Equipment Corp., Duke Power Co., Equitable Life Assurance Society of the US, Ford Motor Co., Frito-Lay Inc., H.B. Fuller Co., Hallmark Cards Inc., King Ranch Inc., Kraft Foods, Inc., Lilly (Eli) and Co., Little Caesar Enterprises Inc., Merck and Co., MITRE Corp., Motorola, Nalco Chemical Co., New England Mutual Life Insurance Co., Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Nynex Corp., Pleasant Co., Procter and Gamble Co., Quaker Chemical Corp., Schlossberg (Edwin) Inc., Schwab (Charles), Sporting News, Stamford Hospital, State Farm Insurance Co., Texas Instruments, TIAA-CREF, Wells Fargo Bank NA, Weyerhaeuser, WGBH Educational Foundation, WIL Research Labs Inc., Wrigley (William, Jr.) Co. We are greatly indebted to the archivists at these companies for putting the time into answering the questionnaires. We are grateful, too, to MHS volunteer Don Gipple for doing the tallies.

25 Our advisors on the project were adamant that these questions would be useless to ask because most business archives would not know these figures and would be reluctant to spend the time to calculate them. For a moment we thought this was overly pessimistic, but we realized that at the MHS we had no easy means of reporting such figures for more than two of our business collections.

26 Jackson, "The 80/20 Archives."

27 Figures for the size of each record series and type were drawn from the "Grant Request to

Burlington Northern Inc, for Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroad Historical Records Project," May 1976, stored in the Grants folder of the Burlington Northern accession file at the MHS.

28 Margaret Cross Norton, *Norton on Archives* (Carbondale, 1975), p. 251.

29 Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London, 1937), pp. 123–28, 152–53.

30 Frank Boles and Mark Greene, "Et tu, Schellenberg? Thoughts on the Dagger of American Appraisal Theory," *American Archivist* 56 (Summer 1996), pp. 176–88.

31 Maynard Brichford, *Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning*, SAA Basic Manual Series (Chicago, 1977), pp. 22–23. The implication that inherent value was based on record type came only after the manual first went to great lengths to explain the many criteria other than record type (administrative, research, and archival "values," including prospective use) that should be factors in appraisal. Unfortunately, it is the list at the end that seems to have become the most popular legacy of the manual.

32 For examples relating to the assignment of archival value to business records, see Maynard J. Brichford, "Preservation of Business Records," *History News* II, no. 10 (August 1956), p. 77; Ralph W. Hidy, "Business Archives: Introductory Remarks," *American Archivist* 29 (January 1966), pp. 33–35; Ralph M. Hower, *The Preservation of Business Records*, (Boston, 1941); Arthur M. Johnson, "Identification of Business Records for Permanent Preservation," *American Archivist* 24 (July 1961), pp. 329–32; Jack King, "Collecting Business Records," *The American Archivist* 27 (July 1964), pp. 387–90; David Lewis, "Appraisal Criteria for Retention and Disposal of Business Records," *American Archivist* 32 (January 1960), pp. 21–24; Robert W. Lovett, "Of Manuscripts and Archives," *Special Libraries* (October 1973), pp. 415–18.

33 See Joan D. Krizack, "Hospital Documentation Planning: The Concept and the Context, *American Archivist* 56 (Winter 1993), pp. 16–34. In Krizack, ed., *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System* (Baltimore, 1994), she defines extensive "core documentation" for a hospital: there are sixty-one series in her list (pp. 213–14). She refers to this as "the minimum documentation that should be preserved" (pp. 211–218) and thereby implies a universal objective criterion for defining archival value, linked to record type.

34 Terry Eastwood, "Nailing a Little Jelly to the Wall of Archival Studies," *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993), p. 237. See also Richard Cox, "The Record: Is It Evolving? A Study in the Importance of the Long-View for Records Managers and Archivists," 11/11/95 and Wendy Duff, "Defining Transactions: To Identify Records and Assess Risk," 6 December 1994, both at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences, Functional Requirements for Evidence in Recordkeeping website, at http://www.lis.pitt.edu/~nhprc; Luciana Duranti, posting to the Archives and Archivists listserv, 24 May 1993.

35 Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22, no. 2 (November 1994), p. 304. Also see Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992), p. 184; Terry Cook, "Archives in the Post-Custodial World: Interaction of Archival Theory and Practice since the Publication of the Dutch Manual in 1989 [sic]," *XIII International Congress on Archives: Third Plenary Session Principal Paper* (Beijing, 1996, p. 10.

36 Macro appraisal is undergoing vigorous and thoughtful evolution, but seems to be based on a belief that evidence of certain government functions is essential and must be preserved, without asking whether or not anyone actually has recourse to that evidence. See Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter," pp. 38–70; 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; Richard Brown, "Macro Appraisal Theory and the Context of the Public Records Creator," *Archivaria* 40 (Fall 1995), pp. 121–72. There seems to be a great deal of macro-

appraisal in the approach sketched by Hans Boom, "*Uberliferungsbildung*: Keeping Archives as a Social and Political Activity," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 31–33.

For expositions of functional analysis, see Helen W. Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 125–40; and her *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Chicago, 1992). Samuels seems to expect that every function of an institution must be documented (though not all to the same level). She apparently considers documenting functions (rather than selecting material for use) to be the purpose of archives.

37 Cook, "Archives in the Post-Custodial World," note 43. Cook goes on to allow that "once acquired, however, their [archives'] description, reference, and diffusion should of course reflect client needs as far as possible." I would suggest that acquiring archives that are not useful and then describing them in user-friendly ways is of arguable assistance.

38 Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* (January 1975), p. 8.

39 Karen Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives – A Reply to Leonard Rapport," *American Archivist* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1984), pp. 47–48. See also, Roy C. Turnbaugh: "Archival Mission and User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986), pp. 27–33, and "Plowing the Sea: Appraising Public Records in an Ahistorical Culture," *American Archivist* 53 (Fall 1990), pp. 562–65. Margaret Cross Norton, who argued against use primarily on the grounds that certain records were inherently archival, also insisted that lack of use in the past was no predictor of future use: "The fact that a document may not have been consulted for a century does not rule out the possibility of the fact that tomorrow some attorney may attach great significance to it." Norton, *Norton on Archives*, p. 26.

40 Terry Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honor of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa, 1992), pp. 78, 83. Eastwood presents two very similar forms of the same argument in, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," pp. 71–89, and "How Goes it with Appraisal?" *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993), pp. 111–21. The quotes and analysis that follow are drawn equally from the two essays.

41 Roy Turnbagh, "Archival Mission and User Studies," p. 28. Anyone who has worked in an institutional archives (government or private) will acknowledge this truth, though it applies to most collecting repositories as well.

42 Susan Steinwall, "Appraisal and the FBI Files Case: For Whom do Archivists Retain Records?," *American Archivist* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1986), pp. 52–63; Terry Cook, "'Many are Called but Few are Chosen': Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 25–50. Also see Richard Cox, who insists that "If these records are properly identified and managed, there will be more than enough documentation for the records creators, concerned parties, and other researchers." ("Putting the Puzzle Together: The Recordkeeping Functional Requirements Project at the University of Pittsburgh; A Second Progress Report," at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences, Functional Requirements for Evidence in Recordkeeping website, at http://www.lis.pitt.edu/~nhprc). As well, see Luciana Duranti, who rejects as unarchival oral histories and everything else that is not a "record," relegating such non-records to the purview of "documentalists" and "historians" (posting to the Archives and Archivists listserv, 22 and 24 May 1993, 3–6 October 1993, 4–6 September 1996).

43 Elizabeth Adkins' posting to the Busarch listserv (busarch@gla.ac.uk), 11 June 1998. The business archivists on this list also seem fairly united in the belief that the "stuff" of archives is and must be a combination of records, library material, and other "historical" material – just so long as it is "needed" by the company in some way. (See the postings on 1 and 2 July 1998.) Additional testimony to the importance and utility of "non-record" information and data will be found in most of the essays comprising Seamus Ross and Edward Higgs, eds., *Electronic Information Resources and Historians: European Perspectives* (St. Katherinen, 1993).

44 Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire," p. 49; Ham, "Archival Edge," p. 13.

45 James M. O'Toole, "The Symbolic Significance of Archives," *American Archivist* 56, no. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 234–55; James M. O'Toole, "On the Idea of Permanence," *American Archivist* 52, no. 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 10–25; Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture," *American Archivist* 53, no. 3 (Summer 1990), pp. 378–92.

46 Mary Jo Pugh, *Archival Fundamentals Series: Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 56, 6 (emphasis added).

47 See Mark A. Greene, "Moderation in Everything, Access in Nothing? Opinions About Access Restrictions on Personal Papers," *in Archival Issues* 18, no. 1 (1993), pp. 31–41, for a summary of the literature to that point. Since then there has been at least one session at every SAA meeting devoted to legal and ethical access issues.

48 Pugh, *Providing Reference Services*, pp. 65–74.

49 Ann D. Gordon, *Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage: The Report of the Historical Documents Study* (Washington, DC, 1992), pp. 39–41, 46. Some archivists do recognize this fact. Former SAA President Anne Kenney has written that "Archives are harder to use than other sources and not just because of their bulk. A researcher cannot check material out and take it home, cannot order it through interlibrary loan, and must use it during fairly limited office hours. The most meaningful distinction between library and archives may not be physical form or 'method and purpose of creation,' ... but access." (Anne R. Kenney, "Commentary" on Lawrence Dowler's "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51, nos. 1–2 [Winter and Spring 1988], pp. 94–95.) For an academic researcher's similar perspective, see Robin Kolodny (Temple University), "Archival Research: A New Look at an Old Tool," focus paper presented for a roundtable at the 1992 meeting of the American Political Science Association, pp. 5–6.

While the possibilities of providing remote access to archival resources through digitized presentation on the Internet have begun to command a great deal of archival attention, much less expensive and resource intensive options have been ignored for years. As Tim Ericson has noted, "For some reason, the concept of ... lending entire fonds for *research* purposes remains revolutionary and controversial – some would even say heretical." The intra-state loan program practiced by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin with its Area Research Centers since 1962 has seen the successful completion of 10,000 loan transactions, "for the benefit of thousands of researchers who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to use archival materials. And we are in the habit of loaning precious documents for months at a time to institutions not only across the continent but across the world, for exhibits." Yet the profession has never given serious consideration to the development of loan protocols (much less made it a professional priority of the archival community), and so far as I know only one institution has undertaken inter-state loans of original archival material for research purposes. This took place from Cornell to University of California, Santa Barbara, under recent RBMS guidelines for loaning rare and unique material (statement by Thomas H. Hickerson, Cornell University, during session entitled "Neither a Borrower Nor a Lender Be ..." at the 1993 meeting of the Society of American Archivists.) The quotation is from Timothy L. Ericson, "At the 'rim of creative dissatisfaction': Archivist and Acquisition Development," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 74–75. Researchers using collections of congressional papers expressed remarkably similar suggestions. See Paul, *The Documentation of Congress*, p. 143. The Society of American Archivists study, *Planning for the Archival Profession* (Chicago, 1986), also urges "expanding the availability of archival records beyond the confines of an institution's reading room" (p. 28; also, p. 29).

Inability to travel to collections is challenged for first rank as an obstacle to access by one of the archival profession's dirtiest little secrets: the extent of our backlogs. As Gordon, writing in *Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage*, discovered, "about 30 percent of respondents had been barred from collections because repository staff had not yet described or

arranged the records, and another 20 percent or more had been barred because records were in poor physical condition" (p. 46). See also *Documentation of Congress*, pp. 6, 143, where a survey respondent is quoted as saying "there are too many unprocessed collections," and Bruce W. Dearstyne, "What is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession," *American Archivist* 50, no. 1 (Winter 87), p. 82, who cites laments about unprocessed collections found in the state assessment reports of California, Kentucky, North Carolina, and New York.

50 Gordon, *Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage*, p. 59. See also Jill Tatem, "Beyond USMARC AMC: The Context of a Data Exchange Format," *Midwestern Archivist* 14, no. 1 (1989), pp. 43, 45: "If ... archivists are going to embark on the expensive process of developing online catalogs in order to assist end-users in discovering archival materials it is imperative to discover what users want to know." Otherwise, "the USMARC AMC format will be both an irrelevance and a failed opportunity." David Bearman's 1989 article on "Authority Control Issues and Prospects" did ask how researchers really *use* an on-line catalog to gain intellectual access, but few authors have followed his example. David Bearman, "Authority Control Issues and Prospects," *American Archivist* 52, no. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 286–99.

51 Elsie Freemen has charged that, "generally speaking, the archivists we produce believe that their clientele must be content with the product they offer – the body of records in the box accompanied by the standardized description, for example – not that they must have the skills to learn what the client needs and how to satisfy that need." Elsie T. Freeman, "Soap and Education: Archival Training, Public Service and the Profession – an Essay," *Midwestern Archivist* 16, no. 2 (1991), p. 89–90. John Roberts, "Archival Theory: Myth or Banality," *American Archivist* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1990), p. 120, also rails against archivists "talking to ourselves about ourselves" rather than paying attention to what the public needs and wants from us. Also see Hugh Taylor, "Chip Monks at the Gate: The Impact of Technology on Archives, Libraries, and the User," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 174–75, 178. Taylor suggests, further, that over-reliance on automated finding aids and "expert systems" presents the "danger of diminishing both ourselves and the user in a lonely deadlock if our technologies become inappropriate and lacking in a human context" (p. 177). See, too, Beattie, "An Archival User Study," p. 47: "archivists ... tend to be too passive and bureaucratic when writing inventories." As well, Beattie comments that, "to date, very few studies have focused on the information seeking behavior of researchers in archives."

52 These statistics were gathered from three sources: Reuters story posted on ZDNet News Channel, http://www.zdnet.com/zdnn/content/reut/1211/262406.html; RelevantKnowledge at http://www.relevantknowledge.com/Press/release/05_04_98.html; U.S. Census data, at http://govinfo.library.orst.edu/cgi-bin/buildit?1a-state.usa.

53 Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*, Staff Information Paper 13 (National Archives and Records Service, 1946).

54 Theodore Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago, 1956), p. 224.

55 Ibid., p. 151.

56 Society of American Archivists, *Planning for the Archival Profession*, p. 22.

57 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in this paragraph are from Dowler, "The Role of Use."

58 Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*, p. 6.

59 Eastwood, "A Social Theory of Appraisal," pp. 80, 84–85.

60 Leonard Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981), pp. 143–50.

61 Hans Booms, in his "Society and the Formation of the Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources," found in Hermina Joldersma and Richard Klumpenhouwer, trans., found in *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987), pp. 69–107, leaned toward exactly this danger in proposing that public opinion should both legitimize and dictate archival appraisal. One can agree that archivists have some obligation to be utilitarian without turning appraisal into a pure popularity contest.

There are two things, in fact, that can mitigate against this majoritarian danger. One is that "minority" constituencies are not only the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population, but for most of us the fastest growing segment of our user populations – hence utilitarianism insists we *not* ignore these communities. The other is that at the level of collection development (that is, deciding what records creators are going to be approached or whose records accepted into a repository), rather than at the level of appraisal (what materials will actually be preserved from each of those creators) there is more room to assert archivists' notion of what "ought" to be documented.

62 Terry Cook, "'Another Brick in the Wall': Terry Eastwood's Masonry and Archival Walls, History, and Archival Appraisal," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994), p. 102; Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1995), p. 72; Stewart, "A Primer on Manuscript Field Work," *Midwestern Archivist* 1, no. 2 (1976), p. 4.

63 Brichford, *Appraisal and Accessioning*, pp. 9–10; Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, "Exploring the Black Box: The Appraisal of University Administrative Records," *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985), pp. 121–140. Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987), p. 12–47.

64 Legal and engineering files might warrant preservation depending on the type of company.

65 See, for example, Henrik Fode and Jorgen Fink, "The Business Records of a Nation: The Case of Denmark," *American Archivist* 60, no. 1 (Winter 1997), pp. 84–85, in which they acknowledge the lack of use of accounting records but insist that the answer is not to reappraise and destroy them but to convince historians to use them. See also the series of exchanges on the ARCHIVES list on just this topic, 5–8 May 1997. One has to wonder just how long archivists will feel compelled to wait for historians or other researchers to find utility in accounting records. Ledgers and journals prior to the late nineteenth century *are* sometimes used by researchers because there are few other sources for economic information in that era. Yet, as noted elsewhere, in the MHS call-slip analysis the only accounting records to receive use were from a mid-nineteenth-century fur trader. The Baker Library at Harvard also reports use of textile company accounting records from the same period. See Laura Linard and Brent M. Sverdloff, "Not Just Business as Usual: Evolving Trends in Historical Research at Baker Library," *American Archivist* 60, no. 1 (Winter 1997), pp. 91–92.

66 See Greene and Daniels-Howell, "Appraisal with an Attitude," pp. 185–93.

67 These include the issues of whether the minutes contain more than preemptory reporting of decisions taken, the relationship of the minutes to other series, and the ever-present "political considerations."

68 It may be added, moreover, that the cost-benefit ratio may encompass more than the direct costs of storing and administering a series of records versus a valuation of use activity. A user group may provide other benefits to the repository that offset the direct costs of preserving a particular set of records despite the use of the records being too infrequent to justify retention: genealogists' well-deserved reputation as lobbyists and willingness to lobby funding sources on behalf of repositories is one example.

69 Timothy L. Ericson, "Beyond Business: External Documentation and Corporate Records," pp. 297–326; James E. Fogerty, "Facing Reality: Oral History, Corporate Culture, and the Documentation of Business," pp. 251–74; Ernest J. Dick, "Corporate Memory in Sound and Visual Records," pp. 275–96; John A. Fleckner, "Reaching the Mass Audience: Business History as Popular History," pp. 327–48; all in James M. O'Toole, ed., *The Records of American Business* (Chicago, 1997).

70 The most vocal advocate for a user-centred revision of archives administration has been Elsie Freeman Finch. See especially, Elsie Freeman, "Buying Quarter Inch Holes: Public Support Through Results," *Midwestern Archivist* 10 (1985), pp. 89–97; Elsie Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," *American Archivist* 47

(Spring 1984), pp. 111–23; "Soap and Education: Archival Training, Public Service, and the Profession – An Essay," *Midwestern Archivist* 16 (1991), pp. 87–94. Terry Cook has criticized this view, most sharply in "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 123–34.

71 This accounting of the congressional collections does not include the Vice Presidential portions of the papers of Walter Mondale and Hubert Humphrey, broader public affairs collections such as the papers of U.S. ambassadors, state governors, and state legislators, the records of political parties and interest groups, or the official records of the state government in the state archives.

72 Patricia Aronsson, "Appraisal of Twentieth-Century Congressional Collections," in Nancy Peace, ed., *Archival Choices* (Lexington, 1984), pp. 82–83.

73 Paul, *The Documentation of Congress*, p. 136.

74 In addition to Aronsson and *Documentation of Congress*, cited above, we used Richard A. Baker, ed., *Proceedings of the Conference on Research Use and Disposition of Senators' Papers* (Washington, 1978); Frank Mackaman, ed., *Congressional Papers Project Report* (Washington, 1986); Eleanor McKay, "Random Sampling Techniques: A Method of Reducing Large, Homogeneous Series in Congressional Papers," *American Archivist* 41 (July 1978), pp. 281–88; Lydia Lucas, "Managing Congressional Papers: A Repository View," *American Archivist* 41 (July 1978), pp. 275–80. The most specific set of appraisal recommendations to date was Karen Dawley Paul, *Records Management Handbook for United States Senators and Their Repositories* (Washington, 1991). Paul's handbook was indispensable in identifying and defining records series, but in several instances her retention guidelines give disproportionate weight to the individual senator rather than to documenting the office, the delegation, or the institution. The less formal House retention guidelines – "Recommended Disposition: Papers of Members of U.S. House of Representatives," (1993), unpublished handout available from the Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives – are more realistic about space constraints and researcher interest. Our discussions also benefited from discussions with, or papers by Richard Pifer (State Historical Society of Wisconsin), Herb Hartsook (University of South Carolina), Rebecca Johnson (University of Delaware), Karen Paul (Senate Historian's Office), Cynthia Pease Miller (Office of the House Historian). Finally, and in many instances most importantly, the guidelines have benefited from conversations with the staffs of several members of the Minnesota Congressional delegation.

75 Aronsson, "Appraisal of Twentieth-Century Congressional Collections," p. 83.

76 An additional result of the reappraisal has been the creation of a better finding aid for the remaining collection.

77 When necessary (under the terms of our donor agreements), we sought and in all cases received permission from the donors to destroy the reappraised material. Moreover, the staffs of our sitting delegation members are pleased to have clear and detailed guidelines from us that help them manage, store, and transfer records.

78 While our guidelines have encountered no resistance from our congressional delegation or – to date – from our researchers, they have had a decidedly mixed response from our archival colleagues. There is nothing close to an archival consensus that cases files and issue-related mail are not worth their bulk to preserve. Some archivists at repositories which exclusively collect congressional papers have been concerned that our guidelines will be seen as a universal standard. Not only have we not promulgated our guidelines as a broad standard, we specifically eschew such a goal. Each repository has its own mission and clientele, its own set of resources, and thus its own individual appraisal criteria. For more complete details of the congressional records project, see Greene, "Appraisal of Congressional Records at the Minnesota Historical Society: A Case Study," pp. 31–43.

79 Distinguished historian Arthur Cole asked fifty years ago whether it really made sense for the Baker Library to devote 324 feet of stack space to records of the Slater textile company that

had been used nine times in fourteen years, as opposed to filling that space with books or other types of sources that would undoubtedly be used more frequently. Arthur H. Cole, "Business Manuscripts: A Pressing Problem," *Journal of Economic History* 5 (May 1945), p. 50.

80 F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance," *American Archivist* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1984), p. 12.

81 Ian E. Wilson, "Commentary: Reflections on Archival Strategies," *American Archivist* 58, no. 4 (Fall 1995), pp. 418–19, has made this point most recently. As he notes, there have been no studies undertaken specifically to explain the evident disparity in the support enjoyed by different archival institutions in the same nation.

82 Brichford, *Appraisal and Accessioning*, p. 1.