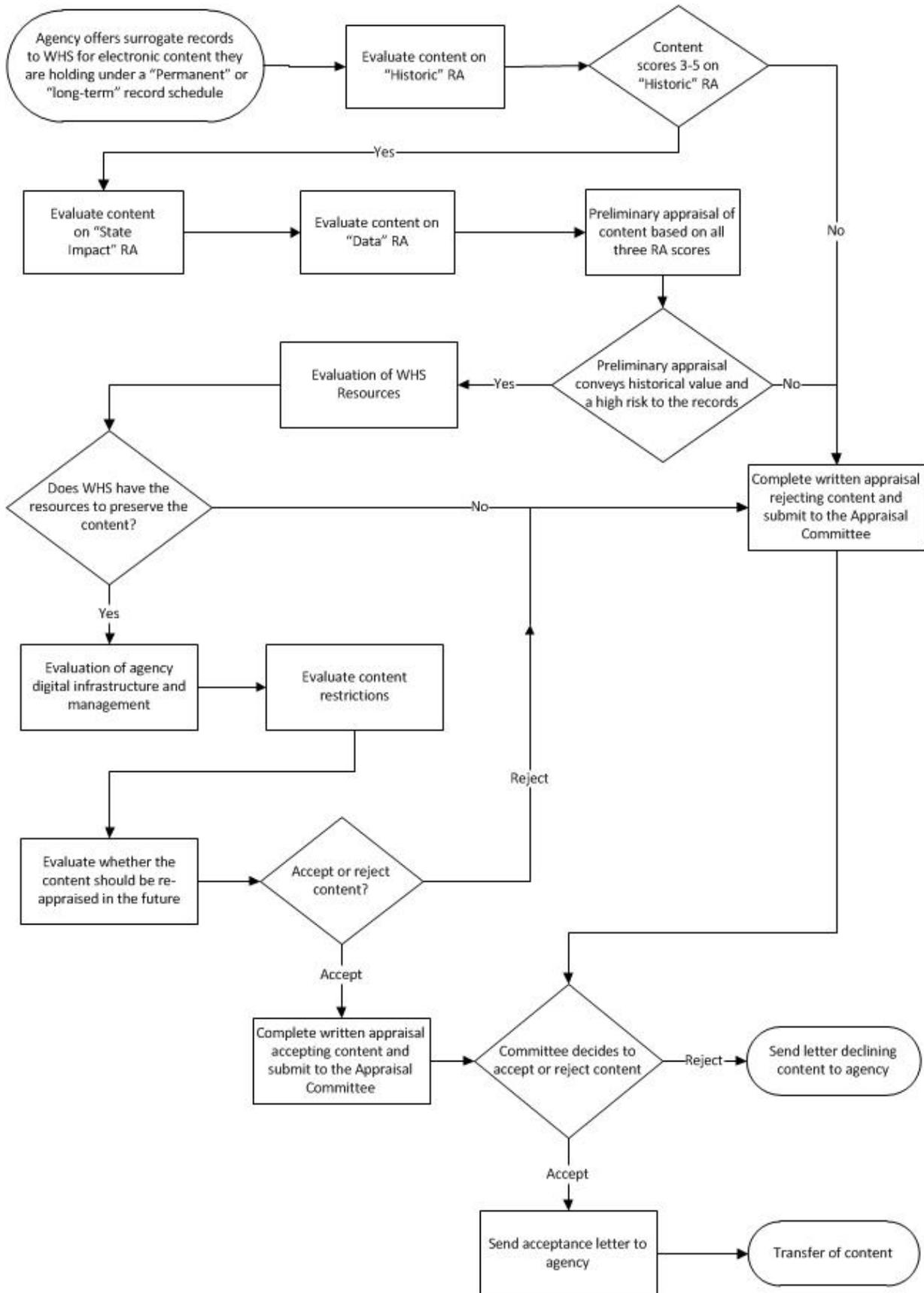


Appraisal Policy and Workflow for Surrogate Records Being Offered to WHS

Surrogate Workflow



Appraisal Policy and Workflow for Surrogate Records Being Offered to WHS

Statement of Purpose

In recent years, state and local agencies have been moving toward the digitization of records in order to provide access or to save space by replacing the traditional paper records. In many cases, these are records that are scheduled with either long-term or permanent retention by the agency. Increasingly, the Wisconsin State Archives is being approached by agencies who are interested in passing surrogate copies of these records to us while they maintain the legal record.

This is a challenging issue in the current landscape of agencies undergoing mass digitization projects, many with the intent of disposing of the paper records when the project is complete. Traditionally, the Archives has declined content where both an agency and the archives hold a copy of the record, as this has the potential to open up questions as to who holds the legal record. There is, however, a general lack of consistency and standards in the digitization process among agencies with different levels of staff knowledge and resources. As a result, there is the very real potential of losing records of historical value along several points of failure in the digitization process.

Because of this risk, records which are being offered to WHS as surrogates for items still held by state agencies may be accepted under some circumstances, although they require a more deliberate evaluation process. The transfer of any material requires a committal of Archives staff time, resources, and storage to either paper or electronic surrogates. This must also be factored into the evaluation.

In addition to the traditional appraisal criteria that WHS routinely uses to evaluate content, offers of surrogate records require further evaluation in accordance with the unique nature of these records. This includes risk assessments of the content and consideration of future re-appraisal. This document provides a workflow for evaluating and appraising these offerings.

Risk Assessment

The first step of the workflow is to conduct a preliminary appraisal based on three risk assessments:

1. Historic Impact Risk Assessment
2. State Impact Risk Assessment
3. Data Risk Assessment

A preliminary appraisal will be conducted on the materials based on the results of these risk assessments. If these results, taken together, convey a high risk to the archivist, the next step is to continue with the content evaluation and final appraisal. If the results do not convey a high risk, the archivist can complete a written appraisal summarizing rejection of the content.

Historic Impact Risk Assessment

The Historic Impact Risk Assessment evaluates the long-term historic value of the content and evaluates the risk of losing that information. This can often be different than the agency's opinion of their content who have many years of time, effort and resources invested in the content. Content that rates between 3-5 on the Historic Impact Risk Assessment has been deemed to have some long-term historic value and

Appraisal Policy and Workflow for Surrogate Records Being Offered to WHS

can progress to the State Impact Risk Assessment. Content that rates at 1-2 on the Historic Impact Risk Assessment is of low or no long-term historic value, making it unsuitable for permanent preservation at WHS. This content would move immediately to an appraisal rejecting the transfer of the records to WHS.

5	High: Content is of high, long-term historic value and does not exist elsewhere. Content provides critical context to the state's story. Loss of this information would leave a critical void in state information
4	Major: Content is of high, long-term historic value but portions of it could be reconstructed from other sources. Content provides significant context to the state's story. Loss of this information would leave a significant void in state information
3	Minor: Content is of medium, long-term historic value. Content provides moderate context to the state's story.
2	Low: Content is of low, long-term historic value. Content provides interesting context to the state's story.
1	None: Content has no long-term historic value and should not be transferred to the archives

State Impact Risk Assessment

For content that passes the Historic Impact Risk Assessment, it will next be evaluated according to the State Impact Risk Assessment, which estimates the potential public repercussions to the state of Wisconsin if digital content of historic value was lost at an agency along one of the many points of failure, and a surrogate record had not been preserved by WHS.

5	Irrecoverable: Permanent loss of content would result in significant and permanent damage to the state's reputation and have a highly negative public relations impact.
4	Major Impact: Permanent loss of content would result in significant damage to the state's reputation and have a highly negative public relations impact.
3	Minor Impact: Permanent loss of content would result in minor damage to the state's reputation and have a negative but manageable public relations impact.
2	Low Impact: Permanent loss of content would result in low damage to the state's reputation and have a limited public relations impact.
1	No Impact: Permanent loss of content would result in no damage to the state's reputation and have virtually no negative public relations impact.

Data Risk Assessment

The Data Risk Assessment evaluates the risk to the digital content and its ability to be replaced if it was accidentally lost through technological or human error.

5	Only one copy of the digital surrogate record exists and is held on an external storage device.
4	Only one copy of the digital surrogate record exists and is held on a local hard drive.
3	The digital surrogate record is backed up locally on an external storage device.
2	The digital surrogate record is backed up on cloud servers through a cloud service provider.
1	The digital surrogate record is backed up on regularly monitored offsite servers (e.g. DET servers).

Appraisal Policy and Workflow for Surrogate Records Being Offered to WHS

Preliminary Appraisal

Evaluations across all three risk assessments must be considered both separately and as a whole when determining whether or not to consider accepting surrogate records. Content may rate a “5” on the Data Risk Assessment but a “3” on the Historic Impact Assessment and a “2” on the State Impact Risk Assessment. Looking at all three together, it is unlikely that WHS would choose to devote time and resources on maintaining a surrogate record.

In another example, content may rate a “5” on the Historic Impact Assessment and a “5” on the State Impact Risk Assessment. We may opt to transfer those to help ensure that historically significant content is safeguarded against loss as more agencies transition to digitized and born-digital environments.

At this point in the workflow, there should be enough information to determine whether to complete a written appraisal summarizing rejection of the content, or to continue to the evaluation of WHS resources.

Evaluation of WHS Resources

Even if the content scores high on the risk assessments, it must be evaluated to see if WHS has the resources to preserve the content. For paper records, the appraisal should include the extent of the content, format (standard sized docs, oversized maps, images, bound volumes, etc), and condition of the materials. For digital surrogates, the analysis should include extent and formats that are proprietary or need to be migrated over time.

This evaluation should summarize whether or not we have the space to hold the content, and if so, whether they will need any special care over time that needs to be factored into the decision. It is possible that even though content ranks high in terms of the assessment, WHS simply does not have the staff and resources to manage the surrogates. If this is the case, the archivist should complete a written appraisal rejecting the content. If WHS is deemed to have the resources to preserve the content, the archivist can continue to the content evaluation and appraisal.

Content Evaluation and Appraisal

If the results of the risk assessments convey a high risk to the archivist, the content can continue through the steps of the content evaluation and appraisal:

1. Digitization Process and Infrastructure Evaluation
2. Content Restriction Evaluation
3. Evaluate Content for Future Re-Appraisal
4. Final Appraisal

Digital Infrastructure and Management Evaluation

There is currently no standardized process in the long-term storage of digitized content by state and local agencies. While we may not have great insight into each agency’s practices, we should be able to

Appraisal Policy and Workflow for Surrogate Records Being Offered to WHS

make a high-level evaluation of the staff and resources available to them, which will play some role in determining whether or not WHS should accept it.

As an example, a state agency that holds its digitized material on DET servers may be evaluated differently than a small local agency holding their digital copies on an external storage device, and files being stored on a shared drive, which are more difficult to manage, would be evaluated differently than those managed in a database. A state agency that uses staff with little training to digitize their materials may be of more concern than a local agency that hires a professional outside vendor to digitize their content.

Content Restriction Evaluation

If WHS opts to take the content, it is critical we understand any restrictions on the content and manage that content according to those restrictions.

This is different from a traditional evaluation, where WHS would often not accept content if no one could ever access it. In this case, WHS is holding surrogates, not the record, and outside parties would work through the state or local agency to access the information. In this scenario, WHS may determine that surrogate records are important enough to accept even with restrictions.

5	There are no restrictions on the content.
4	Portions of the content are restricted for some period of time.
3	Portions of the content are permanently restricted.
2	All content is restricted for some period of time.
1	All content is permanently restricted.

Evaluate Content for Future Re-Appraisal

The discussion to accept or not accept surrogate records is largely being driven by the current landscape of mass digitization projects at a state and local level. There has been a recent push to digitize materials en masse, but standards and long-term management plans have not been fully implemented for these digitized records, creating an inherent risk to those records. In some cases, future re-evaluation may be appropriate to determine if it still makes sense for WHS to hold the surrogate records, given changes in agency technology and records management practices.

Content that WHS ranks highly in the risk assessment may be evaluated at longer time frames or never re-evaluated at all. Items that rank more in the mid-range of the risk assessments may be evaluated within a fairly short time frame (5 years for example) to see if the value of the surrogate content still justifies staff resources and storage space.

Final Appraisal

A summary report of the content along with an evaluation of the above areas should be summarized in a final appraisal document along with the recommendation as to whether or not WHS should take the content. This should be submitted to the appraisal committee for review per the normal process for further discussion.