

# Articles



## Doing Archival Appraisal in Canada. Results from a Postal Survey of Practitioners' Experiences, Practices, and Opinions\*

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**RÉSUMÉ** Ce texte présente les résultats d'un sondage auto-administré acheminé par la poste auprès de 450 archivistes canadiens entre 2003 et 2005. Le sondage qui comportait 58 questions a permis de compiler des données portant spécifiquement sur l'évaluation comme processus de travail : comment les archivistes effectuent l'évaluation dans des dépôts d'archives canadiens; de quelles ressources ils se servent; quels problèmes et questions ils ont rencontrés; et, à la lumière de leurs expériences, quels outils, capacités et connaissances ont été utiles à la réalisation de cette tâche. Le texte rapporte les fréquences pour huit sections du sondage. Il situe les 313 réponses (taux de réponse de 70 %) dans le contexte des expériences générales, des affiliations institutionnelles et des profils démographiques des répondants. Le texte présente aussi leurs opinions en ce qui concerne les connaissances, l'éducation et la formation nécessaires pour mener une évaluation, et il évalue les sources d'information dont ils se servent et qu'ils trouvent utiles. Après avoir fait le tour des approches des répondants pour accomplir cette tâche et des méthodes dont ils se servent, le texte examine les problèmes rencontrés en faisant l'évaluation, et il explore les idées que les archivistes ont au sujet de leur obligation de rendre des comptes pour leurs décisions. L'auteure propose une analyse plus poussée des données du sondage pendant la prochaine phase de recherche sur l'évaluation, alors que seront interviewés des archivistes dans le but d'explorer plus à fond leurs idées et leurs préoccupations.

**ABSTRACT** This paper reports results of a self-administered postal survey of 450 Canadian archivists undertaken between 2003 and 2005. The survey of fifty-eight

\* An earlier version of this paper, based on preliminary data, was delivered to the annual meeting of the Association of Canadian Archivists in Montreal in 2004. The research for that presentation and for this paper was undertaken with the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am grateful for the assistance I received in this work: from Thea Miller and Kate Johnson who worked with me on crafting the survey instrument, and Paul Gardiner who managed the returns, prepared the database, and provided preliminary frequencies from the survey period. Paul's steady hand, knowledge, and calming influence made the survey a success.

questions gathered information specifically about appraisal as a work process: how it is done by archivists in Canadian repositories; what resources they use; what problems and issues they have encountered; and in the light of experience, what tools, skills, and knowledge have proven to be important in doing this task. The paper reports the frequencies for eight sections of the survey. It situates the 313 responses (response rate of 70%) within their overall experience, institutional affiliation, and basic demography. The paper also discusses respondents' opinions on the knowledge, education, and training needed to do appraisal, and assesses the sources for information they use and find useful. After reporting on the respondents' approach to the task and the methods they use, the paper looks at the problems encountered in doing appraisal and discusses the ideas that archivists have about their accountability for decisions. Further analysis of data from the survey is proposed as the companion to the next phase of research on appraisal, interviewing archivists to explore ideas and issues in depth.

### **Appraisal and Archives Research: What we have Achieved and What is Lacking**

The archival turn of the past fifteen years or so has been often remarked upon by archivists as being unprecedented.<sup>1</sup> The public has also discovered archives. Evidence of this discovery is just about everywhere but is especially noticeable in the explosion of archives websites. These now offer more than just brochure information to assist users to plan their on-site visit. Many feature especially crafted exhibitions, some offer full reference service, have finding aids available on-line for downloading, and create digital surrogates of historical documents for delivery to users.<sup>2</sup> The novelty of the Web, its swift ascent to become an important means of broadcasting and personal communication has captured our attention, perhaps overshadowing the striking growth of publication within the archives community itself. On one hand we have far more literature of a technical nature including manuals of prac-

1 Terry Cook, Joan Schwartz, Brien Brothman, Verne Harris, Heather MacNeil, and Tom Nesmith, are just a few of the active archival writers who have commented upon the noticeable archival turn in the last two decades most especially in academic writing. Typical of these comments are those by Brien Brothman, "Archives, Life Cycles, and Death Wishes: A Helical Model of Record Formation," *Archivaria* 61 (Spring 2006), pp. 235–70 and Joan Schwartz, "'Having New Eyes': Spaces of Archives, Landscapes of Power," *Archivaria* 61 (Spring 2006), pp. 1–26.

A comprehensive critical review of select titles in this expanding literature on the archive among philosophers, literary theorists, feminists, and specialists in rhetoric and discourse studies would be very useful to the archival professional. At the very least, such a review would be an exercise in archival self-assertion that has been called upon by many, especially by Joan Schwartz.

2 The critical study of Web developments would help archival planners to understand the potential of new technologies to serve better familiar demands. Archives and archivists need to be involved with the emerging social informatics movement, if only to stay abreast of possible changes in personal documentary practices. Even smaller programs eventually will be archiving digital objects.

tice, national and international standards for records management and description, and reports of special projects of archival works from co-operative acquisitions to digitization. On the other hand, we have a large scholarly literature actively exploring archival theories, histories, and comparative methods. It is the scholarly literature devoted to records and issues associated with them whose growth and richness is perhaps the most remarkable.

A scan of recent publications gives a good sense of issues that currently occupy the profession: appraisal ranks with electronic records, users, and institutional convergence as topics of discussion and debate. However, from among these issues only appraisal has a considerable literature that extends back in a recognizable form to at least the 1920s. A recurring theme in this literature – one that is echoed in the practices of individual archival institutions – is that appraisal must serve a society's needs. This enduring concern – to be of service to the social polity one serves – underwrites the reconceptualization of appraisal by each generation as it responds to altered documentary practices and as knowledge from experience accumulates and is reflected upon.<sup>3</sup>

While matters of appraisal continue to engage successive generations of archivists, noticeable acceleration in interest occurred in the twentieth century during periods of change in archival responsibilities and in records practices following the two world wars and the Great Depression.<sup>4</sup> Changing records habits and reconfigured social sensibilities fostered questions about the

3 Two useful reviews of select appraisal literature are the readings in Frank Boles' *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 160–83, which addresses methods and practices from an American perspective and Barbara L. Craig's "Study Guide" in *Archival Appraisal* (Munich, 2004) pp. 139–59, which covers the main archival literature and points to fruitful places to enter the broader discourse on archives-related themes. In the last thirty-five years or so we have benefited from the profound rethinking of archival appraisal, which has enriched professional literature by providing us with conceptual and theoretical analyses of the many conflicting "whys" of archiving, allowing us to articulate better the unique "whys" we recognize in any given institution.

4 Appraisal, as the selection of material by an archives based on its own assessment of the values to be recognized and the needs to be served in accumulating records, seems to emerge very soon after the establishment of archival repositories. In Great Britain, for example, the Public Record Office (PRO) before 1850 recognized that it must participate in deciding on what records were suitable for long-term preservation. It would be wrong to assume that Jenkinsonian ideas embodied in his 1922 *Manual of Archive Administration* reflected either completely or even accurately the development of actual acquisition and appraisal practices of the PRO. See PRO 30, 75/32 Jenkinson Papers, "Preliminary Memorandum for the Chairman and Members of the Committee on Modern Public Records, 9 July 1952." The archive, as a human institution, bears all the marks of contingent human priorities and actions as much as any other. This is the fundamental reason for archivists to explore their own history – as a group of practitioners, as a profession, and as institutions. This kind of scholarly inquiry does not undermine the credibility of our concepts, theories, methods, and practices; rather it reinforces their natural development by nurturing an understanding of their origins, purposes, and constraints. Archiving is a conscious act: it expresses a form of power, and its

continuing usefulness of inherited archival practices in forming archives that were expected to support very different research demands and altered public expectations for accessible documents and sources. Later, in the 1990s, the effects of institutional downsizing encouraged many repositories to revisit the methods and practices in place from previous times; from that widespread rethinking of archival responsibilities and its work emerged new discussions of appraisal, especially linking new theoretical foundations directly to methodical practice. Over the past twenty years, records and documents were recontextualized as evidence of functions and structures, which emerged to become the focus of archival interest in the first instance, well before specific records were sought or assessed.<sup>5</sup>

The new strategic views of roles, responsibilities, and relationships developed in the past quarter century relocate value to the layered and multiple intentions of people in their individual, corporate, or professional interactions.

exercise is suffused with ambiguities, the unexpected, and the uncontrolled. A fuller understanding of the archivist's concept of appraisal and of its actual working in any given institution would be greatly enhanced by focused studies of archival history, and especially by research into the preconceptions and actual practices of previous generations of archivists. Archiving is not the search for the right answer that proceeds progressively, it is about constantly asking the same kinds of questions – to which the answers at any given time may differ legitimately. See for example Tom Nesmith, "Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005), pp. 259–74. The I-CHORA phenomenon suggests that we may be entering a period of active research into the history of archives and archiving. The third International Conference on the History of Records and Archives (I-CHORA 3) was held in Boston at the end of September 2007; its theme was personal records and records keeping. (The papers of I-CHORA 1, held in Toronto in 2003 were published as issue 60 of *Archivaria* [Fall 2005] and the papers of I-CHORA 2, held in Amsterdam in August-September 2005, were published in *Archival Science*, nos. 3 and 4 [2006].)

- 5 Macroappraisal, as a theory for appraisal and as the label for an associated method of work, was first articulated at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) by Terry Cook and his colleagues. It emerged largely in the 1990s in specific historical circumstances. It was articulated in a number of articles that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s and as part of the development of policy and practices at Library and Archives Canada. See Terry Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics and Implementation in Canada, 1950-2000," *Archival Science*, vol. 5, nos. 2–4 (2005), pp. 101–61. Macro ideas were also abroad in other sectors at the time, notably in the exploration of strategic planned approaches to acquisitions, known collectively as the documentation strategy, and in the notion of preservation management planning. In the area of appraisal, the work of Larry Hackman, the late Joan Warnow Blewet, Helen Samuels, Terry Cook, et al. focused on long-term planning, the priority of functional and structural analysis before the assessment of records, and in the case of macroappraisal, the careful and full articulation of a coherent theory of values being sought before any analysis or appraisal work began. The macro phenomenon and the experience of a number of organizations in using its theory and associated method are discussed in the special macroappraisal theme issue of *Archival Science*, vol. 5, nos. 2–4 (2005). Exponents of new ideas in the 1980s and 1990s were inspired clearly by the ideas of their immediate predecessors such as Hans Booms in Europe and Gerald Ham in North America.

Appraisal became the attribution of meaning to these interactions – records only having value as evidence of attributed meaning. All this fundamental rethinking has provided us with a growing literature of increasing sophistication and potentially of continuing theoretical interest. Certainly the heat from these often lively debates has generated a much brighter light in which to assess the strength of our practices as they have developed over the years.<sup>6</sup>

Numerous special appraisal projects have tried new ideas; we now boast more sophisticated articulations of appraisal theory than we have ever had in the past. As well, policy changes at many archives have had an impact on appraisal practices. As important as these things are as contributions to our professional knowledge and as supports for practitioners, research into historical practices of appraisal and into current activities as they happen are still novel. The emphasis of well-published thinkers, for example, has been on matters of concept and theory, and in particular, on the articulation of theories that support methodologically sound practices, especially within particular institutional settings. As a consequence of this focus of interest, the knowledge that we have about appraisal theories and the perspectives of appraisers in specific institutions is significant and the opinions that surround its many roles in an archives are diverse. However, we would be hard pressed to make proven links between the concepts and theories and to their actual application by archivists in concrete situations.<sup>7</sup>

Our considerable knowledge of appraisal and writing about its conduct lacks an empirical dimension that explores the actual workings of appraisal in one or more institutions. What happened in any given project of appraisal is known intimately to those who did it, but access to this knowledge by those who were not personally involved can only come from face-to-face discussions with the principals or from the documents that were generated by the process and its decisions. Too often we rely on inference and conjecture to fill in the gaps in the record. Who actually does the appraisal? Who makes appraisal decisions? Where does appraisal fit within the panoply of work that archivists and managers are doing every day? What are the working links

6 In addition to the flowering of a robust theoretical literature devoted to archives and to the work of the practitioner, we are fortunate to have a substantial body of evidence from special projects and reports of the experience of several archives who have undertaken to implement new methods for their functions, and especially of appraisal for acquisition. For example see Joan Krizack, ed., *Documentation Planning for the United States Health Care System* (Baltimore, 1994); Nancy McCall and Lisa A Mix, *Designing Archival Programs to Advance Knowledge in the Health Fields* (Baltimore, 1995); and Mark Greene and Todd J. Daniels-Howell, "Documentation with an Attitude: A Pragmatist's Guide to the Selection and Acquisition of Modern Business Records," in *The Records of American Business*, ed. James O'Toole (Chicago, 1998), pp. 161–229.

7 An exception is Caroline Williams' "Studying Reality: The Application of Theory in an Aspect of UK Practice," *Archivaria* 62 (Fall 2006), pp. 77–101, which reports the results of interviews with archivists in six repositories about their uses of appraisal theories.

between the concepts and theories to their application by the archivist? We have only anecdotal information about how the function of appraisal and the activities that comprise it are experienced and understood by the people who do it. The human dimensions of appraisal – the investigation of real people doing real work – are under-researched. By contrast, we have considerable writing that is either theoretical or, at the other extreme, is procedural and often normative in nature. Common sense tells us that in doing appraisal archivists are not the passive instruments of ideas, or policies, or functions. Theories of appraisal value and the methods that structure the processes of choice, whether traditional or new, are only tools: these tools, or others we have yet to uncover, must be used by real people to decide from among the options that they have and that they perceive that they have.

We are well aware that the exercise of appraisal is circumscribed – bounded by the appraiser's ability and experience, shaped by the specific constraints in his or her working realities, and reflecting, inevitably and naturally, the norms shared by archivists. The structures for making decisions are often multi-layered and the contingencies of a specific time and place, often unpredictable and uncontrollable, are natural constraints on options and how we go about making choices. For example, the unique arrangements that shape the character and policies of each institution largely recognize their own circumstances and align ideal theories and recommended tools to the conditions in which they are applied. These adjustments to appraisal in specific situations suggests that research into the institutional and human dimensions of appraisal potentially would inform the further development of conceptual discussions.<sup>8</sup> And on a practical level, such research could be useful to educators and professional associations in developing better workshops and special study institutes, and to archival managers who would have a better understanding of the human contribution to archival functions.

Workplace research can be done using one or more methods of inquiry and frameworks for the analysis of data. Ethnographic methods of direct inquiry and observation of situations, events, or workers, gather data using structured interviews with knowledgeable informants supplemented by information derived from written sources such as workplace policies and procedures. Notes may be taken by the researcher and more often than not the interviews are recorded to create a verbatim record of responses for further study. Qualitative analysis is usually undertaken with the assistance of qualitative analysis software, such as Atlas.ti, which encourages the researcher to build a grounded theory as it emerges through a process of iterative assessment of the interviews and other data.

8 Caroline Williams' sketch of the middle ground where ideas and realities are negotiated in professional work is one way of conceptualizing the reciprocity between theory and practice.

Another method of investigation would be a simple postal survey directed to those who identify themselves as archivists. A survey, in fact, would be especially useful as beginning research in an untouched field: it would permit a bird's-eye view of a group of practitioners and establish basic information about their collective experience, education, and practices. It would also expose possible similarities or differences based on experience, education, and situation within the institutional landscape. Perhaps most importantly, a survey would identify who actually does appraisal, who makes decisions, and what tools and techniques archivists use and find useful in doing their job. Such a survey could also explore certain aspects of the archivists' experience doing appraisal and their understanding of how it works, what is needed, and how it fits within their working situation. A survey would also identify areas that would benefit from further research in the future, and would point to some conclusions that could then be tested and refined in subsequent projects using other methods of inquiry that would provide depth to areas covered in breadth by the survey.

Both ethnography and survey research are well-recognized methods of investigation that have been used for workplace research in the information professions.<sup>9</sup> Surveys continue to be popular and in the past decade the results of over seventy have appeared in major information science journals.<sup>10</sup> These articles are broad in the research that they report, and include surveys of information professional practices, salaries, conditions of work, and needs for the future. None of the citations are to published work that specifically addresses the archival domain. In the archival literature a growing amount of empirical research is being reported, and presumably, this is a sign that even more is being undertaken. Special emphasis has been on probing archives users – their perceptions of archives service, their problems using reference tools especially finding-aids and websites – establishing a profile of the profession, and exploring work practice.<sup>11</sup> Frank Boles and Julia Marks

9 An informative issue of *Archival Science* (vol. 4, nos. 3–4 [2004]) has several articles that address the use of contemporary research methods to investigate archival topics, although none of the contributions deals specifically with the archive workplace as the site of research.

10 See Jacquelyn Burkell "Dilemma of Survey Response," *Library and Information Science Research*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), pp. 339–63.

11 There are several examples of empirical research into archival practices: Caroline Williams, "Studying Reality," pp. 77–102; Wendy Duff, Barbara L. Craig, and Joan Cherry, "Historians' Use of Archival Sources: Promises and Pitfalls of the Digital Age," *Public Historian*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 7–22; Barbara L. Craig, Wendy Duff, and Joan Cherry, "The Use of Archival Resources. A Cross-Canada Survey of Historians Studying Canadian History," *Archivaria* 58 (Winter 2004), pp. 51–81; Barbara L. Craig, "A Look at a Bigger Picture: The Demographic Profile of Archivists in Canada based on a National Survey," *Archivaria* 49 (Spring 2000), pp. 79–93; Barbara L. Craig "What Research Tools do Historians of Canadian Medicine Currently Use? What do They Need and Want for the Future? Report and Analysis of a Survey," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1998), pp. 289–307;

Young's monograph *Archival Appraisal* is unique in reporting the empirical investigation of appraisal as it is practiced.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Goal, Objective, and Limitations of the Postal Survey on Appraisal**

The prime goal of the postal survey of Canadian archivists' experience in appraisal was to replace locally-based and anecdotal understanding of the conduct of appraisal with a broader view encompassing a range of archivists practicing in different repositories. While no mail survey is able to do more than scratch the surface of such a complex topic as the experience of appraisal, it does serve a useful purpose on two levels. First, it provides a broad view over a very large field, allowing the contours of the whole to be seen more clearly. Responses to this survey will help pinpoint areas that may be worth exploring further in-depth by other means. Secondly, anticipating that I may be able to follow-up on this work by interviewing archivists who are willing to discuss their understanding and management of appraisal in detail, I asked recipients for expressions of interest in participating. I plan to follow-up with these individuals and, depending on funding, will schedule interviews across Canada over the next two or three years. The results of the initial survey would allow practitioners to see themselves in relationship to their colleagues and would likely enhance understanding of the profession as a whole. Sections of the survey might also be useful to educators in planning course offerings or other forms of professional enrichment. Beyond specific uses, both planned and unanticipated, the survey, its questions, and its results should provide benchmarks for future surveys or research and would allow a comparison to be made with the experience of archivists in other countries. In the future, when similar types of investigation are undertaken, the data from the 2003–2006 survey will provide another dimension for viewing the new data and may provide many valuable points of comparison.

While a survey is an attractive option, especially for the initial exploration of a large group of practitioners, a postal survey has limitations that need to be recognized. Its great strength is to fix the possible range of replies to specific questions – much like the options provided by a multiple choice test paper. Nevertheless, people are disinclined to complete surveys because they either

Wendy Duff and Allyson Fox, "'You're a Guide Rather Than an Expert': Archival Reference from an Archivist's Point of View," *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 27, no. 2 (October 1996), pp. 129–53; Margaret L. Hedstrom, Christopher A. Less, Judith S. Olson, and Clifford A. Lampe, "'The Old Version Flickers More': Digital Preservation from the User's Perspective," *The American Archivist*, vol. 69, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2006), pp. 159–87; and Ann E. Pederson "Understanding Ourselves and Others: Australian Archivists and Temperament," *Archival Science*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2003), pp. 223–74.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, *Archival Appraisal* (New York, 1991).



demand too much time, or annoy by suggesting simplistic diagnoses of issues respondents know to be complex. A survey can encourage comments that are free-form and unique, but write-in responses take more time. A survey will only command the attention of respondents for a finite period, so a limited range of questions focusing on a few issues achieves a higher rate of response. To be useful, a survey needs to be directed to a well-defined universe. We assume that appraisal activities are undertaken by most archivists at one time or another and practitioners in smaller institutions also may make the ultimate decisions or contribute substantially to them. But we really do not know who makes the final decisions in appraisals – experienced archivists? boards of governors? managers? other people with little archival knowledge? – nor are we able to determine the relative proportion of each participant's contribution to any given appraisal. For very practical reasons, therefore, I chose to use the membership of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA), assuming that it more or less approximated the actual universe of archivists working in Canada and would include at least some archival managers. However, not all practitioners are members and not all persons in positions of authority are members.<sup>13</sup> This gap between the universe of the survey and the situation in reality must be born in mind when viewing the results.

The survey was undertaken fully realizing that there is no one way to understand appraisal or to fit its variety into a model view of what it should be. In designing the survey I did not set out to weigh the benefits of alternatives nor did I want to explore any particular method in detail. Rather, my objective was to develop a profile of the current generation of practitioners who see themselves as professional archivists, their archival experience, their education, their information-seeking habits and practices, and their identification of the barriers to doing appraisal and opinions about what is needed either to overcome those barriers or to make appraisal decisions stronger and better supported. This profile was constructed especially in terms of respondents' experiences with appraisal and their opinions about what helps or hinders the task. The survey combined matters of fact with matters of opinion – these are carefully differentiated in the questionnaire and in the report that follows.

I was particularly interested in the archivist's notion of his or her accountability in the realm of appraisal, especially the ways accounting is tracked in working processes and in the archivist's own recordkeeping. Although each practitioner will have a sense of what constitutes accountability, a collective notion of what this means in practice should be based on research rather than

13 For example, many archivists with responsibility for appraisal at the highest level of competence, knowledge, and responsibility, especially in the large, government archives, are not members of the ACA.

normalizing reality according to personal and specific professional experiences. The survey, in part, asked for information that would show how accountability in appraisal is viewed by archivists in Canada and particularly how they understand the ways that accountability is tracked in their own records. I was also interested in seeing if there was evidence of the impact of the appraisal literature on the archivist's understanding of appraisal. The survey asked questions about the sources of information and support that archivists found useful.

### **The Method for the Survey, Organization of the Questions, the Returns, and the Responses**

The survey was administered in four parts.<sup>14</sup> First, a letter to each professional member of ACA announced that the survey would be coming. Two weeks later, the survey was sent to the same people. The package included a covering letter explaining the research, the survey form itself, a return envelope with postage, and a separate ticket to enter the survey draw for a gift certificate as a small thank you to those who took the time to reply. Two weeks later, a reminder was sent, and six weeks after the reminder, a second full package was sent to those who had not returned their survey. The process began in late August 2003, the forms were mailed out in the fall and winter of 2003–2004, and the last returns were received in the early spring of 2005. The returns were entered into a Microsoft Access database beginning in the spring and summer of 2004 and continuing into the autumn of 2005. Each response was anonymized and verification was done to ensure accuracy of the transcribed data. Analysis began in the winter of 2005 and continued in the summer and fall. Further work was done on the database in the winter of 2005–2006. The manuscript returns and key list uniting names with form numbers were destroyed in the autumn of 2006.<sup>15</sup>

What has been the recent experiences of archivists doing appraisal in Canada? The survey had fifty-eight questions, both closed and open-ended, arranged among eight sections.<sup>16</sup> The first two sections covered the respondent's experience in appraisal and attitudes to doing his or her job. The third section (C), dealt with the respondent's archival knowledge, education, and training. Section D asked what methods of appraisal respondents had used, how helpful they found these to be, and how their appraisals were recorded

14 The survey followed the method for self-administered mail surveys developed by Donald Dillman, *Mail and Internet Surveys, Second Edition* (Hoboken, NJ, 2000).

15 The research was approved by the University of Toronto's process for ethical treatment of human subjects and is embodied in its Protocol approval 10811. The work was paced to take advantage of student assistance and was dependent on funding.

16 See the Appendix for the survey form.

and reported. Sections E and F asked for information about problems encountered in doing appraisals and asked respondents for their opinion on ways appraisal could be made more consistent and useful. Section G asked for information about the respondent's professional, archival experience, and the final section (H) asked for basic demographic information.

Four hundred and fifty survey forms were sent out, one to each professional member of the ACA.<sup>17</sup> Three hundred and forty three were returned, or just under 77% of those sent out (76.73). However, not all forms were completed: thirty respondents declined to participate, returning their forms in the envelope provided. Of those returned, there was variation in the number of completed or substantially completed forms for each section of the survey. This number varied from a high of 320 to a low of 201. A majority of 313 archivists completed the survey fully, or in large part, that is just over 70% of ACA professional members (70.02). This positive response and the high rate of participation were gratifying.

### **An Overview of the Findings**

This paper provides the frequencies tabulated on the following sections of the survey: the profession's demographic profile (section H); its collective appraisal and professional experience, and personal comfort with asserting the authority to keep or destroy (sections A and G); the methods of reporting results, seeking approvals, sharing accumulated information and experience, following-up on appraisal and appraisal decisions (part of section D); and experience with specific methods (the remaining part of section D). There is a general discussion of the results, especially of the problems that respondents reported (section E), the improvements they suggested (section F), and on the respondents' notion of professional accountability in appraisal. This report also provides the frequencies from section C covering education, training, and the ways of maintaining and developing further knowledge of appraisal.<sup>18</sup>

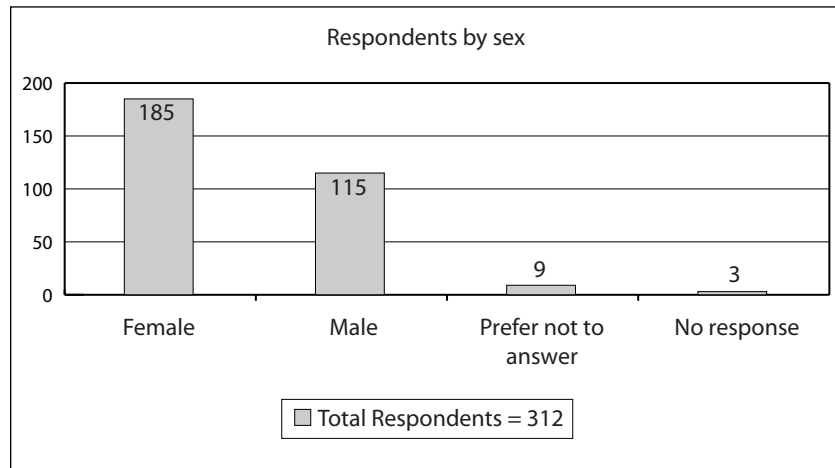
17 The list of professional members of the Association (August 2003) was provided by the office of the ACA. I am grateful for the cheerful and prompt assistance of its office staff, Duncan Grant and Judy Laird. The survey would not have been possible without their help.

18 This paper does not purport to provide complete cross tabulations of the data. Extensive written comments have not been included and section B of the survey is not reported here. Customized questions and cross tabulations among sections will require special programming and needs to be funded. Further analysis of the data and customized queries are planned for the next part of the research and will be done as a preliminary step to undertaking focus groups or in-depth interviews with archivists. Funds are actively being sought to do this work.

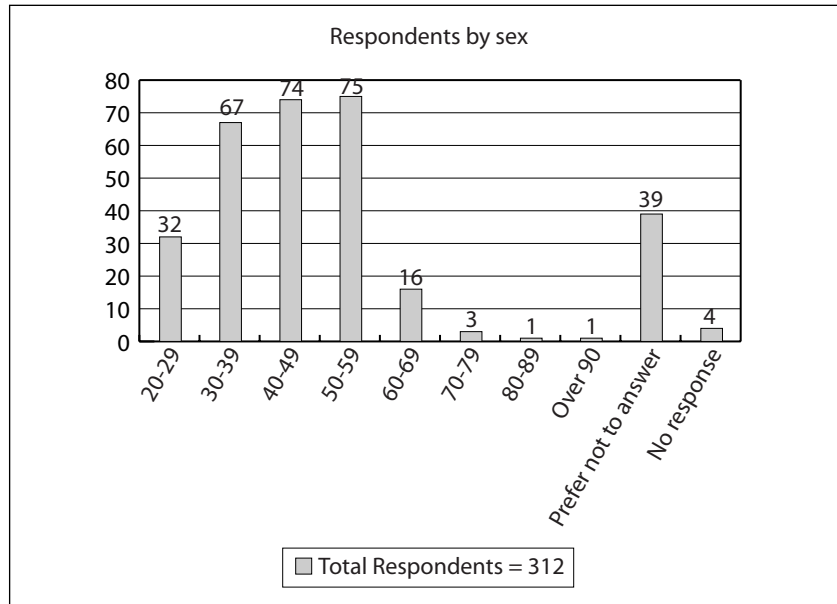
***Profile of Respondents by Age, Gender, and Institutional Affiliation***

Respondents were largely women (59.3% women; 36.8% men; 2.9% preferred not to reply to the question about sex, 1% did not respond), and in their 30s, 40s, or 50s (21.5%; 23.7%; 24%). Only ten percent are younger than thirty years of age (Figures 1 and 2). Most respondents work in government or university archives [44.4% government, 18.1% university, total 62.5%], and as the age profile suggests, have had considerable work experience as archivists (Figure 3). Almost half (49.8%) have between five and twenty years of experience, while a further third (32.6%) have over twenty years of experience working as archivists. Only fifteen percent of respondents have less than five years experience and may be considered at the beginning of their careers (15.1%). Given the age of respondents and their considerable professional experience including appraisal – close to one third have in excess of twenty years experience as archivists – our respondents, whether working level archivists or archival managers, are in mid to late middle career.

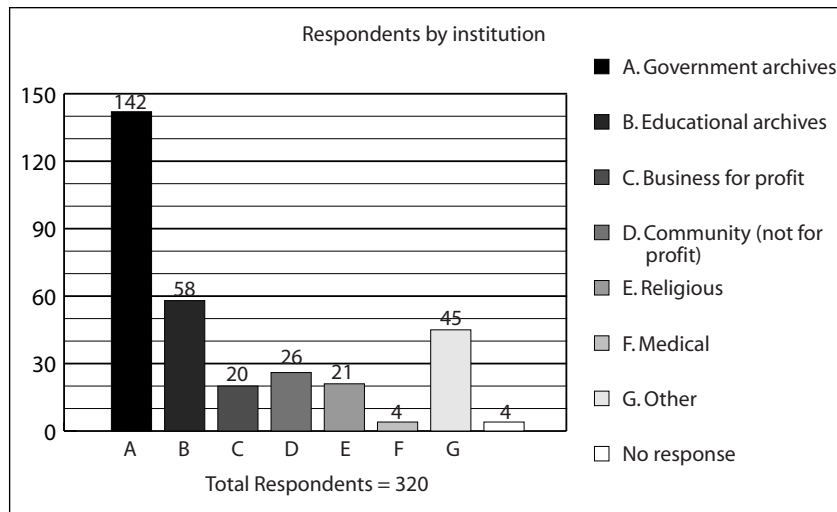
**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

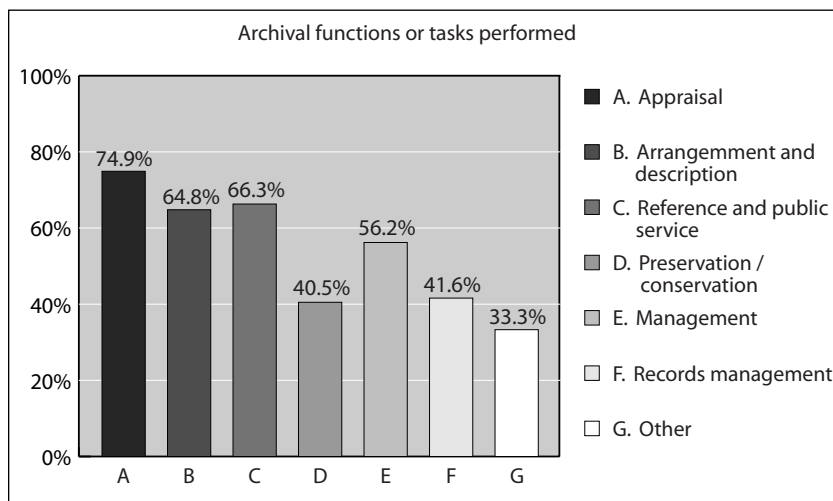


**Figure 3**



### *Overall Professional Experience*

Respondents are involved at work with the full range of what we would consider traditional archival functions and activities. Three quarters of them do appraisal (74.9%), two thirds do arrangement and description (64.8%) and reference and other public services (66.3%), over half are involved with management activities (56.2%), while forty percent have preservation and records management related responsibilities (40.5% and 41.6% respectively) (Figure 4).



**Figure 4**

Initially, two features seem to stand out in this spread of numbers. The first is the importance of management activities in the work of respondents, and, as it turns out, in their eyes as well. Well over half (56.2%) indicated that they were involved in activities that would be best characterized to be of a management nature. The comments in this section underscored the importance of these activities in the eyes of respondents. The second feature was the size of the category “other.” Over thirty percent of the group told us that they also did “other” activities and functions. The job titles they assigned and the marginal comments provided are interesting and suggestive: emerging roles include those of policy analyst; managers of privacy and administrators of statutory requirements and institutional policies for information; public-relations work with donors, schools, volunteers, and visitors; and website management and the development of products for the Web.

***Balance Among Activities Performed (Ranking of the Most Important Among These, Identification of Primary Responsibility)***

Respondents were asked to rank their tasks in three orders of importance: the first was according to the amount of work time each one occupied; the second was a ranking of the importance of the task to the institution; and the third asked which tasks they believed were their primary responsibilities at work. As we have seen, while three quarters are doing appraisal (see Figure 4) only fifteen percent of respondents see appraisal as their primary responsibility (see Figure 5). Appraisal did not rank in the top three activities occupying time, or in the activities the respondents judged to be of the greatest important to the institution. Among the traditional archival functions, arrangement and description, reference, and public service consistently ranked as taking more time and as being more important than appraisal to the institution. From among the traditional archival functions, only preservation scored lower than appraisal in time, importance, and responsibility. Management consistently ranked as the most important activity respondents performed, in terms of time it occupies, in importance to the institution, and as the primary responsibility of the respondent (Figure 6). Further analysis of the data, for example, by probing the possible relationship between the experience of the respondent and the amount of time devoted to tasks, may suggest reasons for this situation beyond those in the comments that pointed to the impact of demand for direct client service.

**Figure 5**

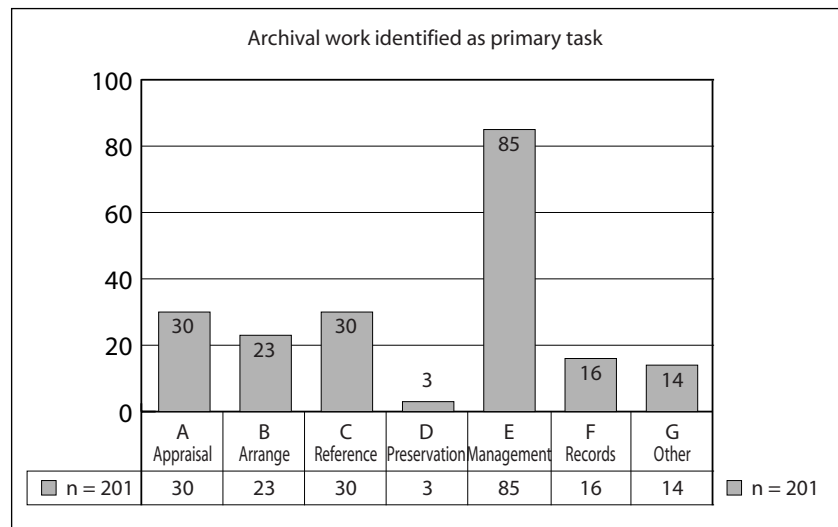
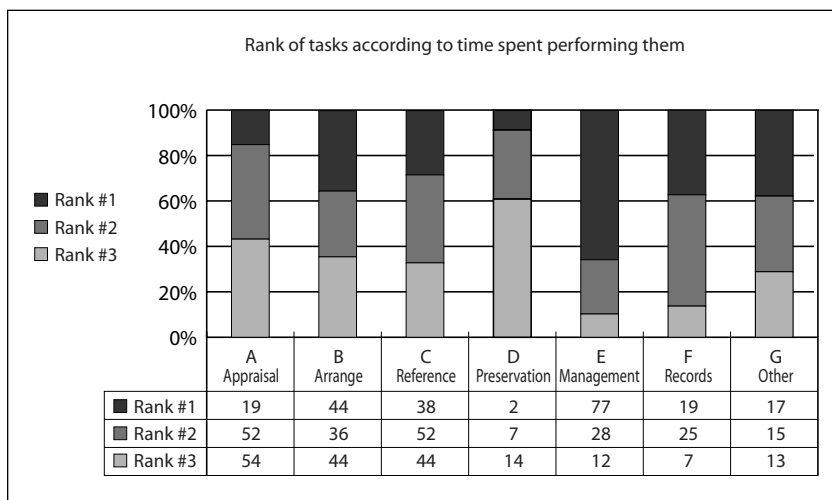


Figure 6



### *Experience Doing Appraisal*

Over sixty percent of respondents are currently involved one way or another in an appraisal project (61.7%). When this question was broadened to include the respondent's experience doing appraisal in the past, more than eighty percent (81.4%) replied that they had done appraisal in archives. Canadian archivists are, overall, experienced appraisers. Most should have observations about appraisal and opinions about what helps or hinders its conduct. However, it is important to bear in mind that the level of responsibility in the appraisal process is split: while the majority of respondents reported that they did the appraisal and made the decisions (53.8%), many only made recommendations but had no responsibility for making a final decision (12.6%), while an equal number had no part in doing the appraisal and only made the final decision (11.8%). This situation would need to be further explored to better understand the nuances in local situations or by type of institution.<sup>19</sup>

### *Knowledge Required or Essential for Doing Appraisal*

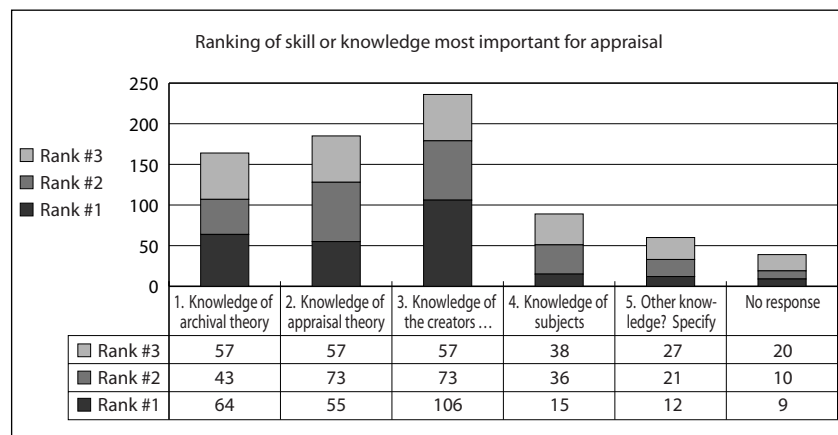
Based on their experience, respondents were asked what type of knowledge was required for the skill of appraisal. They could select as many of the choices they believed were applicable and space was provided to write in any other

<sup>19</sup> Further analysis of the database to link level of responsibility with type of institution and/or experience will be done in the next phase of the research.



knowledge that was not provided for in the other four options: (1) knowledge of archival theory, (2) knowledge of appraisal theory, (3) knowledge of the creators, their habits ... systems, (4) knowledge of some special subject or subjects, or (5) other types of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Over eighty-five percent of respondents selected the first three options as essential for skill in appraisal (knowledge of archival theory 85.5%; knowledge of appraisal theory 85.7%; knowledge of the creators 94.7%) (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**



Two thirds (66.6%) indicated that the knowledge of a special subject or subjects was required to do appraisals, and over a third (38.2%) provided comments that specified what that special knowledge would be and in what ways it contributed to appraisal. These comments identifying the special subject or knowledge and its contribution fell into one of five categories that were often repeated: knowledge of the institution's mandate and policies; knowledge of its holdings and the strengths of other institutions; knowledge of users, uses, and the types of evidence favoured by regular users of archives; knowledge of methodologies for addressing appraisal; and a host of special items that could be best characterized as contextual knowledge – of the records, the institution, the culture, and the environment that shaped records and their uses.

Respondents then ranked the knowledge essential for appraisal in order of importance. Knowledge of creators was ranked first by forty percent of respondents, outstripping other options by at least two to one. Moreover,

20 See Appendix, Section C, Question 9a.

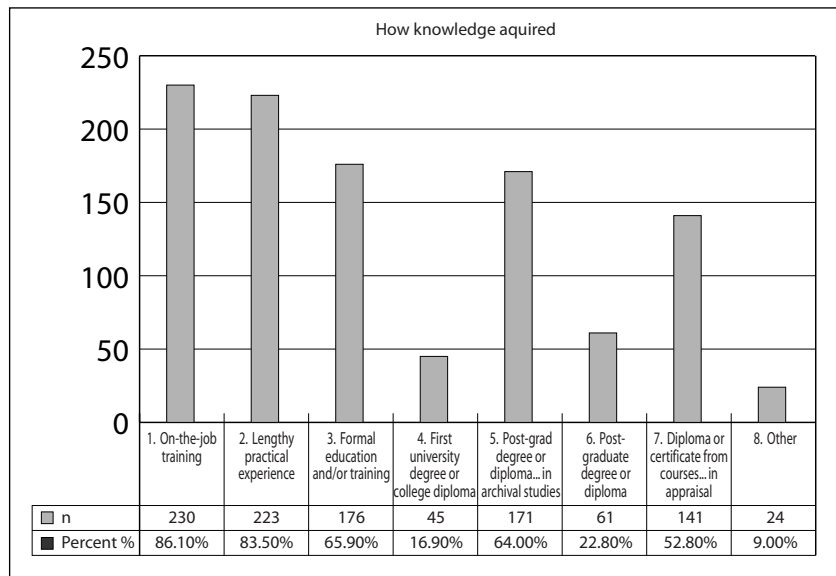
when combined with those who placed it in the second rank, knowledge of creators was the choice of just under seventy percent of respondents (knowledge of creators rank #1, 40.6%; rank #2, 38.5%; total, 69.1%). Knowledge of appraisal theory was ranked first and second by just under half (49.6%), and knowledge of archival theory was ranked first and second by just over forty percent (41.3%). While sixty-six percent found that knowledge of special subjects or a subject was important, only a small group ranked this knowledge in the top three (rank #1, 4.6%; rank #2, 8.2%; rank #3, 10.5%).

Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents indicated that “other” knowledge should be ranked in one of the first three levels of importance (23.3%). The spread of comments specifying this knowledge was wide and various, suggesting that special conditions affect appraisal in some institutions. Three areas were mentioned by many: knowledge of institutional mandates and missions; knowledge of the prime users’ needs; and knowledge of history, historical methods, and records history. The responses and the rankings are interesting from several perspectives and suggest that there would be value in exploring many areas of knowledge as complementary and perhaps synergistic. Responses also pointed to the strong interdependence among areas of knowledge, raising the question of how these areas are related in appraisal, and as well, how respondents believed that this knowledge was acquired.

The survey provided seven options for the respondents to record the ways the knowledge needed to do appraisal was acquired and space was offered for them to write in other sources not provided for on the form (Figure 8). Respondents agreed that working with experienced appraisers and lengthy, practical experience were the best ways to acquire the skill needed to do an appraisal (training by experienced appraisers 86.1%; and lengthy practical experience 83.5%). Formal education was also considered to be important (formal education and/or training 65.9%; postgraduate degree or diploma in archival studies 64%; and diploma or certificate from special courses in appraisal, 52.8%) but knowledge acquired in education needed to be married to that of a seasoned and skilled appraiser. Respondents ranked knowledge in order of importance and, not surprisingly, on-the-job training and lengthy practical experience were ranked first or second by over half (59.1% on the job training; 54.4% lengthy practical experience). It is also interesting to note that respondents to the survey were regular participants in professional meetings and workshops (78.6% attending from 1–3 or more meetings a year at the regional, national, or international levels; 61.1% attending special workshops of other formal training opportunities each year). This suggests, at the very least, that informal sharing of experience more than likely extends beyond individual institutions. Overall, the employing institutions encouraged participation in these events. Over half reported that their institution actively encouraged participation (56.2%) while two thirds (35.2%) indicated that the employer gave limited positive encouragement. Only three percent reported

that their institution did not encourage professional activities nor did the employer provide opportunities to develop professional skills and knowledge.

**Figure 8**



**Sources for Professional Information**

The next series of questions asked about the archivists' information-seeking habits – what did they read, what books (if any) did they use regularly, and what or who did they consult to discuss appraisal issues, problems, or methods. Canadian archivists are active readers, often using the Internet to seek pertinent documents and reports about the experience of others. They regularly visit professional and institutional websites and often talk with colleagues about appraisal. Over eighty percent of respondents (81.64%) read *Archivaria* regularly, find it to be very or somewhat useful for appraisal tasks (91%), and refer to the journal at least four times a year. Texts and manuals are also read and consulted. Those most frequently cited were *Keeping Archives*, *Life of a Document*, *A Manual for Small Archives*, the manuals of the Society of American Archivists, and *Varsity Letters*.<sup>21</sup> Respondents were about equally

21 Ann Pedersen, *Keeping Archives*, 1st ed. (Sydney, Australia, 1987); Judith Ellis, ed., *Keeping Archives*, 2nd ed. (Victoria, Australia, 1993); Carole Couture, *The Life of A Document: A Global Approach to Archives and Records Management* (Montreal, 1987); Archives Association of British Columbia, *A Manual for Small Archives* (Vancouver, 1988, 1994, and 1999), available at <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/msa/> (accessed 10 September 2007); Helen Willa Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Lanham, MD, 1992).

divided on using websites with just under half reporting that they will visit websites to assist in making appraisal recommendations or decisions (47.9%) while just over one half do not (50.2%). Respondents cited a range of sites, from those of the creator, to other archives, to the Canadian Archival Information Network (CAIN, currently Archives Canada). Respondents also use many other sources of support and reference when doing appraisal, particularly policies and procedures that help structure the processes of assessment and evaluation.

Canadian archivists actively consult others during the course of an appraisal. Respondents reported that considerable consultation went on either before or while doing an appraisal project, although it was clear that this was on a case by case basis and not formally structured. Over eighty percent (87.72%) always or occasionally consulted colleagues in the institutions before or while doing an appraisal, while about half (50.93%) consulted colleagues in other archives. About an equal number (49.43%) always or occasionally consulted subject experts outside the institution. Users were not regularly consulted: just over sixty percent of respondents indicated that they rarely or never consulted users, while thirty percent reported that they always or at least occasionally consulted users (31.20%). By contrast, well over eighty percent made it a habit to consult or discuss issues with the records creators (82.77%). Many wrote that the sources they consulted varied according to the particular project they were doing and, interestingly, to time in their career – reading and discussion encouraged them to assimilate new knowledge, which then became part of their own growing experience. Further analysis of the data could be undertaken in the future, for example, to probe any recognizable relationship between years of experience and sources of information.

#### *Use of Strategies, Methods, and Criteria in Appraisal*

Responses were just about evenly divided on the question asking whether their institution had a formal strategy for doing appraisal with just under half (46.8%) responding positively that their institution had such a strategy (or strategies in some cases) and just over forty-five percent (45.3%) responding that none currently existed. Many others reported that strategies were in the course of being developed. Respondents employed a number of guides to direct their appraisals and to structure their assessments. Over three quarters cited the importance of their repository's mandate (78.7%), with the majority using a current appraisal policy (60.7%), acquisition plan or target (55.1%), and lists of criteria of value or uses (52.8%). While just over ten percent used guides derived from publications, largely in manuals (11.2%), nearly half employed criteria developed by their own institution, since these embody its unique experiences (42.7%). Most respondents also consulted and valued the

reports prepared in previous appraisals (61.4%).<sup>22</sup>

The survey asked which methods archivists found useful in doing appraisal. Respondents could select all of the options that applied to them and if they wished they could provide more details of a method(s) that was not specified by name in the form.<sup>23</sup> Canadian archivists always or occasionally use more than just one method when doing appraisal – assessment of evidential and informational values were most frequently cited (94.73%), followed closely by the historical investigation of records systems and creators (90.48%) and functional analysis (82.64%). Other forms of guidance always or occasionally used include established precedents in the institution (84.79%), special analysis of the use of previous acquisitions of the same type (74.09%), and a strategic approach to acquisition planning and documentation (71.37%).

Over half of the respondents indicated that they do not use any particular method but approach each project independently on its own merits (57.83%), while close to three quarters found that intuition derived from considerable experience was useful (74.28%). Many indicated that they used a combination of methods suited to the needs of a situation and to the moment a project was done. As one respondent noted “... methods [may] all play an important role when [appraisal] is considered as a whole. They are like necessary steps to our goal. Separately some methods are not as useful [as others].” Many others provided comments with a similar thrust. “Most methods are useful, however, I tend to use different methods during appraisals. This is due to factors such as the function of the record, its media type and whether the records are institutional or private.”

While it would be premature to make firm conclusions about the impact of ideas, especially theoretical ideas, on respondents and their approach to practice, it seems clear that Canadian archivists are knowledgeable about discussions in the literature and about the practical developments in other institutions, particularly those whose mandate and responsibilities are similar. However, the extension of influence of theories, and the nature of the nexus or bridge between theoretical discussions, practical policies, and the actual unfolding of an appraisal in real-time is not at all clear. Certainly the situation in Canada appears to be somewhat different than the divide between theory and practices in the UK sketched by Caroline Williams.<sup>24</sup>

22 This response will require further analysis of the data to probe connections between strategy/method, etc. and the type of institution. At this point, the only obvious connection is that respondents from large institutions are more likely to have a strategy in place.

23 The survey also asked which methods of appraisal they rarely or never found to be useful. The responses to this question have yet to be analyzed.

24 Williams, pp. 100–101.

*Problems Encountered Doing Appraisals and Improvements in Quality and Consistency of Appraisals*

We know that the broad function of appraisal is rarely undertaken as an abstract exercise and that, by contrast, appraisals of some kind take place at many levels in the archives. However, in whatever way it is conceived and done – as a strategic exercise to build resources, as a test in making file-level decisions during phases of processing, or as a ranking of priorities for conservation – appraisal is integral to the overall operation of the archives program or institution, at the very least, determining the shape and emphasis of its holdings through time. The many activities embodied in the word “appraisal” are also uniquely situated. Appraisers must negotiate a number of practical, local constraints that have a sizeable impact on the conduct of any ideally sketched or modelled appraisal. For example, appraisals may have to be done quickly, they may demand some unanticipated specialist knowledge, either of the records, the business uses for them, their history, or their technology, and the course of an appraisal leading to a decision may be directly influenced by the appraisers’ understanding of the resources the institution can summon either to maintain or to service potential acquisitions. The abstract ideal of a full and considered appraisal unfolding as research proceeds would rarely be translated into a working environment without some necessary adjustments that account for contingencies. While some of these constraints are of a general nature, affecting the institution as a whole, some are particularly pertinent to certain types of record or means of recording, largely because of their unique demands on the appraiser, the institution, and the user.

Respondents provided narrative comments assessing the constraints under which they operated; these constraints were often cited as having a material impact on the quality of their appraisal and on their confidence in its completeness. They generally agreed that institutional records in all of their complexity and interactions are the most time-consuming to appraise and most often reveal the inadequacy of the archives’ resources. They also agreed that newer forms of recording, especially records from fast changing computer and audio-visual recording systems, demand special knowledge and support that was often wanting. Respondents suggested a wide spectrum of initiatives were desirable to improve appraisal, its consistency, and overall quality. Not surprisingly, the majority indicated that more resources would be essential (97.61%), although the comments revealed that respondents frequently had different resources in mind, from more space, to more staff, to better allocation of funds to address appraisal problems. Better ways of sharing information among institutions were either highly or somewhat desirable (92.49%), as was a better understanding of records, including record-keeping systems, and greater experience using structured methods of appraisal and a better understanding of their benefits (88%). Clear guidelines regarding legal

aspects of appraisal (87.25%), more comprehensive policies and procedures (80.56%), and national guidelines on appraisal (71.25%) were also desired by over two thirds of respondents. When asked to rank the importance of these possible improvements, more resources clearly emerged to be what most respondents ranked as the priority.<sup>25</sup>

### *Accountability for Appraisal*

Appraisal may be done by one person or by a group acting in concert at certain points – normally in planning the job, in determining the approach, and, of course, in undertaking the tasks of reading actual records, interviewing creators and users, and researching records practices. Those involved in doing the appraisal share information as the job proceeds and experience accumulates. Front-line archivists have privileged access to the new knowledge acquired in doing the job. Their direct experience provides compelling reasons and rationales for their recommendations or decisions, whatever these may be.

Section D of the survey asked the respondent to indicate the ways and means that this knowledge, especially the critical decisions made during an appraisal, was shared with others. I was especially interested in modes of communicating such information to those not involved in the project but who, nonetheless, had a stake in accessing knowledge acquired in appraisal and to the decisions that were made. At least three identifiable groups need such information: sponsors of the institution and the archivists' superiors and colleagues; future archivists or others who will assume responsibility for the decision and/or for continuing work with the same source; and, arguably, users of the historical resources in the archives today and future users.

Over half of the respondents (54.7%) prepare written appraisal reports that embody key information that supports the argument leading to a recommendation. Written reports are often supplemented by informal communications, especially in the workplace (47.9%) or by formal presentations to peer groups or other types of committee (24.7%). Clearly, with only a few exceptions, the decision and its rationale is communicated to contemporary and future colleagues who carry forward the responsibility for archival functions in the institution. Interestingly, over ten percent of respondents (11.2%) indicated that communication took place in other ways; these included posting on an Intranet, targeted emails, and hard-copy and electronic newsletters. Only a few indicated that as the sole person responsible for their archives, no communications were either requested or required. One respondent wrote that

25 Clearly, further probing of these issues in interviews would add greater detail and nuance to this section.

“no one has ever asked for a written report of appraisal in my thirty years [as an archivist].”

Most appraisals also have a formal expression in genres of records that are typically found in professional archives: retention schedules (59.2%); deposit and disposition agreements (9.4%); and formal accession documents (64.8%). About thirty percent of respondents (29.6%) told us about other formal ways for embodying the decision and its rationales. Five of the most often mentioned include explicit discussion in the finding aids, especially in the scope and content notes; automated systems for tracking implementation and changes to the appraisal; the terms agreed to with the donor(s); formal appraisal reports established as a series distinct from more general files about collections; and submissions to committees and other extra-archives official groups or bodies. Only a few responded that no formal record of any type was kept that reflected the appraisal and the decision process or rationales.

The public that uses the archives, and the larger public interest that is served by the continued existence of authentic records of public bodies and communities of shared experience, also has legitimate interests in appraisals, not only in the records that are kept, but also in the conduct of the appraisal that supported the disposition decision. Despite what one would think is a compelling interest, only twenty percent (19.7%) indicated that appraisal and decision information was provided as a matter of course through finding aids and other catalogue records. Almost three quarters (70%) responded that appraisal decisions were not recorded or reflected in finding aids. Given the fact that most appraisals and certainly their outcomes in decisions are recorded in some way, it is logical to assume that written records of one type or another exist. But interestingly, over two thirds of respondents (66.7%) indicated that the general public does not have access to appraisal documents and decisions, especially to documents that have no status in a separate series but are incorporated in the institution's other official records. Equally interesting, just under one quarter (22.7%) told us that the public does have access; however, it may be less free than one might think to be the case. Many indicated that individuals would have to formally request access if they wanted to examine internal documents relating to appraisal. They would use either institutional guidelines governing freedom of information, or an official process established by law or regulation. In the words of one respondent, “we do not hide or keep information from the public, but it's not published either.”

Many respondents provided marginal glosses to the questions concerning public access to the archivists' professional working papers and decision documents; these qualifications give nuance to the story told by bald numbers. The selectivity applied to access or to closure was not random. Respondents indicated that the gateway to access was balanced on the principle of maintaining some legal or moral confidence. Some indicated that they would provide appraisal information in a finding aid if they believed, in their profes-



sional opinion, that it was important for the user to have it, for example, where the lack of information about selection might affect the users' beliefs about the completeness of the record or the statistical reliability of inferences that might be drawn from the records. This was cited most often in appraisal of case files, where the disposition involved some form of sampling or selection. Others responded that the very act of preservation implied the appraisal decision: by the same token, the absence of records also implied an appraisal decision, in this case not to keep the records but to destroy them. Many also pointed out that future plans for integrated or linked record-keeping systems on computer would be the opportunity to provide explicit links among related data, on appraisal, custodial actions, preservation needs, and use. This future linking was seen to be a useful spinoff of computer-communication technologies. It was agreed to be a positive contribution to appraisal and to a better recognition of archival accountability.

Over half of the respondents (54.3%) follow-up on appraisal decisions – either to audit their continuing relevance or to track compliance with agreed terms and conditions. This response is probably a function of the number replies from archivists in integrated archives and records programs. Just over one third (34.1%) rarely or never follow-up on appraisal decisions. Many wrote that they neglected this aspect of appraisal only because of the constraints imposed by the small number of professional staff available to do complex jobs and by the lack of adequate time and resources for some tasks.

Seventy percent of respondents (69.7%) told us that their institution did not have a formal policy concerning reappraisal. Some did not know of any official policy, and others were not sure whether there was one at all. One respondent told us that “appraisal decisions from the past are frequently scrutinized and changed as the circumstances dictate,” while in direct contrast, another told us their policy was implied “in that de-accessioning is an involved multi-staged process, to be avoided if possible – acquisition is therefore not to be lightly approached.” About one quarter replied that their institution had a formal policy on reappraisal.

This spread echoes respondents' own beliefs about the principle of the fixity of any given appraisal and the decision it supports. Many believe that changed circumstances, whatever these be, should almost automatically result in a rethinking of the appraisal and the existing disposition decision. Others thought this should happen regularly, as part of a cycle of archival business, rather than counting on unpredictable triggers. Yet others, definitely a smaller group, strongly believe that an appraisal decision should stand regardless of changes. What explains the breadth of belief and practices? One third of respondents took the time to provide observations on this point. Many believed that appraisal would always be a moving target that shifted according to resources and especially when costs were reassessed against the benefits that were proved by time and experience. Some indicated that reappraisal was

most often needed for very complex assessments where all pertinent information was not known at the time of the original decision. By contrast, others were concerned about changing the decisions that were the result of a full and complete appraisal done in the first instance: changes to these decisions might not be warranted. Several respondents indicated that they were unable to appraise strategically or proactively but had to do appraisal assessments during processing, especially when dealing with accumulations that had not been fully appraised before accessioning. Many wrote that when all was considered – time, costs, and resources – it was best by far to do a good job in the first instance to prove the archival assertion of competence in making appraisal decisions. A few pointed to the impact of political considerations, especially as these were widely internalized either as part of general social norms or as political needs were interpreted by management in the course of making a decision. As one respondent wrote, “... revisiting appraisal decisions [made in the past] is problematic. Each subsequent decision after the original one is based on only part of the records, not the whole. It is best to appraise it once and correctly the first time.”

### **Conclusions**

At this stage in the project – initial analysis of the data before undertaking custom cross-tabulations and doing follow-up, in-depth interviews – firm conclusions would be premature. The results of the survey are best seen as pointing to some general patterns that evidently transcend the differences in workplace and responsibilities. The narrative comments, which were extensive, proved to be very useful in establishing a sense of the respondents’ context, and with that in mind it was possible to see some patterns to the experiences of this generation of Canadian archivists.

Appraisal involves working archivists, and their managers and supervisors. Responses to the survey confirmed the importance of the manager’s role in appraisal, while many comments provided examples of the impact of this crucial participant in the process. Some respondents at the professional working level see managers not only as necessary to doing a good appraisal but also as positive contributors to the process. However, it was also clear that many others perceived managers to be impediments, largely because their power could too easily overturn recommendations that were based on extensive research and the reasoned judgements of a skilled professional. While the importance of the manager’s role is not a revelation, it seems to be a factor that is not considered adequately or fully in the literature on appraisal. Further discussion with archivists about the procedural aspects of appraisal in specific institutions – and of the factors that tend to have an impact on professional and managerial roles – and their relative influence their different weighing decision-making may be a fruitful line of investigation in the next phase of the

research. The gap between the view of the professional, working-level appraiser and their manager, whether only perceived or real, needs to be addressed.

It is not possible to determine whether the variety of methods that Canadian archivists find to be useful in appraisal indicates a growing sophistication in matching tools to uses, or whether it suggests uncertainty about the continuing value of any method. Does variety mask another commonality, such as sequential employment of different methods at different levels or phases of an appraisal? Indeed all of these factors may be more or less at work in a given case. However, what does stand out is the strong showing of intuition as a valuable approach to appraisal.<sup>26</sup> Many respondents took time to write about their experience with methods, and the comments about intuition were frequent. One respondent's comment captured the spirit of many: "... you do not start with this [intuition], but gain it after years of hands-on appraisal. After years you will 'intuitively' know if the records fill gaps in your institution's holdings, if they are the type of records your users consult, if they have evidential or informational value, etc." Other unique factors also had an impact on appraisals. A large number of respondents are guided by the accessibility of records, paying close attention to the effect of privacy legislation. There appears to be a real need for more concrete guidance for appraisal activities from the profession in the form of standards of practice, and from institutions, in the form of clear policies and related procedures. The survey indicates that respondents considered these desirable and useful.

Respondents strongly agreed that appraisal experience was important to acquire and added a quality to appraisal that could not be replicated by formal education. Experiential learning provided a seasoning that the majority of respondents considered essential, underscoring the importance of having experienced colleagues as mentors for new appraisers. Belief in the key role of experiential learning was prevalent in the survey; this experience was not considered the same as theoretical learning or knowledge of methods that are appropriate to use, but as a complement to that knowledge. The apprentice model is well-entrenched and our respondents believe that it is a valuable part of the learning experience of appraisers. As one respondent wrote in

Based on my experience and observations of colleagues I think it would be enormously difficult and somewhat dangerous for somebody without an archival masters-level degree to do a really good job of appraisal. Even then, it is valuable, if not essential to have a good mentor for at least the first year or two, and contact on a regular basis with colleagues at the same institution or, if not available, at other institutions. Most people lacking the appropriate education simply do not have the perspective needed to do appraisal well. Some can rise above this lack, but only if they are very open-minded and oriented to self-improvement. Otherwise they easily fall into the trap of keep-

26 The notion of intuition needs to be further explored in interviews.

ing records on the basis of perceived research value, rather than the context of their creation (functions and values to the creator, significance and place of the records creator in society.) And no, even a PhD in history does not overcome this lack, far from it!

One of the more intriguing aspects of the survey was the very different practices that were revealed about making appraisal decisions known more widely. Recent high profile scandals in business and government confirm again and again that careful regimes for making, keeping, and facilitating the uses of records, including, of course, archival records, may be the best guarantee society has for ensuring the long-term accountability of elected officials and appointed employees who have discretionary power over people, money, and goods. One dimension of a more general accountability of great importance, but perhaps of low profile, is located within the sphere of records personnel. They advise on record-keeping regimes, participate in making decisions on the long-term retention of records that ensure accountability for actions performed, and, ultimately, records personnel, in the form of the archivist, make final selections of records to preserve as part of our emerging culture and as sources for history that either challenges or comforts the future.

The choices made by archives affect society as a whole and each generation's successors in the profession. Current interest in issues related to ensuring accountability for decisions made by delegates undoubtedly has a parallel in the realm of professional actions. Accountability in many instances rests on documents which provide a means of revisiting past actions. A legitimate question for archivists to ask would be how their professional accountability is expressed, especially as it relates to the assertion of competence to do appraisal and their largely understood power to make keep-and-destroy decisions responsibly, with a view to serving the needs of society as a whole. Clearly, the broader notion of "accountability" should include a dimension of archival accountability, that is, both a recognition of the principle and the provision of a means for rendering an account for the responsibilities to the profession and to society for the decisions we make on records. Archivists certainly value the experiences of their predecessors to make it a regular practice to consult reports that were done in the past, during appraisal, or at the time of accessioning, or even during later processing. However, the responses indicate that there is ambiguity in the archivist's practices and beliefs concerning when and how the society they serve, as represented by the general public and users, have access to appraisal assessments and decisions.

The survey exposed the wide variety of functions undertaken by most archivists in Canada, which may be a reflection of the diversity of activities that is required of those who work in smaller institutions; however, it may also be strong evidence that mutual dependencies among archival functions that are labelled as discrete activities are broadly acknowledged. Many respon-

dents pointed out that it was very difficult to rank activities in the way the survey asked them to because all functions in the archives were interrelated and interdependent. That situation may be true or it may be a product of the large number of respondents who are working in smaller organizations and must be involved in all activities, sometimes intermixed, on a daily basis. On the other hand, the variety of new types of activities that archivists are doing, in addition to the traditional functions of appraisal, description, public service, and collection maintenance, suggest there are changes coming in the future to the expectations of archival competencies in the workplace. This change may be only apparent. The survey indicates that there are many connections between older characterizations of jobs and their new emphasis – the same essential responsibilities are still in place but expressed in new modes. Nevertheless, it was surprising to find that not only was appraisal not considered by respondents to be the archivist's prime responsibility, but that no other traditional professional skill topped the list. Most respondents believe that the first call on their competence is to manage well. As we look to the future, the experience and resulting beliefs of this generation will be important factors in the rebalancing of the profession to deal with the many new corporate and personal documentary practices that are situated in new technologies, which may herald new working relationships.

**Appendix: Survey Questionnaire**  
**“The Experience of Archival Appraisal by Archivists In Canada”**

The questionnaire should take about 50–60 minutes to complete fully: it will take less time for those who have not done appraisal.

**Section A: Your Experience Doing Appraisal in Archives**

1. Are you currently doing appraisal?  
 Yes  
 No
  
2. Have you ever done appraisal in the past?  
 Yes  
 No
  
3. Have you ever been connected to appraisal in any way, e.g., as a project manager, or in making decisions, or as a consultants, etc.?  
 Yes ⇒ *Go to Question 4*  
 No ⇒ *Go to Section H*

4. When was the last time you did appraisal in archives?
- Within the past 5 years
  - Between 6 and 10 years ago
  - Over 10 years ago
5. The last time you did appraisal, what was your role (please check only one)?
- Responsible for doing appraisal but not making the decision
  - Responsible for doing appraisal and making the decision
  - Responsible for appraisal decision
  - Contributed to appraisal decision through recommendations or advice
  - Other (please specify)

### Section B: Your Personal Attitude to Appraisal

This section asks for a self-assessment of your general disposition towards the keep/destroy decision. We are interested in your self-assessment based on your experiences. For example, if asked to provide a general summation of your disposition toward the keep/destroy decision, would you regard yourself as a conservative in appraisal, or would err on the side of keeping more rather than conservative in appraisal, who would err on the side of keeping more rather than less, or would you regard yourself as a radical sceptic, requiring the highest probability of continuing value before contemplating acquisition.

6. How would you respond to the following statements?
- a. I Have trouble making decisions to *keep* things
- 1. Often
  - 2. Occasionally
  - 3. Rarely
  - 4. Depends on the situation
  - 5. Not a problem
- b. I have trouble making decisions to *destroy* things
- 1. Often
  - 2. Occasionally
  - 3. Rarely
  - 4. Depends on the situation
  - 5. Not a problem

7. Have you ever felt uncomfortable doing appraisal?
- 1. Often
  - 2. Occasionally
  - 3. Rarely
  - 4. Never
  - 5. Not sure

***If you have been a manager of appraisal, please answer the next question. If not, skip this question and go to Section C.***

8. Have you ever felt uncomfortable managing appraisal?
- 1. Often
  - 2. Occasionally
  - 3. Rarely
  - 4. Never
  - 5. Not sure

### **Section C: Knowledge, Education, and Training**

This section asks for your assessment of the knowledge that you judge to be essential or required to do an adequate job of appraisal. It further asks for your opinion about the best way to acquire that knowledge, through experience, education, training or a combination of these. Please note that we are interested in your personal and professional assessment, not the official requirements for employment or promotion in your organization/institution.

- 9a. What knowledge, in your experience, is required for the skill of appraisal? Please select as many of the following as you think apply:
- 1. Knowledge of archival theory
  - 2. Knowledge of appraisal theory
  - 3. Knowledge of the creators, their habits, history and systems
  - 4. Knowledge of a special subject or subjects, such as might be acquired through formal education and wide reading in an area or topic
  - 5. Other knowledge? Please specify.
- 9b. From the answers to question 9a (above), please list in order of importance the knowledge and skills you feel are the most important for doing appraisal.
1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_

- 10a. In your opinion, what are the best way(s) to acquire knowledge and skill as an appraiser? Please check all that apply.
- 1. On the job training by experienced appraisers
  - 2. Lengthy practical experience
  - 3. Formal education and/or training
  - 4. First university degree or college diploma
  - 5. Post-graduate degree or diploma with specialization in archival studies
  - 6. Post-graduate degree or diploma in a special subject area
  - 7. Diploma or certificate from courses or workshops in appraisal
  - 8. Other. Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 10b. From the answers to question 10a (above) please list in order of importance the best way(s) in your opinion to acquire knowledge and skill as an appraiser.
1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you attend professional meetings (regional, national, or international)?
- 1. Often (3 meetings or more per year)
  - 2. Occasionally (1 or 2 workshops per year)
  - 3. Rarely (1 every two years or so)
  - 4. Never
12. Have you ever taken special workshops or other special training opportunities?
- 1. Often (3 meetings or more per year)
  - 2. Occasionally (1 or 2 workshops per year)
  - 3. Rarely (1 every two years or so)
  - 4. Never
13. Does your institution encourage participation in professional meetings?
- 1. Actively encourages
  - 2. Limited encouragement
  - 3. Does not encourage



14. What journals do you read or consult for information or experiences?

Name of journal	Weekly	Monthly	3/4 times/year	Never
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. How useful are these journals for appraisal tasks?

Name of journal	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	Irrelevant
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Do you ever visit websites to assist in making recommendations or decisions related to appraisal?

Yes

No

If yes, can you give an example of a website recently visited?

\_\_\_\_\_

17. What professional texts have you found to be most useful for appraisal, if any?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you use any other sources for reference or support when doing appraisal? If so, please list.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

19. Does your institution have a formal strategy for doing appraisal?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Don't know
20. Does your institution have criteria of value that are used when assessing records?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Don't know
21. Before undertaking an appraisal project or while doing it, do you refer to published literature, information on websites, reports from previous projects, internal directives, mission statements? If so, list these items and indicate how often you consult each of them.

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. Please recall an appraisal when you consulted published literature, information on websites, reports from previous projects, internal directives, mission statements, or other formal sources. Please name the sources or documents and explain how they helped you with your project.

Source \_\_\_\_\_

How did it help? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Source \_\_\_\_\_

How did it help? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. Before undertaking an appraisal project or while doing it do you consult:

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
1. Colleagues in your institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Subject experts outside your institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Colleagues in other archives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Users				
5. Records creators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. In your experience of doing appraisal have you ever:

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
1. Consulted statistics on the use of documents by your users?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Surveyed published works to seek information about uses of archival material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Sought legal opinions about your responsibilities for keeping records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Sought legal opinions about your responsibilities for closing records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. While you are doing an appraisal project, what documents or tools do you typically employ (please select all which apply)?
- Archive's mandate
  - Appraisal policy(ies)
  - Acquisition plans, targets, or priority statements
  - Appraisal, acquisition, or other procedural guide such as manuals or standards
  - Lists of criteria – of value or of uses
    - \_\_\_ developed in house
    - \_\_\_ derived from published manual (title \_\_\_\_\_)
  - Reports or records from previous appraisals or acquisitions
  - Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

26. Please add any comments you would like to make about this section.

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#### Section D: Approach/Method/Reporting

This section asks for your opinion on the value and utility of some common types of appraisal methods or approaches.

27. Which of the following methods or approaches have you found to be useful in doing appraisal (please select all that apply)?

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
1. Functional analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Use analysis of previous acquisitions from the same source or the same type	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Acquisition or documentation strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Analysis of evidential and informational value	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Results from a Survey of Practitioners' Experiences, Practices, and Opinions 37

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely
5. Risk analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Sampling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Intuition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Historical investigation of records, systems, and habits of the creator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Conceptual model	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Precedents in our institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Accessibility of records (closures because of privacy or other legislation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I don't use any particular method or approach but approach each project independently on its own merits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. Please comment on the utility of these methods to you.

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29. What is the typical way that your appraisal is communicated to others who need to know (e.g., superiors, sponsors, colleagues, future appraisers) (please check all that apply)?

- Letters or memoranda submitted to others or filed for reference
- Internal memoranda
- Informal oral communication
- Appraisal reports (written)
- Presentations to group or committee (oral and/or written)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

30. How are decisions formally recorded at your institution (check all that apply)?
- In retention schedule(s)
- Deposit agreements
- Formal accession documents
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

31. Does the public have access to internal appraisal documents and decisions?
- Yes
- No
- If yes, please tell us how.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

32. Are appraisal decisions recorded in finding-aids?
- Yes
- No

33. Does your institution follow-up on appraisal decisions to ensure they have been implemented?
- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

34. Does your institution have a policy concerning reappraisal?
- Yes
- No

35. What is your attitude towards appraisal decisions?

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
They are cast in stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They should be reviewed regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
They may change based on circumstance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. Please add any comments you would like to make about this section.

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**Section E: Practical Problems Encountered Doing Appraisal**

This section asks you to identify some of the practical matters that may affect your appraisals. We are interested in hearing about all that you have encountered personally.

37. Which of the following factors have an impacts on your keep/destroy recommendations (please select all your apply)?

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not a Factor
1. Not enough space to store material	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Insufficient time to do full appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Budget constraints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Not enough trained staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Unable to ensure preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Not enough support literature to guide decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Not enough support from institutional administrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Not enough guidance from policies and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Problems dealing with records creators or with donors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Communication problems with management and/or other colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not a Factor
11. Poor working environment (physical space, organizational atmosphere)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Privacy legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

38. Do you have special concerns about appraising some personal and institutional records?

Yes ⇒ *Go to Question 39*

No ⇒ *Go to Question 40*

39. Constraints relating to time, insufficient specialist knowledge, and inadequate human resources are often cited as having an impact on doing appraisal.

	Time Consuming to Access	Require Specialist Knowledge	Too Few Human Resources	Not Applicable
1. Institutional records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Case files or other mass records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Financial records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Electronic records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Audio-visual records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Photographs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Maps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Artwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Artefacts, including memorabilia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Records of new agencies or divisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Incomplete records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Administrative records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



40. In your experience, are there any other problem areas that affect your ability to do appraisal? Please indicate the problem area and the kind(s) of records to which they apply.

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**Section F: Improvements**

This section provides an opportunity for you to tell us what things are needed, in your opinion, to help make appraisal more consistent, responsible, and useful.

41. Which of the following do you think would help improve the quality and consistency of appraisal in archives?

	Highly Desirable	Somewhat Desirable	Not Desirable	No Improvement Needed
1. More resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. More sharing of information among institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. More support from within the institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Better understanding of records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. More information about methods used in other institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. More workshops and courses on appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Better understanding of the application of IT to appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Highly Desirable	Somewhat Desirable	Not Desirable	No Improvement Needed
8. Clear guidelines regarding the legal aspects of appraisal (e.g., privacy, freedom of information, copyright)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. More comprehensive policies and procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. National guidelines or standards for appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Better understanding of the needs of users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

42. From question 41 above, please rank the top three areas of improvement needed in your opinion:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

43. Please add any comments you would like to make about this section.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Section G: Your Professional Experience**

This section asks about your professional experience in archives and about your current appraisal projects.

44. How long have you been an archivist?

\_\_\_\_\_

45. What archival functions or tasks do you currently perform (please check those which apply)?
- Appraisal
  - Arrangement and description
  - Reference and public service
  - Preservation/conservation
  - Management
  - Records management
  - Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)
46. If you checked more than one, please rank these tasks in order of the time you are occupied doing them.
1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
47. If you checked more than one, please rank these in order of their importance to your archives (as you judge importance).
1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
48. Which of these tasks do you regard as your first responsibility (primary task) in the job you are currently doing?
- \_\_\_\_\_
49. Please tell us about your current appraisal project(s) – you may assign a title for ease of reference.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

50. Before undertaking the current project(s) how long have you been doing appraisal?
- Less than one year
  - One to three years
  - Four to seven years
  - Eight to eleven years
  - Over eleven years

### Section H: Information About Yourself

This final section asks for basic information about yourself.

51. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_  
 I prefer not to answer
52. What is your sex?  
 Female  
 Male  
 I prefer not to answer
53. What is the level of your education (please check all that apply)?  
 University academic degree(s) (specify \_\_\_\_\_)  
 (please indicate your area of specialization e.g., Anthropology, Fine Arts, etc. \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Post-secondary education other than university  
 (specify \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Secondary education
54. What archival training have you completed?  
 Theoretical and/or practical course work with certificate or diploma  
 (specify \_\_\_\_\_)  
 University program  
 (specify \_\_\_\_\_)  
 On-the-job training  
 Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)
55. What special training or education have you had, not mentioned above, that you consider relevant to archival appraisal?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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56. By what kind of institution are you currently employed (select one)?
- Government archives (national, provincial/territorial, municipal)
  - Educational archives (university, technical, research)
  - Business (for profit)
  - Community (not for profit, including museums, public libraries, and historical societies)
  - Religious
  - Medical
  - Other (please specify)

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57. Have you ever completed a Keirsev Temperament Sorter questionnaire?
- Yes
  - No   ⇒ *Go to Question 59*

58. What is your Keirsev temperament?
- Artisan
  - Guardian
  - Idealist
  - Rationalist

59. Please use the space below to comment on any aspect of your involvement with archival appraisal which you think may be useful to this study.

Thank you for helping us – and you may look forward to the results of this survey in the coming months.