

**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL  
PRACTICE AND USER STUDIES: U.S. STATE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS  
MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
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University of Pittsburgh, 2011

This study is the first to explore empirically the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies as well as the utilization of users and use as an appraisal factor. Both of these topics have been questioned in the archival community for several decades. This study investigated the current utilization of user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs. It used the findings, along with participants' attitudes toward such practices, to consider the potential relationship between appraisal practice and user studies.

A paucity of information on this research topic and on the target population necessitated three preliminary studies, conducted from 2006 through 2008, which facilitated the development of the survey questionnaire and three interview protocols. These tools were tested in a 2009 pretest study. In 2010 the full research study employed an online survey and in-person and phone interviews. Forty-seven eligible state archivists and records managers from thirty-three states participated, and interviewees involved twenty-eight participants from twenty-one states. This full study analyzed data at four levels (individual, group, program, and state), and it used SPSS software and NVivo8 software for data analysis.

According to the results of this study, the user study is the least frequently utilized user/use information source for appraisal practice, even though many participants consider users and use as an appraisal factor and collect user/use information from several different sources. Participants from only seven programs utilized results of user studies in their appraisal practice,

and then only irregularly and unsystematically. Nevertheless, this study indicates the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies is likely to continue developing for two broad reasons. First, most participants have positive attitudes toward the feasibility and value of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice; participants who have done so proved the feasibility and value. Second, developing information technology helps conduct user studies, and results of this study show that if a program conducts a user study, its results will probably be utilized in appraisal practice. Findings of this study informed recommendations for further research, recommendations for archival education and training, and implications and recommendations for practitioners.

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**TO GOD AND MY PARENTS**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am able to express only a small portion of my full gratitude to many people, more than I can list here, who have supported me as I completed this dissertation and the doctoral program.

Most of all, I attribute my dissertation and achievements in the doctoral program to Dr. Richard J. Cox, my advisor and the chair of my dissertation committee. His interests in my dissertation topic, acknowledgement of its value, and encouragement to move forward enabled me finish this challenging dissertation research. Also, I have gained a lot of knowledge about archives, preservation, records management, and academia in his classes and in discussions outside the classroom. Thanks to his teaching and training, I gained a comprehensive and interdisciplinary perspective. During the doctoral program, he gave me confidence about my research, which will influence my future work.

I also appreciate the other committee members who helped me improve this dissertation. At the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Bernadette Callery and Dr. Ellen G. Detlefsen gave me recommendations about the dissertation process and how to improve my dissertation. Dr. Elizabeth Yakel at the University of Michigan, who was previously my professor there, gave good advice about my dissertation, particularly about user studies.

In addition to my committee members, I would like to give my gratitude to Dr. Elaine N. Rubinstein, a research specialist at the University of Pittsburgh. She helped me improve my survey questionnaire and analyze and interpret data. Moreover, her kind consideration,

comments, and mental support gave me the energy and passion to move forward in the dissertation process.

Dr. Soo Young Rieh was one of my teachers at the University of Michigan, but more importantly, my mentor. Since my master's program there, I have consulted with her on my difficulties in the doctoral program. Her experience and advice helped me succeed in my master's and doctoral programs.

I am also indebted to all the participants in my dissertation research. Without their participation, this dissertation would not have been possible. Their interest in this research and willingness to provide much information gave me passion for the research mission. I hope they find helpful my recommendations for practitioners, presented in the last chapter of this dissertation.

I also appreciate Council of State Archivists (CoSA) members for their interest in and assistance with this research. In particular, Victoria Irons Walch, an executive director at CoSA, informed CoSA about my research and announced it on CoSA's listserv to encourage participation. She provided much information on CoSA and its survey results on state archives and records management programs. Julia Marks Young, director of Archives & Records Services at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, introduced a participant for my pretest and participated herself. Her knowledge and experience on archival appraisal helped me improve my survey questionnaire. Dave Joens, Laura Saegert, and Tony Black participated in my pretest and gave their ideas and recommendations. Thanks to their help, my survey questionnaire and interview questions were improved.

My classmates in the doctoral program supported my dissertation and my personal life. They took my pretest and gave me feedback for this dissertation. Discussions with them inspired many research topics and issues. I will always remember my experiences with them.

I am grateful to the “we-eat-cakes” group members. Their advice on the doctoral program and their mental support enabled me to overcome the difficulties in the long journey of writing this dissertation. I will never forget the strawberry cake one of them baked to celebrate the completion of my dissertation.

I am also indebted to many friends and relatives in Korea and the United States. Their prayers, support, and encouragement motivated me to finish my dissertation and the doctoral program. Their celebration upon my graduation was the most special achievement I gained from the doctoral program.

I would like to give special thanks to my family, who has wished me happiness in life and success in the doctoral program. Without my parents’ love, support, and encouragement, I could not have finished the program. Their efforts to provide me with a good education from childhood led me to attain two Master’s degrees and a doctoral degree. I also thank my brother and sister-in-law for their support of and congratulations on my doctoral degree.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the Library Research Round Table (LRRT) of the American Library Association (ALA), which gave me the LRRT Jesse H. Shera Award for the Support of Dissertation Research and funded portions of my dissertation work. Their esteem of my dissertation proposal motivated me to complete the project.

I cannot include all the names of those who deserve my gratitude. However, I will keep their love and support in my mind for the rest of my life, and I will try to give them my love and support in return.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**AAUS:** Appraisal-Aware User Study

**AHA:** American Historical Association

**CoSA:** Council of State Archivists

**COSHRC:** Council of State Historical Records Coordinators

**CRIME:** Criminal Records Information Management Enterprise

**FCS:** Food and Consumer Service

**GRP:** Government Records Project

**ICAP:** Intergovernmental Cooperative Appraisal Program

**IRP:** Intergovernmental Records Program

**ISO:** International Organization for Standardization

**MARC-AMC:** Machine Readable Cataloging format for Archives and Manuscripts Control

**NAGARA:** National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

**NARA:** National Archives and Records Administration

**NHPRC:** National Historical Publications and Records Commission

**RDA:** Records Disposition Authority

**RLG:** Research Libraries Group

**RLIN:** Research Libraries Information Network

**SHRAB:** State Historical Records Advisory Boards

**SAA:** Society of American Archivists

**UAA:** User/Use-Aware Appraisal

**UIA:** Use-Inclusive Approach to Appraisal

**USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture

**USMARC-AMC:** U.S. Machine Readable Cataloging Format for Archives and Manuscripts

Control

**WHS:** Wisconsin Historical Society

## 1.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Though records are created for a purpose, not all records remain valuable or useful, nor can they all be preserved. Furthermore, as information technology has developed, the quantity of records has experienced explosive growth. This not only challenges archives with limited resources to select and preserve valuable records but also challenges users seeking specific records among a huge number of archival materials. To meet these challenges, many archival studies agree that governments and other organizations need to dispose of useless records through appraisal methodologies. A use study of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Archives reports that nearly 80 percent of the use of its collection involves only 20 percent of the collection.<sup>1</sup> This accords almost perfectly with the 80/20 rule that is conventionally applied in the library community. Many archival studies recommend the disposal of useless records as requisite and beneficial in order to save archives' resources for processing and preserving records and enhancing users' access and use.

The role of *use* in archival appraisal has been the subject of argument, particularly since the 1980s. Many appraisal researchers have claimed that use is a necessary appraisal factor and

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Jackson, "The 80/20 Archives: A Study of Use and Its Implications," *Archival Issues* 22, no. 2 (1997): 133-45.

have made efforts to determine the value and benefit of records based on use—a *use-inclusive approach to appraisal*.<sup>2</sup> In particular, U.S. government archivists have led and supported this approach in order to determine valuable records among the geometrically increasing volume of government records and to justify spending public money on their retention.<sup>3</sup> U.S. state archives and records management programs estimate that only between 2 and 5 percent of all records created need to be retained permanently in state archives, and the other 95 to 98 percent of records need to be retained only as long as the records are necessary.<sup>4</sup>

However, several appraisal researchers have criticized use as an appraisal factor. The main reason is that future use cannot be anticipated because research trends and user information needs change.<sup>5</sup> Another significant criticism is that the measurement of use is inaccurate and unreliable because it is impacted by several factors.<sup>6</sup>

The multi-factored nature of use measurement is leveraged as both support for and criticism of the employment of use as an appraisal factor. However, there are few studies about

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<sup>2</sup> An *appraisal researcher* is operationally defined as an academician or practitioner who examines archival appraisal conceptually and theoretically and/or empirically. *Use-inclusive approach to appraisal* is an operational term for this study, including the value-through-use approach, the use-based approach to appraisal, and use-based cost-benefit analysis. For more information, see page 9 and the Literature Review chapter of this study.

<sup>3</sup> For example, G. Philip Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*, Staff Information Circulars 13, June 1946, Reprint (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1976); Mark Greene, “‘The Surest Proof’: A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal,” *Archivaria* 45 (1998): 127-69; Leonard Rapport, “No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records,” *American Archivist* 44, no.2 (Spring 1981): 143-50; and T. R. Schellenberg, “The Appraisal of Modern Public Records,” *National Archives Bulletin* 8 (Washington: National Archives and Records Service, 1956). Also available online at <http://www.archives.org/research/alic/reference/archives-resources/appraisal-foreword.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records: A Status Report on State Archives and Records Management Programs in the United States* (Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Archivists, 2007). Also available online at <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/2007-ARMreport/StateARMs-2006rpt-final.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2008), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives—A Reply to Leonard Rapport,” *American Archivist* 47, no.1 (Winter 1984): 47-48; Terry Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics, and Implementation in Canada, 1950–2000,” *Archival Science* 5 (2005): 101-61 (119, 146, note 65); F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 8.

<sup>6</sup> For the factors, see Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire”; Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice”; and Greene, “‘The Surest Proof’”. Criticism of use as an appraisal factor is described fully on pages 15-17 in the Literature Review chapter of this study.

how to analyze use and how to collect use information for appraisal practice. Traditionally, many appraisal archivists have consulted subject experts to understand users and use. However, since the 1980s when more appraisal researchers began examining the role of use in archival appraisal, some appraisal researchers have promoted user studies as necessary tools to collect information on users and use of records for appraisal practice.

Since the 1980s user study researchers have asserted the necessity of systematically studying users and their uses of archives by employing empirical research methods.<sup>7</sup> While the focus of their writings is not on archival appraisal per se, they have indicated that user studies can contribute to appraisal practice by providing information on users and use: who uses records, what information users need, how users locate and access records, what kind of records are used, and how records are used. According to those researchers, the results of user studies can be used as empirical evidence to support planning, analysis, and evaluation in appraisal practice. However, user study researchers have neither articulated fully what aspects of users and use appraisal archivists should consider nor how they can apply the information collected from user studies to appraisal practice.

Though some appraisal researchers and user study researchers since the 1980s have agreed that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is feasible and valuable, these two groups of researchers have done so from decidedly different research orientations and perspectives. The subjects of appraisal research are *materials*, specifically *records*, and the subjects of user studies are *people*, specifically *users*. This difference seems to imply that the two groups of researchers have different perspectives on the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, and

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<sup>7</sup> A *user study researcher* is operationally defined as an academician or practitioner who conducts empirical user/use studies or who conceptually acknowledges the necessity of conducting such studies by describing the concepts and importance of users and use.

that they start at different points to connect the two. While the subject has been mostly conceptually approached from the archival appraisal perspective, it has been mostly practically approached from the user study perspective. There has been little research bridging the gap between the two perspectives, which has complicated and obscured the actual relationship between appraisal practice and the user study. As a result, use-inclusive appraisal proponents have not taken advantage of user studies when developing or explaining archival appraisal theories and methods. Likewise, appraisal archivists actually employing use as an appraisal factor have not benefited from user studies. However, no previous studies have investigated the actual utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. In 1981, Clark A. Elliott stated, “The question will remain of the role of use studies [which are conventionally called user studies] in predicting future usage, and in appraisal decisions.”<sup>8</sup> As he anticipated almost thirty years ago, that question still has not been answered.

## 1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the current utilization of user studies in archival appraisal practice by crossing the perspectives of archival appraisal and the user study. It intends to lay the groundwork for further consideration of their potential relationship. To achieve these goals, this study investigates the following research questions.

**Question 1: Do U.S. state archivists and records managers collect and utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice?**

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<sup>8</sup> Clark A. Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science: Some Methodological Considerations,” *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 132.

For more than seventy years there has been continuous debate about employing users and use as an appraisal factor. However, it has been impossible to inform this debate with real-world data because it is unknown if users and use are employed as an appraisal factor and if information on users and use of records is actually utilized in appraisal practice. Therefore, it is necessary to begin this study by filling in this most fundamental gap in knowledge, which led to “why,” “why not,” and “how” questions.<sup>9</sup> That is, this study needs to begin by investigating if state archivists and records managers employ users and their use of records as an appraisal factor and information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice. If they do not, then they obviously do not utilize user studies as tools to collect information on users and use of records for their appraisal practice. The answer to this first research question will validate or invalidate the exploration of the relationship between user studies and appraisal practice. The answers to this question will also provide basic information enabling further exploration of the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice.

*Question 1-1: If U.S. state archivists and records managers do collect and utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice, why and how do they do so?*

Knowing what approaches state archivists and records managers take to integrating user/use information into appraisal practice, and knowing why, helps identify the feasibility and value of such techniques. Furthermore, the investigation determines if state archivists and records managers employ user studies as tools to collect information on users and use of records for such purposes and, ultimately, why and how user studies are utilized in appraisal practice. In

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<sup>9</sup> Sonja K. Foss and William Waters write that when basic information about theoretical construct is not known, “yes-no” questions such as questions starting with “do” and “can” are warranted (*Destination Dissertation: A Traveler’s Guide to a Done Dissertation* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 44-45.

addition, this question intends to determine if state archivists and records managers collect user/use information from other sources.

*Question 1-2: If U.S. state archivists and records managers do not collect or utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice, why not?*

This question does not only intend to identify the rationale for such a decision but also expect to identify factors preventing user studies from being utilized in appraisal practice.

**Question 2: What is the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs?**

Ultimately, this study intends to identify the current relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies. Further, it intends to consider their potential relationship by investigating state archivists' and state records managers' attitudes toward the feasibility and value of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice. This study also brings to light some of the factors that seem to influence this relationship to create a foundation for future studies, to map out focusing on the potential utility of user studies in appraisal practice.

### **1.3 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

This study intends to make a significant impact on its research topic, research methodology, and subjects of investigation. Most importantly, with regards to research topic, this study is the first major research to explore the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies. A similar study is Mark Greene's, which examined the feasibility and benefits of applying user studies to appraisal practices by focusing on the role of research use in making appraisal and

reappraisal decisions.<sup>10</sup> However, Greene's study did not ask the more fundamental question of whether or not user studies are actually utilized in appraisal practices in archives, which is the main topic of this study. In addition, this study is the first to identify archivists' and records managers' attitudes toward utilizing user studies in their appraisal practice. Furthermore, this study gives information on how the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies was thought of in the past, what the current relationship is, and what the future relationship could be. Therefore, this study will constitute a primary contribution to the archival and records management fields and will provide a foundation for further studies on this topic.

This study employs empirical methods although most authors of appraisal literature have examined archival appraisal conceptually and theoretically. Empirical data about appraisal practices and archivists and records managers conducting archival appraisal have been under-researched.<sup>11</sup> A number of researchers have promoted the feasibility and the value of utilizing user studies in appraisal practices on conceptual grounds; however, they have not supported their claims with empirical investigations of archivists and records managers. (The exceptions are Jacqueline Goggin's and Mark Greene's articles supporting user studies in archival appraisal, which are based on their experience.<sup>12</sup>) Except for Ernst Posner's survey, whose results were published in 1964, and continuous surveys of the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) since 1992, this study is the only nationwide survey investigating U.S. state archives and records

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Greene, "'The Surest Proof': A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal," *Archivaria* 45 (Spring 1998): 127-69.

<sup>11</sup> Empirical studies of appraisal practices include Frank Boles in association with Julia Marks Young, *Archival Appraisal* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1991), and Barbara L. Craig, "Doing Archival Appraisal in Canada. Results from a Postal Survey of Practitioners' Experiences, Practices, and Opinions," *Archivaria* 64 (Fall 2007): 1-45.

<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Goggin, "The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women's Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 57-67; Mark Greene, "'The Surest Proof': A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal," *Archivaria* 45 (1998): 127-69.

management programs.<sup>13</sup> Survey and interview instruments developed for this study can serve as benchmarks for further studies on similar topics.

U.S. state archives and records management programs have been little researched. A few papers on state archival programs have been published related to Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Reporting Projects in the 1980s, and there are a few papers related to cooperative appraisal, as well as CoSA reports in the 1990s. Additionally, some state archivists wrote about their own programs based on their experience. However, in the 2000s there have been few studies, including CoSA's surveys, on state archives and records management programs; hence, little is known about them.

Moreover, there are few studies on U.S. state archives and state records management programs together, especially their appraisal practices and user studies. Also, there are few studies investigating if and how archivists and records managers collaborate on certain tasks. Because in most states both state archivists and state records managers are involved with appraising state records, it is appropriate to investigate these two groups together. This study provides an opportunity to reconsider the two communities' relationship and collaboration. Although this study investigates only U.S. state archives and records management programs, further other researchers will be able to adapt its research topic and methods to other types of archives and records management programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Ernst Posner reported results of his survey in his book, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964). Reports of CoSA's surveys are Victoria Irons Walch, *Recognizing Leadership and Partnership: A Report on the Condition of Historical Records in the States and Efforts to Ensure Their Preservation and Use*, (Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Archivists, 1993). Also available online at <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/1993rpt/1993rpt-pt1.pdf>; Victoria Irons Walch, *Maintaining State Records in an Era of Change: A National Challenge* (Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Historical Records Coordinators, 1996). Also available online at <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/1996rpt/96rpt-narrative.pdf>; and Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*.

## 1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

*Appraisal (archival appraisal):* This term is operationally defined as 1) the process of identifying records that have sufficient value to be transferred to and retained in an archives and 2) the process of analyzing/assessing/evaluating records and determining the length of time the records should be retained. Although appraisal is used as a broad term in this study, it denotes archival appraisal, not monetary appraisal.

*Appraisal documentation:* For this study, appraisal documentation refers to the records that are created, collected, and maintained to describe, justify, and explain appraisal choices to the decision-making institution, record creators, and record users.<sup>14</sup> That is, the definition of appraisal documentation is limited to the appraisal function.

*Appraisal practice:* This term has an operational definition broadly encompassing all activities conducted by archivists for archival appraisal, including reappraisal. These activities include the following: making a plan for appraisal; assigning and spending resources (e.g., budget, staff) for appraisal; developing and evaluating policies relevant to appraisal such as acquisition and collection policies; developing and evaluating appraisal criteria and standards; making appraisal and reappraisal decisions; documenting appraisal; consulting with stakeholders (e.g., record creators, record users, state record managers, policy makers) within and outside their archives about appraisal operation; evaluating current appraisal performance, processes, and

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<sup>14</sup> This operational definition is adapted from Thomas J. Ruller's "quality appraisal documentation" definition and Jennifer Alycen Marshall's "documentation" definition. Thomas J. Ruller, "Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data: A Survey of Appraisal Documentation in Government Archival Repositories," *Archival Issues* 17, no. 1 (1992): 68; Jennifer Alycen Marshall, "Accounting for Disposition: A Comparative Case Study of Appraisal Documentation at the National Archives and Records Administration in the United States, Library and Archives Canada, and the National Archives of Australia," (Ph.D. diss.: University of Pittsburgh, 2007), 6.

methods; consulting, developing, reviewing, and approving record retention schedules; and approving destruction of records with an expiring retention period.

Appraisal researcher: This term is broadly defined as someone who writes about archival appraisal. It includes individuals considering the conceptual or theoretical notions of appraisal and individuals doing empirical research about appraisal. This individual may be either an academician or a practitioner.

Appraisal-aware user study (AAUS) researcher: This operational term defines a user study researcher who believes that user studies can contribute to archival appraisal.

Records management: This term is defined as the “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.”<sup>15</sup>

State archivist: This study distinguishes a “State archivist” with a capital “S” from a “state archivist” with a lowercase “s,” although the two terms are interchangeable in much of the literature. In this study, a “State archivist” is someone who is the chief of a state archives and is in charge of all records created by his or her state government’s agencies. A “state archivist” is an archivist working for his or her state.

Use (Use of records): As a broad concept, use in this study means any transaction between archival institutions and their clientele involving records and the information within the records. Use includes, but is not limited to, the following activities: scanning, reading, referring to, copying, printing, checking out, downloading, transforming, and citing records held in archival institutions after clientele access to the records.

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<sup>15</sup> International Organization for Standardization, *Information and Documentation—Records Management—Part 1: General (ISO 15489:2001)* (Switzerland: ISO, 2001), 3.

User/use-aware appraisal (UAA) researcher: This operational term refers to an appraisal researcher who considers users/use and supports the necessity of studying users/use from the appraisal perspective. Hence, this term includes researchers who support use-inclusive approaches to appraisal.

Use-inclusive approach to appraisal (UIA): As a broad concept, this term refers to any type of appraisal approach that considers and employs use as an appraisal factor, regardless of its extent. This operational term broadly includes use as one of several appraisal factors or as the principal appraisal factor because archival researchers' conclusions on the extent of the role of use vary and are ambiguous. As a result, UIA includes the value-through-use approach, the use-based approach to appraisal, and use-based cost-benefit analysis.<sup>16</sup>

Use or user information: This term is employed as a broad concept referring to any information related to users and use of records. This information includes information on the number of users, user types, user information needs/research interests, research trends/methodologies, patterns of records use, used records, and so on. The literature on archival appraisal and the user study most often employs the term “use information” and, more rarely, “user information.”

User or use study: This term is defined as a study conducted in the archival field in order to understand users, their information needs, their information seeking, and their use of archival holdings, systems, and services. More specifically, “user study” in this research is defined as an intentional examination of users and their use of records that has a research question and method. The user study also sometimes utilizes data to support a research question and a research method, and such data is often collected by reference activities and Web analytics. The act of collecting

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<sup>16</sup> The value-through-use approach, the use-based approach to appraisal, and use-based cost-benefit analysis are described fully on pages 12-15 in the Literature Review chapter of this paper.

data on users and use of records in the regular course of business, such as collecting registration forms and conducting Web analytics, is not a user study, although the data collected from registration, reference services, and Web-based tools (e.g., Web tools for tracking Web visitors, Web-based user feedback/comments, Web-based surveys, etc.) can be utilized in user studies. Even though some library and information science researchers distinguish a “user study” and a “use study,” archival researchers conventionally think of them as synonyms.<sup>17</sup>

*User or use study researcher:* As a broad concept, this term refers to both a researcher who conducts empirical user/use studies and one who only conceptually discusses the importance of users and use. This researcher may be either an academician or a practitioner. Just as “user study” and “use study” are employed interchangeably in this paper, “user study researcher” and “use study researcher” are also used interchangeably.

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<sup>17</sup> The convention is shown in glossaries that have been acknowledged as official glossaries by the Society of American Archivists: *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* and *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*. These glossaries define a *user study* and a *use study* as synonyms.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter consists of three sections concerning key concepts of this study: use-inclusive approaches to archival appraisal, user studies, and U.S. state archives and records management programs. The first section provides an overview of use-inclusive approaches to appraisal. The second section examines how the existing literature describes the ways user studies can be utilized in appraisal practices as tools to provide user/use information. The last section investigates appraisal practices and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs.

### **2.1 USERS AND USE AS AN APPRAISAL FACTOR AND AS INFORMATION FOR ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL**

#### **2.1.1 The contested role of users and use as an appraisal factor**

There is an ongoing argument in the archives community about the *role of use* as an appraisal factor, while the records management community has not much paid attention to use as an appraisal factor. A number of researchers, particularly U.S. government archivists, favor use as a factor in appraisal practice primarily because use can be leveraged as an empirical indicator of

the value and benefit of records.<sup>18</sup> Terry Eastwood addressed, “Uses by kind and quantity provide an empirical measure of value, which archivists cannot otherwise adequately deduce except relatively. From analysis of the expression of value indicated by use, the archivist can project continued cost or benefit for some definite interest, some ‘public’ as it were.”<sup>19</sup>

Although the necessity of applying use as an appraisal factor had been assumed since the 1940s and actively promoted since the 1980s in America, there was no theoretical foundation supporting the claim until Terry Eastwood presented one in 1992. Eastwood, an archival educator in Canada, draws on the social theory of utilitarianism and applies it to archival appraisal. Defining archives as “social creations for social purpose,” he asserts that archivists should appraise them based on “an analysis of the use to which they are put by the society that created them.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, he claims that archives are “utilitarian things” and “utilitarian things require utilitarian appraisal, that is, appraisal based ultimately but not exclusively on an assessment of use.”<sup>21</sup>

Mark Greene agrees that use is the “*presumptive determinant* in appraisal or reappraisal” in the utilitarian approach.<sup>22</sup> He concludes, “a utilitarian method will provide a better rigor and rationale for appraisal decisions,” although this approach is “neither wholly scientific nor

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<sup>18</sup> For example, Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*; Terry Eastwood, “How Goes it with Appraisal?” *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 111-21; Terry Eastwood, “Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal,” in Craig, *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992): 71-90; and Greene, “The Surest Proof.”

<sup>19</sup> Terry Eastwood, “How Goes it with Appraisal?” *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 117.

<sup>20</sup> Eastwood, “Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal,” 78, 83.

<sup>21</sup> Eastwood, “Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal,” 83.

<sup>22</sup> Greene, “The Surest Proof,” 152.

completely objective.”<sup>23</sup> Greene also corroborates Maynard J. Brichford’s claim that “‘use of the archives and the growth of its reputation’ was ‘the surest proof of sound records appraisal.’”<sup>24</sup>

Based on the theories of utilitarianism, many archivists have accepted the conception and the role of use in archival appraisal. Among them, U.S. government archivists have presented appraisal approaches employing use as an appraisal factor, referred to as use-inclusive approaches to appraisal. Those approaches include the value-through-use approach to appraisal, the use-based approach to appraisal, and use-based cost-benefit analysis. Each approach is described below.

Many archivists hold that the most important role of use as an appraisal factor is to help archivists determine the value of records, based on the belief that “use expresses value, which archival documents cannot possibly express on their own account.”<sup>25</sup> This valuation approach first appeared in the 1950s. T.R. Schellenberg, a U.S. national archivist and advocate of this approach, articulated a detailed taxonomy of the inherent value of records derived from their uses. He codified the values of records as 1) primary values, subdivided into administrative, legal, and fiscal values; and 2) secondary values, subdivided into evidential and informational values.<sup>26</sup> Schellenberg’s value-through-use approach to appraisal influenced subsequent researchers. For instance, Maynard J. Brichford proclaims, “Research values are use values.”<sup>27</sup>

Embracing many of Brichford’s concepts of the values and use of records, Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young include “use of the records” as a component in their micro-appraisal

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<sup>23</sup> Greene, “‘The Surest Proof,’” 151.

<sup>24</sup> Greene, “‘The Surest Proof,’” 157, 158. Greene cited Maynard J. Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts: Appraisal & Accessioning*, Basic Manual Series (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Eastwood, “How Goes it with Appraisal?” 117.

<sup>26</sup> Schellenberg, “The Appraisal of Modern Public Records.”

<sup>27</sup> Maynard J. Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts: Appraisal & Accessioning*, Basic Manual Series (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977), 9. T. R. Schellenberg also comments, “In appraising the informational value of records various research uses may be taken into account” in T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1956]): 149.

taxonomy.<sup>28</sup> This taxonomy is an appraisal decision-making model popularly known as the black box model, which consists of three supplementary modules: value-of-information, costs-of-retention, and implications-of-the-appraisal recommendations. Use of the records is a component of the value-of-information module, which “assesses the potential of records for use after their active administrative life is concluded.”<sup>29</sup> After the initial development of the micro-appraisal taxonomy in 1985, Frank Boles presented a contemporary micro-appraisal taxonomy in 2005. His new taxonomy also includes use as one of the elements that should be considered in determining the value of information.<sup>30</sup>

The use-based approach to appraisal advocated by Greene puts even more significance on use in the appraisal practice than the value-through-use approach. Greene contends that “use can, should, and must be a principal appraisal tool.”<sup>31</sup> That is, he regards use as a “*primary criterion* in records evaluation”—not just one of many criteria but as the most important basis for appraisal.<sup>32</sup>

Related to use as a determinant of the value of records, use is also regarded as an empirical indicator to measure the benefit of records in conducting cost-benefit analysis. Cost-benefit analysis in archives involves calculation of “the benefits of use versus the costs of

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<sup>28</sup> Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, “Exploring the Black Box: The Appraisal of University Administrative Records,” *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985): 121-40. Boles and Young say, “Many of the components cited in the Value-of-Information module appear in Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessing*” on page 124, note 11. In addition, Thomas J. Ruller comments, “Building on Brichford’s categories, Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young developed a model for appraisal that is both flexible and comprehensive...Boles and Young expanded the values Schellenberg articulated and Brichford refined” in “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data: A Survey of Appraisal Documentation in Government Archival Repositories,” *Archival Issues* 17, no. 1 (1992): 67.

<sup>29</sup> Boles and Young, “Exploring the Black Box,” 124.

<sup>30</sup> For the contemporary micro-appraisal taxonomy, see Frank Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*, Archival Fundamental Series 2 (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Greene, ““The Surest Proof,”” 150.

<sup>32</sup> Greene, ““The Surest Proof,”” 128.

appraisal, processing, space, and conservation.”<sup>33</sup> This analysis for archives was first advocated by G. Philip Bauer in 1944. He contends, “Public value in records (apart from their sentimental value, which is not here in question) is purely utilitarian.”<sup>34</sup> Bauer, a staff member of the U.S. National Archives, contends that the public benefit (also called public good or public value) deriving from preserving public records offsets the expenditure of public money (also called public funds or taxes). Brichford accepts Bauer’s claim that “values must be weighed against costs,” and Brichford continues that “the comparison of maintenance costs and research value is a constant factor in records evaluation.”<sup>35</sup> Incorporating Brichford’s concepts on uses and costs, Boles and Young’s appraisal decision-making model has both the value-of-information module, including the “use of the records” component, and the costs-of-retention module, including “storage,” “processing,” “conservation,” and “reference” components.

Leonard Rapport and Greene followed Bauer’s pragmatism. Rapport proposes that archivists should systematically and periodically reappraise holdings based on the use of the records.<sup>36</sup> Greene states that a cost-benefit analysis approach would provide the archival profession “a practical means to dramatically reduce the vast universe of records we [archivists] are faced with cataloging and preserving, while increasing the usefulness and value of archives to those who support us.”<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, the conceptual and methodological aspects of determining the value of records via use have been criticized for several reasons. The primary conceptual criticism is that future use cannot be anticipated. In other words, past and present use cannot provide archivists

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<sup>33</sup> Greene, “The Surest Proof,” 152.

<sup>34</sup> Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*, 2; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard Rapport, “No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records,” *American Archivist* 44, no.2 (Spring 1981): 143-50.

<sup>37</sup> Greene, “The Surest Proof,” 152.

with indications about future use because user information needs, research interests, and research trends change over time.<sup>38</sup> This anticipation of future use is the most controversial ongoing issue with regards to employing use as an appraisal factor.

A few researchers complain that appraisal decisions based on use are controlled by narrow research interests, particularly historiography. F. Gerald Ham warns, “Archival holdings too often reflected narrow research interests rather than the broad spectrum of human experience. If we cannot transcend these obstacles, then the archivist will remain at best nothing more than a weathervane moved by the changing winds of historiography.”<sup>39</sup> Terry Cook states that a Schellenbergian value-through-use appraisal would require the archivist to spend much time “immersing oneself in reading widely and deeply all relevant historical (and related) scholarship (which is now of course much more complex and voluminous), following closely historiographical debates and controversies, and tailoring one’s appraisal and acquisition accordingly.”<sup>40</sup>

Cook, an advocate of macroappraisal of Canadian archives, contends that the Schellenbergian value-through-use approach to appraisal decontextualizes records and undermines their provenance. This critique seems to originate from the basic difference between the macroappraisal approach and the microappraisal approach to value through use. Cook further says, “Those Americans who still favour ‘use’ as the determinant of appraisal value have articulated a neo-Schellenbergian pragmatism in light of macroappraisal, but such utilitarianism

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<sup>38</sup> Karen Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives—A Reply to Leonard Rapport,” *American Archivist* 47, no.1 (Winter 1984): 47-48; Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 119, 146, note 65; F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 8.

<sup>39</sup> Ham, “The Archival Edge,” 8.

<sup>40</sup> Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 156.

does not address, it seems to me, the many theoretical and practical difficulties outlined earlier in this essay against use-based value determination.”<sup>41</sup>

Some have criticized Bauer’s cost-benefit analysis and utilitarian approach to appraisal as too utilitarian and superficial. Herman Kahn, Bauer’s colleague at the U.S. National Archives, disagrees with Bauer’s claim that “public value in records...is purely utilitarian.”<sup>42</sup> Kahn contends, “Bauer apparently believes that the business of keeping records should be viewed in a purely commercial light.”<sup>43</sup> Even though Kahn admits that “the factor of cost in the maintenance of records is and always must be one of the most important factors” in making appraisal decisions, he contends that cost must not be “the sole criterion” of evaluating records.<sup>44</sup>

Much methodological criticism of use-inclusive approaches to archival appraisal claims that measuring use is fundamentally inaccurate and unreliable because several factors other than the intrinsic value of records affect not only use itself but also the measurement of use. For example, a lack of use may result from poor finding aids,<sup>45</sup> inaccessibility of the record due to physical frailty and access restrictions,<sup>46</sup> or “a lack of knowledge of the records on the part of the reference staff.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the availability of records in various formats (e.g., hard copy, microform) can affect rates of use in either direction.<sup>48</sup> In addition, records may have significance that cannot be quantifiable as the number of uses.<sup>49</sup> These problematic

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<sup>41</sup> Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 146.

<sup>42</sup> Herman Kahn, “Mr. Kahn’s Comments,” in *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*, Staff Information Circulars 13, June 1946, Reprint (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1976), 22. Kahn states his opinions on Bauer’s essay.

<sup>43</sup> Kahn, “Mr. Kahn’s Comments,” 23.

<sup>44</sup> Kahn, “Mr. Kahn’s Comments,” 25.

<sup>45</sup> Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire,” 48; Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 120.

<sup>46</sup> Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 120; Greene, ““The Surest Proof,”” 151.

<sup>47</sup> Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire,” 48.

<sup>48</sup> Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 120; Greene, ““The Surest Proof,”” 151.

<sup>49</sup> Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire”; Greene, ““The Surest Proof,”” 145.

measurements of use underpin the critique that use cannot be a reliable and trustworthy criterion in archival appraisal.

The debate on employing use as an appraisal factor still continues.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, a few items in the literature indicate that use has indeed been employed as a factor in appraisal. In the 1980s, Jacqueline Goggin reported that contemporary archivists made appraisal decisions “based on the value of information and the possible future uses of the records” in the United States.<sup>51</sup> Later in the decade, the Public Archives of Canada, influenced by Schellenberg’s value-through-use approach, made efforts to have the “best record for actual or anticipated historical research use.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1991, Boles’ survey of fourteen archival institutions in the United States showed that “user interest” elements had significant impact on appraisal decisions.<sup>53</sup> Anne Jervois Gilliland-Swetland’s 1995 dissertation reported that experts in the area of archival appraisal considered 1) the nature and extent of potential long-term use of materials being appraised, 2) scholarly use, and 3) the frequency of existing administrative use, and 4) research trends and methodologies.<sup>54</sup>

Barbara L. Craig’s nationwide survey in Canada, which was conducted between 2003 and 2005, demonstrated that 74% of 450 respondents always or occasionally analyzed “the use of previous acquisitions of the same type.”<sup>55</sup> In the American archival community, the latest glossary of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) published in 2005 acknowledges *use*

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<sup>50</sup> This debate on use as an appraisal factor continues particularly among Terry Cook, Terry Eastwood, and Mark Greene.

<sup>51</sup> Jacqueline Goggin, “The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women’s Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 64.

<sup>52</sup> Cook, “Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice,” 112.

<sup>53</sup> Frank Boles in association with Julia Marks Young, *Archival Appraisal* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Anne Jervois Gilliland-Swetland, “Development of an Expert Assistant for Archival Appraisal of Electronic Communications: An Exploratory Study” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Barbara L. Craig, “Doing Archival Appraisal in Canada. Results from a Postal Survey of Practitioners’ Experiences, Practices, and Opinions,” *Archivaria* 64 (Fall 2007): 21.

*analysis* as a “methodology to assess the worth of records based on the potential for future consultation.”<sup>56</sup> However, there is little evidence that archives employ use as an appraisal factor in the 2000s.

Even though there is much less literature indicating that records management programs employ use as an appraisal factor, the records management community seems to accept *use* in determining the value of records and records retention periods, unlike the archival community. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) states, “The patterns of records usage are useful for establishing the currency of the information contained in the record and provide a measure for determining when disposition action should be taken.”<sup>57</sup>

The records management community often employs the term “needs,” such as business needs and needs of stakeholders.<sup>58</sup> ISO instructs that records retention should be managed to 1) “meet current and future business needs,” 2) “comply with legal requirements,” and 3) “meet the current and future needs of internal and external stakeholders.” It also says that “records identified for continuing retention are likely to be those which provide evidence and information about the organization’s policies and actions, provide evidence and information about the organization’s interaction with the client community it serves, ... [and] contain evidence and information about activities of interest to internal and external stakeholders.”<sup>59</sup> This reflects Schellenberg’s secondary values of records—evidential and information values.

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<sup>56</sup> Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, s.v. “use analysis.”

<sup>57</sup> International Organization for Standardization, *Information and Documentation—Records Management—Part 2: Guidelines* (Switzerland: ISO, 2001), 19.

<sup>58</sup> In this case, “business” does not mean only commerce but also includes the public administration and non-profit administration.

<sup>59</sup> International Organization for Standardization, *Information and Documentation—Records Management—Part 1*, 12.

For records retention decision-making in a records disposition authority (RDA), ISO suggests a five-stage analysis. Four of the stages reflect the consideration of users and use of records in records management programs as follows:

- 1) identifying other stakeholders, for example, archives or external users, with enforceable or legitimate interests in preserving the record longer than the internal users of the organization,
- 2) assessing the risks associated with destroying the record, once routine, internal use of the record has finished...
- 4) assessing financial, political, social or other positive gains from maintaining the record after organizational use has been completed, and
- 5) analysing the balance between the costs and non-financial gains of records retention to decide how long records are maintained after organizational needs have been met.<sup>60</sup>

The first stage considers external users as well as internal users, and the second considers risk assessment. The fourth and the fifth seem to involve concepts similar to the cost-benefit analysis of archivists.

## **2.1.2 Approaches to collecting user/use information for appraisal practice**

### **2.1.2.1 Approaches by archives**

To employ users/use as factors in appraisal practice, it is assumed that archivists need user/use information. To gain use information, user/use-aware appraisal (UAA) researchers have suggested or utilized five common approaches: 1) consultation with subject experts; 2) user input; 3) consultation of data on users and use collected through reference activities; 4) consultation of literature describing research processes, trends, and methodologies published in various fields; and 5) performance of systematic and usually empirical user studies and

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<sup>60</sup> International Organization for Standardization, *Information and Documentation—Records Management—Part 2*, 12.

consultation of existing user studies conducted by other archives.<sup>61</sup> The first two approaches obtain information on users and use directly from users by involving subject experts and users in appraisal processes; the other approaches operate indirectly.

Consulting subject experts in the appraisal processes is the most conventional approach. Many authors do not differentiate users from subject experts when describing archivists' consultants for documentation and appraisal. However, Brichford distinguishes the two as different groups that archivists can consult for sound evaluation of scientific and technological records.<sup>62</sup> Consulting subject experts involves tapping into users' experience and knowledge related to specific fields and/or use of archives;<sup>63</sup> identifying research needs, interests, and trends;<sup>64</sup> anticipating and representing potential value and use of records;<sup>65</sup> improving documentation;<sup>66</sup> and applying sampling techniques.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, a review of the literature demonstrates that some archives consult subject experts in appraisal processes and benefit from the consultation.<sup>68</sup> There is a professional consensus that consultation of subject experts is helpful for appraisal practice.

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<sup>61</sup> The user study will be described in greater detail below. For the definition of a "user study," see also page 9 in this paper.

<sup>62</sup> Maynard J. Brichford, *Scientific and Technological Documentation: Archival Evaluation and Processing of University Records Relating to Science and Technology* ([Urbana]: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1969). Brichford defines "users" as "research scholars."

<sup>63</sup> Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*, 14; F. Gerald Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1993.), 71; Thornton W. Mitchell, "New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives," *American Archivist* 33, no. 2 (April 1970): 174; Schellenberg, "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records."

<sup>64</sup> Schellenberg, "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records."

<sup>65</sup> Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 12-47; Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts*, 70.

<sup>66</sup> Hackman and Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process." Many advocates of the documentation strategy cite this reason.

<sup>67</sup> Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators," 172; Meyer H. Fishbein, "Reflections on Appraising Statistical Records," *American Archivist* 50 (Spring 1987): 230.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Barbara L. Craig, "Doing Archival Appraisal in Canada. Results from a Postal Survey of Practitioners' Experiences, Practices, and Opinions," *Archivaria* 64 (Fall 2007): 1-45; Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50

Although archivists had traditionally consulted subject experts in appraisal practice, they had not involved more diverse groups of users in the appraisal process until new appraisal methodologies appeared in the 1980s. During that decade and the next, the American and Canadian archival profession acknowledged the failure of traditional appraisal approaches and developed new appraisal methodologies such as documentation strategy, institutional functional analysis, and macroappraisal. The new appraisal methodologies commonly involve diverse agents (e.g., record creators, record users, stakeholders, subject experts) in the appraisal process, with the expectation that the involvement will draw upon a wide range of perspectives, experience, and needs into appraisal practice to improve it.<sup>69</sup> In particular, these new appraisal methodologies drew archivists' attention to the role of users in archival appraisal. However, each of these new appraisal methodologies regards the role of users in the appraisal practice differently. Even though many archival researchers and archivists greatly appreciate users' aid in archival appraisal, they concede that archivists must be responsible for making final appraisal decisions.<sup>70</sup>

While consultation with subject experts and users inserts people directly into the appraisal process, the third approach is indirect: to consult data on users and use collected through reference activities. A review of the literature indicates that such reference data is

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(Winter 1987): 12-47; T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1956]); and Schellenberg, "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records."

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Craig states, "Macro-appraisal and the documentation strategy include a number of participants, in planning, in doing the appraisal, in making the final decisions, in implementing appraisal decisions to acquire records, and in evaluation and replanning... Macro-appraisal, acquisitions targets and plans, documentation strategy, [and] records disposal scheduling are all methods that rely on participation of a number of people and are animated by the ideals of community and its multiplicity of interests" in *Archival Appraisal: Theory and Practice* (München: K.G. Saur, 2004), 96-97.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts*, 71; William L. Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," *American Archivist* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 126-27; and Nancy E. Peace, "Deciding What to Save: Fifty Years of Theory and Practice," in *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance*, ed. Nancy E. Peace (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1984), 11, 13.

helpful for appraisal archivists conducting use-inclusive appraisal. Among the reference data, use statistics are of particular interest to many archival researchers from the appraisal, reference, and user study perspectives. For example, Helen R. Tibbo claims in her article on reference that use statistics should be helpful for “both reference and collection development.”<sup>71</sup> Goggin describes use statistics as a part of reference statistics and, in her article on her user study, claims that analyzing “which parts of collections are being consulted” is necessary.<sup>72</sup> In his appraisal manual, Brichford contends that use statistics are “one of the best indicators of research value.”<sup>73</sup>

What is noteworthy is that UAA researchers give value to use statistics whether or not they are analyzed.<sup>74</sup> This differs from the stance of user study researchers, who assert the necessity of analyzing data on users and use collected through reference activities. From the appraisal perspective, even though use statistics are usually not analyzed with a specific purpose but merely quantified, the use-inclusive approach to appraisal seems worthwhile because use statistics can provide evidential data about actual use and help appraisal archivists anticipate future use. In other words, the numbers seem to help evaluate and predict current and potential usefulness of records from the archival appraisal perspective, while the numbers seem not to be helpful to understanding users and use from the user study perspective. Surprisingly, UAA researchers rarely assert the necessity of collaborating with reference archivists, although they think reference data is helpful in obtaining use information.

The review of literature indicates the necessity of collaboration between appraisal archivists and reference archivists. Because reference archivists have information and knowledge

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<sup>71</sup> Helen R. Tibbo, “Interviewing Techniques for Remote Reference: Electronic Versus Traditional Environments,” *American Archivist* 58 (Summer 1995): 307.

<sup>72</sup> Goggin, “The Indirect Approach,” 64.

<sup>73</sup> Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*, 9.

<sup>74</sup> For appraisal literature mentioning use statistics, see, for example, Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; and Greene, “‘The Surest Proof’.”

on their users and use of records, they should share the information with appraisal archivists so that use can be employed as an appraisal factor and user studies can be applied to appraisal practice. Kathleen Roe, a project consultant for the South Carolina Department of Archives and History and staff member of the New York State Archives and Records Administration, recommends that reference archivists develop and review appraisal and collection development policies.<sup>75</sup> Mary Jo Pugh, a reference archivist before her retirement, praises the collaboration between reference archivists and appraisal archivists:

Reference archivists also communicate user needs to other staff members, especially those in technical services and acquisitions. Information should be exchanged with collecting staff on evolving user requests and research priorities.

In larger repositories, scheduled staff meetings of department heads provide for structured discussion of departmental needs. Reviewing the accessions log regularly keeps reference staff aware of new holdings; in turn, reference requests may suggest leads for possible acquisitions.<sup>76</sup>

The fourth approach is to refer to the literature about the research use, trends, and methodologies of a specific field in which records are appraised or documented (e.g., history, science, sociology, public administration). This approach purports to obtain knowledge about users and use acquired by various disciplines. For example, bibliographies included in a book on a specific research topic can provide information on actual use of records and future research needs. Although Brichford and Elliott suggest this approach, it is not well known whether

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<sup>75</sup> Kathleen Roe, "State Government Archival Functions at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History: Assessment and Recommendations," South Carolina Department of Archives and History, <http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/shrab/roemain.htm#reference> (accessed September 16, 2008). She also claims, "Policies and practices should be reviewed to ensure that use is considered as a factor in the various archival functions."

<sup>76</sup> Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 258.

archivists actually follow it.<sup>77</sup> Also, this approach is a relatively indirect way to learn about users and use whereas the previous three approaches directly engage or investigate users.

The fifth approach is to conduct studies of users/use and employ those existing studies as tools to collect use information. User study researchers recommend that archives conduct their own user studies; however, if archives cannot conduct user studies, it is recommended that they refer to user studies conducted by similar archives.<sup>78</sup> This approach is related to the third approach, consultation of data on users and use collected through reference activities, but goes beyond it. To conduct their own user studies, archives must have data on users and use collected through reference activities, and their user studies must rest on those data.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, many user studies have been conducted related to reference services or with reference data.<sup>80</sup> User studies are conducted with specific research purposes by employing empirical methods, while reference data are gained as products of reference activities.

Although this user study approach has been discussed since the 1980s, it is still little known. In the United States and Canada, the 1980s was the time archival appraisal was reconsidered, the user study emerged, and connections between archival appraisal and the user study started to be considered and promoted. During that decade, some UAA researchers paid attention to roles of users and use in archival appraisal. At the same time, a number of archivists

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<sup>77</sup> Brichford, *Scientific and Technological Documentation*; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science"; Clark A. Elliott, ed., *Understanding Progress as Process: Documentation of the History of Post-War Science and Technology in the United States: Final Report of the Joint Committee on Archives of Science and Technology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1983).

<sup>78</sup> Greene, "'The Surest Proof,'" 157.

<sup>79</sup> User study researchers assume the presence of reference data on users and use in a specific archives when that archives plans to conduct its user studies. See, for example, Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives," *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 393-407 and Goggin, "The Indirect Approach."

<sup>80</sup> For example, Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "A Virtual Expression of Need: An Analysis of E-mail Reference Questions," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring/Summer 2001): 43-60; Helen R. Tibbo, "Interviewing Techniques for Remote Reference: Electronic Versus Traditional Environments," *American Archivist* 58 (Summer 1995): 294-310; and Kristen E. Martin, "Analysis of Remote Reference Correspondence at a Large Academic Manuscripts Collection," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring-Summer 2001):17-42.

began focusing on users, use, and their systematic study for archival programs and practices, but not for appraisal practices alone. In other words, the two groups, those archivists and UAA researchers, with different research interests and perspectives, both started paying attention to the concept, significance, and role of users and use.<sup>81</sup> In particular, both groups concentrated on analyzing use, determining the value of records with use, anticipating potential use, and promoting use.<sup>82</sup> Most significantly, while anticipation of potential use had been the biggest issue of debate on employing use as an appraisal factor among appraisal researchers, several UAA researchers and appraisal-attentive user study (AAUS) researchers reached a consensus that potential use can and should be anticipated in archival appraisal practices. These commonalities seemed to have provoked many UAA and AAUS researchers to consider connecting the user study to appraisal practice. The following section in this chapter will

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<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Boles and Young, "Exploring the Black Box"; Bruce W. Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 76-87; Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51, no. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 88): 74-86; Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science"; William L. Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," *American Archivist* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 124-33; William J. Maher, "The Use of User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no 1 (1986):15-26; and Fredric Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History," *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 371-92.

<sup>82</sup> Literature on analyzing use includes Conway, "Facts and Frameworks"; Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles"; and SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession*. Literature on determining the value of records with use includes Boles and Young, "Exploring the Black Box"; Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; and Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles." Literature on anticipating potential use includes Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators"; Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles"; Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science"; Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research"; and Nancy E. Peace, "Deciding What to Save: Fifty Years of Theory and Practice," in *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance*, ed. Nancy E. Peace (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1984), 1-18. Literature on promoting use includes Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; Lisa B. Weber, ed., *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States: Consultant Reports Presented at the Conference of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Assessment and Reporting Grantees, Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-25, 1983* (Atlanta, Ga.: NASARA in cooperation with NHPRC, 1984); Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science"; Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use"; and SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession*.

describe more fully how user studies have been conducted and where UAA and AAUS researchers have agreed or diverged about utilizing user studies in appraisal practices.

### **2.1.2.2 Approaches by records management programs**

To employ users/use as factors in records retention scheduling, it is assumed that records managers need user/use information that helps them understand users and use of records. Unfortunately, as it is little known whether records managers employ user/use information, even less is known about whether records managers collect user/use information and, if so, how. Only a few researchers have assumed or suggested two approaches: 1) consultation with staff (usually a records officer) of a unit creating records and 2) consultation with subject experts.

Consultation with staff members of a unit creating records may be conducted while records managers develop and review records retention schedules of records created by the unit. The staff members can give information on what records they need for their operation.<sup>83</sup> This approach seems to involve primary users, who are also internal users, and it may occur for records retention scheduling.

The other approach is to involve subject experts (e.g., historians and representatives of cultural interest groups) in the appraisal practice process to gain information on cultural information needs. Many organizations have a special committee of subject experts.<sup>84</sup>

There is another potential approach to collecting user/use information that has so far gone unreported: records surveys, also called records inventories. Records surveys were traditionally conducted to create and revise retention guidelines and to make records disposition decisions. However, the scope of records surveys has recently become wider. A full records

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<sup>83</sup> Shepherd and Yeo, *Managing Records*, 162.

<sup>84</sup> Shepherd and Yeo, *Managing Records*, 162.

survey seeks “to review the needs of different users and the extent to which they are satisfied by the existing records and systems,” and the process of surveying records includes examining “the ways in which records are created or used in a particular business process.”<sup>85</sup> A records survey form suggested by Shepherd and Yeo includes “frequency and urgency of use” as one of its data elements.<sup>86</sup> However, it is unknown if records survey forms generally include an element on use or if records surveys are utilized for appraisal practice in order to collect user/use information.

## **2.2 USER STUDIES AS TOOLS FOR COLLECTING USER/USE INFORMATION**

The archival community has conducted user studies to collect user/use information. However, there is no knowledge of user studies in the records management community because no research has been done on it. Hence, it is unknown if the records management community conducts user studies, although it seems to consider users/use as one of the factors determining the value of records and records retention periods. As a result, this section does not consider user studies in the records management community. It deals only with user studies conducted by the archival community.

### **2.2.1 User studies for archives programs and practices**

Although use is a stated part of the archival mission, the archival profession had not paid considerable attention to nor conducted many studies of users and use until the 1980s. In that

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<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth Shepherd and Geoffrey Yeo, *Managing Records: A Handbook of Principles and Practice* (London: Facet Publishing, 2003), 66, 68.

<sup>86</sup> Shepherd and Yeo, *Managing Records*, 68.

decade, some user study researchers, championing a systematic approach, criticized the archival community for impressionistically or anecdotally learning about users.<sup>87</sup> At that time archivists described users and use based on observations of and conversations with users rather than on systematic and deliberate investigation.<sup>88</sup> Archival researchers in the 1980s also began to analyze data on users and use of holdings collected through reference activities.<sup>89</sup> Before user studies emerged in the 1980s, many archives had collected some basic information on users and use through registration forms and use statistics; however, most of those archives had not analyzed the collected data.<sup>90</sup> In fact, many archives had kept counts of their users and uses of holdings without analyzing the numbers or considering the significance and impact of use.<sup>91</sup> Bruce W. Dearstyne called this approach the “superficial ‘numbers’ approach.”<sup>92</sup> Moreover, William J. Maher saw problematic irregularity in “what is counted and what is done with the data once they are compiled” among archives at that time.<sup>93</sup> Dearstyne and Maher contended that statistical data

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<sup>87</sup> For example, Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science”; Elsie T. Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User’s Point of View,” *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 112; Lawrence Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records,” *American Archivist* 51, no. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 88): 74-86; Jacqueline Goggin, “The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women’s Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 57-67; and Fredric Miller, “Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History,” *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 371-92.

<sup>88</sup> Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder”; Richard H. Lytle, “Intellectual Access to Archives: I. Provenance and Content Indexing Methods of Subject Retrieval,” *American Archivist* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 64-75.

<sup>89</sup> See Conway, “Facts and Frameworks”; Dearstyne, “What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession”; Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles”; Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder”; Goggin, “The Indirect Approach”; Lytle, “Intellectual Access to Archives”; Maher, “The Use of User Studies”; and Miller, “Use, Appraisal, and Research.”

<sup>90</sup> Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles,” 79; Lytle, “Intellectual Access to Archives,” 66.

<sup>91</sup> Dearstyne, “What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession,” 79; Maher, “The Use of User Studies,” 15.

<sup>92</sup> Dearstyne, “What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession,” 79.

<sup>93</sup> Maher, “The Use of User Studies,” 17.

on users and use of holdings must be analyzed considering significance and impact of use, rather than just counted and recorded.<sup>94</sup>

The mid-1980s saw increased insistence that user studies be conducted systematically, synthetically, and/or scientifically to achieve the following objectives:<sup>95</sup> to identify user information needs and research trends/interests; to improve information systems and user services; to promote use of archival institutions and their holdings; to improve, justify, and evaluate archival programs; to facilitate access; to enhance advocacy and public relations; to request and justify resources for archival programs; to help administration of archival institutions; to refine the archival professional mission; to construct archival theory and conduct archival practice based on use; to aid in the planning, analysis, and evaluation of archival practices; and to improve, justify, measure, and assess archival programs.<sup>96</sup> In other words, user studies were believed to benefit the archival profession by providing a good conceptual basis of and essential information for archival functions, practices, and principles. Ultimately, the biggest benefit of user studies is to support the planning, analysis, and evaluation of archival practices.

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<sup>94</sup> Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession," 79; Maher, "The Use of User Studies," 15.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Bruce W. Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 76-87; Elsie T. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 111-23; Jacqueline Goggin, "The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women's Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 57-67; Richard H. Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives: I. Provenance and Content Indexing Methods of Subject Retrieval," *American Archivist* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 64-75; William J. Maher, "The Use of User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no 1 (1986):15-26; and Hugh A. Taylor, *Archival Services and the Concept of the User: A RAMP Study* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1984).

<sup>96</sup> Conway, "Facts and Frameworks"; Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles"; Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder"; Goggin, "The Indirect Approach"; F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 207-16; Randall C. Jimerson, "Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society," *American Archivist* 52 (Summer 1989): 332-40; Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives"; Maher, "The Use of User Studies"; Hugh A. Taylor, *Archival Services and the Concept of the User: A RAMP Study* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1984); Roy C. Turnbaugh, "Archival Mission and User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 27-34.

In 1986, Conway presented a model for a comprehensive program of user studies based on three key concepts: users, information need, and use. His model has five stages that compare complex objectives of archival programs and services to research methods that assess user information (see Figure 1). The three objectives of this model—quality, integrity, and value—represent the information archives should and could gain from user studies to evaluate their programs and services. The model’s five stages correspond to five research methods: registration, orientation, follow-up, survey, and experimentation. This model considers a broad scope of users beyond those who actually visit reference rooms. In fact, Conway contends that archives must study “past researchers, potential users, and even the broad extra-institutional community served by an archives” as well as “researchers who visit.”<sup>97</sup> He recommends that at every stage of his model archivists should select the sample population and research method most proper to the topic being studied.<sup>98</sup> Although his model has influenced subsequent user studies, many newer user studies do not fall neatly into a specific stage of his model. As described in following paragraphs, the topics and methods of user studies have become more varied, so it is time to consider a more current, realistic, and effective framework for user studies.

As more user studies have been conducted since the 1980s, they have employed more varied research methods. Some researchers have borrowed research methods from other fields, particularly sociology and library and information science, to make their own methods more effective, undertake their studies more systematically, and give validity to their research design and results.

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<sup>97</sup> Conway, “Facts and Frameworks,” 398.

<sup>98</sup> Conway, “Facts and Frameworks,” 400-01.

## METHODOLOGY

		Stage 1 <b>Registration</b> (all users/always)	Stage 2 <b>Orientation</b> (all users at selected times)	Stage 3 <b>Follow Up</b> (sample users/selected times)	Stage 4 <b>Survey</b> (random sample)	Stage 5 <b>Experiments</b> (special groups)
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Nature of Task</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>definition in terms of subject, format, scope</i></li> </ul>	<b>Preparation of Researcher</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>experience</i></li> <li>• <i>stage of defined problem</i></li> <li>• <i>basic/applied</i></li> </ul> <b>Anticipated Service</b>	<b>Search Strategies and Mechanics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>search order</i></li> <li>• <i>pos/neg search</i></li> <li>• <i>who recommended</i></li> <li>• <i>time spent searching</i></li> <li>• <i>time spent talking</i></li> </ul>	<b>Expectations and Satisfaction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>styles of research</i></li> <li>• <i>approaches to searching</i></li> <li>• <i>levels of service</i></li> </ul>	<b>Access and Non-use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>frustration indexes</i></li> <li>• <i>perceptions of use</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Integrity</b>	<b>Identification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>name</i></li> <li>• <i>address</i></li> <li>• <i>telephone</i></li> </ul> <b>Agree to Rules</b>	<b>Knowledge of Holdings and Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>written sources</i></li> <li>• <i>verbal sources</i></li> </ul>	<b>Intensity and Frequency of Use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>collection used</i></li> <li>• <i>time spent with files</i></li> </ul>	<b>Alternative to Physical Use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>value and use of microforms</i></li> <li>• <i>value and use of databases</i></li> </ul>	<b>Formal Independence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>linkages with information creation</i></li> <li>• <i>technology and information</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Value</b>	<b>Membership in Networks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>group affiliation</i></li> </ul> <b>Can We Contact You?</b> <b>Can We Tell Others?</b>	<b>Intended Use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>purpose in terms of function and product</i></li> </ul>	<b>Significant Use</b> <b>Significant Info</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>importance of archives</i></li> <li>• <i>other sources</i></li> <li>• <i>valuable information</i></li> <li>• <i>gaps in information</i></li> </ul>	<b>Impact of Use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>increased use</i></li> <li>• <i>citation patterns</i></li> <li>• <i>decision-making</i></li> </ul>	<b>Role of Historical Information in Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>total potential demand</i></li> <li>• <i>community network analysis</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 1.** Framework for studying the users of archives

Note: Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives," *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 397, Figure 1.

Currently a number of research methods are employed for user studies, including survey, citation analysis, observation, interview, bibliography review, literature analysis, bibliometrics, content classification, reference question/correspondence analysis, diary, experiment, and focus group.<sup>99</sup> Among these, survey and interview methods are dominant. Many researchers recommend employing multiple research methods for a user study, and indeed many user studies do just that.<sup>100</sup>

Research topics of existing user studies can be broadly divided into three categories: 1) information needs, 2) information seeking, and 3) information use. Research topics related to *information needs* include research trends and interests in a specific field, research subjects that bring users to archives, users' inquiries via reference questions, and user presentation language.<sup>101</sup> *Information seeking*, the most popular topic in user studies, deals mainly with what information sources users seek, what access tools they employ in the seeking process, and what information-seeking activities they conduct during their research projects. Many relevant user studies focus on users' information-seeking behaviors while few user studies consider user cognition.<sup>102</sup> Many research topics cover archival description (e.g., *U.S. MACHine Readable*

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<sup>99</sup> The terms for these methods are written as they appear in the original literature.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Dianne L. Beattie, "An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History," *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989-90): 33-50; Paul Conway, *Partners in Research: Improving Access to the Nation's Archive: User Studies of the National Archives and Records Administration* (Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1994); Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, "An Exploration of K-12 User Needs for Digital Primary Source Materials," *American Archivist* 61 (Spring 1998): 136-57; William J. Maher, "The Use of User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 15-26; Christopher J. Prom, "User Interactions with Electronic Finding Aids in a Controlled Setting," *American Archivist* 67 (Fall/Winter 2004): 234-68; and Elizabeth Yakel and Laura L. Bost, "Understanding Administrative Use and Users in University Archives," *American Archivist* 57 (1994): 596-615.

<sup>101</sup> For example, David Bearman, "User Presentation Language in Archives," *Archives and Museum Informatics* 3 (Winter 1989-90): 3-7; Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "A Virtual Expression of Need: An Analysis of E-mail Reference Questions," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring/Summer 2001): 43-60; and Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, "An Exploration of K-12 User Needs for Digital Primary Source Materials," *American Archivist* 61 (Spring 1998): 136-57.

<sup>102</sup> User studies of user behavior, particularly information-seeking behavior, include Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "Accidentally Found on Purpose: Information-Seeking Behavior of Historians in Archives," *Library Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (October 2002): 472-96; Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "Where Is the List with All

*Cataloging, Rules for Archival Description, Encoded Archival Description*), access points (e.g., names, subjects), and access tools (e.g., finding aids, archival inventories, card catalogs, guides, national bibliographic controls).<sup>103</sup> Research on *information use* deals with use patterns such as citation patterns, use of information sources, and agents using archives and/or specific information sources.<sup>104</sup> Research topics of user studies have varied slightly over time although many user studies still focus on information needs, preferred information sources and access tools, and information-seeking behaviors of users.

### **2.2.2 Posited feasibility and benefits of utilizing user studies for appraisal practice**

As can be seen above, the relevant archival literature on archival appraisal and user studies indicates that the connection between appraisal practice and user studies has been considered from both perspectives. However, because the records management community does not pay much attention to use as an appraisal factor or user studies, this section deals with only archival

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the Names? Information-Seeking Behavior of Genealogists,” *American Archivist* 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 79-95; Kristina L. Southwell, “How Researchers learn of Manuscript Resources at the Western History Collections,” *Archival Issues* 26, no. 2 (2002): 91-109; Helen R. Tibbo (2002, July 14-18), Primary history: Historians and the search for primary source materials, Proceedings presented at the 2002 ACM IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries, retrieved November 20, 2004, from <http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=544220.544222>; and Helen R. Tibbo, “Primarily History in America: How U.S. Historians Search for Primary Materials at the Dawn of the Digital Age,” *American Archivist* 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 9-50. User studies dealing with user cognition include Barbara C. Orbach, “The View from the Researcher’s Desk: Historians’ Perceptions of Research and Repositories,” *American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991): 28-43; Elizabeth Yakel, “Listening to Users,” *Archival Issues* 26, no. 2 (2002): 111-23; and Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah A. Torres, “AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise,” *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 51-78.

<sup>103</sup> For example, Wendy M. Duff and Penka Stoyanova, “Transforming the Crazy Quilt: Archival Displays from a Users’ Point of View,” *Archivaria* 45 (Spring 1998): 44-79; Christopher J. Prom, “User Interactions with Electronic Finding Aids in a Controlled Setting,” *American Archivist* 67 (Fall/Winter 2004): 234-68; and Robert P. Spindler and Richard Peace-Moses, “Does AMC Mean ‘Archives Made Confusing’? Patron Understating of USMARC AMC Catalog Records,” *American Archivist* 56 (Spring 1993): 330-41.

<sup>104</sup> For example, Clark A. Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science: Some Methodological Considerations,” *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 131-42; Jacqueline Goggin, “The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women’s Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 57-67; and Elizabeth Yakel and Laura L. Bost, “Understanding Administrative Use and Users in University Archives,” *American Archivist* 57 (1994): 596-615.

literature written from archival perspectives. From the archival appraisal perspective, it has been claimed that, in employing use as a factor in appraisal practice, use information can help archivists identify the type of constituency an archives serves,<sup>105</sup> identify user information needs and research interests,<sup>106</sup> and become aware of changing research trends and methodologies.<sup>107</sup> Capitalizing on this information, archivists can anticipate future use of records,<sup>108</sup> evaluate the value of information contained in records,<sup>109</sup> make appraisal and reappraisal decisions more objectively,<sup>110</sup> measure the benefits of records accession and retention,<sup>111</sup> and constantly reevaluate appraisal theory and practice.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, with regard to record deaccessioning, use information can help archivists reduce the quantity of unused records retained.<sup>113</sup> These posited benefits have prompted UAA researchers to assert that use can and should inform archivists' appraisal activities, specifically in making appraisal and reappraisal decisions,<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators."

<sup>106</sup> For example, Boles and Young, "Exploring the Black Box"; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators"; and SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession*.

<sup>107</sup> For example, Boles and Young, "Exploring the Black Box"; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators"; Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science"; and Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts*.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators"; Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal"; Eastwood, "How Goes it with Appraisal?"; Elliott, "Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science"; and Hackman and Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process."

<sup>109</sup> For example, Boles, *Selecting & Appraising Archives & Manuscripts*; Frank Boles in association with Young, *Archival Appraisal* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 1991); Boles and Young, "Exploring the Black Box"; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal"; Eastwood, "How Goes it with Appraisal?"; and Greene, "'The Surest Proof.'"

<sup>110</sup> Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal"; Eastwood, "How Goes it with Appraisal?"; Greene, "'The Surest Proof.'"

<sup>111</sup> Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Eastwood, "How Goes it with Appraisal?" For cost-benefit analysis, see page 16 in this paper.

<sup>112</sup> SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities, *Planning for the Archival Profession*.

<sup>113</sup> Greene, "'The Surest Proof.'"; Hackman and Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process"; Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause."

<sup>114</sup> Greene, "'The Surest Proof.'"; Hackman and Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process."

developing collecting policies,<sup>115</sup> defining appraisal criteria,<sup>116</sup> destroying records,<sup>117</sup> and requesting and justifying the allocation of resources for appraisal practices.<sup>118</sup>

The user study perspective asserts that user studies can contribute to appraisal practice. In particular, AAUS researchers see appraisal decision-making as the appraisal activity in which user studies show the most potential contribution.<sup>119</sup> That is, user studies can provide helpful information for appraisal decision-making so that archivists can evaluate information contained in records,<sup>120</sup> utilize the information as verifiable and reliable reference,<sup>121</sup> and anticipate future research trends and potential use.<sup>122</sup> User studies are helpful in applying sampling techniques and in examining and evaluating the effectiveness of appraisal techniques and methods.<sup>123</sup> User studies can also provide essential information for developing, improving, examining, and evaluating collections, acquisition/collection policies, appraisal criteria, and appraisal standards.<sup>124</sup>

Appraisal decision-making is regarded by both AAUS researchers and UAA researchers as the appraisal activity that can benefit most from user studies. The reason is that user studies can provide empirical, verifiable, and reliable information on users and use, and that information can help archivists identify user information needs, follow research trends, anticipate future use,

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<sup>115</sup> Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators"; Meyer H. Fishbein, "A Viewpoint on Appraisal of National Records," *American Archivist* 33 (April 1970): 175-87.

<sup>116</sup> Greene, "The Surest Proof."

<sup>117</sup> Hackman and Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process."

<sup>118</sup> Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Greene, "The Surest Proof."

<sup>119</sup> Some authors claim explicitly or implicitly that user studies can and should support appraisal decision-making. See Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles"; Goggin, "The Indirect Approach"; Maher, "The use of user studies"; and Miller, "Use, appraisal, and research."

<sup>120</sup> Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession"; Goggin, "The Indirect Approach."

<sup>121</sup> Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder"; Maher, "The use of user studies"; Miller, "Use, appraisal, and research."

<sup>122</sup> Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research."

<sup>123</sup> Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles"; Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder"; Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research."

<sup>124</sup> Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles"; Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder"; Goggin, "The Indirect Approach."

and evaluate the value of information in making their appraisal decisions.<sup>125</sup> The empirical nature of user studies alleviates concerns about the impressionistic, subjective, and instinctive nature of appraisal. Eastwood contends, “professional objectivity in appraisal comes from the cogency of our method of handling evidence of use, in order to explain and justify the decisions that we make on behalf of the people whom we serve.”<sup>126</sup> Elliott also recommends user studies to transform intuitive conceptions of what has been and will be used: “Use-studies can formalize such impressions, and objectify them so that archivists can share their usage conceptions with one another.”<sup>127</sup> Hence, use studies can enhance the accountability of archivists’ appraisal decisions.

Unlike appraisal decision-making, reappraisal decision-making has received little attention from AAUS and UAA researchers. However, reappraisal decision-making stands to benefit from use studies more than appraisal decision-making; use-study data on past and present use of records can show the contemporary usefulness of those records and help archivists determine their continuing value and predict their future usefulness. Greene considers reappraisal from the utilitarian perspective, stating, “by definition, the application of use in appraisal must be based on assessment of the utilitarian value of extant holdings. Therefore, the most direct and safest application of the data is to the collections used to generate that information—that is, in

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<sup>125</sup> See, for example, Boles and Young, “Exploring the Black Box”; Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts*; Chestnut, “Appraising the Papers of State Legislators”; Dearstyne, “What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession”; Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles”; Eastwood, “Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal”; Eastwood, “How Goes it with Appraisal?”; Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science”; Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder”; Goggin, “The Indirect Approach”; Greene, ““The Surest Proof””; and Miller, “Use, Appraisal, and Research.”

<sup>126</sup> Eastwood, “How Goes it with Appraisal?” 118.

<sup>127</sup> Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science,” 132.

reappraisal.”<sup>128</sup> It is noteworthy that AAUS researchers very rarely consider reappraisal while several UAA researchers do.<sup>129</sup>

The second major area of agreement between AAUS and UAA researchers, with respect to acquisition, appraisal, and collection policies, is that archivists can and should consult information about changing research requirements, research trends, and potential research use.<sup>130</sup> To obtain this information, it is necessary to analyze and study users and use.<sup>131</sup> In fact, Goggin reports that her use study led her Manuscript Division to reevaluate its current acquisition policy, and she claims “use studies can provide information essential for evaluating collecting policies [and] appraisal.”<sup>132</sup>

Third, there is a consensus between some AAUS researchers and UAA researchers that archivists can define, formulate, examine, and evaluate appraisal criteria and standards with information about users and use.<sup>133</sup> Lawrence Dowler states, “the study of use over time will provide a periodic check, a kind of reality test, for evaluating the criteria for appraisal.”<sup>134</sup>

The last major area of agreement between AAUS and UAA researchers is that data on use can provide justification for allocation of resources (e.g., budget, staff, and storage space). For example, archivists can request a budget to acquire new records relevant to a collection that is frequently used, according to data on use. UAA researchers’ use-data justification of resources

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<sup>128</sup> Greene, “‘The Surest Proof.’” 154. Greene criticizes that Terry Eastwood refuses “the application of use studies to reappraisal” on the same page.

<sup>129</sup> For example, literature describing how to apply user studies to reappraisal includes Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science.” Literature describing reappraisal as a reason for employing use as an appraisal factor includes Greene, “‘The Surest Proof,’” and Rapport, “No Grandfather Clause.”

<sup>130</sup> Fishbein, “A Viewpoint on Appraisal of National Records,” 175; Paul I. Chestnut, “Appraising the Papers of State Legislators,” *American Archivist* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 170.

<sup>131</sup> Chestnut, “Appraising the Papers of State Legislators,” 170; Goggin, “The Indirect Approach.”

<sup>132</sup> Goggin, “The Indirect Approach,” 63.

<sup>133</sup> For example, Lawrence Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records,” *American Archivist* 51, no. 1/2 (Winter/Spring 88): 77; Elliott, “Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science,” 134; Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder,” 122; and Greene, “‘The Surest Proof,’” 154.

<sup>134</sup> Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles,” 77.

for appraisal seems to be an extension of cost-benefit analysis.<sup>135</sup> That is, archivists can calculate, request, and justify the costs of appraisal by consulting data on past, current, and potential uses of records as a benefit. However, AAUS researchers do not specify how user studies can justify resources for appraisal practices specifically, only how they can justify archival practices in general.<sup>136</sup>

There is a benefit of applying use studies to appraisal practices that has not been considered at all by UAA researchers but has been considered by a few AAUS researchers. The benefit is that use studies can be helpful in applying, examining, and evaluating documentation strategies and sampling techniques. With respect to the documentation strategy, Dowler states that a study of use over time can contribute to evaluating the effectiveness of documentation strategies by providing “a periodic check.”<sup>137</sup> It is possible that this check can perform the function of a documentation group. Dowler is also in favor of conducting a use study at the national level in order to “establish a baseline of information against which to measure and compare access and retrieval, reference service, acquisitions, management, appraisal guidelines, and documentation strategies.”<sup>138</sup> With respect to sampling techniques, use studies are expected to help archivists determine which records should be preserved.<sup>139</sup> Goggin contends that

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<sup>135</sup> For cost-benefit analysis from the archival appraisal perspective, see page 14 in this paper. Mark Greene claims that “a utilitarian approach seeks... [to] strengthen our case with the sponsors from whom we receive our resources. (‘Look,’ we can say, ‘we have increased use statistics while reducing our storage needs.’) Otherwise, we wind up arguing that we need more space, and more staff, to store more and more dross that nobody actually uses,” in his article, “The Surest Proof,” 157.

<sup>136</sup> For example, Dearstyne, “What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession”; Maher, “The Use of User Studies”; and Turnbaugh, “Archival Mission and User Studies.”

<sup>137</sup> Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles,” 77.

<sup>138</sup> Dowler, “The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles,” 74.

<sup>139</sup> Miller, “Use, Appraisal, and Research,” 374.

archivists must collect “a representative sample of records that document all aspects of society.”<sup>140</sup>

To sum up, this literature review indicates the archival community pays attention to “use” as an appraisal factor and conducts user studies whereas the records management community rarely does. It also indicates that a number of AAUS and UAA researchers consider the user study as a practical means, a verifiable reference, and an informative, analytical, monitoring, and evaluative tool for conducting appraisal practice more soundly. It also shows there are few user studies addressing the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice since the 1990s. The reason is, presumably, that since the 1990s, after AAUS researchers first raised awareness of user studies, more user studies have been conducted and their necessity and benefits have been conventionally acknowledged in the archives community.

This literature review indicates that UAA researchers consider why and how to apply user studies in appraisal practice far less often than why and how to employ use as an appraisal factor. This literature review also indicates that AAUS researchers believe that user studies can contribute to appraisal practice; however, it should be noted that AAUS researchers are primarily interested in user studies themselves, and that appraisal practice is only one area that can benefit from them. However, no researchers from either group precisely explain how to utilize user studies in appraisal practice; rather, they posit only user studies’ feasibility and benefit.

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<sup>140</sup> Goggin, “The Indirect Approach,” 64.

## 2.3 APPRAISAL PRACTICES AND USER STUDIES IN U.S. STATE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

### 2.3.1 History and functions of U.S. state archives and records management programs

In the evolution of state archives, there are two noteworthy formative periods. First, a Public Archives Commission, which was organized at the American Historical Association (AHA) meeting in 1899, submitted in 1900 a report warning of widely divergent conditions of accumulation and care of state government records. In response to this report, twenty-three states created repositories for their archives by 1910. Another formative period of state archives was prompted by two factors: “the establishment of the National Archives in 1934 and the paper explosion that all governments experienced during World War II.”<sup>141</sup> As a result, twenty-one states established their state archives from 1935 to 1970. Between 1945 and 1965, there was some movement to institute a state records management program in at least thirty-six states. Ernst Posner’s survey conducted from 1962 to 1963 found a problem that in “states with well-established archival programs, the need for records management as a measure of economy and efficiency was readily seen.”<sup>142</sup> Between 1963 and 1973, eight states established their state archives programs, and thirteen states established their state records management programs.

The organizational structures that state archives and records management programs have implemented are diverse. With respect to placement within state government, some state archives programs were established as new and independent agencies, but others belonged to existing state historical societies, secretaries of state, state libraries, or other state government agencies.

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<sup>141</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 3.

<sup>142</sup> Posner, *American State Archives*, 32.

Literature indicates that the diversity in state archival administration has continued. In the late 1930s Albert Ray Newsome said, “The federal system of government determines the pattern of archival administration of the United States... A generation of uncorrelated, unsystematic experimentation has produced a wide diversity of legislation, administration and achievement.”<sup>143</sup> In the 1960s Posner also reported a wide variety of “legislation governing the status, organization, and functions of archival agencies” from state to state.<sup>144</sup> The 2007 CoSA survey points out the widely different organizational structures in state archives and records management programs.<sup>145</sup>

Currently, all fifty states and the District of Columbia have a formal state archives programs, and all of them except Arkansas and Minnesota also have a formal records management program.<sup>146</sup> State archives programs and state records management programs exist jointly or separately. A joint state archives and records management program assigns the archives and records management functions to the same government agency and is administered by that agency. However, in separate programs the archives and records management functions are assigned to different government agencies and are administered by those agencies. Posner’s survey in the 1960s and CoSA’s surveys in the 1990s and 2000s indicate that there is a trend toward merging state archives and records management programs. According to Posner’s survey, twenty-four states had a joint program, sixteen states had a separate program, and ten states had no or a limited program in the 1960s.<sup>147</sup> In CoSA’s 1993 survey, thirty-four states had a joint

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<sup>143</sup> Albert Ray Newsome, “Uniform State Archival Legislation,” *American Archivist* 2, no.1 (January 1939), 1.

<sup>144</sup> Posner, *American State Archives*, 308.

<sup>145</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 16.

<sup>146</sup> This paragraph is based on Council of State Archives, “The History, Functions, and Significance of State Archives and Records Management Programs” in *The State of State Records* and Posner, “The Genesis and Evolution of American State Archives” in *American State Archives*.

<sup>147</sup> Posner, *American State Archives*; Council of State Archives, “Placement of State Archives and Records Management Programs,” <http://www.statearchivists.org/arc/states/placement.htm>.

program.<sup>148</sup> In CoSA's 2007 survey, thirty-six states and the District of Columbia had a joint program and twelve states had a separate program.<sup>149</sup> CoSA's Web page posted in January 2010, *Placement of State Archives and Records Management Programs*, shows that thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have a joint program and eleven states have a separate program.<sup>150</sup> CoSA defines three core areas of responsibility of state archives and records management programs: "1) to ensure the documentation of state government is managed effectively, 2) to ensure stewardship of the records of state government for use, and 3) to support access to and use of the records of state government."<sup>151</sup>

### **2.3.2 Appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs**

CoSA's 2007 report includes "appraisal of records to determine those appropriate for permanent retention by the state archives because the records have ongoing legal, fiscal, or administrative value for the state government (primary value), or because the records are of permanent historical value for other purposes (secondary value)" as an activity to effectively manage the documentation of state government, one of three core areas of responsibility of U.S. state archives and records management programs.<sup>152</sup> The following CoSA statement indicates the significance and the necessity of sound archival appraisal in state archives and records management programs.

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<sup>148</sup> Walch, *Recognizing Leadership and Partnership*, 11-14; Council of State Archives, "Placement of State Archives and Records Management Programs."

<sup>149</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 18.

<sup>150</sup> Council of State Archives, "Placement of State Archives and Records Management Programs," <http://www.statearchivists.org/arc/states/placement.htm>.

<sup>151</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 8-10.

<sup>152</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 9.

Good records management programs ensure that records are maintained in efficient and economical ways while they are still in active use. Tools like records retention and disposition schedules identify the small but critical body of records that are essential to current government operations and those that warrant permanent retention in the state archives, estimated to range between 2 and 5 percent of all records created. Records managers also ensure that the other 95 to 98 percent are retained only so long as they are needed and then disposed of according to properly enforced records disposition laws and regulations.<sup>153</sup>

However, little is known about archival appraisal in state archives and records management programs. Thorough and comprehensive research on this topic reveals that very few scholars have concentrated on state archival appraisal practices. To this end, this part of the literature review focuses on noticeable efforts of the state archives and records management community toward the improvement of archival appraisal, to the extent that such information is available.

Although little attention was paid to archival appraisal in state archives programs before the 1980s, the disposal of useless records appeared as a major concern of government archives in the 1940s. The *Federal Records Disposal Act* was enacted by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives in 1943, and it was amended in 1945. In 1942 and 1943 the Society of American Archivists (SAA) hosted several formal discussions on the disposal of useless records. These conversations could not have failed to interest state archivists who were faced with the disposal of useless records due to space constraints and financial limitations.<sup>154</sup> The *American Archivist* journal published several articles dealing with this topic between 1940 and 1944.<sup>155</sup> The National Archives published a manual to help federal government agencies develop effective programs for

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<sup>153</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 1.

<sup>154</sup> Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 324.

<sup>155</sup> For example, Robert H. Bahmer, "Scheduling the Disposition of Records," *American Archivist* 6 (1943): 169-75; Christopher Crittenden and Nell Hines, "The Disposal of Useless State Archives," *American Archivist* 7 (July 1944): 165-73; and Emmett J. Leahy, "The Reduction of Public Records," *American Archivist* 3 (1940): 13-38.

the disposal of their federal records.<sup>156</sup> However, this manual is also applicable at the state level. The last chapter of this manual presents steps for the disposal of records and instructions on how to utilize disposal forms.

Disposing of useless records continued to be an important issue in the 1960s, and state archives made efforts to solve this problem by utilizing disposal schedules. Posner's survey, the first comprehensive survey on state archives programs, reports that the legislation of twenty-nine states and Puerto Rico sanctioned the employment of disposal schedules at that time. It indicates that disposal of useless records was a serious concern, as evidenced by a cessation of record accession by a number of state archives programs due to shortage of storage space. Posner claims that for the appropriate selection and appraisal of records, archives programs and records management programs must merge into a single agency prior to retention scheduling and disposal decisions.<sup>157</sup> In the 1970s, little attention was paid to appraisal in state archives. Only Thornton W. Mitchell contributed an article on appraisal principles and factors in state archives.<sup>158</sup>

After the period of critical inactivity in the 1970s, several comprehensive surveys in the 1980s indicated serious problems and issues concerning state archival appraisal. Roy Turnbaugh's 1984 survey of state archives programs reported that appraisal was ranked as the most important function in the governmental archives program; however, in real practice, state government archives "virtually ignored appraisal."<sup>159</sup> This problematic situation was confirmed by self-assessment projects concerning government archives such as Statewide Historical

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<sup>156</sup> Refer to T. R. Schellenberg, *Disposition of Federal Records: How to Establish an Effective Program for the Preservation and Disposal of Federal Records* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1949).

<sup>157</sup> Posner, *American State Archives*.

<sup>158</sup> Mitchell, "New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives."

<sup>159</sup> Roy Turnbaugh, "Plowing the Sea: Appraising Public Records in an Ahistorical Culture," *American Archivist* 53 (Fall 1990): 563.

Records Assessment and Reporting Projects. These project reports and some contemporary articles presented a number of problems, including lack of sufficient resources for appraisal work; inadequate documentation; the almost complete lack of coherent collecting policies; valueless paper records haphazardly stored at a high annual cost to federal, state, and local governments; the danger of losing historically valuable records due to the absence of provisions for identifying and preserving records of historical value; and fragmented and ill-defined responsibility for decision-making regarding records and recordkeeping.<sup>160</sup> Recognizing their inappropriate appraisal practices, state archives reconsidered their appraisal practices and made efforts to develop and test new appraisal methods, particularly documentation strategies.

During the 1980s and 1990s, state archives made cooperative efforts to share appraisal information and standardize appraisal documentation, although these efforts were inconclusive. The development and implementation of automated information systems for archival practices created interest in sharing information about archival holdings.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, the development and use of the Machine Readable Cataloging format for Archives and Manuscripts Control (MARC-AMC) provided a standard format with which to share descriptive information of archival records. This enabled the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to try to share appraisal information of government records for cooperative appraisal.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Committee on the Records of Government (US), *Committee on the Records of Government Report* (Malabar, Flo.: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1985); Weber, *Documenting America*; Larry J. Hackman, "A Perspective on American Archives," *The Public Historian* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1986): 10-28; Jennifer A. Marshall, "Documentation Strategies in the Twenty-First Century?: Rethinking Institutional Priorities and Professional Limitations," *Archival Issues* 23, no. 1 (1998): 59-74.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas J. Ruller, "Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data: A Survey of Appraisal Documentation in Government Archival Repositories," *Archival Issues* 17 no.1 (1992): 68.

<sup>162</sup> The U.S. national archives' name was changed from the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 1984.

Regarding appraisal information sharing of government records, the RLG conducted two projects: the *Seven States Project* (1986–1988) and the *Government Records Project* (GRP, 1988–1990). In both projects, the RLG tested the sharing of appraisal information among government archives by using its national bibliographic utility, the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN).<sup>163</sup>

The purpose of the *Seven States Project* was not only for “constructing a database of descriptions of state and local government records from seven states,” but also for “testing its utility in an archival context.”<sup>164</sup> The results of the project showed the impracticality of sharing appraisal information in the RLIN. Project participants reported low quality of appraisal information and appraisal documentation, which were created in inadequate forms for information sharing with other institutions. As a result, the participating state archives provided information so tailored to their own organization that no one but the provider could comprehend it.<sup>165</sup>

Following the *Seven States Project*, the Appraisal Working Group of the GRP surveyed twenty-one federal, state, and local government archival agencies in order to investigate their documenting appraisal decision methods.<sup>166</sup> The GRP supported the exchange of descriptive data and appraisal data on archival holdings by utilizing the MARC-AMC and RLIN.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ruller, “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data.”

<sup>164</sup> David Bearman, “Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities: Challenges and Opportunities,” *American Archivist* 52, no. 1 (1989): 32.

<sup>165</sup> Ruller, “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data,” 71.

<sup>166</sup> Ruller, “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data,” 69-73.

<sup>167</sup> Marie B. Allen, *Sharing Information on Intergovernmental Records*, Government Records Issues Series 3 ([Albany, NY]: National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, 1990); Marie B. Allen, “Intergovernmental Records in the United States: Experiments in Description and Appraisal,” *Information Development* 8, no. 2 (April 1992): 99-103; Marie Allen, “Crossing Boundaries: Intergovernmental Records Cooperation, 1987-1997,” *American Archivist* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 216-33; Max J. Evans, “The Visible Hand: Creating a Practical Mechanism for Cooperative Appraisal,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 11-12.

The Appraisal Working Group's survey reported appraisal documentation forms that were utilized in the 1980s and early 1990s. Analyzing the survey data, Thomas J. Ruller, a member of the group, categorized appraisal documentation as forms, forms with concise memoranda or reports, only memoranda or reports, and no documentation.<sup>168</sup> As a result, the survey, despite its small size, revealed that institutions employed different kinds of appraisal documentation. This difference indicates a lack of standardized documentation appraisal that would enable appraisal data sharing among state archives. Unfortunately, since Ruller's study there has been no study about how state archives document archival appraisal; hence, it is not known if documentation of appraisal in state archives has changed.

While the RLG led the *Seven States Project*, the NARA simultaneously led the *Intergovernmental Records Program (IRP)*. The purpose of the IRP was to "facilitate the exchange of information about government records that were divided or duplicated as a result of historical accident or because of parallel functions of government."<sup>169</sup> The IRP was implemented through two phases: 1) accessioned records described in the RLIN and 2) an intergovernmental cooperative appraisal program.<sup>170</sup> In 1989, it extended its collaborative network by joining the *Government Records Project* of the RLG.

While appraisal and scheduling of records were not major subjects per se in the first phase of the IRP, they were the centerpiece of the second phase. In 1991, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) and the NARA formed a joint committee to guide intergovernmental cooperation. Their partnership for intergovernmental appraisal and scheduling was called the *Intergovernmental Cooperative*

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<sup>168</sup> Ruller, "Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data," 70.

<sup>169</sup> Allen, "Crossing Boundaries," 218.

<sup>170</sup> Allen, "Crossing Boundaries," 219.

*Appraisal Program* (ICAP). The mission of the ICAP emphasized “regulatory reform and federal mandate reduction legislation of the last few years.”<sup>171</sup> This program proceeded through a project on appraisal and scheduling terminology review, the Food Stamp Records Project, and the Project CRIME. Despite these years-long collaborative efforts, the results of the IRP were not very influential on appraisal performance in individual state archives or in sharing appraisal information among state archives.

Information technology has brought new challenges to practicing appraisal. To meet these challenges, a series of advanced courses for continuing education of state archivists—“Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age: An Advanced Institute for Government Archivists”—offered a session on “Archival Appraisal and Electronic Records” (June 12–13, 1990).<sup>172</sup> The written evaluations of this institute indicated that the participants had concerns about appraisal and recognized the necessity of learning about appraisal. Responding to questions about what topics could be instructed as a workshop, the participants ranked appraisal first in the 1990 evaluation and second in the 1991 evaluation.<sup>173</sup>

The advent of the World Wide Web has influenced appraisal practices in state archives. For example, with Web-based technology, the Oregon State Archives shifted “emphasis from description of the record series to description of records-creating agencies and programs,”

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<sup>171</sup> Grace Lessner, “News from the CRIME Scene: ICAP Project Pursues Investigations in Its ‘Criminal Records and Information Management Enterprise’,” *NAGARA Clearinghouse* (Summer 1997): 3.

<sup>172</sup> The series was also called “Camp Pitt.” For more information about this institute, refer to David J. Olson, “‘Camp Pitt’ and the Continuing Education of Government Archivists: 1989-1996,” *American Archivist* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1997), 202-14; University of Pittsburgh, School of Library and Information Science, Council on Library Resources, and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, “Archival Appraisal and Electronic Records (June 12-13, 1990),” in *Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age: An Advanced Institute for Government Archivists, June 3-15, 1990* ([Pittsburgh]: [University of Pittsburgh]. School of Library and Information Science, 1990).

<sup>173</sup> Richard J. Cox, “The NAGARA Institute: An Evaluation of Its Effectiveness as a Form of Advanced Archival Education,” in *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists in the United States: A Study in Professionalization* (New York: Haworth Press, 1994), 180-81.

expecting “the descriptions would provide an idea of the relative significance of records within an agency program and thus be a useful appraisal tool.”<sup>174</sup> The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) faced a new challenge in appraising digitally created records that had been kept, accessed, and used only on websites. The working group for the WHS project developed new appraisal guidelines consisting of four analyses: motive analysis, informational analysis, technical analysis, and supplemental analysis. It reported that the whole appraisal process of web records had both similarities to more typical formats and differences.<sup>175</sup>

Literature on state archives indicates that appraisal practices vary among state archives.<sup>176</sup> The diversity in appraisal practices is probably caused by two factors: 1) the independent nature of state archives within the U.S. federal system and 2) each state archives’ own factors influencing appraisal practices.

The pluralistic nature of the U.S. federal system decentralizes and diffuses government records across the United States.<sup>177</sup> This makes shared appraisal work difficult and diverse among state archives. Indeed, each state archives belongs to a state government that has its own structures, functions, histories, and legislations. As a result, each state archives has its own unique setting that consists of its own mission, policies, budget, program, operations, and complex relations with other state government agencies. Turnbaugh claims that the specific setting of a government archives influences appraisal decisions, based on his experiences of two state archives in Illinois and Oregon. According to Turnbaugh, appraisal decisions “necessarily reflect the setting in which a program operates, and each program functions in a unique

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<sup>174</sup> Turnbaugh, “Information Technology, Records, and State Archives,” 192.

<sup>175</sup> Jeremy Brett, “A Case Study of the Web-site Appraisal Process as Applied to State Government Agency Web Sites in Wisconsin,” *Archival Issues* 27, no. 2 (2002): 99-110.

<sup>176</sup> See, for example, Crittenden and Hines, “The Disposal of Useless State Archives”; Mitchell, “New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives”; Posner, *American State Archives*.

<sup>177</sup> Max J. Evans, “The Visible Hand: Creating a Practical Mechanism for Cooperative Appraisal,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no.1 (1986): 7.

setting.”<sup>178</sup> He further contends that the impact of an institutional context on appraisal practices results in “some of the lack of consensus about appraisal of public records.”<sup>179</sup>

On the other hand, Ruller claims that government archival agencies have “striking similarity in the methodology of selection” despite the diversity in their operations, after analyzing survey data from twenty-one government archival agencies encompassing federal, state, and local institutions.<sup>180</sup> He contends, “institutions *collect* similar information in the process of appraisal, but institutional differences in the way those decisions are recorded falsely reflect differences in appraisal methodology.”<sup>181</sup> Moreover, Ruller says, “Appraisal decisions are based on essentially the same factors, regardless of the institution making the decision.”<sup>182</sup> However, he does not elaborate on what these “same factors” are or how they influence appraisal decisions. Therefore, his argument against the conventional wisdom that appraisal is conducted diversely among archives is not persuasive.<sup>183</sup>

Literature on state archives indicates that various factors influence appraisal practices. These factors can be divided into internal (institutional) factors and external factors. Internal factors originating from the archives’ institutional context include institutional mission; institutional policies (e.g., collecting and appraisal policies); institutional resources (e.g., staff, budget); space and facilities for its holdings; appraisal archivists’ background, interest,

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<sup>178</sup> Roy Turnbaugh, “Plowing the Sea: Appraising Public Records in an Ahistorical Culture,” *American Archivist* 53 (Fall 1990): 564.

<sup>179</sup> Turnbaugh, “Plowing the Sea,” 564.

<sup>180</sup> Ruller, “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data,” 66. For more information about this survey, see pages 39-40 in this paper.

<sup>181</sup> Ruller, “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data,” 66.

<sup>182</sup> Ruller, “Dissimilar Appraisal Documentation as an Impediment to Sharing Appraisal Data,” 67-68.

<sup>183</sup> In commenting on the conventional wisdom, Ruller cites Richard C. Berner, *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1983).

subjectivity, and personal bias; and user/use in a specific state archives.<sup>184</sup> Factors external to an institution include changes in information technology, federal statutes and regulations, federal and state information policies, state and local requirements, and the approval of and relations with state and local agencies (e.g., state budget agencies, state libraries, state historical records advisory boards).<sup>185</sup> These various factors collectively affect a state archives program and its appraisal.

Max J. Evans explains diversity in appraisal practices between state archives using the concept of “corporate culture” as “a complex of inter-related factors: institutional bureaucratic placement, clientele served, relationships with libraries and other information agencies, staff resources, space and facilities available to store and maintain archival material, and, most importantly, the perceived mission of the institution.”<sup>186</sup> Evans contends that the corporate culture of each institution must be a basis of appraisal method development in each institution. He further contends that appraisal decision-making according to different appraisal standards allows the archival community to preserve more diverse records than using a single appraisal standard.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Brett, “A Case Study of the Web-site Appraisal Process as Applied to State Government Agency Web Sites in Wisconsin”; Mitchell, “New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives,” 170; Turnbaugh, “Plowing the Sea.”

<sup>185</sup> Christopher Crittenden and Nell Hines, “The Disposal of Useless State Archives,” *American Archivist* 7 (July 1944): 165-73; Dennis East, “A Lesson in Archival Reality: A Commentary on Donald Ratcliffe’s ‘The Mystery of Ohio’s Missing Presidential Returns, 1804-1848’,” *Archival Issues* 17, no.1 (1992): 145-47; Howard P. Lowell, “Elements of a State Archives and Records Management Program,” *ARMA Quarterly* (October 1987): 4; Mitchell, “New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives”; Posner, *American State Archives*; Turnbaugh, “Plowing the Sea”; Turnbaugh, “Information Technology, Records, and State Archives,” 185; University of Pittsburgh, School of Library and Information Science, Council on Library Resources, and National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, “Archival Appraisal and Electronic Records (June 12-13, 1990),” in *Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age: An Advanced Institute for Government Archivists, June 3-15, 1990* ([Pittsburgh]: [University of Pittsburgh], School of Library and Information Science, 1990), 17-18.

<sup>186</sup> Evans, “The Visible Hand,” 7.

<sup>187</sup> Evans, “The Visible Hand,” 7-8.

A review of the literature indicates that the archival community has consistently paid little attention to appraisal in state archives. Appraising records is conventionally acknowledged as a complex and mysterious process; however, two state archivists in different states, Thornton W. Mitchell and Roy Turnbaugh, disagree. Mitchell contends, "Appraisal is essentially pragmatic: there is little that is mystical about it."<sup>188</sup> Turnbaugh argues, "The how of appraisal is a reasonably straightforward process, driven by the configuration and direction, past and present, of our governments, by the needs of our users, and by our own common sense as archivists."<sup>189</sup> However, because of a paucity of investigations of state archives' appraisal processes, it cannot be said whether they are simple and plain.

The lack of attention to archival appraisal in state archives results in poor knowledge of the current state of archival appraisal. Existing comprehensive and nationwide surveys of state archives (e.g., Posner's survey in the 1960s, surveys conducted for the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects in the 1980s) give an indication of the historical status of archival appraisal in state archives. Unfortunately, CoSA's ongoing nationwide surveys that have started since the 1990s do not provide information on contemporary appraisal. Even CoSA's 1996 report, concerning the challenges that state archives and records management programs face because of changes from paper to electronic systems, does not address appraisal of records.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, although CoSA's 2007 report mentions appraisal in its description of core responsibilities of state archives and records management programs, FY2004 and FY2006 survey questionnaires used in the report do not include questions concerning appraisal.<sup>191</sup> The report's only mention of appraisal is this description of the advantages of joint operation between

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<sup>188</sup> Mitchell, "New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives," 173.

<sup>189</sup> Turnbaugh, "Plowing the Sea," 565.

<sup>190</sup> Walch, *Maintaining State Records in an Era of Change* (accessed January 3, 2008).

<sup>191</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 9.

archives and records management: “Appraising and scheduling records is more straightforward and identification of those with continuing (archival) value more certain.”<sup>192</sup> This CoSA report also presents results of issues identified by state archives and records management programs as their top priorities for 2006–2008. None of the participants’ responses to the FY2006 survey raised issues related to appraisal. Only archives programs in four states (Michigan, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) even describe issues of retention scheduling. Clearly, the report does not provide information about appraisal; however, it does at least demonstrate the fact that appraisal is not regarded as a significant issue in state archives programs. It should be asked then whether archival appraisal is given so little weight because state archivists do not actually experience problems in conducting appraisal or because archival appraisal is so low on state archivists’ lists of concerns.

Just as Posner claimed early in the 1960s, CoSA says that a joint operation of a state archives and a records management program has the advantage that “appraising and scheduling records is more straightforward and identification of those with continuing (archival) value more certain.”<sup>193</sup> In the small body of literature on appraisal procedure in state archives and state records management programs, there is a brief paper describing appraisal procedure in a joint program, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, in the 1980s.<sup>194</sup> In the first step, the State Records Survey Division, consisting of records analysts, conducted an inventory of a state agency’s given records series, and in the next step the records analysts made up a state records appraisal form by analyzing the records series. Then, the records analysts created a draft of the records retention schedule and sent an appraisal archivist the schedule with the completed

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<sup>192</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 18.

<sup>193</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 18.

<sup>194</sup> Kathy Roe Coker, “Records Appraisal: Practice and Procedure,” *American Archivist* 48, no.4 (Fall 1985): 417-21. This author was an appraisal archivist at that department.

appraisal forms. The appraisal archivist initiated “a study of the state agency or institution, its historical origin and development, and its past and current administrative, legal, and fiscal functions and responsibilities” with a wide range of records and assistance from the records analyst who created the records retention schedule. The archivist paid attention to identifying “which scheduled record series document the agency's origin and changing governing authority as well as its policies, procedures, programs, fiscal accountability, and functions, and which series are or may be of value to researchers.”<sup>195</sup> After finishing the review of the records retention schedule, she returned the schedule to the State Records Survey Division. After the review of the schedule, the Division received the approval of the state agency. Once the schedule was approved, it was returned to the archivist for a final review, and she created an appraisal report. A deputy director reviewed the records retention schedule with the archivist’s comments and modified it, if necessary. Finally, a director received the records retention schedule and approved it in a meeting with the archivist and the deputy director. Unfortunately, there are few similar records of how state archives programs and state records management programs collaborate on archival appraisal.

### **2.3.3 Users and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs**

Like archival appraisal in state archives and records management programs, users and their uses of those programs have been little studied. In particular, literature on state records management rarely deals with their users and use of records because most state records management programs do not hold records, although state records centers in the same building temporarily preserve

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<sup>195</sup> Coker, “Records Appraisal,” 419.

records when the records are transferred to state archives programs or are destroyed. Records creators own the records held in state records centers, and users of the records are limited to records creators.

As public servants, state archives programs must make their records available, not only to government officials but also to the public, conveniently and efficiently. To do this, state archives programs need to know their users and use of their records and their programs. Nevertheless, the lack of understanding of archives users and use had already appeared in the reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects conducted in the 1980s. The reports show that state archives did not understand their users and that their holdings were underutilized.<sup>196</sup> Moreover, it appears that “the posture of state archives toward” their users was passive in general.<sup>197</sup> William L. Joyce, a consultant to the projects, warned that the state archives community experienced a cycle of poverty. He claimed, “In a culture often described as ahistorical and rootless, there is a limited public appreciation of history and the usefulness of historical records. Lack of public understanding and regard leads to underfunding of historical records repositories and underutilization of their holdings. This process has a circular effect in that low use perpetuates low funding which prevents repositories from upgrading the management of their collections which might in turn increase their use.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Lisa B. Weber edited reports collected in the early stage of the projects, published as the book *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States: Consultant Reports Presented at the Conference of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Assessment and Reporting Grantees, Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-25, 1983* (Weber. Atlanta, Ga.: NASARA in cooperation with NHPRC, 1984); Dearstyne, “What Is the Use of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession,” 82-83.

<sup>197</sup> Edwin C. Bridges, “Consultant Report: State Government Records Programs,” in Weber, *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States: Consultant Reports Presented at the Conference of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Assessment and Reporting Grantees, Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-25, 1983* (Atlanta, Ga.: NASARA in cooperation with NHPRC, 1984), 8.

<sup>198</sup> William L. Joyce, “Consultant Report: Historical Records Repositories,” in Weber, *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States: Consultant Reports Presented at the Conference of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Assessment and Reporting Grantees, Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-25, 1983* (Atlanta, Ga.: NASARA in cooperation with NHPRC, 1984), 39.

The “cycle of poverty” was also of concern to a national agenda for state government records programs proposed by the NAGARA. Pointing out underutilization of state records, this agenda describes the necessity of developing strategies for more effective advocacy and improving use. The NAGARA’s agenda predicts that increased use can elucidate the significance of state archives programs and justify the requests for necessary resources and facilities.<sup>199</sup>

Although the necessity of user studies has been acknowledged since the 1980s, there is still little literature describing users and user studies in state archives. Moreover, most existing literature on users and uses in state archives is based on state archivists’ impressionistic experiences. However, a series of nationwide surveys investigating state archives programs since the 1960s indicates that as time passes more state archives keep statistics about users and uses— at least who uses their archives and their method of access (visit, telephone, fax, or e-mail). For example, Posner’s survey reports that few state archives categorized types of users in the 1960s.<sup>200</sup> The reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects in the 1980s show that a number of state archives kept annual reference service statistics on numbers of users. However, most of those archives did not “interpret the numbers or attempt draw conclusions about or report on their significance.”<sup>201</sup> Those reports also indicate that some state archives conducted user surveys.<sup>202</sup> CoSA’s FY2004 survey of all states indicates that

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<sup>199</sup> National Association of Government Archives and Records Administration, *State Government Records Programs: A Proposed National Agenda*, Government Records Issues 2 ([Albany, N.Y.]: National Association of Government Archives and Records Administration, 1989), 2-4.

<sup>200</sup> Posner, *American State Archives*, 333.

<sup>201</sup> Dearstyne, “What is the *Use of Archives?* A Challenge for the Profession,” 78-79.

<sup>202</sup> Edwin C. Bridges, “Consultant Report: State Government Records Programs,” in Weber, *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States: Consultant Reports Presented at the Conference of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Assessment and Reporting Grantees, Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-25, 1983* (Atlanta, Ga.: NASARA in cooperation with NHPRC, 1984), 8.

almost all state archives collected information on the types of their users and use of their holdings.<sup>203</sup>

The reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects and CoSA's FY2004 survey show a tendency toward diversification of user groups. Although genealogists are a dominant user group in those reports and the survey, there is a difference in the proportion of genealogists between those instruments. While the percentage of genealogists is far greater than the total percentage of other combined user groups in the reports of the Statewide Historical Records Assessment and Planning Projects, the same proportion does not apply to many states in CoSA's FY2004 survey.<sup>204</sup>

Even though the percentage of genealogists out of all users has decreased in the 2000s comparing to the 1980s, CoSA's FY2004 survey indicates that state archives holdings are still used for limited purposes by limited user groups. It shows that the primary use of state archives' holdings is for genealogy in most states, for state government administration in five states, for property/legal research in four states, and equally for genealogy and property/legal research in one state. Genealogy and state government administration together make up a large percentage of use in each state.<sup>205</sup> This fact implies that state archives need to actively court more diverse user groups who might benefit from utilizing their archives.

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<sup>203</sup> See Council of State Archives, *Profiles of State Archives and Records Management Programs: A Supplement to the State of State Records* (Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Archivists, 2007). Also available online at <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/2007-ARMreport/FY06-profiles.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2008).

<sup>204</sup> Bridges, "Consultant Report," 8; Council of State Archives, *Profiles of State Archives and Records Management Programs*.

<sup>205</sup> See Council of State Archives, *Profiles of State Archives and Records Management Programs*. This profile is a supplement of the CoSA's 2007 report, Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records: A Status Report on State Archives and Records Management Programs in the United States* (Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Archivists, 2007). Also available online at <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/2007-ARMreport/StateARMS-2006rpt-final.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2008).

CoSA's 2007 report describes changing user access to and use of records in state archives and records management programs by demonstrating and comparing statistical data collected in the responses to its 1994, 2004, and 2006 surveys.<sup>206</sup> They indicate that most surveyed state archives collect the number of users and uses. However, CoSA's 2007 report does not more specifically describe the collected information or how it is collected. Moreover, it is not known whether state archives analyze the collected information.

Using the results of CoSA's 2007 report, CoSA's Blue Ribbon Panel gives useful, if not thorough, recommendations to improve user studies in state archives.<sup>207</sup> The panel recommends developing methods to collect information about in-person users, web users, and potential users; collecting reliable statistics on website usage and investigating qualitatively the types of web users and their reasons for using the websites; and investigating user satisfaction via user surveys, focus groups, and marketing plans. It is noteworthy that the panel recommends the examination of how better to serve specific groups ("K-12 students and their teachers," "professional historians," "faculty and students in other scholarly disciplines," and "other nonscholarly special interest communities who care about history") to enhance the user base of state archives programs.<sup>208</sup> This seems to underline the need for state archives to proactively exercise their responsibility to serve users beyond government officials.

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<sup>206</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*. This report contains several tables related to this issue, including "numbers of requests received for information about or to use archival records in reporting period, FY 2006," "number of requests for information about and/or access to archival holdings received by state archives through 'person-to-person' contact, i.e., surface mail, e-mail, telephone, in-person, during 1994, 2004, and 2006," "comparison of website activity for states reporting in both FY2004 and FY2006," and "estimates of the percentage of total usage of government records holdings, by purpose, FY2004."

<sup>207</sup> The CoSA convened a Blue Ribbon Panel to "consider the results of its surveys of state archives and records management programs and make recommendations on how to improve the management, preservation, and use of state government records." It selected the panel members to "represent the primary constituents and partners of state archives and records management programs nationwide." Council of State Archivists, Blue Ribbon Panel, *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel: A Supplement to the State of State Records; A Status Report on State Archives and Records Management Programs in the United States* (Iowa City, Iowa: Council of State Archivists, 2007). Also available online at <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/2007-ARMreport/BRPreport-final.pdf> (accessed January 8, 2008), 1.

<sup>208</sup> Council of State Archivists, Blue Ribbon Panel, *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel*, 8-9.

The changing access tools to and use of state archives has stimulated new research topics and methods to study state archives' users and use. For example, a few state archives started collecting information about their own website usage. According to CoSA's 2007 report, fewer than half of the archives surveyed retain statistics on their website usage.<sup>209</sup> The case of the Oregon State Archives highlights the necessity and the benefit of investigating archives' website usage. By analyzing its website logs, the archives could identify the purposes of their online users, who used mostly information on the website itself, and their preferred forms of information sources. Moreover, this data on increased use can be employed to request resources.<sup>210</sup> As the review of literature shows, user studies of state archives also change as users and uses change.

#### **2.3.4 Users and user studies in appraisal practices of U.S. state archives and records management programs**

Thornton W. Mitchell claims that users and use should be considered when appraising records.<sup>211</sup> Indeed, Paul I. Chestnut, Jeremy Brett, and Roy Turnbaugh indicate that users and use are employed as an appraisal factor in state archives.<sup>212</sup> Chestnut claims, "potential use is a principal criterion at all levels of appraisal"; however, he does not describe fully how potential use influences each level of appraisal.<sup>213</sup> While Chestnut shows that use is a criterion in appraising the papers of state legislators, Brett reports that an appraisal option was chosen as "the

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<sup>209</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*, 34.

<sup>210</sup> Turnbaugh, "Information Technology, Records, and State Archives," 189.

<sup>211</sup> Mitchell, "New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives," 174.

<sup>212</sup> Brett, "A Case Study of the Web-site Appraisal Process as Applied to State Government Agency Web Sites in Wisconsin"; Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators"; Roy Turnbaugh, "The Impact of Genealogical Users on State Archive Programs," *Library Trends* 32, no. 1 (Summer 1983): 39-49; Turnbaugh, "Plowing the Sea."

<sup>213</sup> Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators," 163.

best one for serving the interests of researchers.”<sup>214</sup> However, Brett does not describe how to determine those interests.

While Chestnut and Brett briefly address use’s influences on appraisal practice, Turnbaugh describes the relationship between appraisal and use in more detail. He says that “appraisal and disposition of records are the key activities, and any definition of use should reflect such activity.”<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, he contends, “The single key activity which can be performed by an archives is establishing the disposition of a record. This ultimately determines research use, because when appraisal and disposition are flawed, everything which succeeds them is flawed. Disposition is the nexus which joins records creator, archivist, and research user.”<sup>216</sup>

Based on his experience, Turnbaugh emphasizes the responsibility of state archivists to balance services between their governments and citizens. He contends that the purpose of appraising is not to “serve any one group of users, but rather to select the records that may serve our citizens as a necessary counterpoise to government itself” by assuring the acquisition and preservation of those records that “document government’s deeds.”<sup>217</sup> According to Turnbaugh, many government archivists appraise more actively and enthusiastically records for “hypothetical or potential users” than records that are “earmarked as permanent by law, rule, or retention schedule.”<sup>218</sup> Turnbaugh points out the paradox that state archivists protect the interests

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<sup>214</sup> Brett, “A Case Study of the Web-site Appraisal Process as Applied to State Government Agency Web Sites in Wisconsin,” 108.

<sup>215</sup> Roy C. Turnbaugh, “Archival Mission and User Studies,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 27.

<sup>216</sup> Turnbaugh, “Archival Mission and User Studies,” 29.

<sup>217</sup> Turnbaugh, “Plowing the Sea,” 565.

<sup>218</sup> Turnbaugh, “Plowing the Sea,” 564.

of scholars, who are a minor constituency, despite their responsibility to serve governments and the public as a government agency.<sup>219</sup>

Kathy Roe Coker's paper indicates that records analysts in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History consider "the agency's current administrative, fiscal, and legal uses and needs for the records" in analyzing records series.<sup>220</sup> Before creating records retention schedules, the records analysts fill in the state records appraisal form for each series. The form includes "the value or use to the agency (the legal retention requirements) and the archival value/condition (the evidential and informational values) of the series." Along with the appraisal forms, records retention schedules are sent to an appraisal archivist. Although Coker is concerned with "[a state] agency's current need for the records," she pays more attention to "which series are or may be of value to researchers."

The major aspects of users and use for appraisal practice include user needs, research interests, research trends, potential users and use, usefulness of records, reasons for record use, and how records are used.<sup>221</sup> Nevertheless, as the above literature survey shows, how archivists collect information about users and use in appraisal practice is sparsely studied. To obtain user and use information, Mitchell recommends that state archivists consult "those who know the records best" because they are "the only people who know how and why records are used and what potential use they may have."<sup>222</sup> Chestnut claims archivists must investigate and analyze research trends and types of their users in the appraisal process.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Turnbaugh, "Plowing the Sea," 564.

<sup>220</sup> Coker, "Records Appraisal," 419. All quotations in this paragraph came from the same page.

<sup>221</sup> Brett, "A Case Study of the Web-site Appraisal Process as Applied to State Government Agency Web Sites in Wisconsin," 108; Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators," 163; Mitchell, "New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives," 174.

<sup>222</sup> Mitchell, "New Viewpoints on Establishing Permanent Values of State Archives," 174.

<sup>223</sup> Chestnut, "Appraising the Papers of State Legislators," 163, 170.

Many of those promoting use as an appraisal factor are U.S. government archivists, who do so based on their practical experience. Unfortunately, little is known about whether use of records is actually employed as an appraisal factor in U.S. government archives and, if it is, how information on use is collected and utilized for archival appraisal practice. These little-explored issues inspired the research questions of this study.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

As a research paradigm, this study adopts a pragmatic approach, which considers “consequences of actions” and is “problem-centered,” “pluralistic,” and “real-world practice oriented.”<sup>224</sup> With respect to its orientation toward consequences of actions and real-world practice, this study investigates the actual utilization of user studies in the appraisal practice of state archives and state records management programs.<sup>225</sup> This study is not primarily concerned with user studies and appraisal practice in the abstract. Rather, it is concerned with how user studies and archival appraisal relate in actual practice—a pragmatic approach. Furthermore, the pragmatic approach enables this study to employ a plurality of research methods and procedures to best meet its needs.<sup>226</sup>

This study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods by using a survey and interviews in order to answer the following research questions, previously described in chapter 1:

**Question 1: Do U.S. state archivists and records managers collect and utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice?**

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<sup>224</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2009), 6.

<sup>225</sup> For convenience, the term “state archives” refers to all fifty U.S. state archives and the archives for the District of Columbia hereafter in this paper.

<sup>226</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 11.

*Question 1-1: If U.S. state archivists and records managers do collect and utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice, why and how do they do so?*

*Question 1-2: If U.S. state archivists and records managers do not collect or utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice, why not?*

**Question 2: What is the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs?**

The study requires quantitative data to provide broad information on all research questions, particularly research question 1, and to establish the overall state of collection and utilization of user/use information for appraisal practice. The purpose of the study's survey is to collect quantitative data on the particulars of user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice—the why, how, and what of research questions 1-1, 1-2, and 2. The purpose of the study's qualitative data—in-depth narrative answers obtained from interviews with state archivists and records managers—is to complement the quantitative data. This reason the study combines the survey and interview techniques is to provide concrete data upon which to ground an explanation of the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies and, ultimately, to enhance the validity and the reliability of this study's results.

### **3.2 PRELIMINARY STUDIES**

The lack of information about U.S. state archives and records management programs, their appraisal practices, and their user studies necessitated preliminary studies to confirm the feasibility of conducting this exploratory study and to gain basic knowledge on this research

topic. The researcher conducted three preliminary studies over three different time periods over three years and adopted different approaches.

The first preliminary study (October 2006–January 2007) investigated whether state archives conduct and document archival appraisal. For this preliminary study, the researcher requested some sample appraisal documents by e-mailing archivists listed on CoSA’s Directory of State and Territorial Archivists.<sup>227</sup> Many state archivists sent sample documents to the researcher, informed her of the location of relevant documents and information on their websites, and/or explained very briefly appraisal documentation and practices in their archives. The results of this preliminary study indicated that respondents’ archives were doing some kind of appraisal work even though the collected information and sample documents did not provide much detailed information on current appraisal practices.

The second preliminary study (February 2008–May 2008) adopted two different approaches to gain information on appraisal practices and user studies in state archives by investigating two different groups of participants. First, the researcher sent informal e-mail surveys asking six simple questions of appraisal archivists working for state archives in order to gain more information on appraisal practices and the role of use as an appraisal factor, based on the results of the first preliminary study. Some appraisal archivists replied, and a few of them sent the researcher some sample appraisal documents. Because the response rate was low, the researcher also communicated with a few appraisal archivists via telephone. The results indicated that respondents’ archives were conducting some kind of appraisal work, and a few of them were employing use as an appraisal factor. A few respondents briefly described how they regard use and how they gain use information. These results helped the researcher create survey questions

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<sup>227</sup> Council of State Archivists, “Directory of State Archives and Records Programs,” <http://www.statearchivists.org/states.htm> (accessed July 1, 2008).

and multiple-choice answers about the role of use as an appraisal factor, use information considered for appraisal practices, and ways to collect use information.

The review of literature for this research revealed the necessity of clarifying the concept of use, analysis of use, and the user study, as well as the necessity of articulating the scope of user studies. To this end, the researcher communicated in person, via telephone, and via e-mail with reference archivists, authors who had written about use or user studies, and researchers who had conducted user studies. The communication verified that in almost all cases, use means research use, not administrative use. Moreover, the researcher verified that archives' collection and analysis of use information through reference activities is not acknowledged as user studies. This clear distinction between collecting use information through reference activities and through user studies helped the researcher operationalize the definition and scope of user studies and develop survey and interview questions related to archivists' collection of use information.

The third preliminary study (July 2008–September 2008) investigated the websites of all state archival and records management programs in order to investigate their current conduct of appraisal and user studies because there is little literature on this information. This investigation provided the researcher with current information on appraisal practices and collection of user/use information, including user studies. It also indicated that state records managers are involved with the process of appraising state government records in most states. Moreover, this investigation showed not only how state archives programs collect user/use information but also how and for what purpose user studies are conducted. This investigation provided new information that could not have been gained from existing literature on state archives programs, helping the researcher craft interview and survey questions as well as make more varied and

appropriate answer choices for the multiple-choice survey questions. In addition, this investigation informed the creation of operational definitions of “use” and “appraisal practice.”

The first two preliminary studies focused on state archives programs. However, the studies showed that, surprisingly, many state records management programs also participated in archival appraisal practices of state government records. Furthermore, state archives programs and state records management programs were joined in many states and separate in others. The studies also provided insight into the current state of appraisal practices and user studies in state archival and records management programs. The information collected by the preliminary studies informed the development of the study’s survey questionnaire and interview protocols as well as operational definitions.

### **3.3 PRETEST STUDY**

The researcher pretested the developed survey questionnaire, interview protocols, a recruitment letter, and an invitation letter for the full study. The subjects of the pretest study were four staff members from three state archives and records management programs. One CoSA member heard about this research at a CoSA meeting and volunteered for this study, and she recommended another subject from a different state. The researcher contacted a state archives and records management program located in the state where the 2009 Joint Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and CoSA would be held. Two staff members from the state archives and records management program had planned to attend the Meeting and agreed to participate in the pretest study. The researcher conducted the pretest study with the four subjects at the hotel hosting the Meeting.

Using the results of the three preliminary studies, the researcher designed an online survey to branch to different questions depending on participants' answers. She also created three interview protocols, considering research questions and survey questions. No single participants of the pretest study was expected to see or respond to all survey questions and all interview protocols. For this reason, the researcher divided the four participants into two groups and took two different approaches with them to gain feedback on all the survey questions and interview protocols. One group consisted of two archivists practicing appraisal, and the other group consisted of two directors supervising both appraisal and records management—one as director of a state archives and the other as director of a division. The two appraisal practitioners followed the same research process designed for a full study to verify the research design and find unexpected issues in the data collecting process. The two directors reviewed a recruitment letter, an invitation letter, a survey questionnaire, and three interview protocols. Their feedback helped improve those materials.

The state archivists practicing appraisal received invitation letters to this study and completed the online version of the survey before the 2009 Joint Annual Meeting. In separate face-to-face interviews at the 2009 Joint Annual Meeting, they responded to interview protocols chosen according to their survey answers. That is, the researcher conducted this part of the pretest study following the research process design for the full study. After finishing the separate interviews, the researcher elicited participants' feedback on the invitation letter, the online survey, and the interview protocol that they had experienced.

The other two participants received drafts of a recruitment letter and an invitation letter in order to elicit their recommendations on the drafts. At the 2009 Joint Annual Meeting, the first participant in this group reviewed all of the survey questions in the paper version with the

researcher and made recommendations as to how to improve the survey. The second participant actually took the survey in the paper version and also made recommendations. While the online version of the survey only shows part of questions because of the jumping logic function, the paper version of survey includes all of the questions and shows the whole organization of the questionnaire. Unlike the two appraisal practitioners, who answered the questions and gave feedback on only one interview protocol based on their survey answers, the directors reviewed all three interview protocols. Therefore, at the meeting with the directors, the directors gave their ideas, opinions, and recommendations on the drafts of the two letters, the entire survey questionnaire, and all of the interview protocols.

Applying these two different approaches worked synergistically. The approach with the appraisal practitioners helped identify, anticipate, and prepare for issues that would occur in conducting the full study. The practitioners also provided more detailed information on appraisal practices, user studies, and the situation of state archives and records management programs based on their experience. This information enhanced the questionnaire by enabling the creation of realistic and relevant answer choices. At the same time, the approach with the directors enabled the researcher to obtain accurate and comprehensive information about the organizational structure and operation of state archival and records management programs and collaboration between them.

Using results of the pretest study, the researcher modified the recruitment letter, invitation letter, survey questionnaire, and interview protocols. Then she sent modified versions to the pretest study participants for more feedback.

## 3.4 DATA COLLECTION

### 3.4.1 Population and sampling

This study investigates state archivists and state records managers as practitioners of archival appraisal in the United States. A review of the literature shows government archivists in the United States, national and state archivists in particular, have led and supported use as an appraisal factor. Hence, they are assumed to have more of an interest in utilizing user studies in their appraisal practice in order to employ use as an appraisal factor than archivists working for other types of archives, making them the most appropriate participants for this study. This study includes state records managers because the literature review, the third preliminary study, and the pretest study indicated that contemporary state archivists and records managers collaborate for appraisal practices in most states. State records managers are involved with state government records appraisal because they analyze state government records and create records retention schedules. In fact, it is state records managers rather than state archivists who are involved with “the process of determining the length of time records should be retained, based on legal requirements and on their current and potential usefulness,” one definition of “appraisal” in the SAA official glossary.<sup>228</sup>

This study employs a population survey to gain comprehensive answers to its research questions, and then it employs follow-up interviews to elicit more detailed information about the “how” and “why” research questions. This study employs the population survey to maximize the generality of this study’s findings, which are expected to reveal the current, general state of the

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<sup>228</sup> Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2005), s.v. “appraisal.” Also available online at <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/index.asp>.

relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in all U.S. state archives and records management programs. In other words, this study targets the whole population of interest: all U.S. state archives and records management programs and the archival and records management program (officially called Office of Public Records) for the District of Columbia, all listed in the *Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs* on the CoSA website.<sup>229</sup> This full study excludes only the three state archives and records management programs that had participated in the pretest study.<sup>230</sup> The state governments in Arkansas and Minnesota do not have official records management programs. As a result, the actual target group of this study is state archives programs in forty-seven states, state records management programs in forty-five states, and the archival and records management program for the District of Columbia. The survey requires the participating state archivists and records managers to have a high degree of knowledge of and experience with their archives program's or records management program's appraisal practice in order to collect valid and reliable information. It is conventionally known that workers tend to change jobs in their third year of employment; hence, eligible participants must have been full-time equivalents (FTEs) with appraisal experience of more than three years at their own state archives program or records management program. The participants for the follow-up interviews are a convenience sampling, consisting of survey respondents who agree to the interview.

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<sup>229</sup> Council of State Archivists, "Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs," <http://www.statearchivists.org/states.htm>.

<sup>230</sup> The state archives and records management programs are joined in their states.

### 3.4.2 Process of recruiting participants and collecting survey data

As the review of literature in the previous chapter and the investigation of websites of state archives and records management programs indicate, the organizational structure, the number of state archives programs' and records management programs' FTE positions, and position titles vary widely from state to state; therefore, to recruit eligible archivists and records managers, in February 2010 the researcher sent official letters by post to the directors, State archivists, and records managers listed on CoSA's *Directory of State and Territorial Archivists*, referring to "Appendix F. Directory of State Archives and Records Managers" in *The State of State Records: A Status Report on State Archives and Records Management Programs in the United States*.<sup>231</sup> The letters briefly explained this study and requested each state archives program and each state records management program to provide the researcher with names and contact information of state archivists and records managers who were eligible for this study (see Appendix B).

One week after the official letter was sent, the researcher contacted unresponsive state archives programs and state records management programs by e-mail. Ten days after the e-mail contact, she e-mailed unresponsive state archives programs and records management programs by referring to CoSA's *Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs*, contact information on state archives programs' and state records management programs' websites, and contact information of directors and State archivists whom this author contacted in her preliminary studies.<sup>232</sup> On February 28 the researcher posted a recruitment announcement about the study on the SAA Acquisitions and Appraisal listserv and the SAA Records

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<sup>231</sup> Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*; Council of State Archivists, "Directory of State Archives and Records Programs."

<sup>232</sup> Council of State Archivists, "Directory of State and Territorial Archives and Records Programs," <http://www.statearchivists.org/states.htm>.

Management listserv. A CoSA member posted the same message on CoSA's listserv on March 22 on behalf of the researcher.

The researcher sent invitation letters by e-mail to all eligible archivists and records managers. The e-mail briefly explained the study, the online survey, the follow-up interviews, and the rights of participants, and it requested the recipient's participation (see Appendix C). It also included a link to the online survey and a unique ID assigned to each invited archivist and records manager.

The IDs were composed of alpha-numeric code. Each state was randomly assigned a letter code from AA to ZZ or AQ to WQ.<sup>233</sup> Because a few states provided contact information of multiple eligible archivists and records managers, the researcher assigned a specific number to each archivist and records manager within a state archives program and a state records management program. For example, an archivist in a certain state archives program was assigned an ID of "CC2," "CC" representing the state and "2" representing the archivist. The IDs were used in the presentation of this study's findings.

The online survey opened on February 22, 2010 and was originally set to close on March 16. To obtain more responses for better validity and reliability of results, the survey deadline was extended to March 29, with another reminder e-mail sent out on March 27. The researcher obtained contact information for fifty-eight state archivists and records managers from thirty-one states, but she did not gain the information from nineteen states and District of Columbia by March 29.

Although the online survey was closed on March 30, it was reopened on April 21 and 27 for more responses. On April 21 the researcher e-mailed state archives programs and records

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<sup>233</sup> In letter codes from AA to ZZ and AQ to VQ, "QQ" is used only once. The reason for using "Q" is that no state's abbreviation includes a "Q," so the letter code cannot be confused with a state abbreviation.

management programs that had not participated in this study to ask why their programs had not participated. On that day a state archivist e-mailed to ask if she could participate in the online survey, explaining due to budget matters and a project, she had not previously had time to participate. To accommodate her, the online survey was reopened and received her response on that day. On April 27 another state archivist also e-mailed to ask if she could participate in the online survey, explaining she did not previously have time to participate because she was busy conducting a project. The online survey was reopened for her and received her response on that day. In total, forty-seven of sixty invited archivists and records managers participated from thirty-three of forty-eight states. That is, the response rate was 78.3% of archivists and records managers and 68.8% of states.

### **3.4.3 Survey instrumentation**

The survey, which takes approximately forty minutes to complete, was created and operated by an online survey tool, SurveyGizmo. The organization, format, and user interface of the online survey version actually employed by respondents is different from those of the paper version in Appendix E.<sup>234</sup>

In the survey questionnaire, the first three sections were designed to investigate the current situation of appraisal practices, the collection of user/use information, and the utilization of user/use information and user studies in the appraisal practice of the participants' own state archives programs, records management programs, or joint state archives and records management programs. The last section was created to elicit the participants' attitudes on the

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<sup>234</sup> For instance, the online survey mostly presented only one question per page while the paper version includes more than one question per one page.

feasibility and value of utilizing results of user studies in the appraisal practice of U.S. state archives and records management programs. Regarding appraisal practice, this study asked how state archivists and records managers appraise paper state government records, even though they also appraise other sorts of records (e.g., local government records) and other formats of records (e.g., electronic records). The reason for focusing on paper records is that the main mission and function of state archives programs and records management programs are to manage and preserve state government records, and the paper format is the most popularly managed format in state archives programs and records management programs so far.

Definitions of some key concepts (e.g., appraisal practice, user study) were provided as necessary in each section so that respondents could understand questions correctly. The survey questions, survey answer choices, and definitions were all developed based on information obtained from a review of relevant literature, three preliminary studies, and a pretest study.

Most of the survey questions were close-ended in order to collect quantitative data. These close-ended questions provided multiple answer choices to make the survey more efficient for respondents and to ensure that their responses were comparable.<sup>235</sup> They asked respondents to select one or several answers. Most answer choices also included a blank, marked “Other,” that allowed respondents to add their own answer. Seventeen questions provided the option “I don’t know,” and three questions had the option “I don’t remember” for respondents who did not have enough knowledge or did not feel comfortable answering more decisively. One question was a

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<sup>235</sup> According to Pamela L. Alreck and Robert B. Settle, “When research is used to establish which actions were taken by respondents, the alternative courses of action can be listed in categories to be sure the responses are comparable. Simple multiple-choice items can then be used, with either a single or a multiple response permitted.” In *The Survey Research Handbook: Guidelines and Strategies for Conducting a Survey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Burr Ridge, Ill.; New York, New York: IRWIN, 1995), 18-19.

numeric ranking-type question. It provided a list of items to rank according to respondents' preference.

The online survey tailored itself to each respondent in that it included use of a "jumping" function, whereby respondents were guided to different questions depending on their answers. For instance, Question (3-2) asked if a respondent had utilized user/use information in his or her appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months. Depending on the answer, the respondent was guided to a particular question set out of multiple sets (see Appendix D). A few questions were required of all respondents.

#### **3.4.4 Following up survey responses**

In the process of exporting online survey responses into an Excel file and a SPSS file, the core function of participants' units did not seem to match up with the name of their units (e.g., program, division, section). Additionally, several participants' role in appraisal practice did not match the position titles that the researcher had obtained from the participants' contact information, the signature of their e-mails, and/or their staff information on their institutional websites. This led the researcher to check the organizational structures, the core functions of participants' programs, participants' position titles, and participants' role of practicing appraisal by consulting most participants via e-mails and interviews. For this, she also referred to the participants' institutional websites, organizational charts sent to her, and state government placement of state archives programs and records management programs appearing in CoSA's website and its surveys.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, to gain more reliable information on the core functions of

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<sup>236</sup> For CoSA's surveys, see <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/index.htm>.

participants' programs, the researcher created figures that represented the possible core functions of their programs based on information gained from institutional websites and survey data. Depending on the institutional websites and survey data, the researcher drew four figures that seem to represent the core function of participants' programs. The four figures were sent to several participants whose programs' organizational structures and core function were unclear or seemed not to match each other. Those participants were asked to pick the one figure that most properly represented the core functions of their programs and explain it. Follow-up interviews confirmed organizational structures.

### **3.4.5 Interviews**

In-person and telephone interviews were conducted with twenty-eight (62.2%) of forty-five survey respondents in twenty-one (67.7%) out of thirty-one states. The respondents' answer to the last question of the survey determined the original pool of interviewees, which indicated the respondents' willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. A total of thirty survey respondents answered that they were willing. The researcher made a list of potential interviewees and contacted them by e-mail to confirm their willingness to participate in an interview and set up a schedule. Two potential interviewees who did not reply to the e-mail twice were removed from the interview list. From the interview list, the researcher randomly selected a few states as candidates for in-person interviews. Then, she e-mailed staff members of institutions in these states to ask if they could meet her in their institutions for in-person interviews. Four staff members in two states agreed to do in-person interviews; hence, four interviews were in-person interviews in two states on March 17 and 18. The in-person interviews were conducted in a

private environment in each staff member's office or a conference room. The other interviews were phone interviews with twenty-four interviewees from nineteen states.

Prior to each interview, each interviewee's survey responses were examined to ensure they were acceptable for processing and analysis, to ensure that the online survey tool had functioned correctly, to assign one of three interview protocols to each interviewee, and to tailor interview questions to each interviewee. The three interview protocols were designed to further explore topics in the survey questions and obtain more information on the "why" and "how" research questions of this study (see Appendix F). In addition, all protocols provided definitions of key terms for interviews on their first page. To answer research question 1-2, interview protocol 1 was given to interviewees who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months to elicit information on why they had not utilized such information in their appraisal practice. To answer research question 2, interview protocol 2 was given to interviewees who had utilized results of user studies conducted by their own programs in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months in order to identify why, how, and when they had done so. To answer research question 1-1, interview protocol 3 was given to interviewees who had utilized user/use information collected from information sources (e.g., records creators, and records users) other than user studies in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months in order to find why and how they had done so. Moreover, interview protocol 3 was intended to investigate why those interviewees did not utilize user studies to collect user/use information for their appraisal practice. The criterion to assign interview protocols 2 and 3 was whether or not the participant had utilized user/use information collected from user studies in their appraisal practice rather than user/use information collected from other sources. To anticipate the future relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, the three interview protocols all

contained questions on interviewees’ attitudes toward the feasibility and value of utilizing results of user studies in the appraisal practice of U.S. state archives and records management programs. Table 1 shows the assignment of interview protocols to interviewees in this study. The first row of the table does not name the interviewees’ position titles but their roles in conducting appraisal regardless of position title.

**Table 1.** Interview protocol assignments according to interviewee’s appraisal role

	<b>As an archivist</b>	<b>As a records manager</b>	<b>As an archivist and records manager</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Interview protocol 1</b>	3 (25.0%)	2 (16.7%)	7 (58.3%)	12 (100.0%)
<b>Interview protocol 2</b>	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	3 (60.0%)	5 (100.0%)
<b>Interview protocol 3</b>	3 (27.3%)	1 (9.1%)	7 (63.6%)	11 (100.0%)
<b>Total</b>	7 (25.0%)	4 (14.3%)	17 (60.7%)	28 (100.0%)

Because this study did not intend to validate a hypothesis but to establish a disciplinary baseline on the topic of this study, it used semi-structured interview protocols. That is, even though the three interview protocols were predetermined, the interview questions were tailored to the individual interviewee based on his or her survey answers. Before the interview with each participant, the researcher checked all of the participant’s survey answers and revised interview questions to help clarify any survey information that remained unclear. If necessary, she also checked many interviewees’ institutional websites to confirm some survey answers and to obtain more information on some comments. This also led to added interview questions. In particular, interviews helped obtain more information on the many comments that interviewees wrote into the blank “Other” survey fields.

Before the interview by e-mail, interviewees received their interview protocol and were asked permission to record the interview. The researcher processed interviews following the order of interview questions in interview protocols. She conducted the interviews from March 11, 2010 to April 27, 2010, with each interview taking approximately sixty minutes. With interviewees' permission, all interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Each interview transcript is about sixteen single-spaced pages.

After in-person interviews, the staff members introduced the researcher to their facilities and other staff members, and they provided institutional documents useful to this study. A director of a state archives and a state reference archivist in one state showed how their information system with a reference module collected user/use data and categorized and sorted the collected data by the state reference archivist's search strategy. After phone interviews, many interviewees provided the researcher with institutional documents that they mentioned during their interviews and that would be helpful to this study. For example, they provided their online user survey questionnaires, records retention schedules, and records inventory/records survey forms. Several interviewees indicated helpful Web page addresses that they mentioned during their interviews.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

The survey and interview responses recorded numbers and words. Hence, data processing was numeric and verbal, and data analysis was statistical and textual. Data collected through the online survey was calculated and interpreted by statistical analysis with SPSS software. NVivo8

software incorporated narrative survey data and interview data. The following subsections fully describe the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey and interview data.

### **3.5.1 Operationalization of concepts and terms**

For data analysis, this study uses a few operationalized concepts and terms. First, “information on users and use of records” means any concrete information concerning users and their use of records that is not based on personal impression of participants. This information may be obtained directly from users or from investigations of users or reference services. It includes information on the number of users, user types, user information needs and research interests, research trends and methodologies, patterns of records use, used records, and so on. This information is also called “user/use information” in this study.

“Appraisal practices” are practices related to identifying state government records that have sufficient value to be transferred to and retained in a state archives, and analyzing, assessing, or evaluating state government records to determine the length of time records should be retained. More specifically, appraisal practices include such activities as creating records retention schedules; reviewing and approving records retention schedules; making appraisal decisions; making reappraisal decisions; documenting appraisal; planning and evaluating appraisal practice; developing and evaluating a program’s acquisition, appraisal, collection development, and records retention policies; developing and evaluating appraisal criteria, standards, and checklists; applying and evaluating appraisal methods (e.g., functional analysis) and techniques (e.g., sampling); and requesting and justifying resources for appraisal practice.

“User study” is an intentional examination, with a research question and methodology, of users and their use of state archives and records management programs. It includes systematic

investigation of users for specific purposes (e.g., to determine user satisfaction or user information needs) and research questions, and it employs systematic investigation of use of records for specific purposes (e.g., use statistics, used records) and research questions. User studies also employ research methods, such as survey, interview, focus group, and citation analysis. The act of collecting data on users and use of records in the regular course of business, such as collecting registration forms and conducting Web analytics, does not amount to a user study. However, data collected through reference services and Web analytics can be utilized in user studies in order to support a research question and a research method.

### **3.5.2 Hypothetical relationships between appraisal practice and user studies**

To determine the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, this study investigated if and how participating state archives and records management programs utilized user studies as tools to collect user/use information for utilization in appraisal practice.<sup>237</sup> This required that participating state archives and records management programs had conducted archival appraisal practice, so the study recruited archivists and records managers who had been conducting appraisal practice in their current institutions for more than three years. As a result, all participants contributing to the data analysis had conducted archival appraisal practice in the past 36 months. With this condition set, this study determined the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies by considering employment of users/use as an appraisal factor, performance of user studies, and utilization of user studies in appraisal practice (see Table 2). As a result, eight hypothetical relationship propositions were postulated for data analysis.

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<sup>237</sup> “Utilize user studies in appraisal practice” in this study means to make practical use of user studies in appraisal practice.

**Table 2.** Hypothetical propositions of the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies

<b>Proposition</b>	<b>Users/use employed as an appraisal factor?</b>	<b>User study conducted?</b>	<b>User study utilized in appraisal practice?</b>
<b>1</b>	No	No	No
<b>2</b>	No	No	Yes
<b>3</b>	No	Yes	No
<b>4</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>5</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>6</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>7</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>8</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes

For data analysis, this study interpreted propositions 1 through 7 as having no relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. Propositions 2 and 5 cannot occur because if user studies are not conducted, user studies cannot be utilized in appraisal practice. However, it is questionable whether or not propositions 3 and 4 could occur. That is, if there are user studies but users/use is not an appraisal factor, it cannot be assumed that user studies are or are not utilized in appraisal practice. In proposition 7, the program employs users/use as an appraisal factor and conducts user studies; however, it does not utilize user studies in appraisal practice, but it does utilize them for other purposes. The data analysis interpreted only propositions 8 as having a relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. In propositions 8, a program employs users/use as an appraisal factor and conducts user studies; furthermore, it does utilize user studies in appraisal practice.

### **3.5.3 Quantitative data analysis**

A total of forty-seven respondents from thirty-three states responded to the online survey. Before analyzing all the collected data, unexamined survey responses of non-interviewees were examined for acceptability for processing and analysis. The examination also ensured that the online survey tool had functioned correctly, particularly with skip functions. This examination resulted in the exclusion from data analysis of two responses from two states. One response was excluded because it was incomplete. The other response was excluded because the respondent was not eligible for the study. The respondent's survey response indicated that his program had not conducted any appraisal activities in the past 36 months. Moreover, the interview with him revealed that he had answered other survey questions based on his experience and appraisal activities previous to the past 36 months. In total, forty-five responses from thirty-one states were used in the quantitative data analysis.

This study analyzed survey data at four different levels—individual, group, program, and state—because of the complex and diverse organizational structures and position titles in state archives and records management programs. Some data was analyzed at more than one level. For example, utilization of user studies in appraisal practices was analyzed at the state, program, and group levels.

Data analysis at the individual level treated a respondent as an individual unit. The individual analysis level intended to find professional functions of respondents and their individual activities and attitudes. For example, this study asked each respondent to select in which appraisal activities they think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies.

For data analysis at the group level, this study categorized participants into three groups not by position title but by their role in performing appraisal: 1) as only a state archivist (AR-role Group), 2) as only a state records manager (RM-role Group), and 3) as both a state archivist and state records manager (ARRM-role Group). This categorization was necessary because several respondents' appraisal practice role did not match their position title given in respondent contact information, e-mail signatures, and staff information on institutional websites. The reason for analyzing survey data at the group level was that respondents' role can affect their practices and attitudes; therefore, this level of data analysis intended to identify similarities and differences among activities, practices, and attitudes of respondents depending on their role in conducting archival appraisal. As an example, this study analyzed at the group level survey questions on respondents' appraisal activities, utilization of user/use information, and utilization of user studies in their appraisal practice. This study also analyzed attitudes of the three groups toward the feasibility and value of utilizing user studies in the appraisal practice of U.S. state archives and records management programs. Many survey questions in Section 3 and 4 were analyzed at the group level.

This study also analyzed data at the program level based on the core functions of participants' programs instead of participants' program title because core functions of many programs did not match the programs' names. According to core function, programs were divided into three categories: 1) state archives programs (AR programs); 2) state records management programs (RM programs); and 3) joint state archives and records management programs (ARRM programs) regardless of organizational structure and institution, division, or section name. The study analyzed data at the program level because the three programs have different functions, different situations, and staff playing different roles, and these differences

can affect the results of this study. That is, data analysis at the program level was intended to investigate similarities and differences among the situations, practices, activities, and relationship between appraisal practice and user studies of the three programs categories. Many survey questions in Sections 1 and 2 and some questions in Section 3 were analyzed at the program level.

To check the organizational relationships and the core functions of participants' programs, participants' position titles, and participants' roles for appraisal practice, the researcher queried many participants with e-mails and interviews. To gain more reliable information on the organizational structure, the researcher created schematics of the organizational structure based on information gained from the institutional websites and survey data. Then she e-mailed and asked participants to choose the figure that most accurately represented their organizational structure. The researcher also referred to the participants' institutional websites, organizational charts, and state government placement of state archives programs and records management programs in CoSA's website and surveys.<sup>238</sup>

Data analysis at the group, program, and state levels was somewhat complex because of the participation of multiple staff members from individual programs and states and the diversity of organizational structures among state archives programs and state records management programs. To avoid over-representing programs and states that had multiple participants, a representative participant was chosen for each program and state. The decision to select one participant per program and per state according to core functions of the participant's program and the participant's position title was based on the researcher's knowledge of organizational structures, core functions of the participant's program and the participant's position title gained

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<sup>238</sup> For CoSA's surveys, see <http://www.statearchivists.org/reports/index.htm>.

from interviews, e-mails, CoSA's website and its surveys, and websites of state archives and records management programs. As a result, each state's representative and each program's representative were selected according to the highest position in the institution or the program because higher-level respondents had more in-depth knowledge of their programs and more comprehensive insight on this research topic. That is, responses of directors, State archivists, deputy archivists, supervisors, and division chiefs were selected and used for data analysis at the program, group, and state levels.

In propositions where a state archives program and a state records management program in one state did not overlap in function and administration, responses were considered from a representative of each program; in other words, each response was counted separately at the program level. Four states had joint state archives and records management programs, and their archival functions and records management functions were not clearly divided, even when the programs had a division or section charged with each function. As a result, most participants in those states answered that the core functions of their units are both archiving and records management. In this proposition, as at the state level, one representative response was selected according to the participant with the highest position.

This study used two participant sets. Participant set 1 consisted of only thirty-four participants, each representing only a single program and a single state to avoid overrepresenting programs and states that had multiple respondents. These participants' responses were used to count the number of programs and states in the analysis of current practices in the first three sections of the survey questionnaire. Participant set 2 was composed of all forty-five participants, and their responses were used to identify attitudes toward the relationship between appraisal

practice and user studies in Section 4 of the survey questionnaire and the individual participant's demographic information in the last section.

Because some individual programs and states yielded multiple participating staff members and because organizational structures of state archives programs and state records management programs were diverse, this study established a method to determine the number of states and programs to be included in data analysis at the state and program levels. Table 3 summarizes how survey data was analyzed and counted at each level of analysis.

This exploratory study is one that is “not driven by hypotheses, but which seeks information on a phenomenon about which relatively little is known.”<sup>239</sup> Moreover, it investigated the whole population of participants, state archives and records management programs, instead of a representative sample. For these two reasons, this study employed descriptive statistics rather than inferential statistics. To describe participants, their programs, their practices, and their attitudes, this study often employed frequency tables showing number of propositions and percentages.<sup>240</sup>

This study also used cross-tabulation to identify patterns and relationships contained in the data. In some propositions, the data analysis used Fisher's exact tests to judge the statistical significance of the relationships.<sup>241</sup> Even though this exploratory study does not propose to test hypotheses, it tested some potential factors that may influence the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies to provide basic information for further studies on this topic.

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<sup>239</sup> Alan Buckingham and Peter Saunders describe this as the nature of an exploratory study in their book, *The Survey Methods Workbook: From Design to Analysis* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), 290.

<sup>240</sup> Most percentages were rounded to the nearest tenth, so there are cases where the total percentage is not 100 percent.

<sup>241</sup> “The objective of data processing and analysis is to *suppress* the detail and reveal the important and meaningful patterns and relationships contained in the data.” Pamela L. Alreck and Robert B. Settle, *The Survey Research Handbook: Guidelines and Strategies for Conducting a Survey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Burr Ridge, Ill., New York, N.Y.: Irwin, 1995), 255.

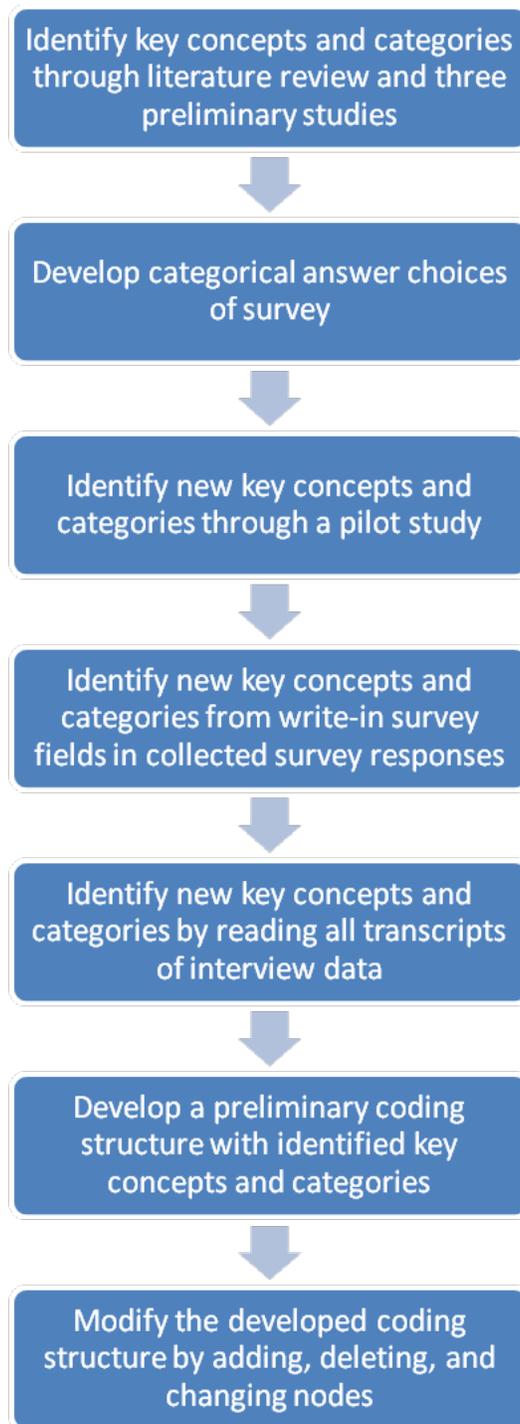
**Table 3.** Data analysis at the individual, group, program, and state levels

Level of analysis	Operationalization of analysis units	Unit count
<b>Individual</b>	Individual participants	Each participant was counted as one individual. This level has participant set 1 (34 participants) and participant set 2 (all 45 participants).
<b>Group</b>	Group name was assigned according to participant's role of conducting appraisal: 1) AR-role group performed appraisal only as archivists, 2) RM-role group performed appraisal only as records managers, and 3) ARRM-role group performed appraisal as both state archivists and records managers	Each group was described by the total number of individuals in it.
<b>Program</b>	Program name was assigned according to the core function of each program: 1) AR programs conducted only archival functions, 2) RM programs conducted only records management functions, and 3) ARRM programs conducted both archival and records management functions.	<p>In propositions where a state archives program and a records management program in one state did not overlap in function and administration, responses were considered from a representative of each program; hence, each response from each program was counted individually.</p> <p>In the proposition of a joint state archives and records management program, and archival functions and records management functions overlapped, a representative from the joint program was selected, and his or her response was used for data analysis. Even if more than one staff member from the joint program responded, the program was counted only once with the representative response.</p>
<b>State</b>	Fifty U.S. states and the District of Columbia	<p>In a state having a separate state archives program and state records management program, if either or both programs answered a question positively, this answer was counted as one positive answer for the state.</p> <p>In a proposition of a joint state archives and records management program whose archival functions and records management functions are not clearly differentiated, one response from the joint program was selected as a representative for the state.</p>

### **3.5.4 Qualitative data analysis**

For qualitative data analysis, participants' write-in comments from the survey and their interview data were analyzed. Twenty-eight participants (62.2%)—excluding two participants whose survey responses were excluded from this study—wrote comments in at least one of the survey's comment fields. Their survey comments, their transcribed interview data, and the documents provided by interviewees were cut and pasted to Microsoft Word files, which were imported to the NVivo8 software for data analysis.

The hierarchical and classificatory coding structure in the NVivo8 software was developed on the basis of key concepts and categories extracted from the literature review, three preliminary studies, a pretest study, and the survey questionnaire. In particular, many structured and categorical answer choices in multiple-choice survey questions helped form the coding structure. Key concepts and categories were represented as free nodes and tree nodes. Nodes evolved as written-in survey responses, and the solicitation for participants' comments relevant to this research topic emerged during survey data analysis. After all interviews had been transcribed, the coding structure evolved with transcripts of interview data. The coding structure continuously evolved until the coding structure stabilized. Meanwhile, the researcher explored collected data. Figure 2 simplifies the process of developing key concepts and categories represented as nodes of the coding structure.



**Figure 2.** Process of developing a coding structure in NVivo8 software

## **4.0 RESEARCH RESULTS**

This chapter presents findings of this study following basically the section order of the survey questionnaire (see Appendix E). The first section in this chapter describes the institutional and professional backgrounds of participants. To give the background necessary to answer the research questions of this study, the second and third sections show the current practices of archival appraisal and the collection of information on users and use of records in participating programs. The fourth section presents results on the first research question, “Do U.S. state archivists and records managers collect and utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice?” The last two sections, *Utilization of User Studies in Appraisal Practice* as well as *Attitudes toward Utilizing User Studies in Appraisal Practice*, present results on the second research question, “What is the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs?” The final section reports on the potential utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. Each section describes the results for a specific topic in detail. The following Discussion chapter describes the results in more depth and interprets them.

As mentioned in the Data Analysis section, references to state archives programs (AR programs), state records management programs (RM programs), and joint state archives and records management programs (ARRM programs) do not refer to organizational structure, institutional name, or division name; rather, they refer to the core function of the participant’s

smaller unit within the larger institution. Also, group names (AR-role, RM-role, and ARRM-role) represent not a participant’s position title but the participant’s role in practicing appraisal.

Also, this chapter generalizes the findings of this study to the whole population of U.S. state archives and records management programs and the archival and records management program for the District of Columbia, including non-participants, by presenting Fisher’s exact test results that indicate the significance of the relationships between categorical variables. To differentiate the entire population from participating subjects, this chapter uses some operational terms (see Table 4). For example, the term “AR programs” refers to those participating programs that conduct only archival functions, whereas the term “state archives programs” refers to the whole population of programs that conduct only archival functions.

**Table 4.** Operational terms for participating programs and for the whole population of U.S. state archives and records management programs

<b>Program</b>	<b>Participating program term</b>	<b>Population program term</b>
State archives program	AR program	State archives program
State records management program	RM program	State records management program
Joint state archives and records management program	ARRM program	Joint state archives and records management program

Also, this chapter and the following chapter use some operational terms (see Table 5) to differentiate the general population from participating subjects. For instance, the term “ARRM-role group” refers to those participants who perform appraisal as a both state archivist and state records manager, whereas the term “multi-role appraisal staff” refers to the overall population of appraisers who perform appraisal as a both state archivist and state records manager. The term

“state appraisal staff(s)” includes the overall population of appraisal staff working for state archives and records management programs.

**Table 5.** Operational terms for participants and for the whole population of U.S. state archivists and records managers

<b>Appraisal staff</b>	<b>Participant term</b>	<b>Population term</b>
State archivist only	AR-role group	Appraisal archivist
State records manager only	RM-role group	Appraisal records manager
Both state archivist and state records manager	ARRM-role group	Multi-role appraisal staff

#### **4.1 INSTITUTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS**

A few of the survey questions asked participants about the core functions and practices of their program, their role in practicing appraisal, their work experience, and their time spent working in appraisal practice. These questions sought to identify participants’ institutional and professional backgrounds so that this study could find the relationship between their backgrounds and their institutional and individual practice, behavior, and attitudes toward the utilization of user studies in their appraisal practice.

##### **4.1.1 Participants’ states, institutions, and programs**

Data analyzed in this study was collected from a total of forty-five participants from thirty-one states. Table 6 shows the number of participating states according to the organizational

relationship between their state archives programs and records management programs.<sup>242</sup> Most participating programs were joint state archives and records management programs. More separate state archives programs participated in this study than separate state records management programs. One state had representation from both its separate archives program and its separate records management program.

**Table 6.** Number of participating states according to the organizational relationship of programs

<b>Program's organizational relationship</b>	<b>Number of states</b>
Joint state archives and records management program	23 (74.2%)
State archives program only	6 (19.4%)
State records management program only	1 (3.2%)
Both a state archives program and a state records management program (separate programs)	1 (3.2%)
Total	31 (100.0%)

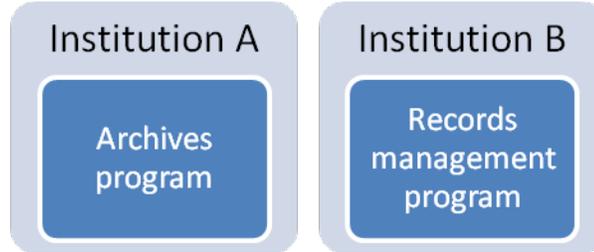
Participants' responses and institutional websites, CoSA's website and surveys, and a few institutional organizational charts indicated that the participating programs' organizational relationships can be categorized into four models (see Figure 3).

Although state archives programs and state records management programs were separated in most states, either within one institution or between two institutions, state archivists and state records managers collaborated on appraisal practice and had a close relationship in many states. However, the degree of collaboration varied from state to state.

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<sup>242</sup> See Appendix G for each state's participating program(s).

Model A. Separate programs in different agencies (separate program)



Model B. Two programs in different divisions/sections within the same institution (joint program)



Model C. Records management program nested within a state archives (joint program)



Model D. Joint state archives and records management program within a division/section in a larger institution (joint program)



**Figure 3.** Models of state archives programs' and state records management programs' organizational relationships

Because of this cross-program collaboration, functions of separate programs often overlapped in many states. For instance, if a state archives had an archives division and a records management division, the archives division may have conducted records management functions as well as archival functions. Indeed, a few participants in this situation reported that the core function of their program was “Both archives and records management.” The core function of a program did not always match the program’s name. For example, the staff members of a state archives division could also perform records management functions.

Table 7 shows the number of states according to the core function of participating programs. Note that the states’ numbers in Table 7 are different from those in Table 6, indicating that a program’s core functions did not always match the program’s title or organizational relationship.<sup>243</sup> The core function of most participating programs was a joint archival and records management function.

**Table 7.** Number of participating states according to their programs’ core function

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

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<sup>243</sup> See Appendix H for more information on core function of participants’ program and participants’ appraisal role.

The relationship between the archival function and the records management function can be represented with four models (see Figure 4). The programs of many states performed both functions (see Table 7). According to interviews, even when AR programs and RM programs were separate, the two programs collaborated for appraisal practice. Hence, as shown in Table 7, many participants reported the core functions of their programs as both archiving and records management. Many participants also reported performing appraisal as both an archivist and records manager. Archivists and records managers had collaborated for appraisal practice in many states regardless of their program's organizational relationship.

Many interviews revealed diversity in state archives programs and state records management programs with respect to organizational structure, placement of programs within state government, organizational relationship, and administration. One interviewee said her director had recently formed a unique organizational structure. A director of another state archives and records management program informed the researcher that his program could not participate in this study because "through struggles with other surveys, principally those organized by the Council of State Archivists, [the program] does not readily fit into comparisons with those of other states."<sup>244</sup>

Moreover, according to interviews, staff and budget cuts caused by the economic climate of the last few years had forced state archives programs and records management programs to change aspects of organizational structure, the number of staff members, and staff members' roles. Information on participants and their programs may have changed even since March and April of 2010, when this study was conducted.

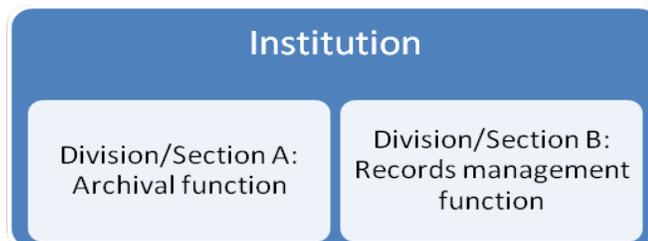
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<sup>244</sup> Source: e-mail from a program director on April 21, 2010.

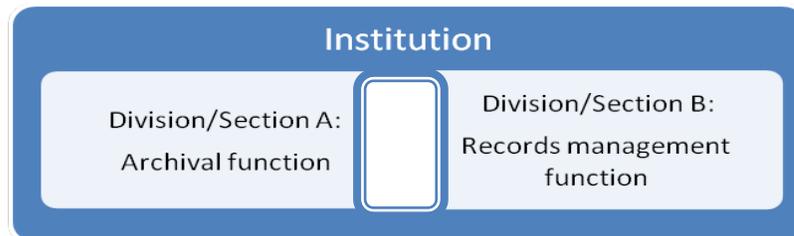
Model A. Separate functions in different agencies (separate program)



Model B. Separate functions in different divisions/sections within the same institution (joint program)



Model C. Overlapped functions in different divisions/sections within the same institution (joint program)



Model D. Joint functions within a division/section under the same institution (joint program)



**Figure 4.** Models of the relationship between archival functions and records management functions

#### 4.1.2 Participants' professional background

A total of forty-five staff members from thirty-four U.S. state archives programs and state records management programs in thirty-one states participated in this study. As described in the Data Analysis section, this study analyzed two sets of subjects: participant set 1 included one representative from each program for a total of thirty-four participants. Participant set 2 included all forty-five participants. The current utilization of user/use information and user studies in the appraisal practice of state archives programs and state records management programs was studied in set 1. Set 2 was used to study attitudes toward utilization of user studies in the appraisal practice of state archives and records management programs in general. Table 8 and Table 9 show the number of participants in each set at each level of data analysis.

**Table 8.** Number of participants at each level of data analysis: participant set 1

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

**Table 9.** Number of participants at each level of data analysis: participant set 2

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

Table 10 and Table 11 show the number of participants in set 1 and set 2, respectively, by core function of their program and their role in performing appraisal. In both sets, the majority of participants belonged to the ARRM-role group and was in ARRM programs. In some cases, the core function of a participant’s program and a participant’s role in practicing appraisal did not match.

**Table 10.** Core function of participants’ programs and their groups: participant set 1

		<b>Program level: Core function of program</b>			
		<b>AR program</b>	<b>RM program</b>	<b>ARRM program</b>	<b>Total</b>
Group level: Role in practicing appraisal	AR-role group	8 (80.0%)	N/A	0 (0.0%)	8 (23.5%)
	RM-role group	N/A	5 (71.4%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (14.7%)
	ARRM-role group	2 (20.0%)	2 (28.6%)	17 (100.0%)	21 (61.8%)
	Total	10 (100.0%)	7 (100.0%)	17 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

**Table 11.** Core function of participants' programs and their groups: participant set 2

		Program level: Core function of program			
		AR program	RM program	ARRM program	Total
Group level: Role in practicing appraisal	AR-role group	10 (83.3%)	N/A	1 (4.3%)	11 (24.4%)
	RM-role group	N/A	8 (80.0%)	2 (8.7%)	10 (22.2%)
	ARRM-role group	2 (16.7%)	2 (20.0%)	20 (87.0%)	24 (53.3%)
	Total	12 (100.0%)	10 (100.0%)	23 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)

Most participants performed several functions, not just archival appraisal, as Table 12 shows. This finding was confirmed by interviews with participants and e-mails recommending eligible subjects for this study.

**Table 12.** Approximate percentage of time spent in appraisal practice

Percentage of time	Participant set 1	Participant set 2
20% or less	16 (47.1%)	23 (51.1%)
21% ~ 40%	10 (29.4%)	11 (24.4%)
41% ~ 60%	4 (11.8%)	7 (15.6%)
61% ~ 80%	3 (8.8%)	3 (6.7%)
81% or more	1 (2.9%)	1 (2.2%)
Total	34 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)

The follow-up interviews indicate that staff in most state archives programs performed several roles:

At the state archives, we don't wear one hat. I don't just run the appraisal program. I also work on our reference desk. I work down in accessions. I work at processing, and then I also run an education program. So within our archives' structure in our state, we wear many hats. We don't just focus on one program. And that's everyone in the building. (interview: EQ1)

Table 13 shows the number of years participants had practiced appraisal in their current programs.

**Table 13.** Years of conducting appraisal practice

<b>Years</b>	<b>Participant set 1</b>	<b>Participant set 2</b>
Less than 10	12 (38.7%)	16 (38.1%)
10–19	13 (41.9%)	15 (35.7%)
20 or more	6 (19.4%)	11 (26.2%)
Total	31 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)

Note: Data of three participants is missing in each participant set.

One survey question asked if participants had ever provided reference services in archives and/or records management programs in their entire professional career. This question was intended to investigate whether participants had the opportunity to meet users directly, collect user/use information themselves, and conduct user studies. As shown in Table 14, most participants had experience providing reference services. Interviews show that many participants had provided reference services for a regular number of hours per week or per month in their current institutions.

**Table 14.** Reference service experience

<b>Reference services experience</b>	<b>Participant set 1</b>	<b>Participant set 2</b>
Yes	31 (93.9%)	40 (90.9%)
No	2 (6.1%)	4 (9.1%)
Total	33 (100.0%)	44 (100.0%)

Note: Data of one participant is missing in each participant set.

### **4.1.3 Non-participants**

The researcher investigated why fifteen states did not participate in this study for two reasons. First, there were no obvious differences between participating and non-participating states, so the researcher needed to confirm that there was no bias between them. Second, when the researcher requested contact information for eligible subjects, directors or State archivists from four states replied that they were unable to participate in this study because of the lack of resources due to staff reduction and budget cuts. Interviews with many participants indicate that the bad national economy had multiple influences on their programs and practices, including participation in this study. A major reason for non-participation seemed to be due to external factors like the economy rather than institutional or individual factors. Hence, on April 21, 2010, when the online survey was closed and follow-up interviews were almost complete, the researcher e-mailed the non-participating state archives programs and state records management programs to ask why they had not participated (see Appendix I). The purpose of the e-mails was to identify what factors had impacted participation in this study. Table 15 summarizes the responses of a records manager, directors, and State archivists from eleven states, 73.3% of the fifteen non-participating states. Because many programs cited multiple reasons for non-participation, the total number of states in Table 15 is greater than eleven.

**Table 15.** Reasons that states did not participate in this study

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Number of states</b>
Lack of staff time due to staff reduction	7 (36.8%)
Constrained resources due to budget cut	3 (15.8%)
No staff members eligible for this study	2 (10.5%)
No official records management program	2 (10.5%)
Survey questions irrelevant to program operation	2 (10.5%)
Program incomparable to other programs due to uniqueness of organization, organizational relationship, and system	1 (5.3%)
E-mail invitation to study lost	1 (5.3%)
No time due to an institutional project	1 (5.3%)
Total	19 (100.0%)

The most common reason for non-participation in this study was that staff members did not have time because they were too busy just keeping their programs running due to staff reduction. This confirms that lack of personnel still prevents active staff participation in research four decades after Posner's surveys in the 1960s reached the same conclusion.<sup>245</sup> One state indicated that it had no staff members who were eligible for this study, specifically that none of its staff members had conducted appraisal in the institution in the previous 36 months; it is not known whether the other state that lacked eligible staff members had the same reason or simply did not have staff appraising its records at all.

The eight reasons for non-participation shown in Table 15 indicate the large impact (e.g., budget cut and staff cut) of the economic situation on participation in this study, which was greater than other factors (e.g., state population, state size, and total volume of records held). The economy's large impact on each program appeared in most interviews with participants. However, the interviews also seemed to indicate that staff members' willingness was also a

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<sup>245</sup> Posner, *American State Archives*, 316.

significant factor in participation, perhaps even more significant than staff size. According to previous CoSA surveys, the number of staff members in some participating programs was much smaller than in some non-participating programs. Some programs did not have a stable, established organization and function due to a very short history.

One program did not participate for an unexpected reason. The program director claimed his program was not comparable to other programs due to the uniqueness of his organization, organizational relationship, and administrative system.

Non-participating programs from four states did not respond to the inquiry into non-participation. It is assumed that these states did not participate in this study for the same or similar reasons as responding states, particularly because of staff and budget cuts due to the economy.

Two participants from different states who did not initially respond to the invitation to the study asked to participate after receiving the non-participation inquiry. They explained they could not take the survey upon invitation because they had been busy. Their programs conducted appraisal and collected user/use information, and they utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice. In particular, one of the respondents had utilized results of user studies in appraisal practice, and the other had not. These two participants seem to have replied to the survey late not because their experience was not relevant, but simply due to lack of time. This inference is supported by the conventional assumption that “questionnaire nonparticipants are merely very late respondents.”<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> David R. Krathwohl, *Methods of Educational & Social Science Research: An Integrated Approach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (N.Y.: Longman, 1997), 374.

## 4.2 ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL PRACTICE

Four survey questions asked participants to define archival appraisal, to describe their own activities in appraisal of paper state government records, and to indicate who was involved in appraisal practice. These questions were intended to elicit participants' thoughts on archival appraisal generally as well as their actual, current situation of appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs.

### 4.2.1 Definitions of archival appraisal

All participants answered a question about the definition of archival appraisal. The majority of all three groups selected "Identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives," a definition of appraisal in the SAA glossary (see Table 16). However, the other definition of appraisal in the SAA glossary, "Determining the length of time records should be retained," was the least selected by all three groups.<sup>247</sup> Participants of all three groups had similar definitions of archival appraisal.

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<sup>247</sup> Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, s.v. "appraisal."

**Table 16.** Definition of archival appraisal by group

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

Five survey respondents wrote their own definitions or thoughts on archival appraisal in the “Other” field.

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

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

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

Items 2 [Determining the length of time records should be retained] and 4 [Analyzing/assessing/evaluating/scheduling records to determine records disposition] are really records management—not archival appraisal. (survey comment: WW4)

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

#### 4.2.2 Appraisal activities

Beyond conceptual definitions, how do state archives and records management programs actually conduct appraisal practice? Table 17 shows the appraisal activities conducted by programs. The total number in each activity represents the total number of states performing that activity. More than 94% of all three types of programs reviewed or approved records retention schedules, and many interviewees also reported that state archivists and state records managers collaborated on records retention schedules. In addition to activities in Table 17, one participant (MQ1) wrote “Destruction of non-permanent records” in the free response survey field.

With respect to making appraisal decisions, all participating programs appraised their state government records at the series level. Many of them appraised their records at different levels as well (see Table 18). Appraisal levels did vary slightly among the three types of programs. Unlike the AR programs and RM programs, the ARRM programs appraised their state government records most often in this order: series, box, folder, sub-series, and items. Fewer than half of the ARRM programs appraised state government records at the sub-series level, whereas more than half of the AR programs and the RM programs appraised their state government records at the sub-series level. More than half of the AR programs appraised their state government records at four different levels (series, sub-series, box, and folder), whereas the RM programs mainly appraised their state government records at the series level.

**Table 17.** Appraisal activities by program

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

**Table 18.** Level of appraised records by program

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

### 4.2.3 Agents involved in appraisal practice

Different types of agents were involved in appraising state government records (see Table 19). After the survey, the researcher learned that archives staff accessioning records also participated in appraisal practice.

**Table 19.** Agents involved in appraisal practice by program

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

Exactly 60% of the AR programs involved records management staff conducting appraisal practice in their appraisal practice, and 71.4% of RM programs involved archives staff conducting appraisal practice in their appraisal practice. This result indicates collaboration between the AR programs and the RM programs. Table 19 indicates the relationship each type of program has with each kind of agent. For example, the RM programs collaborated more with staff in records-creating agencies than the AR programs and the ARRM programs did. All RM programs involved staff in records-creating agencies, implying a close relationship between the

two. Indeed, interviews indicate that staff members in most RM programs—records managers and records analysts—visited state government agencies to obtain information on records, their creation, and the state government agencies themselves, such as organizational structure and function.

Interviews indicate that several people were involved in and collaborated in the appraisal process. Several states even had a special committee for appraisal practice.

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

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

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

### **4.3 COLLECTION OF USER/USE INFORMATION FOR GENERAL PURPOSES**

One section of the survey asked if the participants' programs had collected user/use information at least once in the past 36 months. The questions in that section were intended to determine if participants' programs collected user/use information; if so, why; and if not, why not. Furthermore, the section sought to investigate if participants' programs had conducted user studies to collect user/use information or utilized other information sources.

### 4.3.1 Collection of user/use information

Twenty-two programs (67.7%) in twenty-one states had collected user/use information at least once in the past 36 months, ten programs from ten states had not, and two survey participants from two states did not know (see Table 20).

**Table 20.** Collection of user/use information by program

	AR program	RM program	ARRM program	Total
Yes	8 (80.0%)	1 (14.3%)	13 (76.5%)	22 (64.7%)
No	2 (20.0%)	5 (71.4%)	3 (17.6%)	10 (29.4%)
Do not know	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (5.9%)	2 (5.9%)
Total	10 (100.0%)	7 (100.0%)	17 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

There is a significant relationship between core function of a program and collection of user/use information ( $p = 0.019$ , Fisher's exact test,  $df = 4$ ). Eight AR programs and thirteen ARRM programs had collected user/use information, whereas only one RM program had collected user/use information. In other words, state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs are more likely to collect user/use information than state records management programs.

Interviewees whose programs had collected user/use information reported that their programs had done so for the following reasons: to enhance security, assess and justify budget, measure and report performance to a parental institution or the public, achieve the mission of their institution, and make a better and more stable program.

We have certain budget performance measures that we have to meet, and those include the number of researchers using the archives, the number of new researchers using the archives, and how many items are being pulled and used within the archives. We have to report this as far as a budget measure, a performance measure. (interview: JQ3)

The reason we collect the user information is to ensure to our boss, who's the secretary of state, and also to the legislature that, in fact, we are fulfilling our public purpose, which is to aid researchers in whatever their research needs. So the fact that we have people coming here to do research and that they're finding what they're looking for is reflected in those use statistics. (interview: VQ1)

We do monthly reports that are collated into an annual report for the public. So it's both something we need to do for the public to let them know what we're doing and also internally so we know what we're doing. (interview: BB2)

I think the information that we collect on usage is mostly used internally to just to gauge whether our requests... in a particular area are going up or down. And most of this is used to foretell possible reductions or increases in staff. (interview: SS1)

### **4.3.2 Sources of user/use information**

The twenty-two programs that had collected user/use information drew from several sources (see Table 21). More than 62% of both AR programs and ARRM programs had collected user/use information from the three most common sources: user data collected from registration and reference services, conversations with and observations of records users, and Web use data collected by analyzing usage of the program's website.

The most frequently utilized source of user/use information was user data collected from registration/reference services. Interviews revealed that most programs had not analyzed user/use information collected through reference services, although they had recorded and retained it for a period of time. The following interview is a good example of how user/use information collected from registration/reference services is managed and utilized.

As far as the information we collect from the users, we formally collect their contact information, so that we know, ok, on this date, this box of this records series was used, and here's somebody who used it... We haven't done formal analysis of that. However, it's more like we collect the information, we have it on hand for several years, and we, through practice, develop some notion of research interests... We haven't really made formal analytical use of that [user/use information collected from reference services]. (interview: OQ1)

**Table 21.** Sources of user/use information by program

Sources	AR program (n = 8)	RM program (n = 1)	ARRM program (n = 13)	Total (N = 22)
User data collected from registration/reference services	7 (87.5%)	1 (100.0%)	12 (92.3%)	20 (90.9%)
Records users	6 (75.0%)	1 (100.0%)	9 (69.2%)	16 (72.7%)
Web use data collected by analyzing usage of program's website (e.g., number of visits to a specific digital collection, electronic records accessed/downloaded, etc.)	5 (62.5%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (76.9%)	15 (68.2%)
Use data collected from registration/reference services	6 (75.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (61.5%)	14 (63.6%)
Records creators	3 (37.5%)	1 (100.0%)	3 (23.1%)	7 (31.8%)
Systematic investigation of program users for specific purposes (e.g., user satisfaction, user information needs, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)	2 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (30.8%)	6 (27.3%)
Web user data collected by analyzing users of program's website (e.g., Web-based user feedback/comment, user satisfaction, etc.)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (38.5%)	6 (27.3%)
Systematic investigation of use of records in program for specific purposes (e.g., use statistics, used records, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (18.2%)
Records inventories/records surveys	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (18.2%)
Subject experts in institution	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (9.1%)
Subject experts outside institution	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.5%)

A few interviewees said their programs or their institutions have systems with a reference module for collecting user/use information through reference services. The systems have functions to track and sort collected user/use data. A few systems have an appraisal module as well as a reference module.

We have a software program called Rediscovery, which I think some other archives programs also use it. It has a reference module, and we're able to record information in that about registration, type of registration. It also can give us numbers on what collections are being used and how often, although we haven't utilized that like we should. Anytime we do a pull-slip for a box or pull a box in reference, that system should

keep a record of that box being pulled, so we can more or less see what collections are being used. (interview: JQ3)

We can track for each patron. We can track what collections they've used. We can track overall what collections are being used in the archives, and we can also track the general categories of research... So we can track categories of research as well... It [the software program] is all integrated in our archives catalog. (interview: JQ5)

We haven't sat down and really analyzed the kind of information that we've collected. If we keep getting the same questions over and over again: [we can] do a search to pull...names, topics, just to sort of see if that's something that's starting to happen more and more. (interview: CQ2)

It's a system called Gencat. I believe it's a Canadian-based system, and we have modified it, the program, so it has multiple subsystems. One subsystem is for reference. The other subsystem is for accessioning, and then there is also the appraisal subsystem. And the three systems do interact with each other. (interview: EQ1)

A few participants reported that records managers obtain information on records creators through conversations with the records creators themselves during records retention scheduling.

Records creators (state agency staff) are involved in the appraisal process for determining records retention periods and developing retention schedules. This could be considered a subgroup of "Records users." (survey comment: GQ1)

We [records managers] talk about what people's jobs are and what their responsibilities are and what the types of records are that they create and how they use the records to do their job. So we do, we talk about that type of thing, but it's not anything where we gather all this information and put it in a big database that we use over and over. It's just conversations that we have with people as we work on their retention of their records. (interview: CQ1)

Table 21 shows that one RM program and four ARRM programs have used records inventories/records surveys to collect user/use information, which was not known until this study. Interviewees and records survey forms collected from participants and uploaded on their institutional websites indicate that many states' forms collect user/use information, although the collected information is just frequency use of records series.

One interviewee mentioned that she collects user/use information from records analysts who go to each state government agency to perform records surveys. Through records analysts,

the interviewee learns about needs of records creators—their treatment and preservation of their records, and their opinions on records retention periods.

State records centers collect some basic use information by employing an electronic tracking system that automatically counts the number of uses of any box via its bar code. Each bar code contains simple information about the box and its records (e.g., the record series title number, retention period for that record, and location).

We have an electronic tracking system, a warehouse tracking system for every box that comes into the records center. Every box is given what's called a permanent number that cannot be duplicated. So, that number will always be with that box, no matter if that box gets withdrawn or if it gets moved to another shelf. That number always stays there so we're always tracking that box. They [state government agencies] can withdraw records. An agency can take out records from our agency but we track that as well. We know if withdrawn, what box is withdrawn—that's all tracked electronically... Then our records center tracks every record that's withdrawn from our records center. So we keep statistics on all those to know what records—what agencies—how many pulls they're doing on records. (interview: HH1)

In this study, the term “user study” means a systematic investigation of program users or use of records for specific purposes employing research methods.<sup>248</sup> Of the eleven information sources presented as answer choices in the survey, the two sources defined as user studies were ranked sixth and eighth out of information sources (see Table 21). A total of eight AR programs and ARRM programs had utilized one or both of the two sorts of user studies to collect user/use information. No RM programs had conducted or utilized user studies.

### **4.3.3 User/use information collected**

Participants who answered that their programs had collected user/use information at least once in the past 36 months were asked what kind of user/use information their programs had collected

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<sup>248</sup> User studies are fully described in the Definition of Terms section of Chapter 1.

(see Table 22). Table 22 indicates that the traditional method for collecting user/use information, through registration/reference services, dominated. All twenty-two programs collected the number of user reference requests. In addition to the collected user/use information listed in Table 22, a few programs had employed Web-based tools to collect information on who was using their electronic finding aids and how many hits remote users were getting in electronic finding aids.

**Table 22.** User/use information collected for general purposes by program

<b>Collected user/use information</b>	<b>AR program (n = 8)</b>	<b>RM program (n = 1)</b>	<b>ARRM program (n = 13)</b>	<b>Total (N = 22)</b>
Number of user reference requests	8 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	13 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)
Contact information	7 (87.5%)	1 (100.0%)	12 (92.3%)	20 (90.9%)
Number of visitors to a search room of my program	8 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (92.3%)	20 (90.9%)
Types of users	8 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (76.9%)	18 (81.8%)
User information needs/research topics/ research interests	7 (87.5%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (76.9%)	17 (77.3%)
Which physical records are checked out or copied	6 (75.0%)	1 (100.0%)	10 (76.9%)	17 (77.3%)
User feedback/comments	4 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (69.2%)	13 (59.1%)
Number of visitors to my program's website	4 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (61.5%)	12 (54.5%)
Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	2 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (46.2%)	8 (36.4%)
Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (46.2%)	7 (31.8%)
How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period	3 (37.5%)	1 (100.0%)	2 (15.4%)	6 (27.3%)
How frequently a particular records box/ folder/item is used during a specific time period	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (13.6%)

#### 4.3.4 Reasons for not collecting user/use information

Ten participants whose programs had not collected user/use information in the past 36 months were asked to indicate why (see Table 23). The most common reason was that participants' programs had not normally collected user/use information. It is noteworthy that all three ARRM programs had not done so (see row 2, column 4 in Table 23), even though they may have had staff members charged with reference services.

**Table 23.** Reasons for not collecting user/use information by program

Reasons	AR program (n = 2)	RM program (n = 5)	ARRM program (n = 3)	Total (N = 10)
My program has not normally collected such information	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	3 (100.0%)	5 (50.0%)
My program does not have resources to do so	1 (50.0%)	1 (20.0%)	2 (66.7%)	4 (40.0%)
My program's holdings are used only by authorized government agency staff	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)
My program knows its users and their use of records	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (10.0%)
There is no archivist/records manager charged with reference services	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (10.0%)
I don't know	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (10.0%)
My state/institutional policies restrain my program from doing so	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
My program's parent organizations and/or relevant government agencies restrain my program from doing so	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

One reason for not collecting user/use information was to maintain the confidentiality of users, and another reason was lack of holdings.

We want to maintain the confidentiality of the users. A lot of them are lawyers, and so we don't want to have information that we have to disclose because we're actually quite oftentimes dealing with lawyers on both sides of a lawsuit. (interview: WW4)

My program [records management] has no holdings; we merely write, review, and approve retention schedules. (interview: NQ1)

#### **4.4 COLLECTION AND UTILIZATION OF USER/USE INFORMATION IN APPRAISAL PRACTICE**

Several survey questions investigated why participants had or had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice and, if so, how they had collected and utilized such information. These questions were intended to identify what information sources participants utilized and preferred for the collection of user/use information for their appraisal practice. Moreover, this survey section sought to compare participants' actual collection and utilization of user/use information for appraisal practice to their supposedly preferred collection and utilization.

##### **4.4.1 Users/use as an appraisal factor**

Before asking about collecting and utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice, the survey asked, "What factors relating to users/use of records do you typically consider in appraising state government records?" The survey results show that all participants but one considered at least one of the user/use factors (see Table 24). The ARRM-role group considered research users/use the most, and the AR-role group considered research users/use and future users/use the most; however, the RM-role group considered administrative users/use and legal users/use the most.

**Table 24.** Users/use as an appraisal factor by group

<b>Users/use factors</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 8)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 5)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 21)</b>	<b>Total (N = 34)</b>
Future users/use	8 (100.0%)	3 (60.0%)	18 (85.7%)	29 (85.3%)
Research users/use	8 (100.0%)	1 (20.0%)	19 (90.5%)	28 (82.4%)
Legal users/use	6 (75.0%)	4 (80.0%)	18 (85.7%)	28 (82.4%)
Administrative users/use	6 (75.0%)	4 (80.0%)	17 (81.0%)	27 (79.4%)
Current users/use	7 (87.5%)	3 (60.0%)	17 (81.0%)	27 (79.4%)
Past users/use	6 (75.0%)	2 (40.0%)	15 (71.4%)	23 (67.6%)
Financial users/use	2 (25.0%)	3 (60.0%)	14 (66.7%)	19 (55.9%)
Primary users/use	2 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (71.4%)	17 (50.0%)
Secondary user/use	2 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (71.4%)	17 (50.0%)
I do not consider any users/use	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.9%)

There is a significant relationship between the “Research users/use” factor and participants’ appraisal role ( $p = 0.016$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ). All eight participants of the AR-role group and nineteen participants of the ARRM-role group considered research users/use in their appraisal practice, whereas only one participant of the RM-role group did. That is, appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely than appraisal records managers to consider research users/use in their appraisal practice.

There is a significant relationship between the “Primary users/use” factor and participants’ appraisal role ( $p = 0.007$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ) and between the “Secondary users/use” factor and participants’ appraisal role ( $p = 0.007$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ). Fifteen participants of the ARRM-role group and two participants of the AR-role group considered primary users/use in their appraisal practice, whereas no participants of the RM-role group did. The same results occurred for secondary users/use. This result means that multi-role appraisal

staff members and appraisal archivists are more likely to consider primary users/use and secondary users/use in their appraisal practice than are appraisal records managers.

More participants from the AR-role group and ARRM-role group considered future users/use than current users/use and past users/use, although the difference is very small. RM-role group participants tended to consider future users/use and current users/use equally but more so than past users/use, although again the difference is very small. However, because the number of participants selecting those three options was so small and similar across all three groups, the differences among the groups is not statistically significant.

The following interview shows how user/use factors impact appraisal practice.

When we're doing the appraisal and going through the appraisal process, we ask, "How likely is this information to be used? By whom? Is it going to be widely used, or is it just a certain group?" So we do ask those questions as part of the appraisal team. (interview: NN1)

Many interviewees, even those who had utilized user/use information, emphasized that users and use should not be the only appraisal factors, though they could or should be included among multiple appraisal factors.

I don't think appraisal can be based solely on what users are looking at. I think it's important, but I don't think it's the only criterion you look at. (interview: CQ2)

While we are glad that people use the records we preserve, use is not the only reason a record is appraised to be archival. The record documents something significant/historical and should be preserved. (survey comment: WQ1)

#### **4.4.2 Utilization or non-utilization of user/use information**

One survey question asked, "Have you utilized user/use information in your appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months?" Participants from the AR-role group and ARRM-role group answered "yes" more often than "no," while participants from the RM-role group answered "no"

more often (see Table 25). The proportion of “yes” to “no” is approximately 60% to 40% in all three groups.

**Table 25.** Utilization or non-utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice by group

Utilization	AR-role group	RM-role group	ARRM-role group	Total
Yes	5 (62.5%)	2 (40.0%)	14 (66.7%)	21 (61.8%)
No	3 (37.5%)	3 (60.0%)	7 (33.3%)	13 (38.2%)
Total	8 (100.0%)	5 (100.0%)	21 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

At the state level, user/use information had been utilized in appraisal practice in nineteen states in the past 36 months, and it had not been utilized in twelve states. At the program level, participants in twenty-one programs had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months. However, as reported above, twenty-two programs in twenty-one states had collected user/use information at least once in the past 36 months (see Table 20). That is, except for one program, participants of all programs that had collected user/use information had utilized it in their appraisal practice. Hence, it can be assumed that the thirteen participants who answered “no” to survey question Q3-2 (utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice) included the one participant who answered that his or her program did not utilize the collected user/use information (the exception mentioned above), the two participants in two programs who answered that they do not know if their program collected user/use information, and the ten participants in ten programs that did not collect user/use information (see Table 20).

Table 25 indicates that, overall, more participants utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice than not, even though the opposite is true for the RM-role group. The results of

a Fisher’s exact test ( $p = 0.535$ ,  $df = 2$ ) show that there is no relationship between appraisal role and utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice.

In the Collection of User/Use Information section of the survey, participants of twenty-two programs answered that their programs had collected user/use information at least once in the past 36 months. Table 26 compares answers to the questions “Has your own program collected its user/use information at least once in the past 36 months?” and “Have you utilized user/use information in your appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months?” There is a significant relationship between whether participating programs collect user/use information and whether their participants utilize the user/use information in appraisal practice ( $p = 0.003$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ). Eighteen participants of twenty-two programs that had collected user/use information had utilized such information in their appraisal practice, whereas only three participants of ten programs that had not collected user/use information had utilized such information in their appraisal practice. This means that state appraisal staff whose programs collect user/use information are more likely to utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice than those whose programs do not.

**Table 26.** Relationship between participants’ utilization of user/use information in their appraisal practice and their programs’ collection of such information

		Has your own program collected its user/use information at least once in the past 36 months?			
		Yes	No	Do not know	Total
Have you utilized user/use information in your appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months?	Yes	18 (81.8%)	3 (30.0%)	0 (0.0%)	21 (61.8%)
	No	4 (18.2%)	7 (70.0%)	2 (100.0%)	13 (38.2%)
	Total	22 (100.0%)	10 (100.0%)	2 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

It is notable that three participants had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months even though their programs had not collected their user/use information in that time period. During their interviews, two of these three participants reported that they had provided reference services and interacted with records users, including records creators; it was this experience and knowledge of users and use of records that they had utilized in their appraisal practice.

#### 4.4.3 Reasons for not utilizing user/use information

The survey asked the thirteen participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months why they had not done so (see Table 27). The most cited reason among all three groups was that their program did not collect user/use information. In particular, all participants from the RM-role group cited this reason. Other reasons were not cited as often but were selected by a similar number of participants in all three groups.

**Table 27.** Reasons for not utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice by group

Reason	AR-role group (n = 3)	RM-role group (n = 3)	ARRM-role group (n = 7)	Total (N = 13)
My program does not collect user/use information	2 (66.7%)	3 (100.0%)	2 (28.6%)	7 (53.8%)
I have not thought about it	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (15.4%)
My archives receives and preserves all records transferred to it	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (15.4%)
User/use information collected by my program is inapplicable to my appraisal practice	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (15.4%)
I have no time to do so	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.7%)
I do not think my appraisal practice would benefit from user/use information	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (7.7%)
My staff members have not typically done so	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (7.7%)

In addition to the reasons reported in Table 27, there are many other reasons why the thirteen participants had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice. A few interviewees said that they and their colleagues knew their users and use of records in their state archives, so they did not need to collect user/use information for appraisal practice, even though their programs had such information.

I don't go to take a look at the statistical information on a monthly or yearly basis at all because we have a general sense of what it is that our current patrons are looking for... I think we know what they are going to tell us. (interview GG1)

I use my knowledge of collection use in a general sense... (interview: WW3)

Other reasons include the changing information needs of users, unpredictable future use, the lack of user/use information for certain records and new arrivals, the unreliability of user/use information, unhelpful user/use information, the lack of formal analysis of user/use information, and users' expectation that everything should be preserved in archives.

Researcher priorities, priorities of the researchers themselves, change over time, and so current researcher demand is, to my mind, not an appropriate determinant for appraisal when you're considering that you're basically making a decision about the permanent preservation or destruction of archival information, and we can't perfectly predict how that demand is going to change in the future except by considering the research value of the information that a collection contains and its usability. And I don't think it's professionally responsible to make those kinds of decisions based on a primary consideration of current user demand... The other issue is, for a lot of material, where we haven't taken in a collection before, or a records series, we don't have a track record of user demand. (interview: WW3)

Because I work in records management, I have a lot more of a focus on what's being created now and going forwards, and a lot of users of our collections are looking backwards, towards what was collected. So I'm not quite sure how much value or weight I'd consider what people are looking at. (interview: WW2)

We just haven't really done any formal analysis, so it's really hard to implement that when there's been no formal study done of the data that's been collected. (interview: GQ5)

The reason we don't is that our archives is so small that what we focus on now is trying to identify the records in the state agencies and then the state records center that need to come into the archives. But nobody knows what's in the state records center. It's not advertised. So people wouldn't know to use anything until it was out there. (interview: UU1)

People will ask for anything once, and people never want you to get rid of anything, so if we were to schedule as long-term or permanent everything that somebody sometime decided they wanted to see, we would never be able to get rid of anything. (interview: JQ5)

One reason in particular, the unreliability of user/use information, is related to archival description, processing, accessing, and searching issues. Several interviews indicate that issues with measuring use produce inaccurate and unreliable results.

Our archives is relatively new and therefore still very small. People are currently only using records that are known to them. (interview: UU1)

I find that the whole concept that demand drives value to be really shaky in assessing archival information, because in a lot of situations what retards demand is just lack of awareness. And you know, I think that that is a very hard thing to factor in whether your research community is functionally aware of all of your collection. And that's a very hard thing to gauge and not very reliable at all. Demand is also based a lot on what current issues are. (interview: WW3)

There is something that's difficult to document statistically or in reference. I want to know what people are looking for that they can't find... When I look at how often collections are being used, then I'm looking more...for arrangement and description and presentation purposes. (interview: JQ3)

According to the interviewees, some reasons for not utilizing user/use information in appraisal stem from the state archives' identity as a state agency. That is, as a state agency, state archives have the responsibilities of documentation and stewardship; hence, state archivists must consider some records to be valuable even if they are probably or certainly not going to be utilized.

Government archives programs exist to preserve evidence of how government functions and the decisions made by government. We need to raise awareness among more groups of potential users that these records are preserved and accessible, and to encourage more use among new target audiences... Use is not the only reason a record is appraised to be archival. The record documents something significant/historical and should be preserved. (survey comment: WQ1)

As a government archives we are responsible to document the activities of government regardless of to what extent the records are used at any point in time by researchers... Because our mission is to document to decisions and actions of state and local government and capture valuable research information about the people and populations

those agencies serve, user data would play a limited generalized role in appraisal decisions. (interview: WW3)

Many interviewees agreed that user/use information should not be the sole or primary reference or determinant, as is summed up in the following excerpt:

I think it [user/use information] is interesting information and I think that it's useful in a general sense. I think it's worth consideration as a secondary point of reference, but to me, I just don't see it as a primary determinant for driving appraisal decisions because, one, it doesn't always apply, especially if...it's the kind of information that you don't have a lot of... Consequently, such information can't be used as a sole or primary determinant of archival value. (interview: WW3)

#### 4.4.4 Purposes for utilizing user/use information

The survey asked the twenty-one participants who had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice for what purposes they had done so. As shown in Table 28, the three groups utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice for slightly different purposes.

**Table 28.** Purposes for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice by group

Purpose	AR-role group (n = 5)	RM-role group (n = 2)	ARRM-role group (n = 13)	Total (N = 20)
Anticipating future research trends and potential use of records	4 (80.0%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (100.0%)	17 (85.0%)
Determining the value of information contained in records	3 (60.0%)	2 (100.0%)	10 (76.9%)	15 (75.0%)
Making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively	1 (20.0%)	1 (50.0%)	11 (84.6%)	13 (65.0%)
Identifying changing user information needs and research interests	3 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (76.9%)	13 (65.0%)
Carrying out cost-benefit analysis	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (30.8%)	4 (20.0%)

Note: Data of one participant is missing.

All purposes except carrying out cost-benefit analysis were chosen by at least 65% of all twenty-one participants represented in Table 28. In all three groups, carrying out cost-benefit

analysis is the least cited purpose. This seems to be due to the infrequent conduct of cost-benefit analysis. The following interview supports this assumption.

Cost-benefit analysis is rarely done in state government. When it is done it usually means doing more with less—a cutting of positions, resources or both. (survey comment: VQ1)

There is a significant relationship between the “Anticipating future research trends and potential use of records” purpose and participants’ appraisal role ( $p = 0.004$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ). All thirteen participants of the ARRM-role group and four of five participants of the AR-role group had utilized user/use information to anticipate future research trends and potential use of records. In other words, multi-role appraisal staff members and appraisal archivists are more likely than appraisal records managers to utilize user/use information for this purpose.

There is a significant relationship between the “Making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively” purpose and participants’ appraisal role ( $p = 0.022$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ). Eleven of thirteen participants of the ARRM-role group had utilized user/use information for making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively, whereas only one participant of the AR-role group and one of the RM-role group had. In other words, multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely to utilize user/use information for making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively than are appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers.

Interviews revealed other purposes, beyond the ones in the survey, for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice: developing collections, checking holdings and non-holdings, re-evaluating previous appraisal decisions, accessioning new records that researchers want to use, promoting relevant records use, improving performance, and fulfilling legal requirements for state government records.

The information we collected was comments from researchers saying that they could not find information in our collections, and we used that information to re-evaluate some of

the appraisal decisions that were being made... What I wanted to know from the researchers' comment was what records they were looking for that we did not have in the archives. (interview: JQ3)

I think it's important to collect that kind of information. As I said before, not just because of the records that you're going out to appraise out in the field, but because it helps you look at your own collections that you have within the walls of the archives... because you need to be aware of changes in research practices... I think anyone who's doing appraisal of state government records or any collections [should collect user/use information], but especially state records because we're mandated whereas other institutions are not. (interview: CQ2)

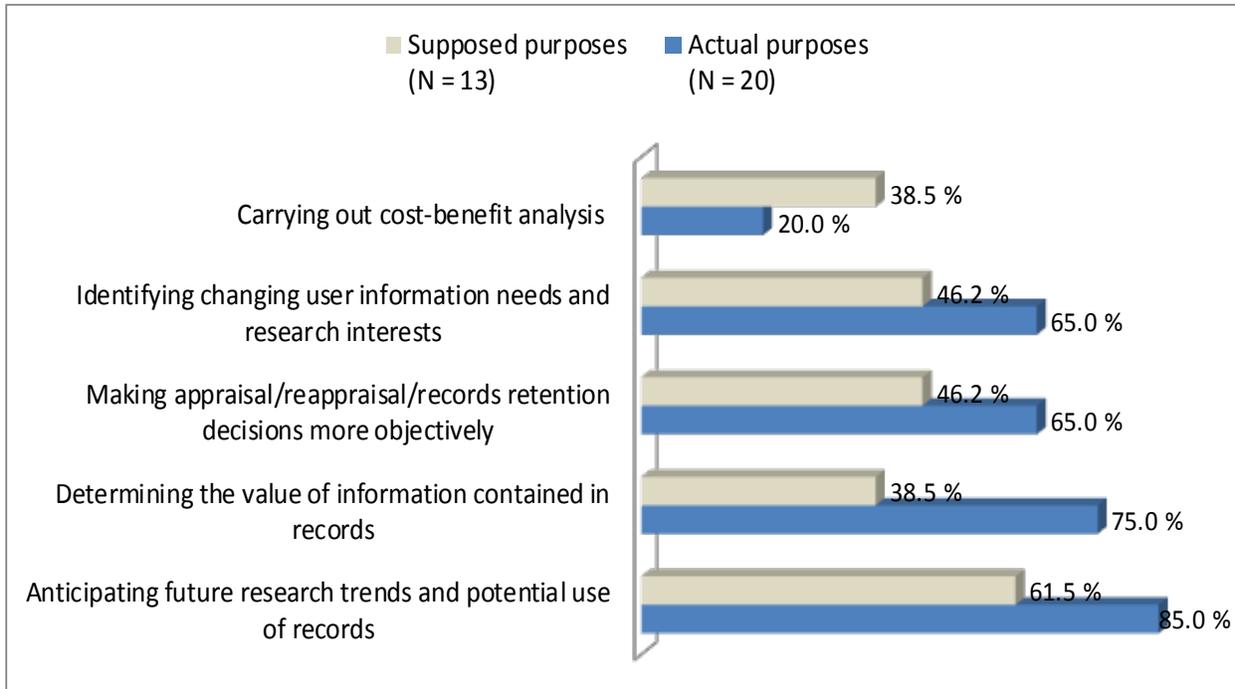
#### 4.4.5 Supposed purposes for utilizing user/use information

The thirteen participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months were asked, "Suppose you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice. For what purposes would you utilize such information?" As shown in Table 29, the answers of the three groups are slightly different. In particular, "Carrying out cost-benefit analysis" is the most cited purpose in the RM-role group, but it is one of the least cited purposes in the AR-role and ARRM-role groups.

**Table 29.** Supposed purposes for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice by group

Supposed purposes	AR-role group (n = 3)	RM-role group (n = 3)	ARRM-role group (n = 7)	Total (N = 13)
Anticipating future research trends and potential use of records	3 (100.0%)	1 (33.3%)	4 (57.1%)	8 (61.5%)
Identifying changing user information needs and research interests	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	4 (57.1%)	6 (46.2%)
Making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (42.9%)	6 (46.2%)
Determining the value of information contained in records	2 (66.7%)	1 (33.3%)	2 (28.6%)	5 (38.5%)
Carrying out cost-benefit analysis	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	2 (28.6%)	5 (38.5%)
I don't know	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (7.7%)

Figure 5 compares the supposed purposes of participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice and the actual purposes of participants who had.<sup>249</sup> In both cases, anticipating future research trends and potential use of records is the most frequently cited purpose, and carrying out cost-benefit analysis is one of the least frequently cited purposes.



**Figure 5.** Actual purposes versus supposed purposes for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice

<sup>249</sup> Refer to the previous section (4.4.4 Purposes for utilizing user/use information) for the actual purposes of participants who had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months.

#### 4.4.6 User/use information utilized

Twenty-one participants indicated that they had utilized user/use information in appraisal practice in the past 36 months (see Table 25). Table 30 shows the user/use information that they utilized.

**Table 30.** User/use information utilized in appraisal practice by group

<b>User/use information</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 5)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 2)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n =14)</b>	<b>Total (N = 21)</b>
Types of users	4 (80.0%)	1 (50.0%)	14 (100.0%)	19 (90.5%)
User information needs/research topics/research interests	5 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (92.9%)	18 (85.7%)
Number of user reference requests	3 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (57.1%)	11 (52.4%)
Which physical records are checked out or copied	3 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (57.1%)	11 (52.4%)
User feedback/comments	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (50.0%)	8 (38.1%)
Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (42.9%)	8 (38.1%)
How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (28.6%)	6 (28.6%)
Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (28.6%)
Contact information	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (28.6%)
Number of visitors to a search room of my program	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (28.6%)
Number of visitors to my program's website	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (19.0%)
How frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used during a specific time period	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (9.5%)
I don't remember	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.8%)

In general, the rankings of the three groups differed. In total, the most frequently utilized information is types of users; however, the most frequently utilized information differs for each group. No participants of the AR-role group had utilized contact information in appraisal practice, whereas one participant of the RM-role group and five participants of the ARRM-role group had.

Six participants had utilized information on how frequently a particular records series is used, whereas only two participants had utilized information on how frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used. This fact may be related to the levels of appraised records. All participating programs appraised their records at the series level, while about 56% of them also appraised their records at the other levels (see Table 18).

Among the kinds of user/use information in Table 30, there is a significant relationship only between “User information needs/research topics/research interests” and participants’ appraisal role ( $p = 0.022$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 2$ ). All five participants of the AR-role group and thirteen of fourteen participants of the ARRM-role group had utilized user information needs/research topics/research interests in their appraisal practice, whereas no participants of the RM-role group had. In other words, appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely than appraisal records managers to utilize such information.

#### **4.4.7 Supposedly helpful user/use information**

The thirteen participants who had not utilized user/use information in appraisal practice answered the question, “Suppose you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice. What kind of user/use information would be helpful?” Table 31 shows their results.

**Table 31.** Supposedly helpful user/use information in appraisal practice by group

<b>Supposedly helpful user/use information</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 3)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 3)</b>	<b>ARRM- role group (n = 7)</b>	<b>Total (N = 13)</b>
How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period	2 (66.7%)	2 (66.7%)	6 (85.7%)	10 (76.9%)
User information needs/research topics/research interests	3 (100.0%)	1 (33.3%)	4 (57.1%)	8 (61.5%)
Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	6 (85.7%)	7 (53.8%)
Types of users	2 (66.7%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (71.4%)	7 (53.8%)
Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	4 (57.1%)	6 (46.2%)
User feedback/comments	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	4 (57.1%)	5 (38.5%)
Which physical records are checked out or copied	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	3 (42.9%)	4 (30.8%)
How frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used during a specific time period	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (28.6%)	3 (23.1%)
Number of user reference requests	0 (0.0%)	2 (66.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (15.4%)
Contact information	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.3%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (15.4%)
Number of visitors to my program's website	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (7.7%)
Number of visitors to a search room of my program	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

There are differences between the three groups in supposedly helpful user/use information in appraisal practice. The two categories related to electronic records/digital collections information, specifically number of downloads and which records/collections were downloaded, were the third and fifth most cited categories in total. However, AR-role and RM-role participants tended to suppose that much less such information would be helpful than did

ARRM-role participants. No participants from the AR-role and ARRM-role groups supposed that information on the number of user reference requests would be helpful, while two participants of the RM-role group supposed it would.

In addition to the user/use information asked about in the survey, participants indicated in their interviews that other information would also be helpful in appraisal practice.

What they [archives users] would like to use and what we are or are not providing for them. (interview: SS1)

I think generally what types of government programs people have an interest in and what general research topics people are interested in. (interview: JQ5)

What records they [state government agencies] most often rely on, and what their users most often rely on. (interview: UU1)

The results indicate that there are differences among user/use information actually collected for a general purpose, actually utilized in appraisal practice, and supposedly helpful for appraisal practice. Table 32 summarizes the rankings of the three categories.

**Table 32.** Actually collected versus actually utilized versus supposedly helpful user/use information

<b>User/use information</b>	<b>Actually collected for general purposes (n = 22)<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Actually utilized in appraisal practice (n = 21)<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Supposedly helpful for appraisal practice (N = 13)<sup>c</sup></b>
Number of user reference requests	100.0% (1)	52.4% (3)	15.4% (9)
Contact information	90.9% (2)	28.6% (7)	15.4% (9)
Number of visitors to a search room of my program	90.9% (2)	28.6% (7)	0.0% (12)
Types of users	81.8% (4)	90.5% (1)	53.8% (3)
User information needs/research topics/research interests	77.3% (5)	85.7% (2)	61.5% (2)
Which physical records are checked out or copied	77.3% (5)	52.4% (3)	30.8% (7)
User feedback/comments	59.1% (7)	38.1% (5)	38.5% (6)
Number of visitors to my program's website	54.5% (8)	19.0% (11)	7.7% (11)
Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	36.4% (9)	38.1% (5)	46.2% (5)
Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website	31.8% (10)	28.6% (7)	53.8% (3)
How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period	27.3% (11)	28.6% (7)	76.9% (1)
How frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used during a specific time period	13.6% (12)	9.5% (12)	23.1% (8)
I don't know	4.5% (13)	0.0% (13)	0.0% (12)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are rankings based on frequency in each category.

a. Twenty-two respondents to survey question 2-1 reported that their programs had collected user/use information at least once in the past 36 months. See also Table 20.

b. Twenty-one respondents to survey question 3-2 reported that they had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months. See also Table 30.

c. Thirteen respondents to survey question 3-2 reported that they had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months. See also Table 31.

#### 4.4.8 Sources of user/use information utilized

The twenty-one participants who had utilized user/use information in appraisal practice answered the question, “From what sources did you collect user/use information at least once in the past 36 months for utilization in your appraisal practice?” (see Table 33). The results of Fisher’s exact tests show that there is no significant relationship between participants’ appraisal role and their selection of user/use information sources for appraisal practice.

**Table 33.** Sources to collect user/use information for appraisal practice by group

Sources	AR-role group (n = 5)	RM-role group (n = 2)	ARRM- role group (n = 14)	Total (N = 21)
Records users	3 (60.0%)	2 (100.0%)	11 (78.6%)	16 (76.2%)
Records creators	4 (80.0%)	2 (100.0%)	8 (57.1%)	14 (66.7%)
User data collected from registration/reference services in my program	3 (60.0%)	1 (50.0%)	10 (71.4%)	14 (66.7%)
Use data collected from registration/reference services in my program	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (57.1%)	10 (47.6%)
Web use data collected by analyzing usage of my program’s website	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (50.0%)	9 (42.9%)
Records inventories/records surveys	0 (0.0%)	1 (50.0%)	7 (50.0%)	8 (38.1%)
Subject experts in my institution	3 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (35.7%)	8 (38.1%)
Subject experts outside my institution	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (28.6%)
Web user data collected by analyzing users of my program’s website	2 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (28.6%)	6 (28.6%)
Systematic investigation of use of records in my program for specific purposes employing research methods	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (28.6%)
Systematic investigation of users of my program for specific purposes employing research methods	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (19.0%)

Table 33 indicates that some sources traditionally utilized to collect user/use information for appraisal practice were still frequently utilized and some were not. Records users, records

creators, user data collected from registration/reference services, and use data collected from registration/reference services were still popular sources of user/use information. However, subject experts in or outside participants' institutions were not frequently utilized, as explained in the following interview.

Subject experts get a little bit narrow on their viewpoint... They tend to think their records or their subjects are more important than anything else, so they are not real objective. (interview: WW4)

Records users were the most frequently utilized information source. One of the reasons came out in interviews. Many interviewees said that they regularly provide reference services in their institutions for a few hours per week. They claimed to know who users are, what information they need, and what the current research trends are. The following interview shows how reference services were helpful, how interviewees could gain user/use information from reference services, and how such information was utilized in appraisal practice.

There's information that we gather that we don't document... If we have people coming in and asking for records, and we don't have them, we make a mental note to see: Are we not appraising collections properly? Are we not bringing those materials into the archives when we should be? So, again, this information isn't documented, but we ask researchers what are they looking for and if they found it. And we do keep that information when we're doing appraisal. It's just not written down. (interview: JQ3)

Many participants provided reference services for records users, and the reference experience seems to have impacted their appraisal practice. Many interviewees said that reference service experience helps them understand users, their use of records, and research trends. Moreover, some of them claimed that appraisal staff should have experience providing reference services.

We don't just run one program, which I actually find very valuable because then I am exposed to what's going on in reference. I feel I am more understanding of our researchers. I'm able to identify more with our users, and I think that is valuable to have that interaction. I'm not appraising records in a vacuum. (interview: EQ1)

It's not in a formally analytical way, as if we have a matrix laid out on paper, but we do acknowledge that, "Well, we have seen this kind of use, or we have seen that. Oh, this

class of information just is hardly ever requested, and we have other information that documents that agency's or the government's interest in that matter"... So, it's at about that level that our reference experience influences our appraisal decisions. (interview: OQ1)

Interviews indicate that several participants consulted reference archivists as well as data on users and use collected from registration/reference services in their program. Some participants asked reference archivists' counsel on users and use of records, and some reference archivists also informally talked about their users and use of records with appraisal staff. Those interviewees found reference archivists helpful.

Our senior reference archivist [is] our user study, basically. She has over thirty years' experience dealing with patrons day in day out. So that is absolutely invaluable to our process... I can see that if we did not have her, we would be a lot more dependent on probably a more formal process for user studies, but because she has such vast knowledge we just ask her, which may not be the best way but that's certainly efficient at this point. (interview: BB2)

To support appraisal practice, participants from one ARRM program and from one AR program collected undocumented user/use information through reference services outside their institutions.

Outside of our reference room, we provide a lot of additional reference services to a variety of different people—records creators, records users, researchers, and subject experts. And we use that to better understand the records that we're evaluating... We provide reference services outside of our reference room but we don't track those specific services. (interview: UU1)

State genealogical society always wants us to appear at their meetings throughout the year to report on what we're taking in and how we're progressing on processing collections. In those meetings we have discussions about what they're interested in and in what ways we could help each other to make sure that we collect the records that they want to use. (interview: KK1)

Some participants utilized laws and regulations related to state archives and records management programs as a source to understand current use and to project future use.

Our scheduling process begins with understanding the public agency: its functions and activities, its requirements for creating records, its requirements for performing a government service. And what we do through that analysis of state laws and regulations is how we begin to appraise our records... And that's how we focus on what people need to know about their current use and also how to project what will be future use. So an

agency, for example, creating legislation on environmental issues, we're able to understand what impact the records and information that they create has on the state. And based on the intent of the legislation, we're able to understand how those records are currently used, and we're able to project their future use and value. (interview: UU1)

According to the survey results, eight (38.1%) out of twenty-one participants—half of the participants from the RM-role and ARRM-role groups and none of the AR-role group—had utilized records inventories or records surveys to collect user/use information. The following interview indicates how records managers collect user/use information through records surveys and utilize records surveys in the appraisal process. In particular, the interviewee expresses why she regards records surveys as a sort of user study and how she utilized their user/use information.

The user information for the state agencies actually occurs when the survey is done for that state agency. When the records managers go into the agency to survey the records to find out how the records are being used, what the work flow process is, what the need of that agency is for those records. So I guess you could say that is the user study, in terms of how they use the records.... And that is documented and the creation is the retention schedule. So for state agencies we don't really see it as a user study, but basically that's what the information we're gathering is, I guess. Because we're asking the agency that created the record how they use the record and how long they need it and for what purposes... I'm looking at, again, the survey of state agency records as a user study. (interview: HH2)

Interviews indicate that most participants had access to user/use information whether or not they utilized it for appraisal practice. The information included user/use information collected by their programs or their corresponding state archives program or records management program, or information stored on the website of their parent government agency. Interviewees who provided reference services had particularly easy access to user/use information collected through reference services. In particular, the staff of programs that had systems collecting user/use information could easily access those systems regardless of the staff member's working unit.

All staff members have access to it because...each of us has the responsibility of entering [requests]. So it's a group effort to document that. (interview: MQ1)

It [user/use information] is all integrated in our archives catalog... We have the functionality where we can track who is using what collections, so we can track what collections are being used... We can track usage by each patron... We can track overall what collections are being used in the archives, and we can also track the general categories of research. (interview: JQ5)

The study results show that a small number of participants collected user/use information for appraisal practice by utilizing user studies or use studies—systematic investigation of use or users of records for specific purposes employing research methods—which were the two lowest-ranked information sources. Section 4.5, *Utilization of User Studies in Appraisal Practice*, fully describes utilization of user studies in appraisal practice.

#### **4.4.9 Supposedly preferred sources of user/use information**

The thirteen participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice in the past 36 months were given the question, “If you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice, from what sources would you want to collect such information? Select all that apply and rank them in order of preference, with 1 indicating the most preference.” Table 34 reports the results by rank order.

An interview with a records manager indicates that records retention schedules can also be a useful source of user/user information, particularly to records managers.

[State agencies] submit their retention schedules for the things that are unique to their agency, and their retention period incorporates what their business needs for the records are. (WW2)

**Table 34.** Supposedly preferred user/use information sources by rank

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Preferred information source</b>	<b>Participants (N = 13)</b>	<b>Mean</b>
1	Records users	11 (84.6%)	2.91
2	Use data collected from registration/reference services in my program	6 (46.2%)	3.50
3	Records creators	10 (76.9%)	3.90
4	Systematic investigation of use of records in my program for specific purposes employing research methods	7 (53.8%)	4.00
5	User data collected from registration/reference services in my program	8 (61.5%)	5.12
6	Records inventories/records surveys	10 (76.9%)	5.20
7	Subject experts in my institution	7 (53.8%)	5.29
8	Systematic investigation of users of my program for specific purposes employing research methods	6 (46.2%)	5.50
9	Web use data collected by analyzing usage of my program's website	7 (53.8%)	6.14
10	Web user data collected by analyzing users of my program's website	6 (46.2%)	6.83
11	Subject experts outside my institution	6 (46.2%)	7.00

Table 34 indicates a tendency for participants to prefer “use data” over “user data” from the same information source. For instance, the rank of use data collected from registration/reference services is higher than that of user data collected from registration/reference services. The same is true for systematic investigation and data collected by analyzing usage of a program’s website.

Table 35 lists the thirteen participants’ supposed user/use information sources in the order of selection frequency, regardless of rank, according to each group. The results of Table 34 and Table 35 differ, except that records users ranked first in both tables.

**Table 35.** Supposedly preferred user/use information sources by selection frequency of group

Preferred information source	AR-role group (n = 3)	RM-role group (n = 3)	ARRM-role group (n = 7)	Fisher's exact p-value	Total (N = 13)
Records users	3 (100.0%)	2 (66.7%)	6 (85.7%)	>.05	11 (84.6%)
Records creators	3 (100.0%)	2 (66.7%)	5 (71.4%)	>.05	10 (76.9%)
Records inventories/records surveys	2 (66.7%)	2 (66.7%)	6 (85.7%)	>.05	10 (76.9%)
User data collected from registration/reference services in my program	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (100.0%)	>.05	8 (61.5%)
Systematic investigation of use of records in my program for specific purposes employing research methods	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (85.7%)	.029	7 (53.8%)
Subject experts in my institution	1 (33.3%)	1 (33.3%)	5 (71.4%)	>.05	7 (53.8%)
Web use data collected by analyzing usage of my program's website	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (100.0%)	.001	7 (53.8%)
Web user data collected by analyzing users of my program's website	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (85.7%)	.005	6 (46.2%)
Subject experts outside my institution	1 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (71.4%)	>.05	6 (46.2%)
Systematic investigation of users of my program for specific purposes employing research methods	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (85.7%)	.005	6 (46.2%)
Use data collected from registration/reference services in my program	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (85.7%)	.005	6 (46.2%)

The results of a Fisher's exact tests show that there are significant relationships between participants' appraisal role and several of the supposed sources of user/use information for appraisal practice that participants preferred: systematic investigation of use of records, Web use data, Web user data, systematic investigation of users, and use data collected from

registration/reference services.<sup>250</sup> For instance, ARRM-role participants preferred to utilize systematic investigation of users or use of records more than AR-role and RM-role participants did. In this study, these two sources are defined as user studies; hence, multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely to prefer utilizing user studies in their appraisal practice than appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers are.

## **4.5 UTILIZATION OF USER STUDIES IN APPRAISAL PRACTICE**

This section focuses on user studies as a source of user/use information for appraisal practice. Some survey questions were intended to investigate the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, two determinants of this relationship, and benefits of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice.

### **4.5.1 Relationship between appraisal practice and user studies**

The Data Analysis section presented eight hypothetical cases to describe the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. The cases were determined by employment of users and use as an appraisal factor, performance of user studies, and utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. Table 36 shows the number and percentage of programs and states that fall into each case.

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<sup>250</sup> Degree of freedom is 2 in Fisher's exact tests of these five information sources.

**Table 36.** Cases of the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in programs and states

<b>Case</b>	<b>Users and use are employed as an appraisal factor?</b>	<b>User study is conducted?</b>	<b>User study is utilized in appraisal practice?</b>	<b>Number of programs (N = 34)</b>	<b>Number of states (N = 32)</b>
Case 1	No	No	No	1 (2.9%)	1 (3.1%)
Case 2	No	No	Yes	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 3	No	Yes	No	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 4	No	Yes	Yes	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 5	Yes	No	Yes	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 6	Yes	No	No	25 (73.5%)	23 (71.9%)
Case 7	Yes	Yes	No	1 (2.9%)	1 (3.1%)
Case 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	7 (20.6%)	7 (21.9%)

Note: This study examined thirty-one states. The “number of states” column in this table totals thirty-two because two participants from two separate programs within one state answered differently.

This study defines only case 8 as having a relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. That is, programs in case 8 consider users and use as an appraisal factor, conduct user studies, and utilize the user studies in their appraisal practice. The other seven cases are defined as having no relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. As table 36 shows, seven programs in seven states had a relationship between appraisal practice and user studies.

Table 37 demonstrates numbers and percentages of each case by program. The majority of participants fall into case 6: they considered users and use as an appraisal factor but did not conduct user studies. Hence, they did not utilize user studies in their appraisal practice. All AR programs considered users and use as an appraisal factor. There is neither an AR program nor an ARRM program belonging to cases 1 through 5, and the RM programs fall into case 1 or 6.

**Table 37.** Numbers and percentages of each case of the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies by program

Case	AR program ( <i>n</i> = 10)	RM program ( <i>n</i> = 7)	ARRM program ( <i>n</i> = 17)	Total ( <i>N</i> = 34)
Case 1	0 (0.0%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.9%)
Case 2	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 3	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 4	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 5	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Case 6	7 (70.0%)	6 (85.7%)	12 (70.6%)	25 (73.5%)
Case 7	1 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.9%)
Case 8	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (29.4%)	7 (20.6%)

Table 38 shows the relationship between utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice and utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. It can be assumed that the seven (33.3%) participants, of the twenty-one total participants, who utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice collected such information from user studies, even though those seven participants collected user/use information from other sources as well. There is a significant relationship between whether programs utilize user/use information in appraisal practice and whether programs utilize user studies in appraisal practice ( $p = 0.029$ , Fisher's exact test,  $df = 1$ ). Seven of twenty-one programs that utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice utilized user studies in appraisal practice, whereas no program that did not utilize user/use information in its appraisal practice utilized user studies in appraisal practice. In other words, state archives and records management programs that utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice are more likely to utilize user studies to collect user/use information for appraisal practice than state archives and records management programs that do not utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice.

**Table 38.** Relationship between utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice and utilization of user studies in appraisal practice

		Utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice		
		Yes	No	Total
Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice	Yes	7 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (20.6%)
	No	14 (66.7%)	13 (100.0%)	27 (79.4%)
	Total	21 (100.0%)	13 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

#### 4.5.2 States, programs, groups, and individuals utilizing user studies in appraisal practice

As shown in Table 36, seven programs in seven states had utilized user studies in appraisal practice. Table 39 shows the core functions of these seven programs, and Table 40 shows the appraisal roles of their participants. The core function of programs and the appraisal roles of their participants did not always match. However, the total numbers for utilization and non-utilization are the same in both tables. Two participants from the AR-role group in AR programs and five participants from the ARRM-role group in ARRM programs utilized user studies in their appraisal practice in seven states.

**Table 39.** Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice by program

Utilization	AR program	RM program	ARRM program	Total
Yes	2 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (29.4%)	7 (20.6%)
No	8 (80.0%)	7 (100.0%)	12 (70.6%)	27 (79.4%)
Total	10 (100.0%)	7 (100.0%)	17 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

**Table 40.** Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice by group

<b>Utilization</b>	<b>AR-role group</b>	<b>RM-role group</b>	<b>ARRM-role group</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	2 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (23.8%)	7 (20.6%)
No	6 (75.0%)	5 (100.0%)	16 (76.2%)	27 (79.4%)
Total	8 (100.0%)	5 (100.0%)	21 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

The results of a Fisher's exact tests show that there is no significant relationship between the core function of a program or participant's appraisal role and utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. That is, the core function of a program and participants' appraisal role are not likely to be related to utilizing user studies in appraisal practice.

Table 41, Table 42, and Table 43 show the professional backgrounds of the participants who had utilized user studies in their appraisal practice: appraisal experience, time spent on appraisal, and reference service experience. The Fisher's exact tests for all three factors show that there is no relationship between these three aspects of professional background of participants and utilization of user studies in appraisal practice.

**Table 41.** Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice by appraisal experience

<b>Utilization</b>	<b>Less than 10 years</b>	<b>10–19 years</b>	<b>20 years or more</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	1 (8.3%)	5 (38.5%)	1 (16.7%)	7 (22.6%)
No	11 (91.7%)	8 (61.5%)	5 (83.3%)	24 (77.4%)
Total	12 (100.0%)	13 (100.0%)	6 (100.0%)	31 (100.0%)

Note: Data of three participants is missing.

**Table 42.** Utilization of user studies in appraisal by percentage of time spent on appraisal

<b>Utilization</b>	<b>20% or less</b>	<b>21–40%</b>	<b>41–60%</b>	<b>61–80%</b>	<b>81% or more</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	3 (18.8%)	4 (40.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (20.6%)
No	13 (81.3%)	6 (60.0%)	4 (100.0%)	3 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	27 (79.4%)
Total	16 (100.0%)	10 (100.0%)	4 (100.0%)	3 (100.0%)	1 (100.0%)	34 (100.0%)

**Table 43.** Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice by reference service experience

<b>Utilization</b>	<b>Reference service experience</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	7 (22.6%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (21.2%)
No	24 (77.4%)	2 (100.0%)	26 (78.8%)
Total	31 (100.0%)	2 (100.0%)	33 (100.0%)

Note: Data of one participant is missing.

### **4.5.3 User/use factors employed when utilizing user studies in appraisal practice**

The seven programs that had utilized user studies in appraisal practice all employed research users/use, administrative users/use, legal users/use, current users/use, and future users/use as an appraisal factor (see Table 44). Five programs (71.4%) employed more than one user/use appraisal factor. However, Fisher’s exact tests show that there is no significant relationship between utilization of user studies in appraisal practice and the type of user/use appraisal factor employed.

**Table 44.** User/use factors employed by programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice

<b>User/use factor</b>	<b>Programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice (N = 7)</b>
Current users/use	7 (100.0%)
Administrative users/use	7 (100.0%)
Research users/use	7 (100.0%)
Legal users/use	7 (100.0%)
Future users/use	7 (100.0%)
Past users/use	6 (85.7%)
Primary users/use	5 (71.4%)
Secondary users/use	5 (71.4%)
Financial users/use	5 (71.4%)

#### **4.5.4 User studies employed in appraisal practice**

Seven participants indicated that they had utilized user studies in their appraisal practice, and interviews with four of them provided additional information on their user studies. They indicated that their programs conducted user studies not only for appraisal practice, but also for general program purposes and practices, including institutional security; understanding users; understanding the reason for creating records; identifying user satisfaction; justifying budget; measuring performance; reporting to the state legislature; and improving services, programs, and practices.

We have had focus groups... We used to have an evaluation form that we felt was kind of cumbersome: “How did you find out about us?” “How was your time in the archives?” “Did you find what you wanted?” “Were there things here that you wish that you could have seen?” Those kinds of things we felt were cumbersome and our focus group helped us sort of refine that. (interview: CQ2)

Results of user studies were also utilized as sources of testimonial information and to promote records related to frequently utilized records.

We collected samples of testimony from agencies and from some public who we served—how we helped them in their daily operations, because we do keep government

running on a daily basis with the information we provide back to them, and also we meet the public's...legal issues or personal issues.... The Governor's office is very interested in helping us get permanent funding for the archives. And so we're gathering the testimonial information now for this particular project... People identify us as an essential service to their operations and they're very generous, positive, with their comments. (interview: MQ1)

We collect them [results of user studies], as I said before, so we know what people are doing research in and which of our records are being used the most. And if we know that there are other records that are related to those records, that we might start promoting them. (interview: CQ2)

The research methods utilized in user studies were surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Surveys were the most popular. One interviewee indicated a gap between education and practice, saying that the user studies she learned about in library school have not been conducted in her state archives.

As far as collecting of user information, again, every time a new patron walks in the door we always ask the same questions, very basic questions: who you are, where you're from, why you're here... We've never done a user survey in the sense that...those of us who went to a library school learned about. (interview: GG1)

Most user studies noted in interviews investigated archives users, mostly researchers. Three interviewees' programs also conducted user studies of state government agencies that created state government records. Their participating staff indicated that some of the questions they asked state government agencies were the same as those they asked of records users in state archives, and some were different.

We use a lot of focus groups with records creators, who understand exactly why they are creating the records and what their purpose is, so that we understand what the original intent behind the record [is]... We do it based on each agency... We track and document all of our findings in a special database. This particular database is separate from the people coming into our reference room, because our reference room has only such a small subset of records that it provides. (interview: UU1)

When we do our annual survey...one way we do it is we send out the information to our customers there who do the reference through the internet. Then we ask them to fill out the survey too... For records management what we do is just send questionnaires to all of our state agencies, to all our cities and our counties, and ask them to provide feedback on what we're providing to them. (interview: NN1)

What happened was that those [user studies] actually came about as an agency-wide survey program... We were all assigned a task of conducting a...customer service survey... So, the preservation office and I—as the State archivist—we created our own surveys and then we provided those surveys to our customer or patrons or researchers coming in the door and also the agencies we serve across the state... We have done interviews with some, but most of it is just a series of questions. But we also sat down and talked with a number of them—especially the agencies and how we served them... That will be for me a sort of fascinating insight into how they [state agencies] view their operations and how they view the working relationship they have with us here in the state archives. (interview: MQ1)

The seven programs that had utilized user studies in appraisal practice had also collected user/use information from other sources (see Table 45). All of the programs employed user and use data collected from registration/reference services in their programs.

**Table 45.** User/use information sources employed by programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice

Sources	Programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice (N = 7)
User data collected from registration/reference services in my program	7 (100.0%)
Use data collected from registration/reference services in my program	7 (100.0%)
Web use data collected by analyzing usage of my program's website	6 (85.7%)
Systematic investigation of users of my program for specific purposes employing research methods	5 (71.4%)
Systematic investigation of use of records in my program for specific purposes employing research methods	4 (57.1%)
Web user data collected by analyzing users of my program's website	4 (57.1%)
Records users	4 (57.1%)
Records creators	3 (42.9%)
Subject experts in my institution	0 (0.0%)
Subject experts outside my institution	0 (0.0%)
Records inventory/records survey	0 (0.0%)

More than half of the seven programs utilized the seven top-ranked information sources. Fisher's exact tests show that there is a significant relationship between whether programs utilize their own user studies in appraisal practice and whether they use six of the seven sources,

excluding records users.<sup>251</sup> In other words, programs that utilize user studies in appraisal practice are more likely to collect user/use information from the six sources than programs that do not utilize user studies in appraisal practice. However, this relationship probably applies only to AR programs and ARRM programs because no RM program in this study utilized user studies in appraisal practice.

Of the eight programs that reported conducting user studies, seven utilized the results of their user studies in their appraisal practice. Fisher's exact tests indicate that conducting user studies has a very strong relationship with utilizing user studies in appraisal practice ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $df = 1$ ). In other words, if a program conducts user studies, its staff is more likely to utilize user studies in appraisal practice.

#### **4.5.5 Benefits of utilizing user studies**

Participants who had utilized user studies in their appraisal practice reported how they had benefited from doing so (see Table 46).

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<sup>251</sup> The result of Fisher's exact test between programs collecting user data from registration/reference services and programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is  $p = .012$ . The result of Fisher's exact test between programs collecting use data from registration/reference services and programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is  $p = .001$ . The result of Fisher's exact test between programs conducting systematic investigation of users and programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is  $p = .001$ . The result of Fisher's exact test between programs conducting systematic investigation of use of records and programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is  $p < .001$ . The result of Fisher's exact test between programs collecting Web user data and programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is  $p = .010$ . The result of Fisher's exact test between programs collecting Web use data and programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is  $p < .001$ .

**Table 46.** Benefits of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice by group

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 2)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 5)</b>	<b>Total (N = 7)</b>
Anticipated future research trends and potential use of records	1 (50.0%)	5 (100.0%)	6 (85.7%)
Identified changing user information needs and research interests	2 (100.0%)	4 (80.0%)	6 (85.7%)
Made appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively	0 (0.0%)	4 (80.0%)	4 (57.1%)
Determined the value of information contained in records	1 (50.0%)	2 (40.0%)	3 (42.9%)
Carried out cost-benefit analysis	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (14.3%)

The following interviews describe how interviewees benefited from utilizing user studies in their appraisal practice.

I'm always interested in learning what people are doing research in, not because I'm an archivist, but because I am an historian as well, so that [a user study] informs me sometimes about the latest trends in research. That's primarily, I think, why we do that. (interview: CQ2)

It [user study] helps us understand what people are using so then we can look for that information when we're out there and we also look at how they're using it, because sometimes the information is getting used in a way that we didn't anticipate so we want to know that, so we can look for other information that may be similar that has that. (interview: NN1)

Table 47 shows the appraisal activities from utilizing user studies. No one answered that no appraisal activities benefited.

**Table 47.** Appraisal activities benefiting from user studies by group

<b>Appraisal activity</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 2)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 5)</b>	<b>Total (N = 7)</b>
Making appraisal decisions at the series level	2 (100.0%)	3 (60.0%)	5 (71.4%)
Making reappraisal decisions at the series level	2 (100.0%)	3 (60.0%)	5 (71.4%)
Developing/evaluating program's acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies	1 (50.0%)	4 (80.0%)	5 (71.4%)
Planning/evaluating appraisal practice	1 (50.0%)	2 (40.0%)	3 (42.9%)
Developing/evaluating program's appraisal criteria/standards/checklists	0 (0.0%)	3 (60.0%)	3 (42.9%)
Creating records schedules	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	2 (28.6%)
Applying/evaluating program's appraisal methods/techniques	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	2 (28.6%)
Requesting/justifying resources for appraisal practice	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.0%)	2 (28.6%)
Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (14.3%)
Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (14.3%)

As expected, appraisal and reappraisal decision-making benefited most from utilizing results of user studies. However, the level of records appraised made a noticeable difference. Five participants indicated that making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the series level benefited from utilizing user study results, but only one participant indicated the same of making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the other levels. The following interviews indicate the benefits of user studies in appraisal decision-making as information sources and evidence to support appraisal decisions and to persuade records creators.

For instance, there are a lot of people who are suddenly looking at Mexican labor, and if I'm looking at a retention schedule or I'm out in an agency and I'm looking at the actual boxes that they have there, and I see that there's a big section on Mexican migrant schoolchildren or that might not have been considered permanent, I'll reexamine those records and go back and talk to our records management division and say, "I really think that there's information in here that I really think is valuable to researchers." (interview: CQ2)

When we get the surveys back, or when we do the inventories...we kind of analyze the information, the feedback we're getting from our users and from what we're collecting... Sometimes it helps us make a decision as to whether something should be permanent or not permanent. So we use it to analyze what we're doing so that we're hopefully making better decisions, so that we're making sure that people are getting truly the information that they want and not just the information that we think that they want... It shouldn't be the only thing that's considered, but it should be one of the things considered when you're determining what records should be kept and for how long they need to be kept. If you don't, then you're basically collecting information based on a very small population of individual preferences, because really archivists are historians and they have [their] own little ideas and idiosyncrasies as to what should be kept historically. (interview: NN1)

Notably, only two participants (28.6%) selected "Creating records schedules." This low percentage may result from having no participants from the RM-role group answer this question. In many cases, RM-role appraisers create records schedules, and AR-role appraisers review and/or approve them; hence, no participants from the AR-role group reported that they benefited from creating records schedules. Participants from the ARRM-role group play the role of records manager, so it is not surprising that two ARRM-role participants selected "Creating records schedules."

User studies and user and use information are critical to the development of records retention and disposition schedules. The users provide the best insight on the value of the records. (interview: HH1)

The following comments show how user studies are important, beneficial tools when requesting and justifying budgets for appraisal practice.

User studies have become instrumental in our budget process. They help to determine our benchmarks and are related to the agency's Key Performance Measures. They help to justify what we do and how we are received. (survey comment: NN1)

User studies are an excellent means for providing information about collection use, research trends, and so on. These statistics can help to justify the continuation of your program and get you more funding when times are good. As beneficial as user studies and user and use information in appraisal practice may be, however, in the current fiscal crises in our various states, most of us are reducing the programs that we currently have in place. (interview: CQ2)

## **4.6 ATTITUDES TOWARD UTILIZING USER STUDIES IN APPRAISAL PRACTICE**

The last section of the survey was designed to investigate the potential relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. It was given to all participants—participant set 2—and asked about their attitudes toward the value and feasibility of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs. Because many participants' programs had not conducted user studies or utilized user studies in appraisal practice, participants were asked to assume that programs provided their staff with their own internal user studies.

### **4.6.1 Those for whom utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable and feasible**

One survey question asked participants for whom they thought utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible. Another question asked for whom they thought doing so is valuable, disregarding feasibility.

Table 48 shows how each group answered the value question. The majority in all three groups thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable to both U.S. state archivists and records managers. Only one participant answered that doing so is not valuable for either U.S. state archivists or records managers.

**Table 48.** Those for whom utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable by group

<b>Valuable for whom</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 11)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 10)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 24)</b>	<b>Total (N = 45)</b>
U.S. state archivists only	0 (0.0%)	2 (20.0%)	1 (4.2%)	3 (6.7%)
U.S. state records managers only	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Both U.S. state archivists and records managers	10 (90.9%)	7 (70.0%)	22 (91.7%)	39 (86.7%)
Neither U.S. state archivists nor records managers	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.2%)	1 (2.2%)
I don't know	1 (9.1%)	1 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.4%)

No participants from the AR-role group thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable to U.S. state archivists only, and no participants thought that doing so is valuable to U.S. state records managers only. However, two participants from the RM-role group and one participant from the ARRM-role group thought that it is valuable to U.S. state archivists only.

I think user studies would be very valuable to archivists as it would allow them to find out what topics users are interested in researching. In records management we work closely with the user in developing retention periods and we work with archivists to determine what records are historical. (survey comment: CQ1)

Table 49 shows the answers to the survey question “For whom do you think utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice is feasible?” by group. As with the results for value described earlier, the majority of all three groups thought that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible for U.S. state archivists and records managers. Only one participant answered that it is not feasible for either U.S. state archivists or records managers.

**Table 49.** Those for whom utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is feasible by group

<b>Feasible for whom</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 11)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 10)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 24)</b>	<b>Total (N = 45)</b>
U.S. state archivists only	1 (9.1%)	4 (40.0%)	1 (4.2%)	6 (13.3%)
U.S. state records managers only	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Both U.S. state archivists and records managers	8 (72.7%)	5 (50.0%)	20 (83.3%)	33 (73.3%)
Neither U.S. state archivists nor records managers	1 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.2%)
I don't know	1 (9.1%)	1 (10.0%)	3 (12.5%)	5 (11.1%)

More than twice the number of participants who thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is feasible only for U.S. state archivists thought that doing so is valuable for only U.S. state archivists. Moreover, more than twice the number of participants selected “I don’t know” for feasibility than for value. Forty-two participants (93.4%) thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable for U.S. state archivists and/or U.S. state records managers, while thirty-nine participants (86.6%) thought that it is feasible. This result indicates that participants had more doubt about feasibility than value. This tendency appeared in many interviews.

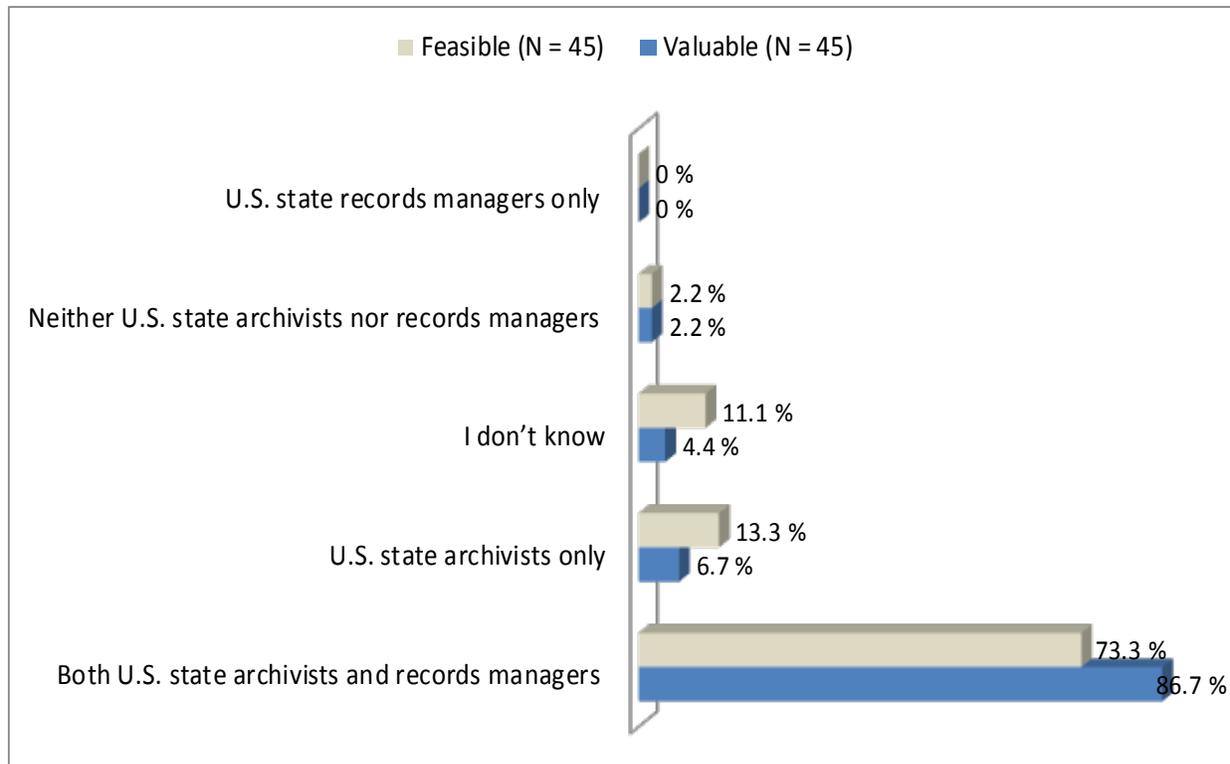
Participants tend to be more positive toward the value of utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice than the feasibility of doing so, even though most participants had positive attitudes toward both feasibility and value. This tendency also appears in Table 50 and Figure 6. Table 50 shows the results of combining the answers to the questions “For whom do you think utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice is feasible?” and “For whom do you think utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice is valuable?”

**Table 50.** Valuable for whom versus feasible for whom regarding utilizing user studies in appraisal practice

		Valuable for whom				
		U.S. state archivists only	Both U.S. state archivists and records managers	Neither U.S. state archivists nor records managers	I don't know	Total
Feasible for whom	U.S. state archivists only	3 (50.0%)	2 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (16.7%)	6 (100.0%)
	Both U.S. state archivists and records managers	0 (0.0%)	33 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	33 (100.0%)
	Neither U.S. state archivists nor records managers	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)
	I don't know	0 (0.0%)	3 (60.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	5 (100.0%)
	<b>Total</b>	3 (6.7%)	39 (86.7%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (4.4%)	45 (100.0%)

Note: Percentages in parentheses are for the question “For whom do you think utilizing results of their own user studies is feasible?” No one answered “U.S. state records managers only” to either question, so this table does not include a “U.S. state records managers only” row or column.

Figure 6 uses a bar graph to compare answers to the same questions. Thirty-nine participants (86.6%) answered that utilization of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible for both U.S. state archivists and records managers or U.S. state archivists only; however, forty-two participants (93.4%) answered that it is valuable to the same groups. In addition, while five participants (11.1%) answered “I don’t know” to the feasibility question, two participants (4.4%) answered “I don’t know” to the value question.



**Figure 6.** Valuable for whom versus feasible for whom regarding utilizing user studies in appraisal practice

The results in Table 50 and Figure 6 may indicate that participants felt less confident about for whom utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible than for whom it is valuable. This tendency became more obvious in interviews. The following interview exemplifies several interviewees' uncertainty about the practice's feasibility.

This [utilizing user studies in appraisal practice] sounds great in theory, but state archives have been particularly hard hit with budget cuts, staff reductions, and so on. Most of us do not have the time or the resources to do this in a systematic way. (interview: CQ2)

A few interviewees were even more skeptical or negative toward utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice.

State agencies are very complicated, state governments very complicated, and it's very difficult to go after the most problematic information agency by agency... And I think the user survey is not going to help me there... I think that our emphasis needs to be on developing a better upfront relationship with the creators of these records. And more of a

dialogue between the creators of the records, between the records analysts, the archivists, and people outside who are doing research in these areas that can tell us: “This is the kind of stuff that we can see being useful to someone in ten, twenty, thirty, one hundred years.” And I don’t think our users can tell us that. (interview: GG1)

Government archives programs exist to preserve evidence of how government functions and the decisions made by government. We need to raise awareness among more groups of potential users that these records are preserved and accessible, and to encourage more use among new target audiences. User studies of current users have limited ability to help us encourage more use in the future. While we are glad that people use the records we preserve, use is not the only reason a record is appraised to be archival. The record documents something significant/historical and should be preserved. (survey comment: WQ1)

This study also used cross-tabulation and Fisher’s exact tests to investigate how participants’ experience with utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice affected for whom they thought utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable and feasible. There is no such relationship for either value ( $p = 0.547$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 1$ ) or feasibility ( $p = 0.179$ , Fisher’s exact test,  $df = 1$ ).

#### **4.6.2 Supposed benefits of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice**

Thirty-nine participants thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable for both state archivists and records managers, and three participants thought that doing so would be valuable for only state archivists (see Table 48). These forty-two participants also indicated how they expected user studies would benefit appraisal practice. Their responses were similar, as shown in Table 51.

**Table 51.** Supposed benefits of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 10)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 9)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 23)</b>	<b>Participants (N = 42)</b>
Anticipate future trends and potential use of records	10 (100.0%)	6 (66.7%)	20 (87.0%)	36 (85.7%)
Identify changing user information needs and research interests	9 (90.0%)	5 (55.6%)	20 (87.0%)	34 (81.0%)
Make appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively	9 (90.0%)	7 (77.8%)	18 (78.3%)	34 (81.0%)
Determine the value of information contained in records	6 (60.0%)	7 (77.8%)	16 (69.6%)	29 (69.0%)
Carry out cost-benefit analysis	1 (10.0%)	4 (44.4%)	13 (56.5%)	18 (42.9%)

The following interviews elaborate on how participants supposed user studies would help their appraisal practice.

I really think it [results of user studies] would inform your future decisions in a way that we don't have time to do right now. So I think it would be extremely valuable. As for the records managers, it would certainly help them when they're going out and working with agencies to develop those retention schedules in the first place. I mean, we come along after them and we say, "I think that needs to be permanent," but archivists tend to go along behind the records managers unless you can sit down with them up front. But I think something like this would be good because it would inform both records managers and archivists. There are things out there that we're missing that would have long-term, permanent value that just aren't getting picked up. (interview: CQ2)

It would show a track record of the use of the records and how important or not important they are. (interview: WW4)

Other assumed benefits included helping to understand previous appraisal decisions, justifying appraisal work to the public, defining priorities in appraisal practice, providing confidence in their own appraisal activities, economizing resources, determining what to evaluate and appraise, and providing data to support the transference of records to records creators and records managers.

To understand how previous appraisal decisions influenced researchers. (survey comment: UU1)

I would think if we had some good user studies that we might inform some of our initial appraisal decisions, but we also might be more confident, in some cases, about some reappraisal activity. (interview: OQ1)

If someone were to say, “You know what, we don’t think we should send that material to the archives anymore, we don’t think we should collect it in the first place.” Then I would have a strong argument showing user statistics that, in fact, that is something that the public is extremely interested in. (interview: VQ1)

They [user studies] should play a part in the whole basic appraisal process... It [a user study] shouldn’t be the only thing that’s considered, but it should be one of the things considered when you’re determining what records should be kept and for how long they need to be kept... I think what needs to happen is that you take that into consideration when you’re making your decisions, you have better justification as to why you did this and...why you’re collecting the information you’re collecting and how it’s of value to the people that you’re serving. (interview: NN1)

Because we’re looking at what our users want, it gives me a better idea of what to prioritize as far as appraisal goes, what records are a priority to users, therefore what state agency records or what state agencies do I need to work with, as far as funding is concerned, time, staffing... All of those things can be entered into the priority mix of what’s important, and I think the user study is something that would help define some of that. (interview: EQ1)

Knowing what your patrons are asking for would help you to understand, perhaps, what you want to evaluate and appraise. (interview: SS1)

So it [utilizing user studies in appraisal practice] would help economize on our space needs and staff needs. It would be very useful. (interview: WW4)

One interviewee said that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be more important as the number of remote users increases and those users access and gain information about holdings through the Internet.

I think it [utilizing user studies in appraisal practice] is more important now than even in the past because the Internet has opened up new areas and new opportunities for people to access records, and...at least from my experience in the last three years, it has changed to a great extent the kind of materials that we’re making available and the kind of materials people are using... I definitely think that using user studies in appraisal is more important now than it ever was, and I don’t think archives, to my experience, are doing it enough. (interview: SS1)

While several interviewees acknowledged the value of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice, they were cautious in their endorsement.

It [utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice] would be very valuable, but only to a point. The problem with appraisal is we have to envision the future. What people

might be looking for a hundred years from now. So we can't just go on the past, we have to consider both the past and the present and the future... So user studies are just the study of the past and the present, but in my thirty years of working with this, people have changed their various needs and endeavors to a large degree. (interview: WW4)

I guess if it was available I would look at it, but I wouldn't hold a lot of weight to it. I would see it more as supporting evidence rather than something that would really sway a decision. (interview: WW2)

#### 4.6.3 Reasons that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would not be valuable

The three participants who indicated that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable for U.S. state archivists only were asked why they thought doing so would not be valuable for U.S. state records managers. Table 52 shows the results. One of the three participants was in the RM-role group, and the others were in the ARRM-role group.

**Table 52.** Reasons why utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would not be valuable for U.S. state records managers

Reason	Frequency (N = 3)
I don't feel it is necessary to do so in state records management programs	3 (100.0%)
State records managers conducting archival appraisal can directly consult records users to obtain user/use information instead of utilizing user studies	1 (33.3%)
The benefits are less than the spent resources (e.g., staff, budget)	1 (33.3%)
Impracticality due to lack of training	1 (33.3%)
I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in state records management programs	1 (33.3%)
Lack of evidence about state records managers benefiting from the utilization of user studies	0 (0.0%)

One participant indicated that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice would not be valuable for either U.S. state archivists or records managers. When saying why, the participant indicated that state archivists and records managers conducting archival appraisal can

directly consult records users to obtain user/use information instead of utilizing user studies, that the benefits are less than the spent resources (e.g., staff and budget), and that there is a lack of evidence about state archivists and records managers benefiting from the utilization of user studies.

#### 4.6.4 Reasons that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would not be feasible

The one participant who answered that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would not be feasible for either U.S. state archivists or records managers cited as reasons lack of time, staff, and budget. Six participants indicated that doing so is not feasible for U.S. state records managers; Table 53 shows their reasons. Four of the six participants were in the RM-role group, one was in the AR-role group, and the other one was in the ARRM-role group.

**Table 53.** Reasons why utilizing user studies in appraisal practice may not be feasible for U.S. state records managers

Reason	Frequency (N = 6)
Lack of staff	4 (80.0%)
Lack of time	3 (60.0%)
Lack of budget	2 (40.0%)
Difficulty in collaborating between staff conducting appraisal practice and staff conducting user studies	2 (40.0%)
I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in state records management programs	2 (40.0%)
Lack of training on how to utilize user studies in appraisal practice	1 (20.0%)

The three most commonly cited reasons (lack of staff, lack of time, and lack of budget) indicate that lack of resources would significantly influence the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice in U.S. state records management programs. Lack of training on how to utilize

user studies in appraisal practice was the least cited reason. Indeed, two interviewees who had utilized user studies in their appraisal practice said they did not have difficulty conducting user studies even though they had not received any education regarding them and had had no previous experience in conducting user studies and utilizing their results in appraisal practice before doing so at their programs. One interviewee (NN1) modified user studies of other divisions in her state government. Another interviewee (MQ1) consulted previous surveys developed by his archives, referred to user surveys of other state archives on Google, and employed a convenient online survey tool. He found user studies conducted by some other state archives, which helped him develop survey questions and conduct user studies for his own state archives.

I looked at past surveys conducted by the archives going back to 1990... I also did a nationwide search on Google looking at other state archives who had conducted surveys, and looked at those and the questions they asked... It was very helpful to look at what other states had done... We had no problem with it [online survey]... For the customer service survey...I did that myself on SurveyMonkey... All that I can tell you is that SurveyMonkey did that [data analysis] for me... Not knowing much—never taking a statistics course in my life—it was a challenge, but the automated format of SurveyMonkey was very helpful. (interview: MQ1)

It [conducting user studies] is actually pretty easy to do and actually how we set upon ours is we looked at another one of the divisions within the Secretary of State's office and looked how they did their user studies and then just built ours off of that... The biggest problem is just admitting that we can take outside opinions and still make good decisions. I think we make better decisions. So, it's just training on how to make the right decision based on the information that we're collecting and how to put that into practice. (interview: NN1)

One records manager said that RM programs cannot gather results of user studies because each state government agency is different, so records managers need to talk with each state government agency to gain information on state government officials, their information needs, and their use of records.

I think it's not feasible for a records management program [to utilize results of user studies in appraisal practice] because it's not possible to gather the information. I think state agencies all do such different things...even though they might have the same types of records as another state agency, the fact that their jobs are so different, you can't really go by what this group does to help determine how long they need their records. You

really have to do each group individually and talk with each one... There are a few records that are used among different agencies, but they use them for such different reasons and their retention periods aren't the same for those. (interview: CQ1)

One interviewee indicated that staff members' resistance to a change in their practice can hinder feasibility.

With the amount of information that we're trying to collect and that government is continually creating, it's impossible to continue the way we've been doing things... But, I think sometimes archivists are a little change phobic because they think they're going to lose something and I don't think that's the case... I know we have gained information from doing our studies that we might not have otherwise gotten, and it's because we're just open to what's going on and how it's being done. So, it's a change of behavior that we all know is very difficult to do. (interview: NN1)

#### **4.6.5 Supposed value and feasibility of utilizing user studies in specific appraisal activities**

The forty-two participants who thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable for U.S. state archivists only or both U.S. state archivists and records managers were asked, "In which of the following appraisal activities do you think results of their own user studies would be valuable to U.S. state archivists and/or records managers?" The thirty-nine participants who thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be feasible for U.S. state archivists only or both U.S. state archivists and records managers were asked, "In which of the following appraisal activities do you think results of their own user studies would be feasible to U.S. state archivists and/or records managers?"

Table 54 combines the appraisal activities for which participants thought results of user studies would be valuable and/or feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers. Results for value and feasibility are similar. Ranks in parentheses in each category indicate that the appraisal activities are ranked in the same order for both, except "Planning/evaluating appraisal practice" and "Developing/evaluating their programs' acquisition/appraisal/collection

development/records retention policies.” However, the difference in these activities was only one participant.

**Table 54.** Appraisal activities for which utilizing user studies would be valuable versus feasible

<b>Appraisal activities</b>	<b>Valuable (N = 42)</b>	<b>Feasible (N = 39)</b>
Making appraisal decisions at the series level	90.2% (1)	89.7% (1)
Making reappraisal decisions at the series level	80.5% (2)	84.6% (2)
Planning/evaluating appraisal practice	75.6% (3)	71.8% (4)
Developing/evaluating their programs' acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies	73.2% (4)	74.4% (3)
Creating records schedules	70.7% (5)	71.8% (4)
Applying/evaluating their programs' appraisal methods/techniques	61.0% (6)	56.4% (6)
Developing/evaluating their programs' appraisal criteria/standards/checklists	58.5% (7)	56.4% (6)
Requesting/justifying resources for appraisal practice	43.9% (8)	46.2% (8)
Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	43.9% (8)	46.2% (8)
Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	31.7% (10)	38.5% (10)
I don't know	4.9% (11)	0.0% (11)

Note: The rankings are shown in parentheses.

The following two sub-sections report for whom utilizing user studies would be valuable and/or feasible according to each participant group.

#### **4.6.5.1 Value by Group**

Participants from the AR-role and ARRM-role groups had similar results for which appraisal activities they supposed utilizing user studies would be valuable. However, the RM-role group's results were different (see Table 55).

**Table 55.** Appraisal activities for which utilizing user studies would be valuable by group

<b>Appraisal activities</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 10)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 9)</b>	<b>ARRM-role group (n = 23)</b>	<b>Total (N = 42)</b>
Making appraisal decisions at the series level	9 (90.0%)	8 (88.9%)	20 (87.0%)	37 (88.1%)
Making reappraisal decisions at the series level	9 (90.0%)	4 (44.4%)	20 (87.0%)	33 (78.6%)
Developing/evaluating their programs' acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies	7 (70.0%)	4 (44.4%)	19 (82.6%)	30 (71.4%)
Planning/evaluating appraisal practice	7 (70.0%)	6 (66.7%)	18 (78.3%)	31 (73.8%)
Creating records schedules	6 (60.0%)	6 (66.7%)	17 (73.9%)	29 (69.0%)
Applying/evaluating their programs' appraisal methods/techniques	6 (60.0%)	3 (33.3%)	16 (69.6%)	25 (59.5%)
Developing/evaluating their programs' appraisal criteria/standards/checklists	6 (60.0%)	5 (55.6%)	13 (56.5%)	24 (57.1%)
Requesting/justifying resources for appraisal practice	4 (40.0%)	2 (22.2%)	12 (52.2%)	18 (42.9%)
Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	4 (40.0%)	5 (55.6%)	9 (39.1%)	18 (42.9%)
Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	3 (30.0%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (39.1%)	13 (31.0%)
I don't know	0 (0.0%)	1 (11.1%)	1 (4.3%)	2 (4.8%)

There is a significant relationship between participant's appraisal role and "Making reappraisal decisions at the series level" ( $p = 0.024$ , Fisher's exact test,  $df = 2$ ). Nine of ten AR-role participants and twenty of twenty-three ARRM-role participants thought results of user studies would be valuable in making reappraisal decisions at the series level, whereas four of nine RM-role participants did. In other words, multi-role appraisal staff members and appraisal archivists are more likely than appraisal records managers to think results of user studies would be valuable in making reappraisal decisions at the series level.

The following interviews indicate the supposed value of utilizing user studies in appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decision-making. The last interview excerpt, with interviewee (BB2) who had been doing item-level appraisal, indicates that legal restrictions could make user studies valueless in making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the item level.

I would think that the results of user studies could be valuable in making decisions about which records to be preserved and for how long, and in some cases, when we're dealing with records that were determined... For doing reappraisal, I would think user studies would be an element in making those decisions. (interview: OQ1)

I just think that it's something that those who do appraisal should be aware of as far as what kinds of records people are requesting, what the research trends are, what possible future research needs there might be, and to use those user studies to remain aware of all those things, and use them to help you in conducting your appraisal and your scheduling activities along with all the other criteria that you would normally use to make decisions about records retention and about selection of records for the archives. (interview: JQ5)

I think it [utilizing user studies in appraisal practice] is part of looking at the whole picture and making decisions with a holistic view. Often we're looking at what legislative requirements are and what the agency's requirements are and user requirements. Looking at what users are utilizing the records for as well as the personal experience of our records archivists, it's just all part and parcel of making a good decision. (interview: WW2)

Patrons might want it [a certain records item] but they can't have it for certain reasons. Again that may get back to a law. That it's a closed record or it's something we don't keep because of privacy issues or something. So user studies are not going to be quite so valuable in that kind of sphere. Because it's not a question of whether a user wants to see it, it's a question of law. (interview: BB2)

Although twenty-nine participants (69.0%) answered that user studies would be valuable in creating records schedules, the following interviewee had a different opinion.

It [a user study] will rarely affect creation of retention schedules, partly because when we're writing retention schedules, we generally already have a pretty good idea of what kinds of records might have long-term historical value... There's rarely an overlap between the types of records that we are told researchers are asking for and the types of records that we're writing records retention schedules for because most of the new retention schedules we write are for records that are very specific to certain agency activities in different agencies that are not the kind of records that normally would be of long-term historical value. However, we would certainly take that information about user requirements into account in the event that we were scheduling records that relate to those user requests. For the most part, we've already got retention schedules in place for the kinds of records that users request. (interview: JQ5)

Participants also mentioned other activities: developing collections, justifying not deaccessioning records, defining collection management procedures and policies, and creating a better and more solid program.

I think it would be good for all of those [appraisal activities in Table 55], especially collection development... User studies would tell me that financial records...are something that researchers want to use, but the user study would also tell me that they're looking for records from the Department of Agriculture, and we don't have any, or that people are doing research on social issues, and we have no records in the archives dealing with social issues. That would tell me that I need to add those to the focus of our teams...add it to my collection policy, as far as the development side of it. (interview: JQ3)

I would use it to justify not deaccessioning something. If we say...it's of questionable value, because it's used heavily, we wouldn't deaccession it. (interview: WW2)

It would help us to better serve the public who are using the records. Also, it would help us to maintain a tighter collection and maybe not keep as much material as we do right now because we don't really know what people are going to want. So it would help economize on our space needs and staff needs. It would be very useful. (interview: WW4)

It will help you define your collection management procedures and policies. It gives you a means to develop better retention periods in records management. It just creates a much better program, a much more solid program. (interview: EQ1)

#### **4.6.5.2 Feasibility by Group**

Three groups had different rankings of which appraisal activities they supposed utilizing user studies would be feasible for (see Table 56). The AR-role group's feasibility rankings are similar to the ranking of all three groups combined.

**Table 56.** Appraisal activities for which utilizing user studies would be feasible by group

<b>Appraisal activities</b>	<b>AR-role group (n = 9)</b>	<b>RM-role group (n = 9)</b>	<b>ARRM- role group (n = 21)</b>	<b>Total (N = 39)</b>
Making appraisal decisions at the series level	8 (88.9%)	8 (88.9%)	19 (90.5%)	35 (89.7%)
Making reappraisal decisions at the series level	9 (100.0%)	5 (55.6%)	19 (90.5%)	33 (84.6%)
Developing/evaluating their programs' acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies	7 (77.8%)	6 (66.7%)	16 (76.2%)	29 (74.4%)
Planning/evaluating appraisal practice	7 (77.8%)	4 (44.4%)	17 (81.0%)	28 (71.8%)
Creating records schedules	6 (66.7%)	7 (77.8%)	15 (71.4%)	28 (71.8%)
Applying/evaluating their programs' appraisal methods/techniques	5 (55.6%)	5 (55.6%)	12 (57.1%)	22 (56.4%)
Developing/evaluating their programs' appraisal criteria/standards/checklists	4 (44.4%)	5 (55.6%)	13 (61.9%)	22 (56.4%)
Requesting/justifying resources for appraisal practice	3 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)	12 (57.1%)	18 (46.2%)
Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	3 (33.3%)	5 (55.6%)	10 (47.6%)	18 (46.2%)
Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level	3 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)	9 (42.9%)	15 (38.5%)

There is a significant relationship between participant's appraisal role and "Making reappraisal decisions at the series level" ( $p = 0.038$ , Fisher's exact test,  $df = 2$ ). All nine AR-role participants and nineteen of twenty-one ARRM-role participants thought results of user studies would be feasible in making reappraisal decisions at the series level, whereas five of nine RM-role participants did. In other words, multi-role appraisal staff members and appraisal archivists are more likely than appraisal records managers to think results of user studies would be feasible in making reappraisal decisions at the series level.

Making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the series level were the two most cited appraisal activities for which utilizing user studies was thought to be feasible. However, as with

value (see Table 55), only 42.9% and 31.0% of participants selected making appraisal decisions and making reappraisal decisions at other levels (i.e., the item/folder/box level), respectively.

One interviewee said the following:

Not so feasible at the item level. Because you'd have so many different questions at the item level that you're dealing with individual documents, and you don't have time to go to your users and ask them because you're sitting at your desk processing something and you have to decide whether you're keeping it or not. You can't go asking people all the time. In some cases it's a matter of law, whether something is kept or not. Sometimes it's a matter of a privacy issue... Although there are certainly some series that are also affected by laws, I think appraisal work is perhaps more influenced at the item level by rules than user studies. (interview: BB2)

In addition to activities in Table 56, one interviewee said that results of user studies might help revise collection policy.

[Collection policy is] something that you would want to revise on some regular basis every few years or so, and you might base a revision of your collection policy, in part, on the results of your user studies if those user studies show that there's an important area of collecting where your collection has weaknesses, and you need to focus on that area, and it's not already mentioned in your collection policy. So that's someplace where that might be revised. Your appraisal criteria should pretty much remain the same. (interview: JQ5)

#### **4.6.6 Concerns about utilizing user studies in appraisal practice**

Although most participants indicated that it is valuable and feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of user studies in appraisal practice, interviews regarding feasibility and value indicate that participants were concerned about several variables and factors.

I would say we're already doing that [utilizing results of user studies in our appraisal practice]... But the positive effects at the moment are limited by the budget. The state government has different priorities, and records management, if it's not perceived as being a problem, consequentially is low down on the list of priorities. (interview: VQ1)

I do [think it would be feasible], although I believe there are many variables based on how their program is set up... It's good, but it's difficult to conduct user studies and apply the research to appraisal practice because each state archives and records

management program has different situations and resources. It's because each archive is set up a little different in each state. (interview: EQ1)

The value of user studies and use information in appraisal is dependent on the maturity of the institution, the relationship between the records management and archival management programs, the manner in which records are arranged and described, and the overall understanding of government recordkeeping. (survey comment: UU1)

Notably, several interviewees were concerned about conducting user studies rather than utilizing results of the user studies in appraisal practice.

I don't see many difficulties in actually using those [user study] results. I think it's more in actually conducting the user studies and getting the results. Once you have the results, I don't think it's that difficult to determine how to apply those to appraisal. (interview: JQ5)

I would think that if that [a user study] was available...then it is more than feasible to utilize it. If you had that information, you'd want to at least look at it and consider it in making a decision. (interview: WW2)

I think that we'd have to think hard about who we were going to ask to fill out the survey because if we just poll our current researchers we wouldn't get the whole picture. But there are people when you go out on the street and they say, "What do you do?" and you say, "I'm an archivist," they don't even know what that is. So it might be difficult to get the general public to fill out a user survey when they aren't even aware of what you're doing. (interview: KK1)

The majority of participants agreed that it is valuable and feasible to utilize user studies in appraisal practice. Nevertheless, they cautioned that the user study should not be the only tool for appraisal practice, just as many participants claimed that user/use factors should not be the only appraisal factors.

I would caution people that I think that it [utilizing user studies in appraisal practice] could be very self-limiting. I worry that if we concentrate on user studies we're going to be collecting what is most currently popular as opposed to being proactive and going outside who's coming in the door... We all know what genealogists want. The big question is, what are the scholars, the historians, the scientists, sociologists—what kind of economic information should we be keeping? I would caution people to think about whom it is they target specifically if they're going to ask these questions. (interview: GG1)

Using user studies and use information can be dangerous because some items need to be maintained even though the public may not have a ready need for them for some time to come. It could be used in tight budget times as justification to deaccession collections that could be valuable to the state for future generations, not the current ones who may not want it to be maintained. Overdependence can be a slippery slope. (interview: SQ1)

If they're doing formal appraisal of records, then of course it would be feasible to utilize those [user studies] results, again, as simply one of a number of criteria to consider. It doesn't mean that you are bound by those results. It means that it's one of the considerations to factor in among other criteria in determining the retention of records and their possible selection for an archives. (interview: GQ1)

[A user study] should just be one tool, but it shouldn't be the only tool... So there's some valuable information that comes out of it and it can be helpful and beneficial, but you need to make sure you're getting what you need and keeping everything in context. (interview: NN1)

I think that it [user/use information] is useful in a general sense, and I think it's worth consideration as a secondary point of reference, but to me, I just don't see it as a primary determinant for driving appraisal decisions. (interview: WW3)

I think that state archives and records management programs need to collect information from a variety of sources to be able to develop a better user study of many different factors. Not just use individual thoughts and opinions, but also evaluate the quality of the presentation of the finding aids, indexes, or database. [We should use] a variety of different sources, and not rely on just certain criteria. (interview: UU1)

But just because it wasn't used wouldn't necessarily alter my appraisal decision because how well it's used depends a lot on how it's arranged and described in the finding aids. Just because we might have really good records in our archives, just because they're not described well people don't use them, but that doesn't mean they're not valuable. And I guess I'm also focusing not only on what people are using today, I'm looking at what people are going to want [in the future]. Some things are constant that they will always want, but other things do change. Just because people aren't using them now doesn't mean that they're not going to be valuable. I wouldn't throw out the State Constitution because nobody looked at it in the last ten years. It has value beyond any use study. (interview: WW2)

## **4.7 SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

There has been no study empirically investigating whether users and use are considered in appraisal practice, and, if so, how user/use information is collected and utilized. This study produced empirical data showing that thirty-three participants (97.1%) in thirty-four programs actually consider multiple user/use factors in their appraisal practice. Nevertheless, thirteen participants did not collect or utilize user/use information for appraisal practice.

This study investigated whether participating programs had collected user/use information at least once in the last 36 months and whether the programs' participants had utilized the information in appraising state government records at least once in the last 36 months. Twenty-two (64.7%) out of thirty-four programs reported that they had collected user/use information at least once in the last 36 months, and two participants reported that they did not know whether their programs had done so. The statistical results show that there is a significant relationship between a program's core function and its collection of user/use information. That is, state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs are more likely to collect user/use information than are state records management programs.

Out of the twenty-two programs that had collected user/use information for general purposes, participants of eighteen programs (81.8%) had utilized the information in their appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months. Three participants answered that they had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice even though their programs had not collected such information. Those participants had utilized user/use information they gained through their own experience with and knowledge of users and use of records. Seven programs reported that they had neither collected nor utilized such information. One statistical result shows that there is a significant relationship between collection of user/use information and utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice. That is, staff whose programs collect user/use information are more likely to utilize that information in their appraisal practice.

The twenty-one participants who had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice answered survey and interview questions related to this research question. They had utilized several information sources to collect user/use information for their appraisal practice.

The three most commonly cited information sources were records users, records creators, and user data collected from registration/reference services in their program. The two information sources defined as user studies in this study (systematic investigation of users and of records use in their program for specific purposes employing research methods) were the least frequently utilized information sources. The other information sources included use data collected from the program's registration/reference services, the program's website user and use data, records inventories/records surveys, subject experts in the institution, subject experts outside the institution, and reference archivists. The results of Fisher's exact tests show that there is no significant relationship between participants' appraisal role and their selection of user/use information sources for appraisal practice.

The most commonly cited purpose for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice was to anticipate future trends and potential use of records, and the least commonly cited purpose was to conduct cost-benefit analysis. Other purposes included determining the value of information contained in records; making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively; identifying changing user information needs and research interests; checking holdings and non-holdings; promoting relevant records use; improving performance; and fulfilling legal requirements for state government records. According to statistical results, "Anticipating future trends and potential use of records" as well as "Making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively" both have significant relationships with participants' appraisal role. Specifically, appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely than appraisal records managers to utilize user/use information for anticipating future trends and potential use of records. Also, multi-role appraisal staff members

are more likely to utilize user/use information for making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively than are appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers.

The thirteen participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice answered survey and interview questions related to this research question. The most commonly cited reason was that their programs had not collected such information. Other reasons included that participants had not thought about it; their archives received and preserved all records transferred to it; user/use information collected by their program was inapplicable to their appraisal practice; they had no time to do so; they did not think their appraisal practice would benefit from user/use information; their staff members had not typically done so; they and their colleagues already knew their users and use of records in their state archives; information needs change and future use was unpredictable; there was a lack of user/use information for certain records and new arrivals; user/use information was unreliable and unhelpful; there was a lack of formal analysis of user/use information; users expected everything to be preserved in archives; and as a state agency, state archives had the responsibilities of documentation and stewardship.

This study identified empirically that user studies are actually utilized in appraisal practice and contribute to appraisal practice. A total of eight AR and ARRM programs (23.5%) out of thirty-four programs had conducted user studies, and seven programs (87.5%) of those eight had utilized user studies to collect user/use information for appraisal practice. Those seven programs were two AR programs and five ARRM. No RM programs had conducted or utilized user studies. The results of Fisher's exact tests indicate that conducting user studies has a very strong relationship with utilizing user studies in appraisal practice. In other words, programs

conducting user studies are more likely to utilize user studies in appraisal practice than programs not conducting user studies.

The responses of participants who had actually utilized user studies in appraisal practice support the previous hypotheses that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable and feasible. Appraisal activities benefiting from user studies include making appraisal and reappraisal decisions; developing and evaluating program acquisition, appraisal, collection development, and records retention policies; planning and evaluating appraisal practice; developing and evaluating program appraisal criteria, standards, and checklists; creating records schedules; applying and evaluating program appraisal methods and techniques; and requesting and justifying resources for appraisal practice. The results prove that appraisal activities benefit from user studies, just as participants who had not utilized user studies in appraisal practice had supposed.

This study also shows that user studies in appraisal practice helped anticipate future research trends and potential use of records; identify changing user information needs and research interests; make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively; determine the value of information contained in records; carry out cost-benefit analysis; and publicize archival and records management work as a significant service. Participants who had not utilized user studies in appraisal practice supposed that user studies would be valuable to appraisal practice. The research results proved their suppositions correct: actual appraisal practice does indeed receive such benefits from user studies.

This study indicates that most participants had positive attitudes toward utilizing user studies in appraisal practice. Thirty-three participants (73.3%) of forty-five participants believed that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible and valuable for both U.S.

state archivists and records managers. Even participants from twenty-four (88.9%) of the twenty-seven programs that had not utilized user studies thought it would be feasible. Interviewees were more confident in its value than its feasibility. Some interviewees reported that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is feasible theoretically, but questionable practically. Although most participants agreed that user studies can be good tools for collecting user/use information for appraisal practice, they also agreed that user studies should not be utilized exclusively.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION**

This section discusses the research topics and the answers to the research questions in depth. Section 5.1 gives an overview of current organizational relationships and functions of U.S. state archives and records management programs because they impact the other results of this study. Section 5.2 discusses collecting user/use information in appraisal practice, and Section 5.3 discusses utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice, considering the use-inclusive appraisal approach. Sections 5.4 and 5.5 consider the current and potential utilization, respectively, of user studies in appraisal practice.

### **5.1 COMPLEXITY OF ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND FUNCTIONS OF U.S. STATE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

The purpose of this study is not to investigate U.S. state archives and records management programs themselves, but to explore their appraisal practice and user studies. However, this study did produce a snapshot of the current state of U.S. state archives and records management programs. Their core functions and organizational relationships seem to influence their collection of user/use information, as well as their utilization of user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice. This section briefly describes the current state of state archives and records

management programs to illuminate the study's results and provide recent information on these programs, which have been little studied, particularly since the 1990s.

This study confirms previous studies' reports that the organizational structures of state archives and records management programs vary widely.<sup>252</sup> Just before participating, one program's institution had reorganized itself into a unique structure. The varying organizational structures may be one reason why there are few studies on state archives and fewer studies on state records management programs. In particular, there are very few studies that investigate the whole population of both state archives and state records management programs. Indeed, a few interviewees and one non-participant mentioned the difficulties of taking CoSA's regular surveys because their programs do not readily fit into the same categories as other states.

CoSA's surveys have divided state archives and records management programs into two categories: joint programs and split programs. This study found that participating programs could be divided into four categories according to their organizational relationship: two separate programs in different institutions (separate program); two programs in different divisions or sections within the same institution (joint program); a records management program nested within a state archives (joint program); and a joint state archives and records management program within a division or section in a larger institution (joint program) (see Figure 3). It is almost certain that every non-participating state archives and records management program also corresponds to one of the four models.

Furthermore, this study also discovered that the core functions of several state archives and records management programs do not strictly match their organizational relationships. It seems that the functions of separate programs often overlap because state archivists and state

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<sup>252</sup> See, for example, Council of State Archives, *The State of State Records*; Newsome, "Uniform State Archival Legislation"; and Posner, *American State Archives*.

records managers have a close relationship. The relationship between the archival function and the records management function can be represented with four models (see Figure 4). It is highly probable that the core function of every non-participating state archives and records management program corresponds to one of the four models.

This study empirically identified that the majority of state appraisal staff members perform appraisal as both an archivist and a records manager. This seems to be because the core functions of the majority of state archives and records management programs are both archiving and records management, regardless of a program's name and organizational relationship. The differences between a program's name and its core function may cause some staff members' appraisal role to differ from his or her position title. That is, even if an appraisal staff member's position title is records manager and he or she works in a state records management program, the staff member may perform appraisal as both an archivist and records manager because the core function of his or her program overlaps with the core function of a state archives program. It is probable that many state appraisal staff members in non-participating programs perform appraisal as both an archivist and records manager, and their position titles do not represent their appraisal role.

CoSA's 2007 survey says that state archives and records management programs will likely perform better when they are more closely linked, and that the advantages of joint programs include the following: "appraising and scheduling records is more straightforward and identification of those with continuing (archival) value more certain; advisory services to state agencies are better coordinated."<sup>253</sup> However, the CoSA survey does not explain more fully why joint operations have those advantages. This study found that state archives and state records

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<sup>253</sup> Council of State Archivists. *The State of State Records*, 18.

management programs in many states are actually joint and that their core functions often overlap; furthermore, the majority of participants perform appraisal as both a state archivist and records manager. There is a strong possibility that these multi-role appraisal staff and overlapping core function of programs could be signs of effective appraisal practice and advisory services to state government agencies. Such crossover indicates that knowledge of appraisal functions exists both in archives and in records management programs, and that their staff interacts with records creators and records users. It also suggests that appraisal staff in programs whose core functions overlap can more easily collaborate than those in separate programs whose core functions do not overlap.

## **5.2 COLLECTION OF USER/USE INFORMATION FOR APPRAISAL PRACTICE**

This study investigated how participating programs collect user/use information, what kind of user/use information they collect, what user/use information sources they utilize in appraisal practice, and what supposed sources they prefer.

### **5.2.1 Function of program, staff appraisal role, and collection of user/use information**

The results of this study indicate that there is a significant relationship between program function and collection of user/use information, whereas there is no relationship between staff appraisal role and utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice. As previously mentioned, a greater percentage of AR-role participants and ARRM-role participants utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice than did RM-role participants. This is not an effect of

appraisal role but rather of program function. That is, because AR programs and ARRM programs more frequently collected user/use information than did RM programs, AR-role participants and ARRM-role participants utilized user/use information in appraisal practice more than RM-role participants did. The same is highly likely of the whole state archives and records management community.

It is clear that state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs tend to collect their user/use information, but it is unclear if state records management programs do. Why does program function so strongly influence collection of user/use information? In this case, state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs perform archival functions, and one of the basic archival functions is reference services to users. However, state records management programs perform only records management functions. Programs with archival functions make use of their records, provide reference services for their users, and preserve inactive records long-term or indefinitely. This puts such programs in a position to interact directly with users, facilitating collection of user/use information, though their collection strategies and kinds of information collected can differ from program to program. State records management programs, on the other hand, rarely have holdings. State records centers or state storage facilities keep temporary, semi-active records that belong to state government agencies and transfer those records upon request of their owners. They provide simple check-out and shipping services to their users, state government agencies. Though state records management programs do interact with their users, they do not provide the same kind of reference services or interact with the same kinds of users that state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs do.

This study indicates that state archives and records management programs do not collect user/use information for a specific practice, such as appraisal practice, but for general purposes and administration. It is highly likely that other kinds of archives and records management programs do so for the same purpose.

### **5.2.2 Changing user/use information sources utilized for appraisal practice**

One implication of this study is that the user/use information sources utilized for appraisal practice likely change, particularly as information technology changes. UAA researchers have suggested or utilized five common user/use information sources: subject experts; record users; user/use data collected through reference activities; literature describing research processes, trends, and methodologies published in various fields; and user studies. According to the results of this study, consultation with subject experts is no longer a popular source of user/use information, whereas records users and user/use data collected through reference activities remain popular sources. State appraisal staff rarely consult literature describing research processes, trends, and methodologies published in various fields. Conducting user studies and consulting existing user studies conducted by other archives does not frequently occur. In addition to those sources, state appraisal archivists utilize records creators and Web user/use data collected through their program's website.

Little is known about whether records management programs collect user/use information for their appraisal practice and, if so, how. Only a few researchers have assumed or suggested two user/use information sources for records management programs: records creators and subject experts. This study indicates state records managers utilize records users as well as records creators; however, this study's RM-role group did not utilize subject experts. This study also

indicates state records managers utilize user data collected from registration/reference services. It finds that records survey forms utilized in many RM programs and ARRM programs contain “frequency and urgency of use” as one of its data elements, as Shepherd and Yeo suggest.<sup>254</sup> Each user/use information source utilized for appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs is discussed fully in this section.

State appraisal staff members seem to have many opportunities to interact with records users. Most participants of this study, excluding RM-role participants, regularly provided reference services in their institutions. Even if appraisal staff providing reference services in state archives search rooms do not intend to collect user/use information for appraisal practice, they do so unintentionally through exposure to and interaction with records users. This unrecorded knowledge on users and use of records, gained simply through reference experience, can supplement user/use data recorded on registration and reference forms. Thus, state appraisal staff providing reference services can utilize, consciously and unconsciously, this knowledge in their appraisal practice. The same also seems to apply to appraisal staff working in other types of archives. Providing reference services seems to enhance state appraisal staff members’ understanding of their users and use of records. One implication of this is that appraisal staff members should provide reference services to better understand users, their use of records, and research trends and interests.

The value of appraisal staff conducting reference services seems to reflect the benefits of a holistic approach to archival work, where individual archival staff members appraise, process, and provide reference services for specific records series. Such staff members would have more opportunities to interact with both records users and records creators. This interaction would

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<sup>254</sup> Shepherd and Yeo, *Managing Records*, 68.

allow them to collect a good deal of information on their records, records users, and records creators, which they could utilize when appraising records and serving records users.

State appraisal staff members tend to consider state government agencies to be records users as well as records creators. Many interviewees mentioned that they had collaborated with records creators, and they highlighted the significance of this relationship. This close relationship with records creators and consideration of records creators as records users may occur more often in state archives and records management programs than in non-state programs because state programs are agencies of the same state government as their records creators.

Several state archives and records management programs involve records creators, and sometimes also records users, in meetings of special committees for appraisal. This study indicates that appraisal committee makeup varied among participating states and included different combinations of records users; records creators; appraisal records managers; reference archivists; processing archivists; appraisal archivists; a deputy archivist; a State archivist; subject experts, including an information technology director and a business officer; and a representative from the Attorney General's office. The appraisal committees of state archives and records management programs that did not participate in this study seem to be similar to those of participating programs. It is highly likely that other types of archives and records management programs have such special committees for appraisal; however, their constituents would not be the same, and they probably include constituents not included in state program appraisal committees.

Providing reference services, participating in appraisal committee meetings, and consulting with records creators on records surveys and records retention schedules exposes state appraisal staff to information on records users and records creators, intentionally or not.

Collecting user/use information from records users and records creators in this way seems to be convenient for appraisal staff and does not require much additional effort or many additional resources. It is no surprise, then, that participants' most frequently utilized user/use information sources for appraisal were records users and records creators. However, except for information collected through reference services in search rooms, user/use information from records users and records creators is usually not recorded, documented, or otherwise formally retained. The loss of this information would be significant because records users and records creators can provide the most accurate and reliable user/use information, particularly user information needs, one of the most important kinds of information for state appraisal staff. This study indicates the significance of collaboration between state archives programs, state records management programs, and record-creating state agencies for collecting information on records creators and their use of records as well as understanding the records themselves. Ultimately, this collaboration seems to be an important contributor to the evaluation of records.

Subject experts used to be popular sources of information on users, use of records, research interests, and research trends. Many archival researchers have claimed the necessity of appraisal archivists' collaboration with subject experts because an appraisal archivist cannot be expected to know user information needs and evaluate records produced in all disciplines.<sup>255</sup> Indeed, some archives have consulted subject experts during the appraisal process and benefited from it.<sup>256</sup> However, subject experts no longer seem to be popularly utilized or highly preferred

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<sup>255</sup> See, for example, Barbara L. Craig, "Doing Archival Appraisal in Canada. Results from a Postal Survey of Practitioners' Experiences, Practices, and Opinions," *Archivaria* 64 (Fall 2007): 1-45; Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 12-47; T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1956]); and Schellenberg, "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records."

<sup>256</sup> For example, Barbara L. Craig, "Doing Archival Appraisal in Canada. Results from a Postal Survey of Practitioners' Experiences, Practices, and Opinions," *Archivaria* 64 (Fall 2007): 1-45; Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50

by state appraisal staff as user/use information sources. Only a small percentage of participants had utilized subject experts. In particular, no RM programs had consulted subject experts, despite Shepherd and Yeo's claim that involving subject experts in retention decision-making can give records managers information on financial requirements, legal requirements, and cultural needs.<sup>257</sup>

Though Brichford acknowledges the necessity of appraisal archivists' collaboration with subject experts, he ultimately argues that these consultations have been overrated, emphasizing the difficulties of finding qualified experts.<sup>258</sup> However, an interviewee of this study cited a different argument against subject expert consultations. According to him, subject experts tend to think records relevant to their own subjects are more important than other records; hence, subject experts are not objective and have a narrow perspective. There may be another reason that this study found so little utilization of subject experts. The survey questionnaire asked participants to consider appraisal of only state government records. The best subject experts for state government records must be the records' creators, in other words, the state government agencies creating the records. In other words, participants seem to consider records creators to be subject experts of state government records.

This study indicates that state appraisal staff have been changing which user/use information sources they utilize for appraisal practice as information technology has been developing even though records users, records creators, and user/use data collected from registration/reference services are still popularly utilized. Furthermore, the development of technology has advanced Web-based tools, information systems including a reference module,

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(Winter 1987): 12-47; T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1956]); and Schellenberg, "The Appraisal of Modern Public Records."

<sup>257</sup> Shepherd and Yeo, *Managing Records*, 162.

<sup>258</sup> Brichford, *Scientific and Technological Documentation*, 5.

and online surveys for user studies. It has brought not only new and convenient sources of user/use information, but also new kinds of information, such as the number of times specific electronic records and digital collections are accessed and downloaded from a program's website.

State archives and records management programs have their own websites or Web pages on their parental institution's website. Many of them have used Web-based tools to collect data on their users and use. In particular, many participants had actually utilized, or supposed to be helpful, data on which electronic records and digital collections are accessed or downloaded from their program's website and the number of downloads. Nevertheless, participants who had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice ranked Web data on users and use lowly as information sources actually utilized. Those who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice ranked such information even lower as preferred supposed information sources. Despite this finding, collecting user/use information through Web-based tools is likely to increase as new Web-based tools develop and the number of remote users, remote reference services, electronic records, and digital collections increases. If state archives and records management programs collect more user/use information through Web-based tools, their appraisal staff may more often utilize the collected information in their appraisal practice.

Some state archives and records management programs have an information system with a reference module. Those systems facilitate their programs' collection and retention of user/use information collected through reference services. They also facilitate their staff's access to and utilization of the collected information. Tracking, retrieval, and sorting functions in the information systems seem to reduce the necessity of analyzing reference user/use data. The information systems also give state appraisal staff members easy access to the user/use

information in the reference module. One program's information system has both a reference module and an appraisal module. Another program even tailored a commercial information system to its own needs. Interviewees using information systems with a reference module reported being satisfied with their systems, thought they were helpful, and mentioned the benefits they had provided. Overall, it is almost certain that existing information systems would be applicable and helpful to state archives and records management programs that do not currently utilize such information systems.

Web-based tools and information systems with a reference module enhance state accessibility to user/use information collected by appraisal staff's institutions and other state government agencies. This study's interviews indicate that the accessibility to user/use information is not limited by program type. Even the appraisal staff of separate records management programs, which did not directly collect user/use information, could access user/use information collected through reference services and Web-based tools, either at their state archives or other state agencies. Web-based tools and information systems with a reference module seem to facilitate the sharing of user/use information between records officers of state agencies creating records, reference archivists, appraisal archivists, and appraisal records managers. The development of information technology will continue to make available new sorts of reference data.

### **5.2.3 Approaches to collecting, documenting, and managing user/use information for appraisal practice**

Based on the user/use information sources for appraisal practice described in the previous section, state appraisal staff's methods for collecting, documenting, managing, and storing

user/use information for appraisal practice can be largely divided into two approaches. One approach, a form of natural processing, is more subjective, personal, and informal; the other approach, a form of systematic processing, is more objective, institutional, and formal. This section describes these two approaches.

In the first approach, user/use information is not documented but stored as individual knowledge in memory, which is naturally retrieved and utilized when needed. This approach collects user/use information mainly through individual experience, oral conversations (e.g., with colleagues, subject experts, records creators, and records users), review of literature indicating research trends, or reference to existing user studies. The collected information is not usually recorded.

This informal approach may explain a few contradictory findings of this study. First, although thirteen participants from thirty-four programs in this study answered that they did not utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice, it cannot be said that they did not consider users and use as an appraisal factor. In fact, future “users and use” was ranked first as an appraisal factor by twenty-nine participants from thirty-four programs. Yet eight of the thirteen participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice had considered future users and use. Given the contradictory responses to these two questions, it is possible that even more participants who answered that they did not utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice did in fact consider users and use as an appraisal factor. That is, those participants seemed to utilize knowledge of users and use of records gained from their experience. Indeed, a few participants claimed they knew their users and use of records even though they did not collect user/use information in their appraisal practice.

This informal approach also seems to explain why three participants answered that they utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice even though their programs did not collect user/use information. They seem to gain user/use information in a few ways, such as in appraisal committee meetings and informal conversation with reference archivists, users, and state officials, even though their programs do not collect such information. These collecting activities seem to be conducted in various ways without difficulty.

This informal approach may be one reason that a few participants did not collect user/use information for appraisal practice even though their programs had such information. A few interviewees said that they and their colleagues knew their users and use of records in their state archives very well. However, this approach would not help their appraisal of a new series of records on which they have no information. Despite this issue, many participants seem to rely on their knowledge of and experience with users and use in their appraisal practice. Furthermore, it seems that the informal approach probably occurs commonly throughout the entire archival and records management community—in smaller archives and records management programs in particular—because it is convenient and does not require extra resources (e.g., staff time and budget).

The other approach—systematic processing—is more objective, institutional, and formal. This approach collects user/use information through tools (e.g., reference service forms, records survey forms, Web-based tools, and research methods such as interviews and surveys). The collected information is recorded and kept in papers, databases, and computer files. Hence, staff members practicing appraisal can utilize such data as empirical evidence to support their decisions on appraisal, measure their performances, and prove and justify their budget for appraisal practice. The objective, collective, institutional, and formal approach operates as

institutional memory, whereas the subjective, individual, informal approach operates as individual memory. Hence, the user/use information retained and operated as institutional memory could be utilized by future staff members of the institution.

The two approaches seem to affect state appraisal staff members' recognition of their programs' collection of user/use information and their utilization of the information. In this study, participants from programs that took the formal approach could explain how they and their programs collected user/use information and utilized such information in appraisal practice more confidently than participants from programs that took the informal approach. Some interviewees from the latter programs seemed unsure about their utilization of their knowledge on users and use of records in their appraisal practice. A few of them seemed not to recognize their own knowledge on users and use of records gained through their experiences because the knowledge is not recorded or stored as data. As a result, they said that they only realized that they had utilized user/use information in appraisal practice since participating in this study. Some other participants who answered that they had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice seem to consider users and use as appraisal factors in a similar way.

Overall, state appraisal staff tend to prefer and utilize information sources that their programs already have or that they can easily access. However, this study also indicates that state appraisal staff can collect user/use information themselves, even if their program does not collect such information, such as by providing reference services for users and interacting with records creators. They may also be able to obtain user/use information collected by a comparable program and other state government agencies within their state. Ultimately, collecting user/use information for appraisal practice mostly depends on each appraisal staff member's willingness to do so.

### 5.3 USE-INCLUSIVE APPRAISAL APPROACH IN CURRENT APPRAISAL PRACTICE

The archival community has paid attention to research users/use as an appraisal factor, as indicated in the Literature Review chapter. However, this study indicates the necessity of paying more attention to additional appraisal factors, collecting user/use information from other user groups, and studying other user groups. It also indicates that user/use appraisal factors would be prioritized differently depending on the context of archives and records management programs. For instance, Brichford proclaims, “Research values are use values,”<sup>259</sup> which implies that research is the major use. He was a university archivist when he wrote an appraisal manual for the SAA, so he seemed to focus on research values. However, this study showed that legal users/use, reflecting legal values, and administrative users/use, reflecting administrative values, should be considered as much as research users/use in state archives and records management programs.

There are similarities between the purposes identified in this study for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice and those claimed by UAA researchers. Also, the purposes claimed by participants reflect how they utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice.

The most common purpose was anticipating future research trends and potential use of records. Moreover, according to a result of Fisher’s exact test in this study, there is a relationship between appraisal role and anticipating future research trends and potential use of records. That is, appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely than appraisal records managers to utilize user/use information for anticipating future research trends and

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<sup>259</sup> Maynard J. Brichford, *Archives & Manuscripts: Appraisal & Accessioning, Basic Manual Series* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977), 9.

potential use of records. Indeed, the majority of the AR-role and ARRM-role participants, but not the RM-role participants, who had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice reported this purpose more than any other. Likewise, the majority of the AR-role and ARRM-role participants, but not the RM-role participants, who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice supposed they would utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice for the same purpose.

It makes sense, then, that a greater percentage of appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members than appraisal records managers would consider future users and use—particularly, future researchers and their use—as an appraisal factor. This may be a necessary condition of utilizing user/use information to anticipate future research trends and potential use of records. This tendency seems likely to occur with appraisal staff working for other types of archives and records management programs as well.

Identifying changing user information needs and research interests also seems to be a common purpose to appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members, but not to appraisal records managers. In this study, only participants from the AR-role and ARRM-role groups utilized user/use information for this purpose, and only one RM-role participant supposed he or she would do so. However, there is no statistically significant relationship between appraisal role and the activity of identifying changing user information needs and research interests. For this activity in appraisal practice, many AR-role and ARRM-role participants seemed to utilize information on user information needs, research topics, and research interests. The result of a Fisher's exact test shows there is a significant relationship between such information and appraisal role. That is, appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff

members are more likely than appraisal records managers to utilize such information in appraisal practice.

These two purposes, anticipating future research trends and potential use of records and identifying changing user information needs and research interests, seem to be related to consideration of research users and use as an appraisal factor. The result of a Fisher's exact test in this study shows a significant relationship between appraisal role and consideration of research users and use as an appraisal factor. Appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely than appraisal records managers to consider research users and use in their appraisal practice. This difference seems to be due to the fact that state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs provide reference services for researchers, whereas state records management programs do not. Moreover, many appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members provide reference services for users, including researchers, whereas appraisal records managers rarely do. Hence, it is very likely that because appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members more often consider research users and use as an appraisal factor than do appraisal records managers, they more often utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice in order to anticipate future research trends and potential use of records and identify changing user information needs and research interests.

Determining the value of information contained in records reflects the value-through-use approach to appraisal, which assesses the value of records according to use. The majority of participants had split attitudes toward this approach: they acknowledged its necessity and value, but they also had concerns. For the most part, participants regarded users and use as just one of many appraisal factors and criteria, not a primary one. Their opinions run counter to Greene's claim about the use-based approach to appraisal. Also, most participants agreed that users and

use should not be the sole appraisal factor. Taken together, all these findings indicate that the value-through-use appraisal approach still influences contemporary state appraisal staff.

Making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively is also a purpose of utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice. Although the archival community has acknowledged the inevitable subjectivity of appraisal and reappraisal decision-making, it has pursued ever more objective ways to make these decisions. Participants who had utilized user/use information for appraisal practice for this purpose seemed to do so to support their subjective appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decision-making with empirical data on users and use.

Making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively has a significant relationship with appraisal role. According to a Fisher's exact test in this study, multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely to utilize user/use information to make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively than are appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers. Staff in all three roles make those kinds of decisions; hence, it is not clear why multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely than others to utilize user/use information for this purpose.

It seems that two purposes—making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively and determining the value of information contained in records—are related. They both seem to indicate the need and desire for guidelines or tools to help evaluate the abstract concept of value and make subjective decision-making more objective. This implies that state archivists and records managers need tools to guide their appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions.

It is somewhat surprising that carrying out cost-benefit analysis was the least commonly cited actual and supposed purpose. This result is unexpected because government archivists and records managers are very concerned about their budgets and justifying the expenditure of public money. This is why Bauer advocated use-based cost-benefit analysis in U.S. national archives.<sup>260</sup> The infrequent citation of cost-benefit analysis seems to have occurred because many state archives and records management programs do not conduct cost-benefit analysis, as a few interviewees of this study indicated. In addition, while carrying out cost-benefit analysis was the most commonly cited supposed purpose in the RM-role group, it was one of the least cited supposed purposes in the AR-role and ARRM-role groups. This result seems to be related to the convention that records managers are more concerned with efficiency than are archivists.

This study indicates, in general, that state appraisal staff may have similar purposes for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice. In this study, the actual purposes of participants who had utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice were similar to the supposed purposes of participants who had not. Most appraisal staff members of all types of programs are likely to utilize user/use information in appraisal practice for the purposes identified in this study, though they may have additional purposes as well.

The three most significant reasons for non-utilization of user/use information for appraisal practice seem to be the failure to consider doing so, a lack of available user/use information, and conventional practice in a program and an institution. These factors are connected. Lack of education and training on the UIA and circumstances in programs and institutions that make the UIA unavailable or unnecessary caused participants to not to consider UIA in their appraisal practice.

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<sup>260</sup> See Bauer, *The Appraisal of Current and Recent Records*.

A lack of information and knowledge on UIA and on collecting and utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice indicates a gap in education and training about these topics. If appraisal staff members do not know about utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice, they cannot choose to do so. Further, the less that appraisal staff know about and consider it, the less they can expect to gain from it, and the less they will think about its benefits.

Regarding a lack of available user/use information, a Fisher's exact test shows that programs' collection or non-collection of user/use information impacts their staff's utilization of such information in appraisal practice. That is, if a program collects user/use information, its staff is more likely to utilize the collected information in appraisal practice. It is highly likely that this relationship exists in other types of archives and records management programs.

Several participating programs, however, did collect or have user/use information, mainly due to the appraisal conventions of each state archives or records management program. Yet their appraisal staff still had not utilized it in appraisal. The first reason is that previous staff members at some programs had not typically utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice, and their practices shaped those of newer staff members. The second reason is that staff members in some state archives programs had no choice about utilizing or not utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice because their programs did not select what records to accession; rather, they received all records transferred to them. These latter programs' staff members do not seem to be making appraisal decisions and instead follow retention periods in records retention schedules. In this case, appraisal archivists' opinions are not accounted for in the transfer of records.

Another reason for not collecting or utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice is that such information is inapplicable to some programs' appraisal practice. There are two

possible explanations for this: 1) the differences between user/use information actually collected by programs and user/use information thought to be supposedly helpful in appraisal practice; and 2) the common criticisms of determining the value of records via use, as well as employing users and use as an appraisal factor.

First, this study indicates that there are differences between user/use information actually collected by programs and user/use information thought to be helpful in appraisal practice. The differences seem to result from two factors. First, in most cases, the reference staff collects most of the user/use information, not the appraisal staff. Second, such information is not collected exclusively for appraisal practice. It is also collected to improve user services, enhance security, assess and justify budget, measure performance, report performance to a parental institution or the public, achieve the mission of their institution, and make a better program. The gap between collected and supposedly helpful user/use information derives from which staff members collect user/use information, which staff members practice appraisal, and their purposes for collecting such information. That is, in state archives, reference archivists collect user/use information not only for appraisal practice but also for general administration and practice in their institution. In general, appraisal practice is conducted by appraisal archivists, records managers (particularly records analysts), and state government agents (usually records officers). Although those staff members can obtain user/use information from a state archives or other sources and/or provide reference services in state archives, they do not have much authority over what sort of user/use information should be collected because the reference staff is mainly charged with collecting such information. Also, because user/use information is not collected exclusively for the purpose of appraisal practice, not every collected piece of information is useful and helpful in appraisal

practice. These two factors probably occur in archives and records management programs outside the state system and cause the same gap.

The other reason that user/use information is sometimes inapplicable in appraisal practice is the same as the common criticisms of determining the value of records via use, as well as employing users and use as an appraisal factor: unpredictable future use and the problematic nature of measuring the use of records. Many members of the archival community have considered future use to be unpredictable because collected user/use information yields data only about past and present users and use of records, and such information does not help anticipate future users and use of records. Anticipation of future use has been the most controversial ongoing issue with regards to employing users and use as an appraisal factor because user information needs and research interests and trends change over time, as many previous researchers, such as Ham, have noted.<sup>261</sup> The problematic nature of measuring use of records is a more methodological concern. It is shared by archival researchers' methodological criticism of the use-inclusive approach to archival appraisal.<sup>262</sup> That is, measuring use is fundamentally inaccurate and unreliable because several factors (e.g., archival description, processing, accessing, and searching) other than the intrinsic value of records influence both use itself and the measurement of use, as many researchers, such as Benedict and Cook, have claimed.<sup>263</sup> These issues and criticisms will always exist because use continuously changes and is an abstract and evolving concept influenced by other factors. Hence, the two issues will continue to be reasons for criticizing the UIA and for not utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice.

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<sup>261</sup> See Ham, "The Archival Edge."

<sup>262</sup> As a broad concept, the use-inclusive approach (UIA) to appraisal refers to any type of appraisal approach that considers and employs use as an appraisal factor, regardless of its extent. This operational term broadly includes use as one of several appraisal factors or as the principal appraisal factor because archival researchers' conclusions on the extent of the role of use vary and are ambiguous. As a result, UIA includes the value-through-use approach, the use-based approach to appraisal, and use-based cost-benefit analysis.

<sup>263</sup> See Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire"; Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice."

The issues of unpredictable future use and inaccurate measurement of use influence both the archival community and the library community, but the two communities respond differently. This stark difference is worth considering. These issues have a much greater negative influence in the archival community than in the library community. The library community has frequently utilized user/use information in collection development and management even though the library community has acknowledged the issues of unpredictable future use and inaccurate measurement of use. The differing responses to the issues seem to be related to several assumptions about the following: different natures of archival materials and library materials, slight but meaningful differences in archival appraisal practice and collection development and management, and differences in the significance of preservation and use in the archival and library communities. In terms of materials, most archival materials are unique, though some of them are copied or digitized. Archivists are generally reluctant to destroy archival materials even when they have not been used for a long time because future users may want them. However, librarians can, in most cases, borrow or re-purchase additional copies of destroyed materials. Hence, librarians are not as afraid as archivists to destroy library materials, except for special collections and rare books, and they do not weigh future use of library materials as heavily. Librarians also put less emphasis on the value of library materials, again except for special collections and rare books, than archivists put on the value of archival materials. Archivists consider the archival value, intrinsic value, and historical value of the archival materials themselves as well as of the information contained in archival materials, whereas librarians rarely do the same for their materials. Regarding the significance of use and preservation, libraries generally put more weight on making use of their holdings than preserving their holdings. However, preservation is traditionally part of the defining mission of archives, though they have considered use of archival

materials more over time. In addition, archival appraisal is more complicated than library collection development and management. For these assumed reasons, the archival community seems to be more cautious about utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice than the library community.

## **5.4 UTILIZATION OF USER STUDIES IN APPRAISAL PRACTICE**

This section describes the conduct of user studies and the current utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. Then it anticipates potential utilization of the user studies in appraisal practice. This section also considers the factors affecting the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice.

### **5.4.1 Current conduct of user studies investigating archives users and state government agencies**

This study indicates that conducting user studies is highly related to utilizing user studies in appraisal practice. According to the statistical results of this study, if a state archives program, state records management program, or joint state archives and records management program conducts user studies, the program's appraisal staff is highly likely to utilize results of the user studies in their appraisal practice. This relationship is also likely to occur in other types of archives and records management programs.

This study indicates that a number of state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs conduct user studies, but state records management programs

rarely do so. The lack of user studies conducted by state records management programs may derive from two causes. The first is that state records management programs have a limited scope of users—records creators—and such programs directly interact with records creators through formal meetings and personal communication. Most interviewees from the RM-role group thought that they knew records creators, and they seemed to feel that conducting user studies of records creators is helpful but not necessary. However, because state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs interact with several different user groups, it is necessary and useful for them to conduct user studies. The second cause is that state records management programs do not provide reference services and rarely have records managers charged with reference services. Hence, they do not collect or retain user/use information through reference services, which provide basic information for conducting user studies.

It is noteworthy that state archives and records management programs conduct user studies investigating state government agencies as records creators and also as records users. Three ARRM programs conducted user studies of both archives users and state government agencies. For user studies of state government agencies, the programs distributed survey questionnaires, conducted interviews, and conducted focus group meetings with state government agencies. This study indicates that user studies investigating state government agencies can ask the same questions they asked users in state archives as well as different questions such as why state government agencies are creating their records, the purposes of the records, how they manage records in their own facilities, how they use the state archives, how the state archives serve them, how they view their operations, and how they view the working relationship they have with the staff of the state archives. That is, it can be said that user studies of archives users seek different information than do user studies of state government agencies. It

is highly likely that joint state archives and records management programs can more conveniently conduct user studies of records users in state archives and records users creating records than can separate state archives programs and separate records management programs. The reason is that joint state archives and records management programs have more opportunities to interact with both records users of state archives and records users creating records, promoting closer relationships with both groups of users.

One of the more interesting findings of this study is that a few state appraisal staff members regard records surveys as user studies. Two interviewees of this study thought that records surveys are user studies because state appraisal staff can identify the state government agency's information needs and use of records while conducting records surveys by meeting, talking with, and listening to records creators, who are also records users. However, even if the process of conducting records surveys were similar to the process of conducting user studies via interviews and focus group meetings, current records surveys are not user studies. Records surveys do not purport to investigate users and use of records, but rather records themselves. Appraisal staff members can implicitly gain information on records creators and their use of records during the conduct of surveys, but they do not systematically analyze, interpret, record, or retain the information. Currently the only user/use information in most records surveys is use frequency of a specific records series. That information represents past and current use by records creators, and it would help archivists anticipate the future administrative, legal, and financial use of the records series by the records creators. Frequent past and current use of records series in their office may indicate their frequent use in the future.

This study indicates that state archives and records management programs conducting user studies tend to collect user/use information from information sources that are relatively

objective, formal, systematic, and planned rather than information sources that are relatively subjective, informal, and personal. The majority of the seven participating programs conducting and utilizing user studies in appraisal practice preferred collecting user/use information by utilizing systematic tools (e.g., reference service forms, records survey forms, Web-based tools, and research methods) and recording and storing the information in papers, databases, and computer files rather than collecting such information from individual experience and storing it only in individuals' memories. This finding implies that user study researchers' claim that archives must have data on users and use collected through registration and reference services, and that user studies must rest on those data, actually occurs in state archives and records management programs.<sup>264</sup> In other words, this study shows that the participating programs conducting user studies also have reference data.

The majority of the seven programs conducting and utilizing user studies in appraisal practice also preferred collecting user/use information by utilizing indirect approaches (e.g., consultation of data collected through reference services and Web-based tools) rather than direct approaches (e.g., consultation of subject experts), except for the direct approach of consulting records users. Other types of archives and records management programs conducting and utilizing user studies in appraisal practice may also utilize these same kinds of sources and methods.

As previously shown, state appraisal staff tend to prefer use information over user information. This preference may explain why citation analysis has already drawn the attention of a few appraisal researchers for use in conducting user studies. User studies employing citation analysis are helpful for reappraising current records series or appraising a new records series that

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<sup>264</sup> See, for example, Conway, "Facts and Frameworks," and Goggin, "The Indirect Approach."

is similar to a records series that has been used in an archives. Such user studies should, perhaps, more properly be called use studies, but the archival community does not distinguish between the two terms.

#### **5.4.2 Current utilization of user studies in appraisal practice**

Some general characteristics of participants who utilized user studies in their appraisal practice, as well as characteristics of their programs, seem to imply the conditions necessary for utilizing user studies in appraisal practice. First, their programs collected user/use information from several information sources and had reference data on their users and use of records. Second, the participants considered multiple kinds of user/use factors in their appraisal practice, though they thought user/use factors should not be the only appraisal factors. That is, they took the use-inclusive approach to appraisal. Third, the participants also thought that user studies should be only one of multiple tools for appraisal practice, not the only one. Lastly, they were willing to conduct user studies and utilize their programs' existing user studies in appraisal practice.

There is a strong possibility that state appraisal staff utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice also gain user/use information from other information sources. Participants of this study who had utilized results of user studies in appraisal practice utilized user/use information collected from at least four other information sources: reference data on users, reference data on use, Web user data, and Web use data. Furthermore, statistical results show that there are relationships between a program's utilization of user studies in appraisal practice and the program's collection of user/use information from these four information sources, some of which was used in appraisal practice. In other words, programs that utilize user studies in appraisal practice are more likely to collect user/use information from the four information

sources for utilization in appraisal practice than programs that do not utilize user studies in appraisal practice.

All participants who had utilized user studies in their appraisal practice also utilized user/use information collected from registration and reference services in their appraisal practice. These relationships among reference data, user studies, and utilization of reference data and user studies in appraisal practice probably occur in other types of archives and records management programs.

State appraisal staff seem to utilize and prefer user studies on records use more than user studies on records users. This implies that information on records use is more helpful to state appraisal staff than information on records users. This seems to be related to the tendency for the appraisal process to focus more on use than users, as can be seen in the UIA, even though use and users are inseparable. It is very probable that this same bias toward records use occurs in non-state appraisal staff.

This study confirms the value of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice in addition to the feasibility of doing so, as have been claimed by AAUS researchers and UAA researchers. It also indicates that participating programs that utilized user studies in appraisal practice actually gained the benefits claimed by UAA researchers of considering users and use as an appraisal factor. Their appraisal practice also gained some of the benefits claimed by AAUS researchers of the utilization of user studies. Moreover, the results of this study empirically confirm the conceptual claims of AAUS and UAA researchers about the feasibility and benefits of user studies in particular appraisal activities, including making appraisal and reappraisal decisions. Furthermore, this study identified two additional appraisal activities not previously considered by AAUS and UAA researchers as benefiting from user studies: planning and evaluating appraisal

practice and creating records retention schedules. In general, user studies would seem to benefit the appraisal activities of all types of archives and records management programs, though the benefits would differ depending on context and appraisal practice.

The two appraisal activities that have benefited and can benefit most from user studies seem to be appraisal decision-making and reappraisal decision-making. Whereas previous AAUS and UAA researchers have expected appraisal decision-making to benefit most from user studies, there was no consensus on whether reappraisal decision-making would benefit, even among UAA researchers. Some UAA researchers, such as Rapport and Greene, have claimed that utilizing use of records as an appraisal factor can help in the reappraisal of records, whereas UAA critics, such as Benedict, argue that archivists cannot and should not reappraise records based on frequency of past use.<sup>265</sup> However, Greene contends that reappraisal decision-making is the appraisal activity that can benefit the most from use studies: “Eastwood’s rejection of the application of use studies to reappraisal is impractical because it ignores the limits that past appraisal decisions place on current and future acquisitions.”<sup>266</sup> On the other hand, AAUS researchers have very rarely paid attention to reappraisal decision-making. Results of this study affirm that several state appraisal staffs actually benefited from utilizing user studies in their reappraisal and appraisal decision-making. This finding suggests that appraisal staff of non-state archives and records management programs could benefit from user studies in both appraisal decision-making and reappraisal decision-making. User studies help appraisal decision-making and reappraisal decision-making ultimately by providing user/use information to help consider users and use as an appraisal factor—in other words, the UIA. That is, results of user studies help

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<sup>265</sup> See, for example, Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire”; Greene, ““The Surest Proof””; and Rapport, “No Grandfather Clause.”

<sup>266</sup> Greene, ““The Surest Proof”,” 154.

state appraisal staff anticipate future research trends; identify changing user information needs and research interests, conduct cost-benefit analysis; and make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively.

One of the significant features of this study is that it provides empirical data showing that state appraisal staff actually gained benefits that have been debated in arguments about the UIA. One of the biggest arguments was whether or not consideration of users and use as an appraisal factor can help appraisal staff anticipate future research trends and identify changing user information needs and research interests. Critics of the UIA have frequently criticized the approach's efficacy for these two appraisal activities. They have claimed that because user information needs, research interests, and research trends always change, user studies presenting results on past and current users and use of records are not helpful in anticipating future trends in research and information needs. This study found that, indeed, this was one reason that a few participants did not utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice. Despite this debate, all participating programs that had utilized user studies in appraisal practice but one reported that doing so had benefited anticipating future research trends and identifying changing user information needs and research interests. A few study interviewees said that user studies had helped them anticipate future research trends and potential use of records. It seems likely that appraisal staff members working in non-state archives and records management programs could also benefit from user studies when anticipating future research trends and identifying changing user information needs and research interests.

User studies have also helped appraisal staff make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively, as more than half of participating programs utilizing user studies in appraisal practice reported. UAA researchers have also claimed this as a benefit of

considering users and use as an appraisal factor. AAUS researchers have addressed how results of user studies can be utilized as verifiable and reliable reference for more objective appraisal and reappraisal decision-making. It is highly likely that appraisal staff in other types of archives and records management programs also could gain these benefits from user studies.

This study indicates that though user studies benefit appraisal and reappraisal decision-making, the benefits vary depending on the levels of the appraised or reappraised records. Utilizing results of user studies benefited appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the series level of records. For the most part, other kinds of archives and records management programs also appraise their records at the series level, so it is likely that user studies would be similarly beneficial. However, a question on the level of appraised records remained. That is, whereas several participants of this study benefited from utilizing user studies in appraisal and reappraisal decision-making at the series level, few participants reported this benefit for other levels of records (e.g., boxes, folders, and items). This difference derives from the fact that appraising records at the item, folder, and box levels is not common in state archives and records management programs.

User studies rarely seem to benefit cost-benefit analysis, not because user studies are not beneficial to cost-benefit analysis, but only because cost-benefit analysis is rarely conducted in state archives and records management programs. Hence, the study's results on how much cost-benefit analysis can benefit from user studies are inconclusive. Nevertheless, it is assumed that cost-benefit analysis may be more helpful to reappraisal decision-making than appraisal decision-making; it is easier to calculate the benefits of an existing records series versus the costs of its preservation than it is to appraise a new records series.

Creating records retention schedules has benefited from user studies, a relationship that has gone unnoticed in previous research. Only two participants in this study reported that they had benefited from user studies when creating records retention schedules. This small number of participants seems to be due to the fact that no participants from the RM-role group utilized user studies in appraisal practice or answered questions about the benefits of user studies. The two aforementioned participants were from the ARRM-role group; this is meaningful because it implies that it is feasible for appraisal records managers to benefit from user studies when creating records schedules. Beyond state records management programs, records managers working for other types of records management programs could benefit from user studies when creating records retention schedules.

This study has revealed an open topic that UAA researchers should consider. A few AAUS researchers have considered the possibility of utilizing user studies when applying and evaluating appraisal approaches (e.g., use approach), methods (e.g., functional analysis), and techniques (e.g., sampling).<sup>267</sup> Indeed, this study finds that a few state archives and records management programs had actually benefited from user studies when applying and evaluating appraisal methods and techniques. However, according to the literature review of this study and the researcher's experience, no UAA researchers have considered this possibility even though appraisal researchers have tried to develop, apply, and evaluate appraisal approaches (e.g., use approach), methods (e.g., functional analysis), and techniques (e.g., sampling).

The findings of this study indicate that only a weak relationship currently exists between archival appraisal practice and user studies in state archives and records management programs. Only seven participating programs utilized user studies in appraisal practice. User studies have

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<sup>267</sup> For example, Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles," and Goggin, "The Indirect Approach."

not been conducted for appraisal practice or utilized systematically or regularly in appraisal practice. The following section considers the potential utilization of user studies in archival appraisal practice.

## **5.5 POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPRAISAL PRACTICE AND USER STUDIES**

### **5.5.1 Attitudes toward the value and feasibility of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice according to appraisal role**

It is expected that, in general, state appraisal staff members, regardless of their appraisal role, can utilize user studies in their appraisal practice and benefit from doing so. However, the results of this study indicate that the feasibility and value of user studies could differ for appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers.

Utilizing user studies in appraisal practice seems not to be as valuable to appraisal records managers as to appraisal archivists. A few participants indicated that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable only for appraisal archivists; none said that it would be valuable only for appraisal records managers. It is interesting to note that most of the reasons participants thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would not be valuable to appraisal records managers also apply to appraisal archivists. There may also be reasons other than the ones presented as options in the study's survey or cited by participants in this study.

One of these other reasons may be the stability of records series production by state government agencies and of records creators' information needs. State government agencies do

not often produce new records series, and records creators' information needs do not frequently change because their roles, tasks, and operations do not often change. Even if a state government continuously produces new records for a records series, the value of the records series does not change much. Appraisal records managers are familiar with records series and their value. However, user/use information and user studies about a specific state government records series are very helpful to state archivists' appraisal and reappraisal decision-making because various archives users have different information needs, their information needs change, and research trends also change.

User/use information and user studies are of some value to appraisal records managers, but they are of more value to appraisal archivists. Indeed, a few records managers interviewed for this study seemed to think that records managers do not need to utilize user/use information or user studies in their appraisal practice because of their close relationship with records creators and their years of experience managing the same government records series. Another likely reason is that most existing user studies are about archives users, and they do not investigate records creators as records users.

Similarly, utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice seems not to be as feasible for appraisal records managers as for appraisal archivists. Some participants indicated that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be feasible only for appraisal archivists; none said that it would be feasible only for appraisal records managers, and some said that it would not be feasible for them. The latter participants cited several reasons for this belief, and except for the difficulty of collaboration between staff conducting appraisal practice and staff conducting user studies, all these reasons apply to appraisal records managers and appraisal archivists. One RM-role participant said that records managers cannot conduct user studies

because each state government agency is different. However, three ARRM programs participating in this study had conducted user studies of various state government agencies. Also, even though state archives programs have conducted user studies that investigate various user groups of their archives, they have utilized the same user study tools do so; hence, state records management programs can develop and utilize a single user study to investigate various state government agencies. Perhaps the RM-role participant's real hindrance is a lack of knowledge or experience regarding the conduct of user studies, rather than diversity among state government agencies.

There is a statistically significant relationship between a staff member's appraisal role and the supposed value and feasibility of making reappraisal decisions at the series level. Appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members are more likely to believe that results of user studies would be valuable and feasible in making reappraisal decisions at the series level than are appraisal records managers. This tendency seems to be due to the fact that appraisal records managers make fewer reappraisal decisions at the series level than appraisal archivists and multi-role appraisal staff members do.

### **5.5.2 Differing attitudes toward value versus feasibility of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice**

This study finds that, in general, state appraisal staff think that utilization of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible and valuable in state archives and records management programs, and the same seems likely of other types of archives and records management programs. However, state appraisal staff seem to have different degrees of confidence about value versus feasibility; non-state appraisal staff are highly likely to have the same attitudes. Some of the

survey results indicate that participants had less positive attitudes toward the feasibility of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice than the value of doing so. First, fewer total participants thought that doing so is feasible than thought that doing so is valuable. Second, three participants answered that doing so is valuable for both state archivists and state records managers, but they responded “I don’t know” to the question about feasibility. Third, more than twice the number of participants thought it is feasible than thought it is valuable for only state archivists.

Although several interviewees and survey respondents indicated that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice seemed good in theory, they also indicated that it would be difficult in actual practice in the current environment of state archives and records management programs. Many interviewees were not confident about its feasibility due to several factors, particularly the current lack of resources in the state archival and records management community. It is highly likely that most appraisal staff members in all types of archives and records management programs share similar attitudes.

Nevertheless, most participants had positive overall attitudes toward utilizing user studies in appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs. This finding seems to indicate a potentially strong future relationship between user studies and appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs, though the relationship will be affected by many factors.

### **5.5.3 Reasons for anticipating potential utilization of user studies in appraisal practice**

Despite differences in utilizing user studies in appraisal practice according to appraisal role and different attitudes toward its value versus its feasibility, the results of this study imply that the

utilization of user studies in appraisal practice could increase for two broad reasons. First, most participants believe that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is feasible and valuable, as is supported by the experiences of participants who have utilized user studies in their appraisal practice. The other reason is that this study statistically shows that if a program conducts a user study, which developing information technology is making easier, the results will probably be utilized in appraisal practice.

First of all, almost all participants of this study supposed that utilization of user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable and feasible for state appraisal staff even though many of them had never done so. Though only seven of thirty-four participating programs had utilized user studies in appraisal practice, participants who had done so had benefited from it. These participants' results further confirm that the appraisal activities that benefited were also activities for which participants supposed utilizing user studies in appraisal activities would be feasible and valuable.

State appraisal staff members seem to believe that it is feasible and valuable to utilize results of user studies in many appraisal activities. The appraisal activities that participants believed would benefit were greater in number and more diverse than the ones AAUS and UAA researchers have claimed would benefit. Participants also expected more benefits from utilizing user studies in appraisal practice than AAUS and UAA researchers have addressed. These high expectations and this study's empirical evidence of actual benefits of user studies may suggest a positive potential relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. The results of this study show that user studies actually benefited appraisal practice in the same ways that participants supposed they would. The participating programs that had utilized user studies in appraisal practice did so for most of the appraisal activities participants supposed would benefit,

and those activities did indeed benefit. Also, participants' high expectations of utilizing results of user studies in their appraisal practice suggest that appraisal staff would probably do so if they were provided with user study results. The same probably applies to non-state appraisal staff.

State appraisal staff members seem to expect great value from utilizing results of user studies in their appraisal practice. Regardless of their experience doing so, most participants of this study answered that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is valuable for both appraisal archivists and appraisal records managers for several reasons. Some of these reasons are the same ones claimed as benefits of the use-inclusive appraisal approach. It seems likely that both state and non-state appraisal staff share these expectations.

This study leaves open a question on the feasibility of utilizing user studies in appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the item level. It appears that state appraisal staff expect that making appraisal decisions and making reappraisal decisions are the two activities for which utilization of user studies are supposedly most valuable and feasible. Indeed, participants ranked making appraisal decisions and making reappraisal decisions as the two activities for which utilization of user studies are supposedly most valuable and feasible. However, they ranked making appraisal decisions and making reappraisal decisions at the item, folder, and box levels near the bottom of the same ranking. Participating programs that had utilized user studies in their appraisal practice reported that doing so was very beneficial to making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the series level of records, but not very beneficial in making appraisal and reappraisal decisions at the other levels of records. As mentioned earlier, these results derive from the fact that appraising records at the item, folder, and box levels is not common in state archives and records management programs. In this case, the organizational levels of state government records series must be considered. A single series of state government records consists of multiple levels of

records, such as boxes and folders, containing many items. Library materials, however, are organized entirely by item; even if a periodical series consists of many volumes and issues, each volume is considered one item, as is each issue. This single level of material organization greatly facilitates libraries' utilization of use statistics and results of user studies in collection development and management. However, doing so would not be easy in archives and records management programs, which organize their materials at multiple levels. It is also questionable how valuable it is to utilize results of user studies in making an appraisal decision on a single record item in a state government records series.

The other reason for the potential increase of utilization of user studies in appraisal practice is that developing information technology helps conduct user studies, and the more user studies a program conducts, the more likely its appraisal staff will utilize them in appraisal. This study indicates developing information technology, particularly online surveys and the Internet, helped participants who had no previous experience conducting user studies. New information technology will advance new and more convenient tools, encouraging more user studies.

#### **5.5.4 Factors affecting the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies**

Although user studies are expected to be utilized more in appraisal practice, their utilization will continue to be affected by several factors. This exploratory study was not intended to identify these factors. Nevertheless, survey comments and interviews indicate several such factors. In particular, interview responses regarding the feasibility of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice indicate that many factors affect appraisal practice and the conduct of user studies separately as well as in combination. Because these factors impact the potential relationship

between appraisal practice and user studies, they are worth considering. This section briefly describes the factors mentioned in previous sections.

One highly influential factor is resources (e.g., staff, budget, and time). This factor directly influences every program's administration, operation, and priorities, as well as staff members' activities. Hence, a program's resources limit its staff's conduct of user studies and utilization of their results in appraisal practice. This study's interviews indicate that state archives and records management programs put a low priority on user studies because they are not a basic archival function. As a result, before the current bad economic situation, a few state archives and records management programs conducted user studies; however, as the economy worsened, state archives and records management programs have concentrated their resources on maintaining only basic archival functions. This was also a reason that some programs did not participate in this study, which they considered a non-essential, low priority.

Reference archivists' knowledge and experience influence utilization of user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice. It is easier for appraisal staff to consult reference archivists than to conduct user studies. From a certain perspective, then, highly knowledgeable reference archivists can be like living user studies. Their involvement in appraisal practice can reduce dependence on user studies or replace user studies in appraisal practice.

The organizational relationship between state archives and state records management programs—separate or joint—within a state and the collaboration between separate programs seem to influence the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. The influence is determined by who conducts user studies and who practices appraisal in which program. In general, reference archivists collect user/use information through reference services and lead user studies.

Even though staff members in an institution can access user/use information, including results of user studies collected by their institution, knowing about user studies conducted in a program and sharing the results seem to influence the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. Appraisal staff in state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs have more opportunities to engage with user studies than do appraisal staff in state records management programs. Hence, it is important for staff members conducting user studies and those practicing appraisal to collaborate.

The conduct of user studies by a program directly affects the utilization of user studies in its appraisal practice. If a program conducts user studies, the probability that its appraisal staff will utilize the user studies in their appraisal practice is very likely to increase. The factors affecting whether or not a program conducts user studies include the director's permission to conduct user studies, the staff's education and training on how to conduct user studies, the staff's willingness and interest, information technology such as online survey tools, institutional resources, participation of user study subjects, and institutional requirements. In particular, technology influences the research methodology and tools available for conducting user studies. If the archival and records management communities could easily conduct user studies without much staff time and effort, they would conduct more user studies. According to the statistical results of this study, the more user studies are conducted, the more they are utilized in appraisal practice. Hence, the development of technology will probably increase not only the conduct of user studies but also their utilization in appraisal practice.

Appraisal staffs' acceptance of utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice as a new appraisal approach is also a factor. The debate on the use-inclusive appraisal approach has been ongoing, and utilizing user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice is not

popular. Many interviewees of this study have not even received education and training on conducting and utilizing user studies and utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice. Hence, how state appraisal staff learn about and accept this relatively new approach would be a major factor.

This study did not find any individual participant factors to have a statistically significant relationship with utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. These individual factors included a participant's professional background, number of years worked in appraisal, percentage of time spent on appraisal, experience conducting reference services, and experience utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice.

Many factors also relate to the unique context of state archives and records management programs, including the complexity of state government agencies and appraisal of state government records, the mission to document, different priorities from other kinds of archives and records management programs, the responsibility of stewardship, relationships with records creators, state laws and regulations, taxes, and understanding of government recordkeeping. It seems likely that only a few of these factors would affect the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in other kinds of archives and records management programs, which may have still other factors.

Institutional and individual factors partially determine the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. However, this study found three broad reasons to believe that this relationship is likely to continue to develop. First, the programs that have utilized user studies in their appraisal practice reported that doing so is feasible and valuable. Second, most participants, both those who have utilized user studies in appraisal practice and who have not, had high expectations of the practice. Third, developing information technology facilitates the conduct

user studies. This relates to the fourth reason, which is that if a program conducts a user study, the results will probably be utilized in appraisal practice.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter covers three topics. The first section summarizes this study and answers the research questions. The following two sections describe the limitations of this study and its contributions. Finally, the last three sections provide state appraisal staff members with recommendations, based on the research results of this study, for utilizing user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice. They also give recommendations for archival education and training and for further research relevant to this research topic.

### **6.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH**

This study set out to explore the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, which has been questioned in the archival community for more than thirty years. The study investigated the current utilization of user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs and utilized the findings, including findings on participants' attitudes toward such practices, to consider the potential relationship between appraisal practice and user studies

Because the employment of users and use as an appraisal factor, which has been debated for several decades, affects the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, this study's first research question probed such employment. The second research question then asked directly about the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies.

**Research Question 1: Do U.S. state archivists and records managers collect and utilize information on users and use of records in their appraisal practice?**

Twenty-two out of thirty-four programs did not collect user/use information for appraisal practice exclusively, but rather for general purposes and administration. A program's core function seems to influence its collection of user/use information. Specifically, state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs tend to collect user/use information more than do state records management programs.

Out of the twenty-two programs that had collected user/use information for general purposes, participants of eighteen programs had utilized the information in their appraisal practice. One statistical result shows that staff whose programs collect user/use information are more likely to utilize such information in their appraisal practice.

The archival community has paid attention to research users/use as an appraisal factor. However, this study shows that legal users/use and administrative users/use should be considered as much as research users/use in state archives and records management programs. Most participants employed multiple user/use appraisal factors in their appraisal practice, regardless of their appraisal role. Nevertheless, about the third of them did not collect or utilize user/use information for their appraisal practice.

**Research Question 1-1: If so, why and how do they do so?**

The twenty-one participants who utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice collected such information from several information sources. The three most commonly cited information sources were records users, records creators, and user data collected from registration/reference services in their program. Even though these three sources are still

popularly utilized, this study indicates that user/use information sources utilized for appraisal practice have been changing as information technology has been developing. The development of technology has also advanced the websites or Web pages of state archives and records management programs, Web-based tools, information systems including a reference module, and online surveys utilized for user studies. The least frequently utilized type of information source was the user study.

State appraisal staff's methods for collecting, documenting, managing, and storing user/use information for appraisal practice can be largely divided into two approaches. One approach, a form of natural processing, is more subjective, personal, and informal; the other approach, a form of systematic processing, is more objective, institutional, and formal.

A few participants seemed to take the informal approach, naturally and unintentionally collecting user/user information and naturally using it for appraisal practice. This study indicates that many state appraisal staff members are, intentionally or not, exposed to user/use information when they provide reference services, participate in appraisal committee meetings, and consult with records creators for records surveying and records retention scheduling. That is, those state appraisal staff members can gain information about users and use of records from their experience and use it. Unfortunately, such information is not recorded, documented, or formally retained. The informal approach probably occurs commonly throughout the entire archival and records management community because it is convenient and does not require extra resources (e.g., staff time and budget).

By contrast, the systematic processing approach is more objective, institutional, and formal. It collects user/use information by using tools such as reference service forms, records survey forms, Web-based tools, and research methods such as interviews and surveys. State

appraisal staff members record the information in papers, databases, and computer files. Because such information is formally retained, state appraisal staff members can utilize it as empirical evidence to support their appraisal decisions, measure their performances, and prove and justify their budgets for appraisal practice. The systematic processing approach functions as institutional memory, whereas the informal approach functions as individual memory.

Overall, state appraisal staff tend to prefer and utilize information sources that their programs already have or that they can easily access. Even if their program does not collect such information, state appraisal staff can collect user/use information themselves, such as by providing reference services and interacting with records creators. They may also be able to obtain user/use information collected by a comparable program and other government agencies within their state. Ultimately, collecting user/use information for appraisal practice mainly depends on each appraisal staff member's willingness to do so.

This study indicates that state appraisal staff members collect and utilize user/use information for appraisal practice with the same purposes, and in the same way, that UAA researchers have claimed. Participants utilized user/use information in appraisal practice to anticipate future trends and potential use of records; conduct cost-benefit analysis; determine the value of information contained in records; make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively; identify changing user information needs and research interests; check holdings and non-holdings; promote relevant records use; improve performance; and fulfill legal requirements for state government records. These results indicate that the value-through-use appraisal approach still affects contemporary state appraisal staff. However, these results also indicate that use-based cost-benefit analysis is not popular in state archives and

records management programs. Further, the results show that state appraisal staff need tools to support their appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions.

**Research Question 1-2: If not, why not?**

Thirteen participants did not utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice. Their reasons include that their programs did not collect such information; participants did not think about it; their archives received and preserved all records transferred to it; user/use information collected by their program was inapplicable to their appraisal practice; they had no time to do so; they did not think their appraisal practice would benefit from user/use information; their staff members did not typically do so; they thought that they and their colleagues already knew their users and use of records in their state archives; they thought that information needs change and future use is unpredictable; there was a lack of user/use information for certain records and new arrivals; they thought that user/use information was unreliable and unhelpful; there was a lack of formal analysis of user/use information; they thought that users expected everything to be preserved in archives; and, as a state agency, state archives had the responsibilities of documentation and stewardship.

These criticisms align with previous researchers' criticisms of UIA. Moreover, some of these criticisms imply a lack of information and knowledge on UIA and on collecting and utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice, which indicates a gap in education and training about these topics.

**Research Question 2: What is the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs?**

This study shows that user studies are the least frequently utilized user/use information source for appraisal practice, even though many participants consider users and use as an appraisal factor and collect user/use information from several different sources. Only eight participating programs (23.5%) conducted user studies, and seven programs (87.5%) of those eight utilized user studies to collect user/use information for appraisal practice. These statistically indicate that programs conducting user studies are more likely to utilize user studies in appraisal practice than programs not conducting user studies.

The conditions necessary for utilizing user studies in appraisal practice can be deduced from the common characteristics of participants who had done so. First, their programs collected user/use information from several information sources and had reference data on their users and use of records. Second, the participants considered multiple kinds of user/use factors in their appraisal practice. Third, the participants also thought that the user study should be one of multiple tools for appraisal practice, not the only one. Lastly, they were willing to conduct user studies and utilize their programs' existing user studies in appraisal practice.

The responses of participants who had actually utilized user studies in appraisal practice support the previous hypotheses that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice is valuable and feasible. They also prove the positive assumptions about its feasibility and value reported by participants who had not utilized user studies in appraisal practice. Appraisal activities benefiting from user studies include making appraisal and reappraisal decisions; developing and evaluating program acquisition, appraisal, collection development, and records retention policies; planning and evaluating appraisal practice; developing and evaluating program appraisal criteria, standards, and checklists; creating records schedules; applying and evaluating program appraisal methods and techniques; and requesting and justifying resources for appraisal practice. User

studies in appraisal practice helped anticipate future research trends and potential use of records; identify changing user information needs and research interests; make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively; determine the value of information contained in records; carry out cost-benefit analysis; and publicize archival and records management work as a significant service.

Most participants had positive attitudes toward utilizing user studies in appraisal practice. They believed that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is feasible and valuable for both U.S. state archivists and state records managers. Nevertheless, they thought that utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice is more feasible and valuable for state archivists than for state records managers. Participants also were more confident in its value than its feasibility. Although most participants agreed that user studies can be good tools for collecting user/use information for appraisal practice, they also agreed that user studies should not be utilized exclusively.

Currently only seven participating state archives and records management programs utilize user studies in appraisal practice, and then only irregularly and unsystematically. Nevertheless, this study indicates that the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies is likely to continue to develop for two broad reasons. First, most participants have positive attitudes toward the feasibility and value of utilizing user studies in appraisal practice, and the participants who had done so proved the practice's feasibility and value. Second, developing information technology helps conduct user studies, and a statistical result shows that if a program conducts a user study, the results will probably be utilized in appraisal practice.

## 6.2 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Before this study there was a lack of research on this topic. Hence, basic information on the constructs of this study (e.g., appraisal practice, user studies, and state archives and records management programs) was not available. The three preliminary studies preceding the full study provided much basic information. However, due to the huge amount of data collected by the full study, appraisal practice or user studies in each participating program were not investigated in depth.

To avoid over-representing programs and states that provided multiple participants, this study selected one participant per program according to the program's core function and the participant's appraisal role. The three preliminary studies and the pretest study indicated that higher-level staff members have more in-depth knowledge, experience, and comprehensive insight on this research topic. Their responses may not represent the practices or attitudes of every staff member at their program or institution.

Though this study investigated only the participating programs and participants, its results can be generalized to all U.S. state archives and records management programs due to the high rate of response to the population survey and interviews. However, the results may not represent the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in other types of archives and records management programs.

### 6.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF RESEARCH

This study is the first major research to explore the relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies. Many of its results were previously unknown or undocumented: core functions of state archives and records management programs overlap in many states; most state appraisal staff members perform appraisal as both an archivist and records manager; records surveys and records retention schedules are utilized as user/use information sources; a small number of state appraisal staff members regard records surveys as user studies; some joint state archives and records management programs conduct user studies that consider state government agencies as archives users; several state archives and records management programs utilize user studies for appraisal practice; those utilizing user studies in appraisal practice also utilize user/use information collected from registration and reference services in their appraisal practice; and state appraisal staff members benefit from user studies when planning and evaluating appraisal practice and creating records retention schedules, a topic that AAUS and UAA researchers have not paid attention to. This research will serve as a base for future studies on relevant research topics, including UAA, utilization of user studies in appraisal practice, and state archives and records management programs. This study can also be used as a foundation for further studies on this topic in different archival and records management contexts.

The online survey questionnaire and interview protocols developed for this study may be applied to future studies. They were carefully designed over four years through three preliminary studies and a pretest study. The full research study validated the survey questionnaire and interview protocols. Other researchers can use those instruments as benchmarks for their own instruments.

The empirical findings of this study provide a new understanding of archival appraisal practice; the employment of users/use as an appraisal factor; practitioners' opinions on such employment; their collection and utilization of user/use information; their conduct and utilization of user studies; their attitudes toward utilizing user studies in appraisal practice; the impact of resources on archival practice; collaboration between archivists, records managers, and records creators; and the current status of U.S. state archives and records management programs. In particular, this study confirms previous findings and previous researchers' conceptual claims about UAA that have been debated for many decades. It also contributes empirical evidence that users/use have been employed as an appraisal factor since the 1990s.

It is hoped that this study will encourage a reconsideration of the UAA, appraisal methods, the significance of collaboration between archivists and records managers, and the necessity of conducting and utilizing user studies for archival practice. Furthermore, it provides practitioners with an opportunity to consider utilizing user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice.

This study uncovered previously unknown or unpublicized information that would help archival researchers, educators, and practitioners improve their research, education, and practices relevant to user studies, user/use information in appraisal practice, and other relevant topics. The following sections provide recommendations for these groups based on results and implications of this study.

#### **6.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

This section gives some preliminary recommendations for state appraisal staff members who want to utilize user/use information, including results of user studies, in their appraisal practice. However, because each state archives and records management program is different, the recommendations may not apply in every programs. State appraisal staff would need to selectively tailor any recommendations.

State archives or records management programs need to actively inform their staff members about available user/use information. This study indicates that if a program collects user/use information, its staff members tend to utilize such information in their appraisal practice. Many state appraisal staff members consider several kinds of user/use appraisal factors; hence, they need data to empirically support their consideration of users/use in appraisal practice. Even if a program does not require its staff members to do so, it should inform them of the program's user/use information and provide it to those who are interested in utilizing it.

If a state archives and records management program wants its appraisal staff to utilize its user/use information in appraisal practice, it should offer guidelines for how to do so. The guidelines should be precise and easy to understand. They should at least include 1) user/use information and user/use information sources available within the program and the programs' parental institution, 2) the significance of and strategies for collaboration with stakeholders (e.g., records managers and records creators), and 3) the procedure for obtaining user/use information and applying it in appraisal practice. The program should encourage all of its appraisal staff to utilize its user/use information in appraisal practice following the guideline. Such utilization by only part of the appraisal staff would produce inconsistent appraisal practice and fewer benefits of user/use information.

State archives and records management programs should effectively utilize the user/use information they already have. For example, state archives programs and joint state archives and records management programs collect data on users and use of records through several forms (e.g., registration forms and request forms). Interviewees of this study differentiated analysis from compilation. Most of their programs collect and compile user/use data from reference services and Web-based tools; however, the programs do not analyze or interpret the data. Analysis and interpretation of the collected data will provide beneficial user/use information for appraisal practice. Furthermore, even if those data are not analyzed or interpreted, use statistics, such as use frequency, seem to benefit appraisal practice. For example, the number of call slips for a specific records series can indicate the usefulness of the records series, predict potential use of the records series, and help appraisal archivists make appraisal decisions about similar records series. Also, many state records management programs and joint state archives and records management programs seem to already have user/use information of state government agencies in their records surveys, records retention schedules, and/or tracking systems of state records centers/storage. This study showed that a number of participants considered, utilized, or wanted to utilize such user/use information for their appraisal practice. State appraisal staff members' interest in employing such existing data on users and/or use would encourage their program to expend resources on user studies.

State archives and records management programs should identify what kind of user/use information their appraisal staff want for appraisal practice. The user/use information actually collected by programs is not always the same as the user/use information appraisal practitioners think is helpful in appraisal practice. What user/use information is collected may not be applicable or helpful to appraisal. This may explain why several state appraisal staff members do

not utilize user/use information in their appraisal practice even though their programs or institutions collect it. Conversely, if programs collect user/use information that is helpful and applicable to appraisal practice, their appraisal staff members may be more likely to utilize such information in appraisal practice. This study indicates that collaboration between staff members practicing appraisal and staff members collecting user/use information, including reference archivists, can help determine what sort of user/use information should be collected for appraisal practice. In other words, state appraisal staff members should engage in the collection of user/use information to get the most beneficial user/use information for appraisal practice.

State appraisal staff members need to collaborate with reference archivists not only to share insights for reference services and appraisal activities, but also to mutually assist each other's tasks. Even though a number of previous studies have indicated the necessity and usefulness of the collaboration between appraisal archivists and reference archivists,<sup>268</sup> fewer than half of the study's participating programs, slightly fewer than expected, had involved reference archivists in their appraisal practice. It is understandable that few RM programs involved reference archivists because reference archivists do not belong to such programs. However, while more than half of the AR programs had involved reference archivists, fewer than half of the ARRM programs had, even though both kinds of programs are assumed to have their own reference archivists. It is necessary for each state archives and records management program—in particular, state archives and state records management programs separated within a state—to consider the relationship between its appraisal staff and its reference staff and to facilitate their collaboration.

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<sup>268</sup> See, for example, Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts*, and Roe, "State Government Archival Functions at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History."

NARA, CoSA, and/or SAA should develop concrete and simple guidelines for appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions. All three appraisal-role groups in this study cited making appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions more objectively and determining the value of information contained in records as two purposes for utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice. There is a definite need and desire for guidelines and tools to help concretize the abstract concept of value and to make subjective decision-making more objective.

State archives should record, document, and keep all user/use information collected through reference services, including information collected inside and outside state archives search rooms. A few participating programs of this study provided reference services outside their institutions by visiting association meetings. Through these external reference services, their appraisal staff gained and utilized user/use information, but they did not record or document it. Rather, they counted on their observations and memories. Such information could complement user/use information collected through reference services in search rooms and perhaps provide new information that could not be gained inside the institution. Both kinds of information should be recorded and documented together for both reference staff members and appraisal staff members.

An important practical implication is that staff members with holistic roles would be effective in a joint state archives and records management program. That is, a joint state archives and records management program would assign several state government agencies to each staff member, and each staff member would be responsible for all records created by their state agencies. As a result, one staff member would be both a records manager and an archivist for several assigned state government agencies. This study shows the value of appraisal staff members' reference experience, implying the benefits of a holistic approach to archival and

records management practices, particularly in state archives and records management programs. A holistic state staff member should not only manage active records for several records creators, but also preserve inactive records and provide references for archives users. That is, for specific records series, a staff member would survey records, create records schedules, appraise, accession, process, preserve, and provide reference services. That staff member would be familiar with their assigned state government agencies and the records they produce. As each agency produces more of the same records series, holistic state staff members would become more and more expert with those series. They would also have closer relationships with their agencies and more opportunities to interact with both records users and records creators. This interaction would allow them to collect a good deal of information on their records, records users, and records creators, which they could utilize when appraising records and serving records users. Such a holistic approach would benefit joint state archives and records management programs, state government agencies, and users of state archives.

State appraisal staff members need to document information on records creators and their use of records. The majority of participants considered records creators to be good sources of user/use information for appraisal practice and consulted with records creators to develop records surveys and create and review records retention schedules. They also thought collecting user/use information from records creators was beneficial because the records creators—state government agencies—could provide information about the nature, purpose, value, and context of the records; what records they need for their operation; their information needs; how the records were being used; how long they wanted to keep a specific records series; and the past and current needs for the records. However, the participants who had collected user/use information from records creators did not document it except in their own memories. Such information should be

recorded, documented, and kept for other staff members who do not directly consult with records creators, as well as for future appraisal staff members.

It is recommended that state appraisal archivists and state appraisal records managers conduct records surveys together and that records survey forms include frequency of records use. Results of this study indicate that records surveys present a good opportunity to consult with records creators and gain their user/use information. A few study interviews imply that records surveys could, perhaps, replace user studies. State appraisal archivists and state appraisal records managers could add questions about the user/use information of records creators to their records surveys without spending many additional resources. The user/use information in records surveys would reflect past and current use by records creators, and it would help state appraisal staff members consider the administrative, financial, and legal value of the records and predict future use. Hence, the user/use information in records surveys would be helpful in making appraisal and reappraisal decisions as well as making records retention decisions.

State archives and records management programs should consider how records retention schedules can more effectively address records creators' information needs and use of records because current archival appraisal practice is conducted based on records retention schedules. Most participants of this study agreed that archival appraisal is conceptually defined as the identification of materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives; however, on a practical level, archival appraisal is the process of using records retention schedules to analyze, assess, evaluate, and schedule records to determine records disposition. One reason why current archival appraisal practice is based on records retention schedules seems to be because the schedules are simple, objective tools that provide a means of communication between records creators, appraisal records managers, and appraisal archivists. The records retention schedule

form was designed to include information on records. However, modifying records retention schedule forms to include a few simple questions about information needs, the value of records, and the potential use of records would help appraisal records managers and appraisal archivists.

The easiest approach state appraisal records managers take to collecting user/use information seems to be consulting records creators to develop records surveys and create and review records retention schedules of state government agencies. To investigate state government agencies' information needs and use of records, state appraisal staff members could utilize research methods employed for user studies of archives' users. But they could also simply develop questions to ask records creators in interviews and focus groups. Giving records creators a well-designed semi-structured interview and involving them in focus groups would help appraisal records managers obtain more useful information. Also, appraisal records managers could enhance a simple meeting with records creators into a focus group.

State archives should analyze user/use information collected through reference services and present the results to the state's appraisal staff members and the public. Most state archives retain user/use data collected through reference services, and several state archives include data on users and use (e.g., the number of reference requests, visiting users) in their annual reports. Some state archives include those data in the "performance" section of their annual report, including performance of reference services, so that when state archivists prepare annual reports, they can analyze the data on users and use. Analysis requires time and effort. However, appraisal using the analysis results can reveal seemingly unused records that would otherwise be accessioned and preserved, saving effort and preservation space.

An information system integrating information on use frequency collected by a state's records management program, records center or storage facility, and archives should be

developed and deployed. This system should integrate use frequency information collected through records surveys, records retention schedules, electronic tracking systems of state records centers or storage facilities, Web-based tools, and reference services, both on-site and online. In general, state archives and records management programs have basic information on users and use of records, typically frequency of records use, as previously described. Some programs use information systems for their archival practice, usually for reference activities. This study shows that simple statistics on frequency of records use are helpful for state appraisal staff members. Records surveys and records retention schedules can show frequency of active records use by records creators and indicate records creators' information needs, as well as the records' potential use after the records series are transferred to a state archives program.

Electronic tracking systems of state records centers or storage facilities can show frequency of semi-active records use by records creators. Nevertheless, because very little literature focuses on state records centers, it is not well known if state records centers collect some basic use information by employing an electronic tracking system. In a state archives program, reference data collected in a search room and by Web-based tools and stored in a reference module can show frequency of inactive records use by archives users, including records creators. Hence, an information system that integrates the information on use frequency separately collected and retained by different organizations would make a broad array of information accessible to a state's appraisal staff members—information that they would not have had access to before. Moreover, the information system would indicate the past and present use of a specific records series and suggest its future use frequency. Such a system would help state appraisal staff members make appraisal, reappraisal, and records retention decisions on specific series because each state government agency produces the same records series over time.

Also, the information stored in the information system would help state appraisal staff make these decisions on new records series that are similar to existing ones.

An information system incorporating a reference module, an appraisal module, an accessioning module, and a processing module should be developed and deployed. Those information systems would heighten accessibility to user/use information, and they would facilitate appraisal staff's utilization of user/use information in their appraisal practice. The information systems would also facilitate coordination between reference staff and appraisal staff.

More user studies should be conducted and made available to program staff members. One statistical result of this study indicates that if a program conducts user studies, its staff are more likely to utilize user studies in appraisal practice. They may also be more likely to utilize user studies in archival practices other than appraisal. This empirical study confirms not only the benefits of user studies in archival practice that have been claimed since the 1980s, but also other benefits. Knowledge of some of the common characteristics of participants who utilized user studies in their appraisal practice, and common characteristics of their programs, both of which were mentioned in the Discussion chapter, would shed some light on the conditions necessary for designing, conducting, and utilizing user studies in appraisal practice.

In particular, state archives and records management programs need to pay attention to user studies investigating records creators for appraisal practice. Existing user studies have paid little attention to records creators, focusing on researchers in archives. Only a few participating programs conducted user studies investigating records creators. As described in the Discussion chapter, user studies investigating records creators for appraisal practice should be somewhat different from those investigating archives users. User studies of records creators can investigate

records creators' use of active, semi-active, and inactive records. User studies of archives users, however, investigate users and use of inactive records only. User studies investigating state government agencies could employ the same questions as are asked of archives users or different questions depending on the purpose of the user studies. They could include questions to examine why records creators need to create certain records; what records are active or inactive; why and how often creators have used their records in their offices, state records centers, and/or state archives; how long they need to hold their records in their offices and state records centers; how frequently they think they would use their records after transferring them to a state records center and/or a state archives; how they manage records in their own facilities; how they use the state archives; what services they want from the state archives; and how they think about state archives services and the working relationship with state archives staff. In addition to appraisal practice, user studies investigating records creators could also provide useful information for other archival practices and administration. In particular, user study researchers need to study what user/use information can and should be gained from user studies investigating records creators, including what user/use information that cannot be gained from user studies of archives records users could be gained from user studies of records creators.

Appraisal archivists and reference archivists should collaboratively design and conduct user studies to collect and utilize more appropriate user/use information for appraisal practice. Participants of this study who had conducted user studies did so for general institutional administration and practice, not exclusively for appraisal practice, even the few interviewees who had developed user studies. This partially explains the gap between the user/use information that participants supposed would be helpful for appraisal practice and the user/use information that participants' programs actually collected. This gap could be closed by designing and

conducting user studies specifically for appraisal practice, in particular by involving state appraisal staff members in the process. User studies intended for utilization in appraisal practice would be more effective if designed according to the needs of state appraisal staff members. Even user studies not exclusively intended for appraisal practice could incorporate the kinds of information that state appraisal staff members need. Appraisal staff members could more easily understand and interpret their results and provide new insight to the user studies. Results of these user studies would ultimately improve the archival programs and their public service.

Appraisal documents, including records retention schedules, should be put on a program's or an institution's website and should be accessible to the public. If state archives and records management programs publicly document how they appraise their records, including how they consider their users and use of records, they can advocate for the significance of appraisal practice, demonstrate accountability for appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions, show their concern about the public as well as about state government agencies, justify the public's tax expenditure for their administration and programs, and keep the public's trust.

State archives and records management programs need to employ their websites more effectively to communicate to their users and for public advocacy, accountability, and transparency of their appraisal practice and user services. As technology has developed, state archives and records management programs have had more electronic records and digital collections, and remote users have increasingly accessed them through the programs' websites. Technology will continue to provide new and more effective tools to collect user/use information through websites. Hence, the websites of state archives and records management programs need to show not only how they collect user/use information to meet users' needs and improve user

services through investigations of archives users and use of records, but also how they select and preserve their records based on societal need.

CoSA's periodic surveys need to investigate appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs. As mentioned in the Literature Review chapter, CoSA's periodic surveys have not investigated archival appraisal, one of the fundamental archival functions. This discovered how difficult it is to investigate appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs because of diversity in organizational structures, organizational relationships between an archival program and records management programs, relationships between archivists and records managers, relationships between records managers and state agencies, and budgets for state archives and records management programs. Nevertheless, CoSA needs to identify basic information on appraisal practice. The information might remind the programs of the significance of appraisal practice, support state appraisal staff members' requests to enhance appraisal practice to their supervisor or parental organization, and encourage collaborative appraisal projects between states.

State archives and records management programs need to share their information with each other. State archives and records management programs have similar users, issues, environments, operations, tasks, and records. This study indicates there is a lack of communication and information-sharing among state archives and records management programs. Most interviewees said they did not know about the administration, practices, and other particulars of other state archives and records management programs, though they expressed a desire to know. Indeed, one interviewee of this study, who had no experience with or education on user studies, developed and conducted a user survey by referring to user surveys of other state archives found on Google. This lack of inter-programmatic knowledge seems to cause

state archives and records management programs to consult user studies conducted by other programs only rarely, despite previous researchers recommending doing so when programs cannot conduct their own user studies. One influential reason seems to be a lack of information-sharing about user studies. Even the few state archives and records management programs that conduct their own user studies do not, for the most part, present or publish their results or the questions utilized for their studies, which would be useful to other programs.

Publication of user study results could improve advocacy to both state government and the public. Questions utilized for user studies are also good information for other state archives and records management programs that intend to conduct their own user studies. It is recommended that state archives and records management programs conducting their own user studies put their user study tools, such as user survey questionnaires, and the results of their studies on their websites and, if possible, on the CoSA's website and/or NAGARA's website.

Regarding information-sharing, it is worth reconsidering collaborative appraisal of state government records. As described in the Literature Review chapter, state archives made cooperative efforts to share appraisal information during the 1980s and 1990s to facilitate state archivists' appraisal decision-making;<sup>269</sup> however, these efforts were inconclusive. The third preliminary study of this research showed that all states have records retention schedules. The full study indicates that most state archives and most joint state archives and records management programs make appraisal decisions, and their staffs share similar appraisal difficulties and desires to make appraisal decisions more effectively. Corresponding state government agencies in different states produce many of the same or similar records series because they perform the same or similar functions. Because these records series could be

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<sup>269</sup> For more information about collaborative appraisal, see p. 47.

transferred to other state archives, collaborative appraisal would seem to benefit state archives particularly. All state archives have their own website, Web page, and/or information system. The development of the Internet and search engines will permit state archives to use more flexible descriptions of appraisal information and to search and access other state archives more conveniently. The simplest way would be for each state archives to put its appraisal information on its website. However, for more effective collaborative appraisal, the CoSA should present minimum requirements for shared appraisal information and develop a database or a Web page to incorporate and share appraisal information among all state archives, including information on use frequency of records series, which would facilitate appraisal and reappraisal decisions.

It is necessary to develop a matrix for utilizing user/use information, including results of user studies, in appraisal practice. This study found most participants employ users/use as an appraisal factor, the majority of participating programs collect user/use information, and their staffs utilize such information in appraisal practice. These results are highly likely to apply to many non-participating state archives and records management programs. A few interviewees of this study, particularly directors of state archives, talked about the need for a matrix to facilitate utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice. The development of this kind of matrix should be led by CoSA because CoSA members best know the circumstances and the needs of state archives and records management programs and because the collaboration of CoSA members is required. CoSA may need to collaborate with other professional associations like NAGARA and NARA or involve outside experts from academia or other organizations. Such a matrix should be developed and tested at least by archivists and records managers who appraise records, collect user/use information, and/or conduct user studies. The developed matrix could be useful to appraisal staff in other kinds of archives and records management programs.

This and other recommendations offered in this section could be improved by feedback from state archives and records management programs, particularly appraisal staff, reference staff, and records officers. Tests of recommendations could be shared in the archival and records management community beyond the context of state archives and records management programs. As appraisal practice, user studies, records, and circumstances of state archives and records management programs change, recommendations offered by this study must be modified and accept new knowledge and methodologies about archival appraisal and user studies.

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARCHIVAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Archival education programs need to teach the use-inclusive approach to appraisal and the feasibility of utilizing user/use information, including the results of user studies, in appraisal practice. This study indicates that one reason state appraisal staffs do not collect or utilize user/use information for appraisal practice is a lack of information and knowledge on doing so, which indicates a gap in education and training about the subject. This study indicates that utilization of user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice is rarely covered in education and training. It seemed that this study raised participants' awareness of this topic. Most interviewees said that they had never heard of or trained in the utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice, either in school or in their program, even in programs that had collected user/use information. Several interviewees said they would now consider utilizing user/use information and user studies in their appraisal practice.

Of course, each staff member must determine whether or not to utilize user/use information and user studies for appraisal practice. However, this study shows that many

participants had already benefited from doing so and that most participants think it is feasible and valuable. This implies that it is necessary to teach the feasibility of utilizing user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice and the methods for doing so. If appraisal staff members become familiar with the idea in their education and/or training, their appraisal practice could benefit.

Archival education programs also need to teach the feasibility and benefit of utilizing reference data for appraisal practice. So far, most user/use information has been collected through reference services; hence, students should know how to use reference data for appraisal practice. This could lead them to utilize reference data for other practices (e.g., preservation and budgeting), have new perceptions of the relationship between appraisal practice and reference practice, and realize the significance of collaboration between appraisal archivists and reference archivists.

It is suggested that academic archival education programs and professional associations teach how to conduct user studies. This study indicates that the user study is a low educational priority. This seems to derive from the fact that user studies are not one of the basic archival functions. However, user studies can support and benefit archival functions and administration as a planning, analytical, and evaluative tool, as previous studies and this current study show. Hence, it is worthwhile to teach and conduct user studies.

Because there are not big differences between the research methods of archival user studies and library user studies, a course in an archival program or a library and information science program could teach how to conduct user studies for archival students and for library students. If it is difficult to open this kind of class in academic programs, professional associations can provide workshops on user studies. The most realistic way to teach user studies

may be professional workshops teaching how to conduct user studies easily and conveniently by employing technology such as an online survey. This study indicates that, in general, brief training on simple user studies would suffice. A few interviewees who did not formally learn how to conduct user studies said it was easy to do by using online survey tools and referring to previous user studies.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This exploratory research has not only presented new findings on this research topic, but also brought to light many topics in need of further study. This section suggests directions for further research in collecting and utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice and in conducting user studies and utilizing the results for appraisal practice. The recommendations are largely divided into two categories: 1) in the context of U.S. state archives and records management programs and 2) expanding to all kinds of archival and records management programs.

### **6.6.1 In U.S. state archives and records management programs**

It is necessary to examine the deep constructs underlying this research topic and population to clarify the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs. The constructs include appraisal practice, records management, user studies, and U.S. state archives and records management programs. As shown in the Literature Review chapter, little is known about the target population of this research. A limitation of this exploratory study is that it could not investigate this population in depth or

describe it in detail, although it gained basic data on it and described it briefly. Further studies on each of these constructs are worthwhile not only to understand them but also to investigate the factors affecting the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs.

More information on the collection of user/use information in state records management programs would help determine the necessity, feasibility, and value of considering users/use as an appraisal factor and utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice. The results of this study, the review of previous relevant literature, and CoSA's surveys indicate that state archives and joint state archives programs tend to collect user/use information. This study showed that state records managers meet state government agents and that many records surveys forms and records retention schedules have information on use frequency. However, it is not clear why, how, and who collects such information. It is necessary to study why and how state records management programs collect what kinds of user/use information.

A further study could assess the necessity and value of utilizing user/use information, including results of user studies, for appraisal practice in state records management programs. Also, it is worth asking if appraisal records managers think that they need to conduct user studies and utilize the results in their appraisal practice. A Fisher's exact test in this study showed that there is no significant relationship between utilizing results of user studies in appraisal practice and the core function of state archives and records management programs or the appraisal role of state appraisal staff members. Nevertheless, this study found that no RM-role participants in RM programs conducted user studies or utilized results of user studies in appraisal practice. Also, a few participants indicated that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would be valuable only for state appraisal archivists, not for state appraisal records managers. It is interesting to note that

most of the reasons participants thought that utilizing user studies in appraisal practice would not be valuable to appraisal records managers also apply to appraisal archivists. Hence, further studies should investigate why appraisal records managers utilize less user/use information in appraisal practice than appraisal archivists do, as well as the reasons that appraisal records managers think that they need or do not need to conduct user studies or utilize their results in appraisal practice. If they think they would need to do so, it would be interesting to investigate what research methods they would employ for their user studies and what kind of user/use information they would collect for their appraisal practice.

More information on what user/use information state appraisal staff members want for appraisal practice would help design more effective user studies for appraisal practice. According to this study, there are some differences among user/use information collected for general purposes, utilized in appraisal practice, and supposedly helpful for appraisal practice. The reasons behind these differences should be examined. It would also be helpful to investigate whether state appraisal staff members with different appraisal roles prefer different user/use information for appraisal practice and, if so, why.

Before investigating factors affecting the utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice, it is suggested that a study similar to this one should be carried out on which staff roles collect, manage, and keep user/use information in U.S. state archives and records management programs. This study indicates that 1) the differences between who collects, manages, and keeps user/use information and who practices appraisal and 2) the accessibility to such information seem to impact the utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice. In general, reference archivists are responsible for user/use information collected through reference services. However, it is not clear who is responsible for user/use information collected through a

program's or institution's website and how such information is kept and managed. Some interviews implied that reference archivists did this. However, a few interviewees said such information is collected, managed, and kept by IT staff in their program, their institution, or another state government agency. Also, it is worth asking who is responsible for conducting user studies.

A study of the relationship and collaboration between state archivists and state records managers is also recommended. Findings of this study show that state archives generally collect and keep their user/use information whereas most state records management programs have just simple information on use frequency. They also showed that state archivists and state records managers communicate about users and use of records. The acquisition of user/use information would influence whether state records managers utilize user/use information in appraisal practice.

It is necessary to study what factors affect the selection of user/use information sources for appraisal practice. This study shows that some information sources are preferred over user studies. In particular, records users and records creators still seem to be the two most frequently utilized user/use information sources for appraisal practice in state archives and records management programs. Also, this study showed that many state appraisal staff still collect user/use information subjectively, individually, and informally. It is possible that state appraisal staff prefer these sources because they have many opportunities to interact with records users and records creators and it takes no extra resources to consult with them.

Moreover, it is necessary to study if appraisal role influences state appraisal staff members' preference for different sources of user/use information for appraisal practice, and if so, why. This study indicates there are differences between participants' appraisal roles,

particularly in preferred supposed user/use information sources. Notably, the AR-role group's and RM-role group's top three preferred supposed sources are the same, and there are differences in the rankings between the ARRM-role group and the AR-role and RM-role groups. These differences are unexpected because the ARRM-role group shares characteristics with both the AR-role and RM-role groups. A notable, significant relationship exists between the preferences for certain user/use information sources (i.e., Web use data, Web user data, reference data on use, and user studies) participants supposed they would prefer and the appraisal role of participants who had not utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice. This relationship might indicate which user/use information sources are most beneficial to appraisal staff in different roles. However, there is no relationship between appraisal role of participants who had actually utilized user/use information in their appraisal practice and their selection of user/use information sources.

More research is needed to investigate why appraisal role influences which state appraisal staff suppose that utilizing user studies would be valuable for certain appraisal activities. A greater percentage of AR-role participants and ARRM-role participants than RM-role participants supposed user studies would be valuable in all appraisal activities except three: creating records schedules and making appraisal and reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level (see Table 55). However, a greater percentage of RM-role participants than AR-role participants supposed user studies would be valuable in creating records schedules. This seems to derive from the fact that records schedules are created more often by appraisal records managers than appraisal archivists. Knowing why appraisal role influences appraisal staff members' attitudes about the value of user studies could reveal ways for different appraisal staff members to get the most out of user studies in their appraisal practice.

Considerably more work needs to be done to determine the value of utilizing user studies in creating records retention schedules, which has been the subject of much disagreement. Many participants supposed it would be valuable, and two participating programs reported that they actually benefited from doing so. However, one interviewee contended that utilizing user studies will rarely affect creation of retention schedules. Before this study, nothing was known about the utilization of user studies in creating records retention schedules, and the archival research community has paid little attention to it. However, because current appraisal practice is based on records retention scheduling, it is necessary to consider how user studies could enhance this activity.

It is necessary to study the process of collecting user/use information and utilizing it in appraisal practice as well as the process of conducting user studies, getting their results, and utilizing them in appraisal practice. This study did not focus on or identify such processes. A multiple-case study would reveal more about this topic. Such a case study should deeply examine each appraisal staff member's utilization of user studies in appraisal practice a state's separate state archives and records management programs and in a state's joint state archives and records management program. This is because the current study indicates that the core function of programs and the organizational relationship between a state archives and a state records management program impact appraisal practice and the collection and utilization of user/use information. A researcher should visit the institution of interest; analyze relevant institutional documents (e.g., organizational chart, appraisal reports, records retention schedules, use statistics, documents on user studies), observe staff members' practice, and interview staff members. The researcher could observe the many factors that block or facilitate utilization of user studies in appraisal practice. The researcher should also pay attention to the flow of user/use

information among staff members between separate state archives and a separate state records management programs and within a joint state archives and records management program. At the same time, the researcher also should investigate staff members' accessibility to the user/use information. The case study could indicate approaches or strategies for effectively utilizing user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice. Results of the study would also be valuable to state appraisal staff members in other states.

The current study did not investigate commonalities, similarities, and differences among multiple responses from a single program. A further study could investigate how staff members in a single program behave similarly or differently in terms of collecting and utilizing user/use information for appraisal practice and conducting user studies and utilizing their results in appraisal practice. Any differences between the staff members, and the factors behind those differences, should be identified.

Longitudinal studies investigating changes in how state archives and records management programs utilize user/use information and user studies in appraisal practice over time would be very interesting. Developing information technology facilitates the conduct of user studies, and the more user studies are conducted, the more likely they are to be utilized in appraisal practice, according to the results of this study. Hence, it seems likely that more state archives and records management programs will utilize user/use information and user studies in their appraisal practice. Longitudinal studies would show the long-term development of this practice.

## **6.6.2 Beyond U.S. state archives and records management programs**

More broadly, research is also needed to investigate different populations. This study identified the employment of users/use as an appraisal factor, collection and utilization of user/use

information in appraisal practice, and the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies in U.S. state archives and records management programs. Hence, this study's results may not represent other archival and records management contexts (e.g., university, museum, hospital, and corporate) or those of other nations and cultures. Studies of these other populations would produce interesting results on their own. In addition, the comparison of those results to this study's results may provide even more useful information to the global archival and records management communities.

It is worth identifying the factors affecting the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies. Although this study uncovered many such factors, they were not the study's focus, and there are certainly more to be identified. Other contexts of archives and records management programs almost certainly have their own factors. Investigating how these factors affect the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies will enhance the utilization of user studies in appraisal practice.

To study the relationship between appraisal practice and user studies, future researchers should understand and consider different research orientations (records versus people), different perspectives (conceptual versus practical), and different roles (appraisal staff versus users). Archival appraisal tends to be material-oriented, and user studies tend to be people-oriented. Archival appraisal has been researched mostly from the conceptual perspective, while user studies have been conducted mostly from the practical perspective. Appraisal staff has the responsibility to appraise created records and preserve records containing valuable information for society, and users access and obtain records they need among the preserved records. User studies can be evidence that appraisal staff carry out their responsibility to society. Hence, as participants reported or expected, user studies can help justify the archival and records

management missions and practices. Future researchers should consider the differences between archival appraisal and user studies. The connection between them is not simple, nor is the research examining them. However, doing so will help save archives' resources for processing and preserving records and enhancing users' access to and use of those records. The ultimate benefits of those efforts will return to society.

**APPENDIX A**

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



**University of Pittsburgh**  
*Institutional Review Board*

3500 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
(412) 383-1480  
(412) 383-1508 (fax)  
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

**Memorandum**

To: Hea Lim Rhee

From: Christopher Ryan, PhD, Vice Chair

Date: 7/10/2009

IRB#: PRO09070004

Subject: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL PRACTICE AND USER STUDIES IN U.S. STATE ARCHIVES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "**Study Completed**" report from the project workspace.

**Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.**

**APPENDIX B**

**RECRUITMENT LETTER**

February 15, 2010

Dear Mr. / Ms. XXX:

As part of a doctoral candidate's research, the University of Pittsburgh's School of Information Sciences would like your assistance in contacting archivists and/or records managers who appraise, analyze, assess, and/or schedule retention of state government records for state archives or records management programs. The purpose of our research is to explore the relationship between *archival appraisal practice* and *archival user studies* in U.S. state archives and records management programs. (For the purpose of this study, *archival appraisal* includes the process of identifying materials that have sufficient value to be transferred to a state archives and determining retention periods, not including monetary appraisal.) The utilization of user studies in archival appraisal practice has been debated for almost 30 years. However, even now little is known about whether user studies are actually utilized in archival appraisal practice. We hope to explore this under-researched topic with your assistance. For this research, it is not necessary that your institution conducts archival user studies or utilizes them in appraisal practice. Our research aims to establish whatever relationship between archival appraisal practice and user studies currently exists.

Participation involves individual archivists and records managers responding to an approximately 30-minute online survey as well as an optional follow-up interview (about 40 minutes). This research carries neither predictable risk nor any direct benefit to your institution. The information obtained will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential. For data analysis, reporting, and potential publication of survey and interview responses, each state archives and/or records management program and each participant will be referred to by an alpha-numeric ID. Survey responses will be presented only in aggregate. Individual responses will never be identifiable. If you have any questions regarding research participants' rights, please contact: Institutional Review Board, 3500 5th Avenue, Ground Floor of Hieber Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, tel: (412) 383-1480, fax: (412) 383-1508, e-mail: irb@pitt.edu.

Eligible participants include archivists and records managers who have conducted state government records appraisal, analysis, assessment, and/or retention scheduling as a full-time equivalent in their current state archives and/or records management program for more than three years. We request your recommendations for eligible participants, either in your program or at another U.S. state archives or records management program. To invite those you recommend to participate, we will need his or her name, institution, phone number, and e-mail. Please e-mail information to Ms. Hea Lim Rhee at hlr8@pitt.edu. We deeply appreciate your assistance in this significant research. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Rhee by e-mail or at (412) 728-8512.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Cox  
Professor, Archival Studies  
School of Information Sciences  
University of Pittsburgh

Hea Lim Rhee  
Doctoral Candidate, Archival Studies  
School of Information Sciences  
University of Pittsburgh

**APPENDIX C**

**INVITATION LETTER**

Dear Mr. / Ms. XXX:

You are invited to participate in a study of U.S. state archives and records management programs. This research explores the relationship between *archival appraisal practice* and *archival user studies* in U.S. state archives and records management programs. (For the purpose of this study, *archival appraisal* includes the process of identifying materials that have sufficient value to be transferred to a state archives and determining retention periods, not including monetary appraisal.) Eligible participants for this study include archivists and records managers who have conducted state government records appraisal, analysis, assessment, and/or retention scheduling as a full-time equivalent in their current state archives and/or records management program for more than three years. You were recommended as an eligible participant for this study by a director, a state or territorial archivist, and/or a records manager at your institution or another institution. Participation involves taking an online survey (about 30 minutes) and an optional follow-up interview (about 40 minutes). The survey and interview will investigate the current utilization of archival user studies in your program and your attitudes about it. For this research, it is not necessary that your institution conducts archival user studies or utilizes them in appraisal practice.

This research carries neither predictable risk nor direct benefit to you. However, your participation as a professional practitioner will help resolve the ongoing, 30-year debate on user studies in archival appraisal practice. If you are willing to assist us, please respond to our survey by visiting the study's website at «URL» and entering **your survey ID number: XXX**. The survey will be available from **February 22, 2010** to **March 15, 2010**. The last survey question will ask whether you are willing to participate in the follow-up interview. Your participation is voluntary. You may skip questions if they make you uncomfortable, and you may withdraw at any point. Your responses will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential and secure. Responses to the survey will be presented only in aggregate form, and only ID numbers will be used for potential presentation of interview responses in publications and reports. Your individual responses will never be identifiable. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact: Institutional Review Board, 3500 5th Avenue, Ground Floor of Hieber Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, tel: (412) 383-1480, fax: (412) 383-1508, e-mail: irb@pitt.edu.

We would deeply appreciate your participation in this significant research. If you have additional questions, please contact Ms. Hea Lim Rhee via e-mail at hlr8@pitt.edu or by calling (412) 728-8512.

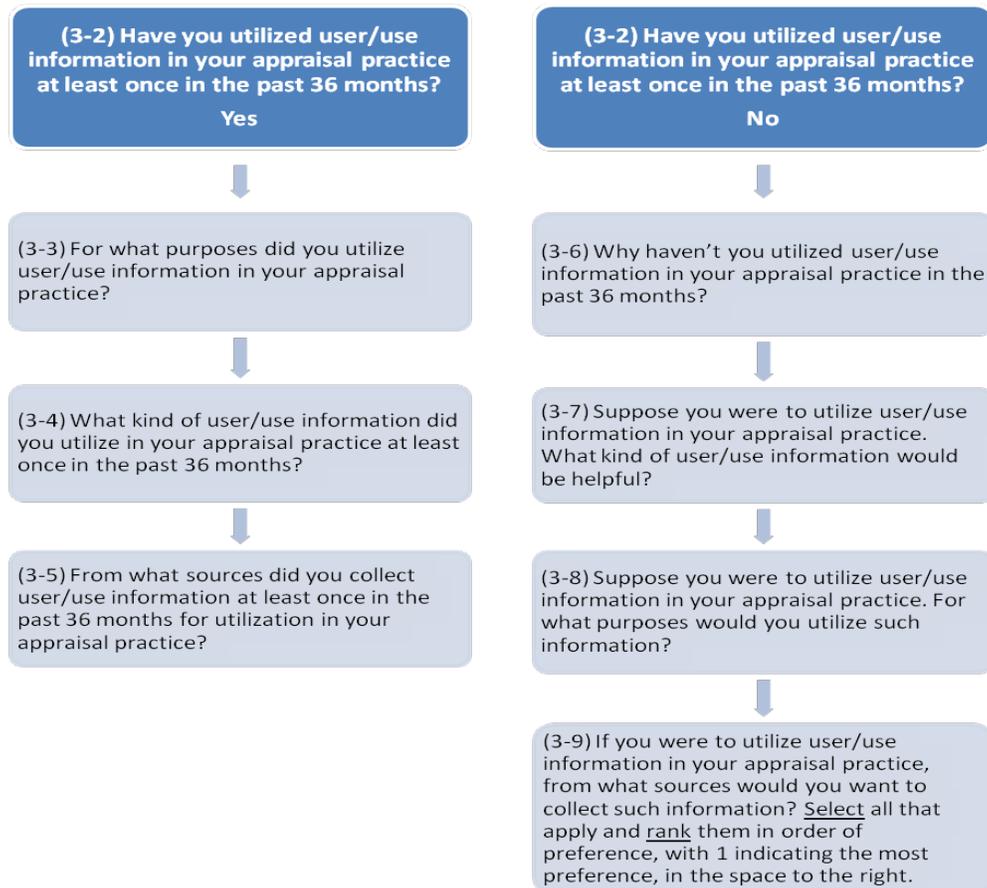
Sincerely,

Richard J. Cox  
Professor, Archival Studies  
School of Information Sciences  
University of Pittsburgh

Hea Lim Rhee  
Doctoral Candidate, Archival Studies  
School of Information Sciences  
University of Pittsburgh

## APPENDIX D

### A SURVEY QUESTION USING A “JUMPING” FUNCTION AND ITS TWO SETS OF QUESTIONS



## APPENDIX E

### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This nationwide survey will examine the current utilization of information on archival users and their use of records in archival appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs. It will also ask for your thoughts on the feasibility and value of that utilization. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes.

Thank you for your participation.

To start this survey, please enter your survey ID number from my letter and email message.

(                    )

#### < Section 1: Archival Appraisal Practice >

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

- Identifying materials that have sufficient value to be accessioned to an archives
- Determining the length of time records should be retained
- Evaluating records to determine their retention based on administrative, legal, and fiscal requirements
- Analyzing/assessing/evaluating/scheduling records to determine records disposition
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

This survey defines the following terms:

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

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

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

This survey defines the following terms:

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

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

- 1-3) In the past 36 months, what activities have typically been part of the archival appraisal process in your own program? (Select all that apply.)
- Creating records retention schedules
  - Reviewing/approving records retention schedules
  - Making appraisal decisions
  - Making reappraisal decisions
  - Documenting appraisal (e.g., appraisal reports, database, etc.)
  - Planning/evaluating appraisal practice
  - Developing/evaluating my program's acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies
  - Developing/evaluating my program's appraisal criteria/standards/checklists
  - Applying/evaluating my program's appraisal methods (e.g., functional analysis, etc.)/techniques (e.g., sampling, etc.)
  - Requesting/justifying resources (e.g., staff, facilities, etc.) for appraisal practice
  - My program has not conducted any appraisal activities in the past 36 months
  - Other activities of the appraisal process (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

This survey defines the following term:

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

1-5) In the past 36 months, who has typically been involved in the appraisal of state government records? (Select all that apply.)

- Archives staff conducting appraisal practice
- Records management staff conducting appraisal practice (e.g., records analysts, etc.)
- Staff in records-creating agencies
- Archives staff processing records
- Archives staff providing reference services
- Records management staff providing reference services
- Records users
- Subject experts outside my institution (e.g., historians, etc.)
- Subject experts within my institution
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## < Section 2: Collection of User/Use Information by Your Program >

This survey defines the following terms:

- **USE OF RECORDS:** Any transaction between archival institutions and clientele involving records and the information within records. Use includes, but is not limited to, the following activities: scanning, reading, referring to, copying, printing, checking out, downloading, transforming, and citing records held in archival institutions after clientele access to the records.
- **USER/USE INFORMATION:** Any concrete information concerning users and their use of records that is not based on personal impressions. This information may be obtained from users themselves or from investigations of users or reference services. It includes information on the number of users, user types, user information needs/research interests, research trends/methodologies, patterns of records use, used records, etc.

- 2-1) Has your own program collected its user/use information at least once in the past 36 months?
- Yes → CONTINUE TO QUESTION 2-2
  - No → SKIP TO QUESTION 2-4
  - I don't know → SKIP TO SECTION 3
- 2-2) What kind of user/use information did your own program collect at least once in the past 36 months? (Select all that apply.)
- Contact information (e.g., name, telephone number, email address, etc.)
  - Types of users (e.g., government officials, genealogists, etc.)
  - User information needs/research topics/research interests
  - Number of visitors to a search room of my program
  - Number of user reference requests (via one or more contact method: in person, phone, mail, email, online chatting)
  - Which physical records are checked out or copied
  - How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period
  - How frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used during a specific time period

- Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website
- Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website
- User feedback/comments
- Number of visitors to my program's website
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2-3) From what sources did your own program collect user/use information? (Select all that apply.)

- Subject experts outside my institution
- Subject experts in my institution
- Records creators
- Records users (e.g., government officials, researchers, etc.)
- Records inventories/records surveys created for records retention scheduling
- User data collected from registration/reference services in my program
- Use data collected from registration/reference services in my program
- Systematic investigation of users of my program for specific purposes (e.g., user satisfaction, user information needs, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)
- Systematic investigation of use of records in my program for specific purposes (e.g., use statistics, used records, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)
- Web user data collected by analyzing users of my program's website (e.g., Web-based user feedback/comment, user satisfaction, etc.)
- Web use data collected by analyzing usage of my program's website (e.g., number of visits to a specific digital collection, electronic records accessed/downloaded, etc.)
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO SECTION 3.

2-4) Why has your own program not collected user/use information? (Select all that apply.)

- My program does not have resources (e.g., staff, time, money, etc.) to do so
- My program knows its users and their use of records
- My program's holdings are used only by authorized government agency staff
- There is no archivist/records manager charged with reference services
- My state/institutional policies restrain my program from doing so
- My program's parent organizations and/or relevant government agencies restrain my program from doing so
- My program has not normally collected such information
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**< Section 3: Collection/Utilization of User/Use Information for Appraisal Practice of Your Program >**

This study defines the following term:

• **(ARCHIVAL) APPRAISAL:**

- 1) the process of identifying state government records that have sufficient value to be transferred to and retained in a state archives and
- 2) the process of analyzing/assessing/evaluating state government records and determining the length of time records should be retained

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

- 3-1) What factors relating to users/use of records do you typically consider in appraising state government records? (Select all that apply.)
- Research users/use
  - Administrative users/use
  - Legal users/use
  - Financial users/use
  - Past users/use
  - Current users/use
  - Future users/use
  - Primary users/use
  - Secondary users/use
  - I do not consider any users/use of records
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

This study defines the following term:

- **UTILIZE USER/USE INFORMATION IN APPRAISAL PRACTICE:** To make practical use of user/use information in appraisal practice.

- 3-2) Have you utilized user/use information in your appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months?
- Yes → CONTINUE TO QUESTION 3-3
  - No → SKIP TO QUESTION 3-6
- 3-3) For what purposes did you utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)
- Anticipating future research trends and potential use of records
  - Identifying changing user information needs and research interests
  - Determining the value of information contained in records
  - Making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively
  - Carrying out cost-benefit analysis by calculating the benefits of records use versus the costs of records appraisal, processing, and retention

- I don't remember
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3-4) What kind of user/use information did you utilize in your appraisal practice at least once in the past 36 months? (Select all that apply.)

- Contact information (e.g., name, telephone number, email address, etc.)
- Types of users (e.g., government officials, genealogists, etc.)
- User information needs/research topics/research interests
- Number of visitors to a search room of my program
- Number of user reference requests (via one or more contact method: in person, phone, mail, email, online chatting)
- Which physical records are checked out or copied
- How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period
- How frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used during a specific time period
- Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website
- Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website
- User feedback/comments
- Number of visitors to my program's website
- I don't remember
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3-5) From what sources did you collect user/use information at least once in the past 36 months for utilization in your appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- Subject experts outside my institution
- Subject experts in my institution
- Records creators
- Records users (e.g., government officials, researchers, etc.)
- Records inventories/records surveys created for records retention scheduling
- User data collected from registration/reference services in my program

- Use data collected from registration/reference services in my program
- Systematic investigation of users of my program for specific purposes (e.g., user satisfaction, user information needs, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)
- Systematic investigation of use of records in my program for specific purposes (e.g., use statistics, used records, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)
- Web user data collected by analyzing users of my program's website (e.g., Web-based user feedback/comment, user satisfaction, etc.)
- Web use data collected by analyzing usage of my program's website (e.g., number of visits to a specific digital collection, electronic records accessed/downloaded, etc.)
- I don't remember
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 3-10

3-6) Why haven't you utilized user/use information in your appraisal practice in the past 36 months? (Select all that apply.)

- I have no time to do so
- I have not thought about it
- My program does not collect user/use information
- My archives receives and preserves all records transferred to it
- User/use information collected by my program is inapplicable to my appraisal practice
- I do not think my appraisal practice would benefit from user/use information
- My staff members have not typically done so
- My program's parent organizations and/or relevant government agencies restrain us from doing so
- My state/institutional policies restrain us from doing so
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3-7) Suppose you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice. What kind of user/use information would be helpful? (Select all that apply.)

- Contact information (e.g., name, telephone number, email address, etc.)
- Types of users (e.g., government officials, genealogists, etc.)
- User information needs/research topics/research interests
- Number of visitors to a search room of my program
- Number of user reference requests (via one or more contact method: in person, phone, mail, email, online chatting)
- Which physical records are checked out or copied
- How frequently a particular records series is used during a specific time period
- How frequently a particular records box/folder/item is used during a specific time period
- Which electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website
- Number of times specific electronic records/digital collections are accessed/downloaded from my program's website
- User feedback/comments
- Number of visitors to my program's website
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3-8) Suppose you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice. For what purposes would you utilize such information? (Select all that apply.)

- Anticipating future research trends and potential use of records
- Identifying changing user information needs and research interests
- Determining the value of information contained in records
- Making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively
- Carrying out cost-benefit analysis by calculating the benefits of records use versus the costs of records appraisal, processing, and retention
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3-9) If you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice, from what sources would you want to collect such information? Select all that apply and rank them in order of preference, with 1 indicating the most preference, in the space to the right.

<b>Information sources</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Subject experts outside my institution	
Subject experts in my institution	
Records creators	
Records users (e.g., government officials, researchers, etc.)	
Records inventories/records surveys created for records retention scheduling	
<u>User data</u> collected from registration/reference services in my program	
<u>Use data</u> collected from registration/reference services in my program	
<u>Systematic investigation of users</u> of my program for specific purposes (e.g., user satisfaction, user information needs, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)	
<u>Systematic investigation of use of records</u> in my program for specific purposes (e.g., use statistics, used records, etc.) employing research methods (e.g., survey, interview, focus group, citation analysis, etc.)	
<u>Web user data</u> collected by analyzing users of my program's website (e.g., Web-based user feedback/comment, user satisfaction, etc.)	
<u>Web use data</u> collected by analyzing usage of my program's website (e.g., number of visits to a specific digital collection, electronic records accessed/downloaded, etc.)	

If you would collect user/use information for your appraisal practice from other sources, please specify:

This study defines the following term:

- **USER STUDY:** Investigative activity that collects and analyzes information on users and their use of records
  - 1) through registration/reference services via registration forms, call slips, use statistics, etc.
  - 2) by research methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, citation analyses, focus groups, etc.)
  - 3) through Web-based tools (e.g., Web tools for tracking Web visitors, Web-based user feedback/comments, Web-based surveys, etc.)

3-10) In the past 36 months, have you utilized results of user studies conducted by your own program in your appraisal practice?

- Yes → CONTINUE TO QUESTION 3-11
- No → SKIP TO SECTION 4

3-11) How did you benefit from utilizing results of your program's user studies in your appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- Anticipated future research trends and potential use of records
- Identified changing user information needs and research interests
- Determined the value of information contained in records
- Made appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively
- Carried out cost-benefit analysis by calculating the benefits of records use versus the costs of records appraisal, processing, and retention
- I did not benefit
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3-12) In which appraisal activities did you benefit from utilizing results of your program's user studies in your appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- Making appraisal decisions at the series level
- Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level
- Making reappraisal decisions at the series level
- Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level
- Creating records schedules

- Planning/evaluating appraisal practice
- Developing/evaluating my program's acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies
- Developing/evaluating my program's appraisal criteria/standards/checklists
- Applying/evaluating my program's appraisal methods/techniques
- Requesting/justifying resources (e.g., staff, facilities, etc.) for appraisal practice
- I did not gain benefits in any appraisal activity
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**< Section 4: Utilization of User Studies in Appraisal Practice: General U.S. State Archives and Records Management Programs >**

This study defines the following term:

- **USER STUDY:** Investigative activity that collects and analyzes information on users and their use of records
  - 1) through registration/reference services via registration forms, call slips, use statistics, etc.
  - 2) by research methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, citation analyses, focus groups, etc.)
  - 3) through Web-based tools (e.g., Web tools for tracking Web visitors, Web-based user feedback/comments, Web-based surveys, etc.)

\* In responding to questions in this section, suppose that every U.S. state archives and records management program provided its staff with its own internal user studies. Respond to the following questions considering appraisal practices for all U.S. state archives and records management programs.

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

4-1) In general, for whom do you think utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice is feasible?

- U.S. state archivists only → CONTINUE TO QUESTION 4-2
- U.S. state records managers only → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-3
- Both U.S. state archivists and records managers → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-5
- Neither U.S. state archivists nor records managers → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-4
- I don't know → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-6

4-2) Why do you think it may not be feasible for U.S. state records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- Lack of time
- Lack of staff
- Lack of budget
- Difficulty in collaborating between staff conducting appraisal practice and staff conducting user studies
- Lack of training on how to utilize user studies in appraisal practice
- I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in state records management programs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 4-5.

4-3) Why do you think it may not be feasible for U.S. state archivists to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- Lack of time
- Lack of staff
- Lack of budget
- Difficulty in collaborating between staff conducting appraisal practice and staff conducting user studies
- Lack of training on how to utilize user studies in appraisal practice
- I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in state archives programs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 4-5.

- 4-4) Why do you think it may not be feasible for U.S. state archivists and records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)
- Lack of time
  - Lack of staff
  - Lack of budget
  - Difficulty in collaborating between staff conducting appraisal practice and staff conducting user studies
  - Lack of training on how to utilize user studies in appraisal practice
  - I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in other state archives and records management programs
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 4-6.

- 4-5) In which appraisal activities do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies? (Select all that apply.)
- Making appraisal decisions at the series level
  - Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level
  - Making reappraisal decisions at the series level
  - Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level
  - Creating records schedules
  - Planning/evaluating appraisal practice
  - Developing/evaluating their programs' acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies
  - Developing/evaluating their programs' appraisal criteria/standards/checklists
  - Applying/evaluating their programs' appraisal methods/techniques
  - Requesting/justifying resources (e.g., staff, facilities, etc.) for appraisal practice
  - I don't know

○ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4-6) Disregarding feasibility, for whom do you think utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice is valuable?

- U.S. state archivists only → CONTINUE TO QUESTION 4-7
- U.S. state records managers only → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-8
- Both U.S. state archivists and records managers → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-10
- Neither U.S. state archivists nor records managers → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-9
- I don't know → SKIP TO QUESTION 4-12

4-7) Why do you think it may not be valuable for U.S. state records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- I don't feel it is necessary to do so in state records management programs
- State records managers conducting archival appraisal can directly consult records users to obtain user/use information instead of utilizing user studies
- The benefits are less than the spent resources (e.g., staff, budget, etc.)
- Lack of evidence about state records managers benefiting from the utilization of user studies
- Impracticality due to lack of training
- I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in state records management programs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 4-10.

4-8) Why do you think it may not be valuable for U.S. state archivists to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- I don't feel it is necessary to do so in state archives programs
- State archivists conducting archival appraisal can directly consult records users to obtain user/use information instead of utilizing user studies
- The benefits are less than the spent resources (e.g., staff, budget, etc.)
- Lack of evidence about state archivists benefiting from the utilization of user studies

- Impracticality due to lack of training
- I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in state archives programs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 4-10.

4-9) Why do you think it may not be valuable for U.S. state archivists and records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- I don't feel it is necessary to do so in state archives and records management programs
- State archivists and records managers conducting archival appraisal can directly consult records users to obtain user/use information instead of utilizing user studies
- The benefits are less than the spent resources (e.g., staff, budget, etc.)
- Lack of evidence about state archivists and records managers benefiting from the utilization of user studies
- Impracticality due to lack of training
- I don't know about appraisal practice and user studies in other state archives and records management programs
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO QUESTION 4-12.

4-10) For what reasons do you think it would be valuable for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice? (Select all that apply.)

- Anticipating future research trends and potential use of records
- Identifying changing user information needs and research interests
- Determining the value of information contained in records
- Making appraisal/reappraisal/records retention decisions more objectively
- Carrying out cost-benefit analysis by calculating the benefits of records use versus the costs of records appraisal, processing, and retention
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4-11) In which of the following appraisal activities do you think results of their own user studies would be valuable to U.S. state archivists and/or records managers? (Select all that apply.)

- Making appraisal decisions at the series level
- Making appraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level
- Making reappraisal decisions at the series level
- Making reappraisal decisions of special records at the item/folder/box level
- Creating records schedules
- Planning/evaluating appraisal practice
- Developing/evaluating their programs' acquisition/appraisal/collection development/records retention policies
- Developing/evaluating their programs' appraisal criteria/standards/checklists
- Applying/evaluating their programs' appraisal methods/techniques
- Requesting/justifying resources (e.g., staff, facilities, etc.) for appraisal practice
- I don't know
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4-12) Please use this space for additional comments you may have relevant to the utilization of user studies/user and use information in appraisal practice in U.S. state archives and records management programs. Your comments are valuable to my research.

## < Section 5: Your Professional Functions >

5-1) In what capacity do you perform archival appraisal?

- As an archivist only
- As a records manager only
- As both an archivist and records manager

5-2) Approximately what percentage of your time do you spend on archival appraisal?

- 20% or less
- Between 21% and 40%
- Between 41% and 60%
- Between 61% and 80%
- 81% or more

5-3) Since what year have you conducted archival appraisal in your current program?

\_\_\_\_\_

5-4) In your entire professional career, have you ever provided reference services in archives and/or records management programs?

- Yes
- No

Are you willing to participate in a follow-up telephone or in-person interview? For this interview it is not necessary that you or your program collects user/use information or utilizes it in appraisal practice.

- Yes
- No

**\*\*\* Thank you for your participation in this survey! \*\*\***

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#### < Definitions of key terms for this interview >

\*\*\* **(Archival) appraisal:** 1) the process of identifying state government records that have sufficient value to be transferred to and retained in a state archives and 2) the process of analyzing/assessing/evaluating state government records and determining the length of time the records should be retained

\*\*\* **User/use information:** Any concrete information concerning users and their use of records that is not based on personal impressions. This information may be obtained from users themselves or from investigations of users or reference services. It includes information on the number of users, user types, user information needs/research interests, research trends/methodologies, patterns of records use, used records, etc.

\*\*\* **User study:** Investigative activity that collects and analyzes information on users and use of records

- 1) through registration/reference services via registration forms, call slips, use statistics, etc.
- 2) by research methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, citation analyses, focus groups, etc.)
- 3) through Web-based tools (e.g., Web tools for tracking Web visitors, Web-based user feedback/comments, Web-based surveys, etc.)

\*\*\* **Reference services:** Services that help patrons locate and access records

## F.1 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

### < Section 1: Job functions >

1. Describe the archival appraisal practice of your program and your work related to the appraisal practice.
2. If your program provides reference services for users (e.g., staff in records-creating agencies, researchers, etc.), tell me about those reference services. If you have ever provided reference services in archives and records management programs in your whole professional career, briefly tell me about that work. If your reference service experience has influenced your appraisal practice, can you tell me how?

### < Section 2: Utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice in your program >

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

3. In the past 36 months, has your program collected user/use information?
  - a. If yes: Why and how did your program collect such information? What kind of information did your program collect?
  - b. If no: Can you tell me why your program hasn't collected such information?
4. In the past 36 months, have you collected user/use information to utilize it in your appraisal practice at least once?
  - a. If yes: Tell me about that experience. Why and how did you do that? What kind of user/use information did you collect?
  - b. If yes: Why didn't you utilize the collected information in your appraisal practice?

- c. If no: Can you tell me why you haven't collected or utilized user/use information in your appraisal practice in the past 36 months?
- d. If no: Suppose that you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice and that all sources (e.g., subject experts, records creators, records users, user studies, etc.) were available to you. Which sources would you prefer for collecting user/use information for your appraisal practice and why?
5. Suppose you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice. For what purposes and how would you utilize such information? What kind of user/use information would you utilize?
6. Suppose your program conducted user studies and you were to utilize their results in your appraisal practice. In which appraisal activities would you utilize such information? Why and how?
7. What would motivate you to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice?

**< Section 3: Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice in U.S. state archives  
and records management programs >**

\*\*\* In responding to questions in this section, suppose that every U.S. state archives and records management program provided its staff with its own user studies.

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

8. In general, do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?
- a. If yes or no: Why do you think so?

b. If yes: For what appraisal activities do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies? Why do you think so? If possible, tell me how you think U.S. state archivists and/or records managers would utilize the results in those appraisal activities.

9. Disregarding feasibility, do you think it would be valuable for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

a. If yes or no: Why do you think so?

b. If yes: For what appraisal activities do you think results of their own user studies would be valuable to U.S. state archivists and/or records managers? Why do you think so?

10. What difficulties or limitations would you anticipate for U.S. state archivists and records managers utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

11. What do you think U.S. state archives and records management programs need to facilitate utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

< **Ending** >

12. Are there any comments that you would like to share relevant to this study (for example, about appraisal practice, user/use information, utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice, utilization of user studies in appraisal practice, etc.)?

13. Do you have any questions (for example, about this interview, this study, etc.)?

## F.2 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

### < Section 1: Background information >

1. Describe the archival appraisal practice of your program and your work related to the appraisal practice.
2. If your program provides reference services for users (e.g., staff in records-creating agencies, researchers, etc.), tell me about those reference services. If you have ever provided reference services in archives and records management programs in your whole professional career, briefly tell me about that work. If your reference service experience has influenced your appraisal practice, can you tell me how?

### < Section 2: Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice in your program >

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

3. Why and how did your program conduct user studies in the past 36 months? Who conducted the user studies? What kind of user/use information did your program collect from the user studies?
4. Tell me why and how you collected user/use information from user studies of your program.
5. Why and how did you utilize user/use information collected from your program's user studies in your appraisal practice? What kind of user/use information did you utilize?
6. In what appraisal activities did you utilize user/use information collected from your program's user studies? Can you tell me why and how you did that?

7. How did you benefit from utilizing results of your program's user studies in your appraisal practice?
8. What difficulties and limitations did you have in utilizing your program's user studies in your appraisal practice?
9. What advice would you give to other archivists and/or records managers about utilizing results of their own user studies in appraisal practice?

**< Section 3: Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice in U.S. state archives  
and records management programs >**

\*\*\* In responding to questions in this section, suppose that every U.S. state archives and records management program provided its staff with its own user studies.

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

10. In general, do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?
  - a. If yes or no: Why do you think so?
  - b. If yes: For what appraisal activities do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies? Why do you think so? If possible, tell me how you think U.S. state archivists and/or records managers would utilize the results in those appraisal activities.
11. Disregarding feasibility, do you think it would be valuable for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?
  - a. If yes or no: Why do you think so?

- b. If yes: For what appraisal activities do you think results of their own user studies would be valuable to U.S. state archivists and/or records managers? Why do you think so?
12. What difficulties or limitations would you anticipate for U.S. state archivists and records managers utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?
13. What do you think U.S. state archives and records management programs need to facilitate utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

< **Ending** >

14. Are there any comments that you would like to share relevant to this study (for example, about appraisal practice, user/use information, utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice, utilization of user studies in appraisal practice, etc.)?
15. Do you have any questions (for example, about this interview, this study, etc.)?

### F.3 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 3

#### < Section 1: Background information >

1. Describe the archival appraisal practice of your program and your work related to the appraisal practice.
2. If your program provides reference services for users (e.g., staff in records-creating agencies, researchers, etc.), tell me about those reference services. If you have ever provided reference services in archives and records management programs in your whole professional career, briefly tell me about that work. If your reference service experience has influenced your appraisal practice, can you tell me how?

#### < Section 2: Collection of user/use information from user studies >

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

3. In the past 36 months, has your program conducted user studies?
  - a. If yes: Can you tell me who has conducted the user studies? Why and how has your program conducted the user studies? What kind of user/use information has your program collected from the user studies?
  - b. If yes: Have you collected user/use information collected from your program's user studies for your appraisal practice? If yes, why and how? If no, can you tell me why you haven't done it?
  - c. If yes: Can you tell me why you haven't utilized user/use information collected from your program's user studies in your appraisal practice?

**< Section 3: Collection/utilization of user/use information from sources other than  
user studies >**

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

4. Why and how has your program collected its user/use information from sources other than user studies (e.g., records creators, subject experts, records users, literature, etc.) in the past 36 months? Who has collected user/use information in your program? What kind of user/use information has your program collected?
5. Tell me why and how you collected user/use information for your appraisal practice. Why and how did you utilize such information in your appraisal practice? What kind of user/use information did you collect and utilize?
6. In what appraisal activities did you utilize user/use information? Can you tell me why and how you did that?
7. What benefits did you gain from utilizing user/use information in your appraisal practice?
8. Suppose that all sources (e.g., user studies, subject experts, records creators, records users, etc.) of information on your users and their use of records were available and that you were to utilize user/use information in your appraisal practice. From which sources would you prefer to collect user/use information for your appraisal practice and why?
9. What advice would you give to other archivists and/or records managers about utilizing user/use information in appraisal practice?

**< Section 4: Utilization of user studies in appraisal practice in U.S. state archives  
and records management programs >**

\*\*\* In responding to questions in this section, suppose that every U.S. state archives and records management program provided its staff with its own user studies.

\*\*\* Regarding appraisal practice, please consider only state government records in a paper format, not other records or other media.

10. In general, do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

a. If yes or no: Why do you think so?

b. If yes: For what appraisal activities do you think it would be feasible for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies? Why do you think so? If possible, tell me how you think U.S. state archivists and/or records managers would utilize the results in those appraisal activities.

11. Disregarding feasibility, do you think it would be valuable for U.S. state archivists and/or records managers to utilize results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

a. If yes or no: Why do you think so?

b. If yes: For what appraisal activities do you think results of their own user studies would be valuable to U.S. state archivists and/or records managers? Why do you think so?

12. What difficulties or limitations would you anticipate for U.S. state archivists and records managers utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

13. What do you think U.S. state archives and records management programs need to facilitate utilizing results of their own user studies in their appraisal practice?

**< Ending >**

14. Are there any comments that you would like to share relevant to this study (for example, about appraisal practice, user/use information, utilization of user/use information in appraisal practice, utilization of user studies in appraisal practice, etc.)?
15. Do you have any questions (for example, about this interview, this study, etc.)?

**APPENDIX G**

**ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STATE ARCHIVES PROGRAMS  
AND STATE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

State	Relationship (Joint vs. Separate Programs)	Participating program		
		State archives program (Separate)	State records management program (Separate)	State archives and records management program (Joint)
Alabama	J			√
Alaska	J			√
Arizona	J			√
California	S	√	√	
Connecticut	J			√
Delaware	J			√
Florida	J			√
Idaho	S	√		
Indiana	J			√
Iowa	J			√
Louisiana	J			√
Maine	J			√
Maryland	S		√	
Massachusetts	J			√
Michigan	J			√
Missouri	J			√
Montana	S	√		
New Hampshire	J			√
New Jersey	J			√
New Mexico	J			√
North Carolina	J			√
North Dakota	S	√		
Ohio	S	√		
Oregon	J			√
Pennsylvania	J			√
Utah	J			√
Vermont	J			√
Virginia	J			√
Washington	J			√
West Virginia	S	√		
Wisconsin	S	√		

**APPENDIX H**

**CORE FUNCTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS' PROGRAM AND PARTICIPANTS' ROLE  
IN APPRAISAL**

State	Relationship (Joint vs. Separate Programs)	Core function of participant's program								
		AR (Separate)			RM (Separate)			ARRM (Joint)		
		Participant's role of performing appraisal								
		AR	RM	ARRM	AR	RM	ARRM	AR	RM	ARRM
Alabama	J									√
Alaska	J									√
Arizona	J	√				√				
Arkansas	A only									
California	S	√				√				
Connecticut	J						√			
Delaware	J									√
Florida	J	√				√		√	√	√
Idaho	S									√
Indiana	J					√				
Iowa	J									√
Louisiana	J						√			
Maine	J							√	√	
Maryland	S					√				
Massachusetts	J									√
Michigan	J									√
Missouri	J	√				√				
Montana	S			√						
New Hampshire	J									√
New Jersey	J	√								
New Mexico	J					√				√
North Carolina	J									√
North Dakota	S			√						
Ohio	S	√								
Oregon	J									√
Pennsylvania	J									√
Utah	J									√
Vermont	J									√
Virginia	J	√								
Washington	J					√				√
West Virginia	S	√								
Wisconsin	S	√								

**APPENDIX I**

**NON-PARTICIPATION INQUIRY E-MAIL**

Dear Mr. / Ms. XXX:

In February and March Professor Richard J. Cox and I invited your archives and/or records management program to participate in our research project conducted by the University of Pittsburgh's School of Information Sciences. The purpose of the project is to explore the relationship between *archival appraisal practice* and *archival user studies* in U.S. state archives and records management programs. We requested that you provide contact information of eligible participants: archivists and records managers who have conducted state government records appraisal, analysis, assessment, and/or retention scheduling as a full-time employee in your state archives and/or records management program for more than three years.

We did not receive a response from your institution. Could you take a few moments to say why your institution did not participate in this study? Knowing why will help us understand what factors influenced participation in this study. You may want to choose one or more of following answer options as they apply or write your own comment.

1. Because of personnel and/or resource reduction, the staff was too busy maintaining the core functions of our institution to participate in your study.
2. There were no staff members eligible for your study.
3. My program has not conducted any appraisal activities in the past 36 months.
4. Survey questions seemed irrelevant to the operation of my state archives/state records management program.
5. Other reasons: ( )

Your answer will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Your name, your state, and your institution's name will never be identifiable.

I deeply appreciate your assistance in this significant research.

Sincerely,

Hea Lim Rhee  
Doctoral Candidate  
Archives, Preservation, and Records Management  
School of Information Sciences  
University of Pittsburgh

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