

# APPRAISAL OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS

Archives and Public Memory  
Module 3, Part 1 of 3

# REVIEW OF CONCEPTS

- ▶ Record (syn. archival record)
  - ▶ Any information in a fixed medium
    - ▶ Typically not published or available anywhere else (overlaps with but not synonymous with “primary source”)

# REVIEW OF CONCEPTS

## ► Archives

- The papers or records of an individual, family, group, business, or organization (syn. collection, manuscripts, papers, records)
- An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, etc. (syn. repository)
- The professional discipline of administering such collections
- A physical building where records are stored

# REVIEW OF CONCEPTS

## ► Creator

- Individual, group, or organization that is responsible for the production, accumulation, or creation of information



# CLASS GOALS

- ▶ Understand *what value* records have
- ▶ Understand *how* archivists assess value
- ▶ Understand *why* there are different forms of value
- ▶ Understand *what* the different values of appraisal are

## QUICK NOTE: WHAT ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL IS NOT

- Appraisal ≠ \$
- History professionals do not appraise anything for monetary value
- Unethical, untrained
- Be like Mark Hall-Patton
- Refer to professional appraisers



Mark Hall-Patton (left) examining historical records on *Pawn Stars*

# APPRAISAL

HOW ARCHIVISTS DETERMINE THE VALUE OF INFORMATION

# Why Appraise Records?

- ▶ FINITE ARCHIVAL RESOURCES
- ▶ Personnel
- ▶ Space
- ▶ Time
- ▶ Money

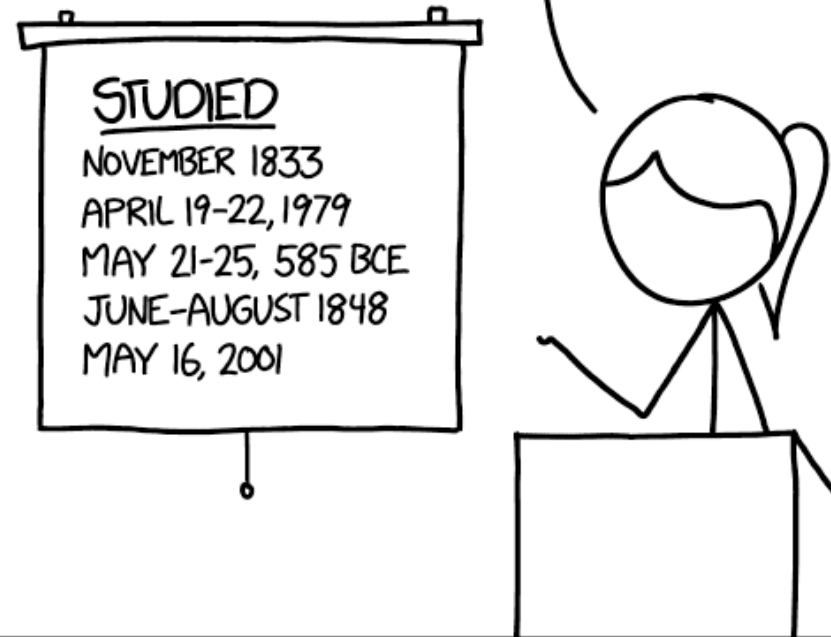


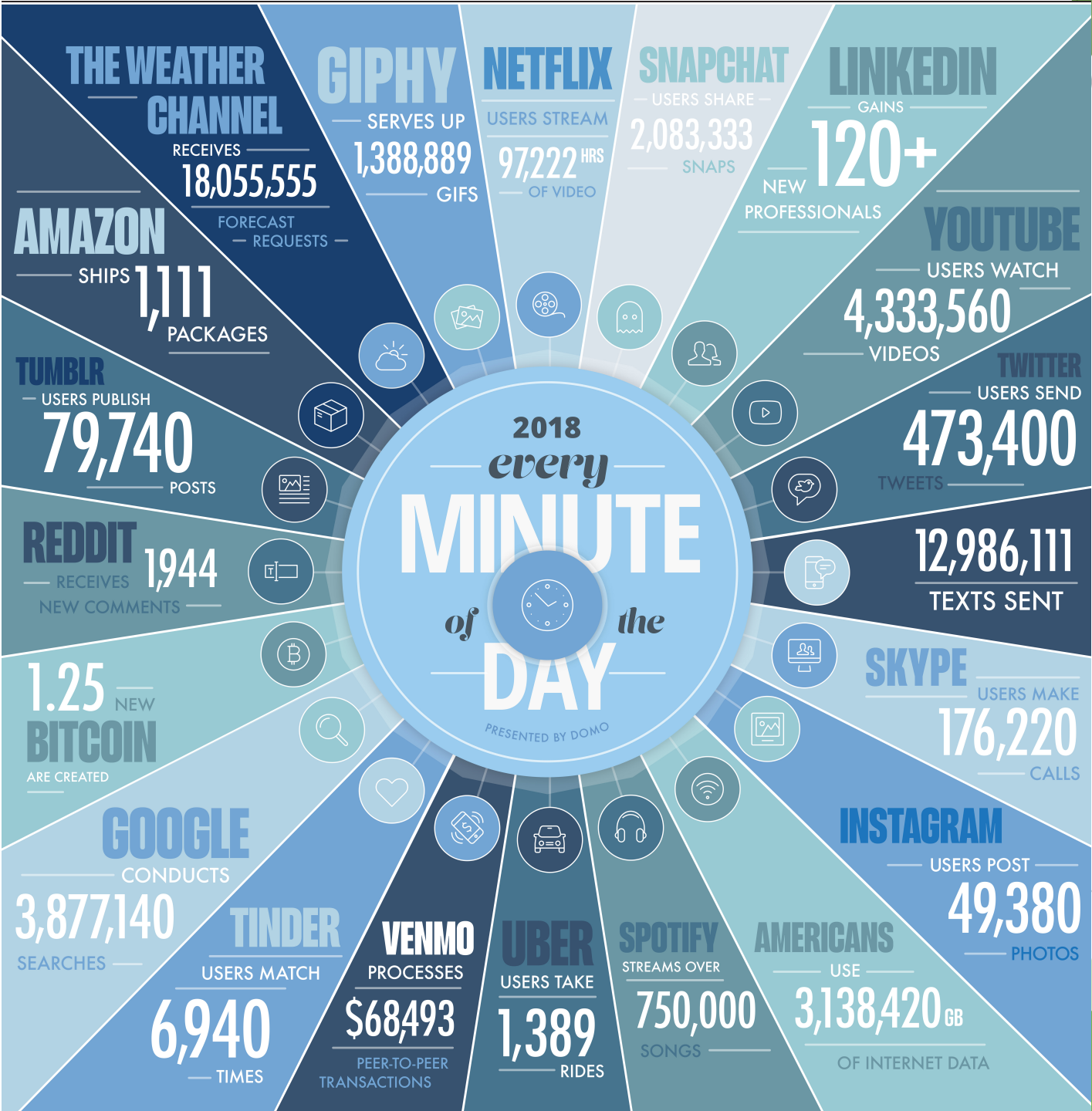
Diaries stored for nearly 100 years before being examined

2018 WAS A PRODUCTIVE YEAR FOR  
THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT—WE  
WERE ABLE TO FULLY ANALYZE  
OVER FOUR MONTHS OF HISTORY.

UNFORTUNATELY, OVER THAT SAME  
TIME PERIOD, AN ENTIRE YEAR OF  
NEW HISTORY WAS PRODUCED.

I'M AFRAID WE'RE FALLING BEHIND.







# Why Appraise Records?

- ▶ CONSTANT STREAMS OF INFINITE INFORMATION
- ▶ Est. 1.7mb per person per second of information
- ▶ That's 63 yottabytes per year (63 million terabytes)



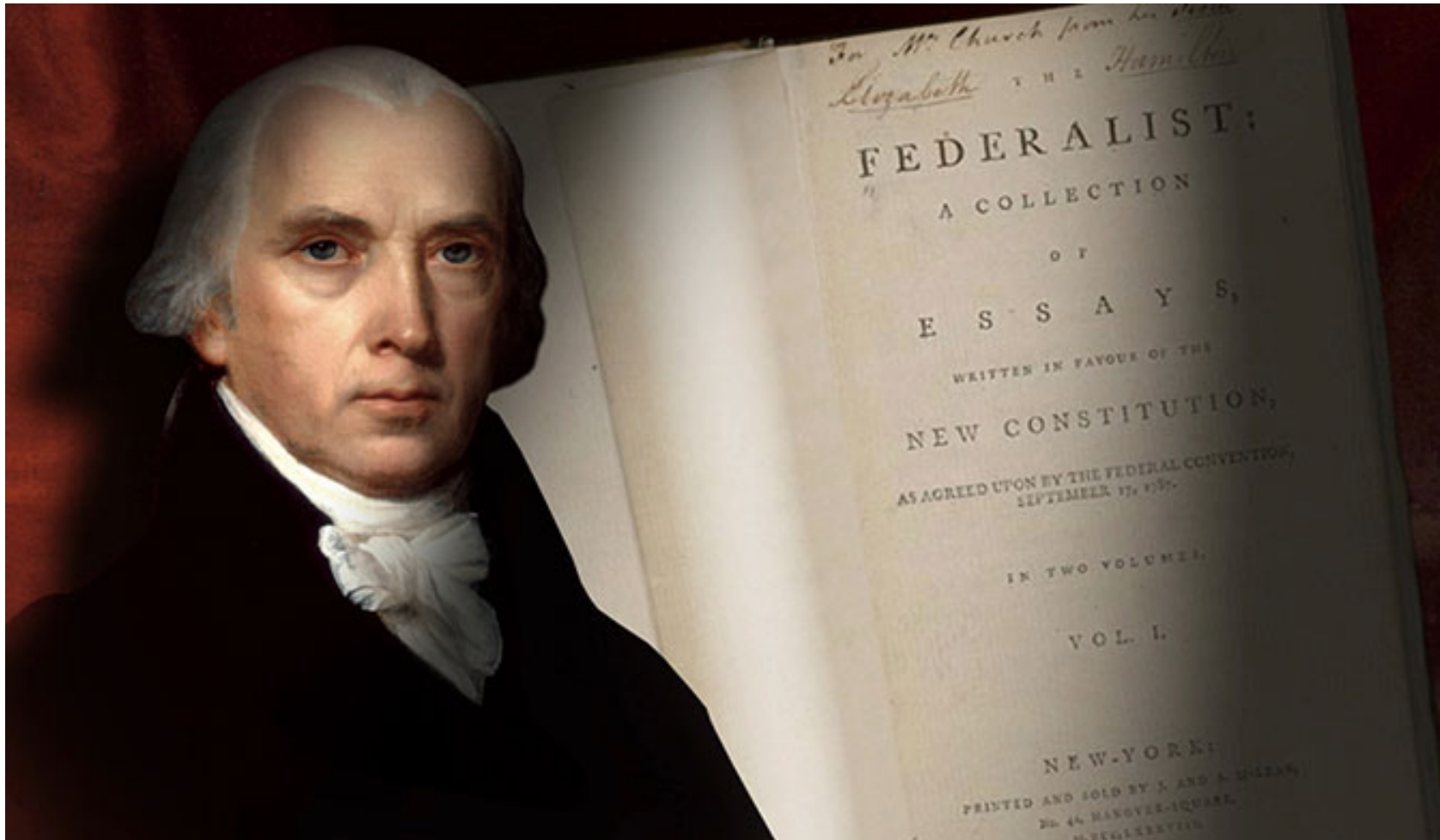
# APPRAISAL

HOW ARCHIVISTS DETERMINE THE VALUE OF INFORMATION



Digitalbevaring.dk



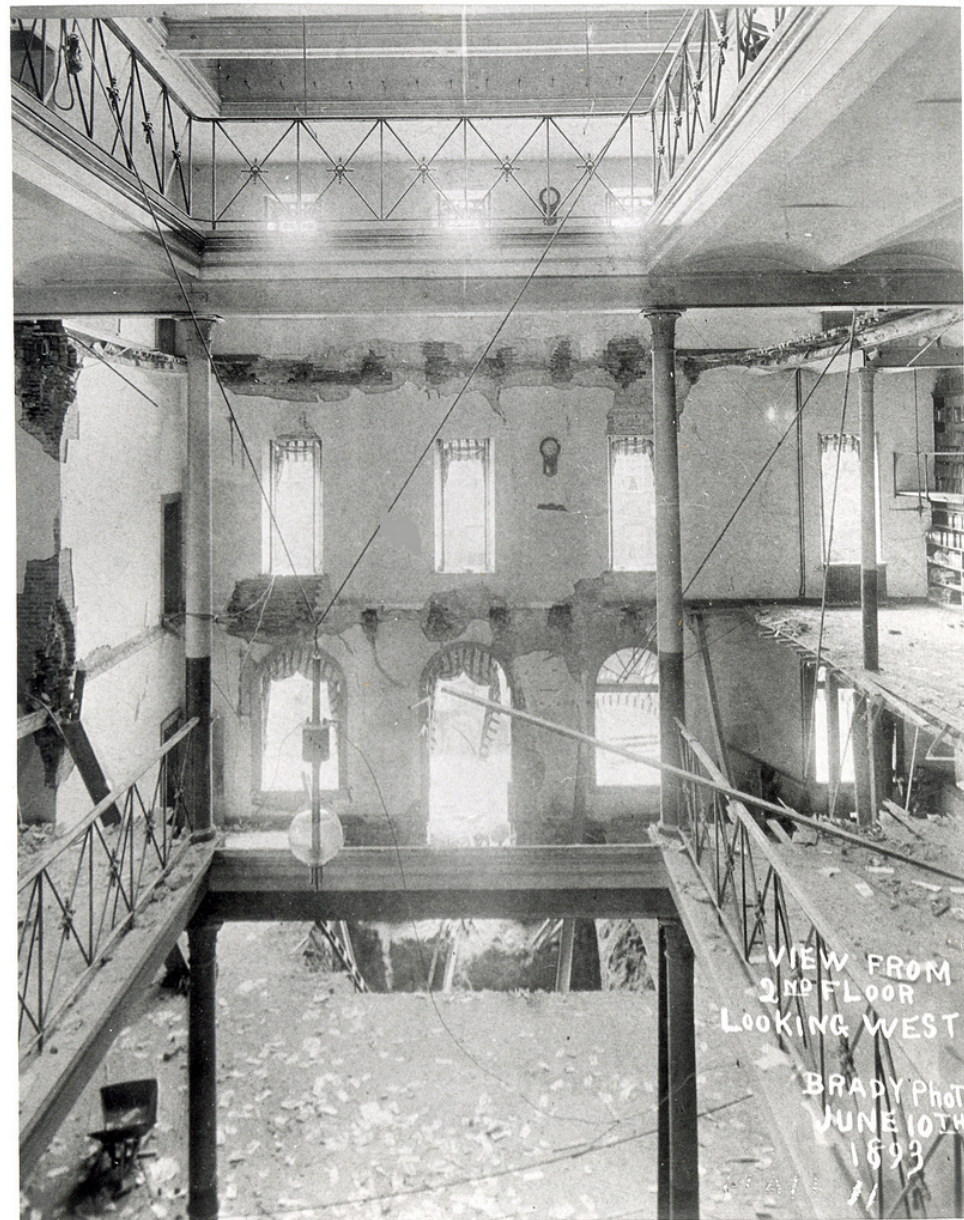


James Madison portrait and *The Federalist*

# Federal Archives in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century United States

- ▶ Made no distinction between historical material and general purpose records
- ▶ Stored in myriad buildings, with no central filing systems
- ▶ Organized by individual departments and agencies





Left: Ford's Theatre, 2005 | Right: Ford's Theatre Interior, 1893

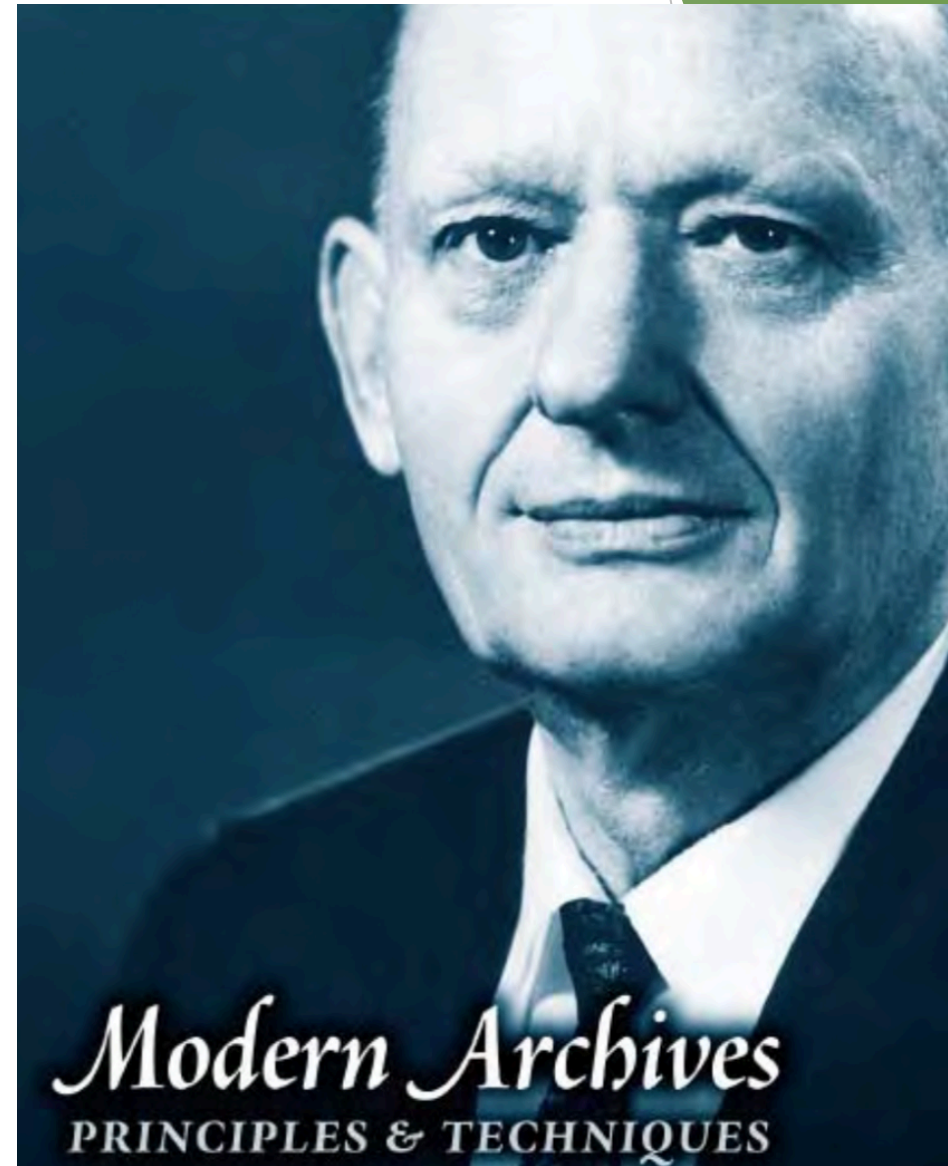
# U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

NARA



# Theodore R. Schellenberg

- ▶ NARA, 1935-1963
- ▶ Director of Archival Management, 1950-1962
- ▶ Deputy Archivist of the United States, 1963



T.R Schellenberg

# THEORIES OF APPRAISAL

- ▶ **Classical (Schellenberg)**
- ▶ Black Box (Boles & Young)
- ▶ Minnesota Method (Greene & Dennis-Howell)
- ▶ Documentation Strategy
- ▶ Functional Analysis
- ▶ Macroappraisal
- ▶ Reappraisal (Greene)

# CLASSICAL APPRAISAL THEORY

## PRIMARY VALUE

- ▶ Operating
- ▶ Administrative
- ▶ Fiscal
- ▶ Legal

## SECONDARY VALUE

- ▶ Historical
  - ▶ Evidential
  - ▶ Informational

# “Active” Records - Primary Value

- ▶ Operating
- ▶ Administrative
- ▶ Fiscal
- ▶ Legal





# SCHELLENBERG'S TYPES OF VALUE

## PRIMARY VALUE

- ▶ Operating
- ▶ Administrative
- ▶ Fiscal
- ▶ Legal

## SECONDARY VALUE

- ▶ Historical
  - ▶ Evidential
  - ▶ Informational

# “Permanent” Records – Secondary Value

## ▶ HISTORICAL VALUE

### ▶ Evidential Value

- ▶ Documenting the organization and functioning of an institution (or individual)
- ▶ Background, programs, activities

### ▶ Informational Value

- ▶ Information that sheds light on persons, places, things, events and interactions

# Schellenberg's “Tests” for Informational Value

THREE CRITERIA

# SCHELLENBERG'S "TESTS"

## THREE CRITERIA OF INFORMATIONAL VALUE

- ▶ Importance
- ▶ Uniqueness
- ▶ Form

# IMPORTANCE

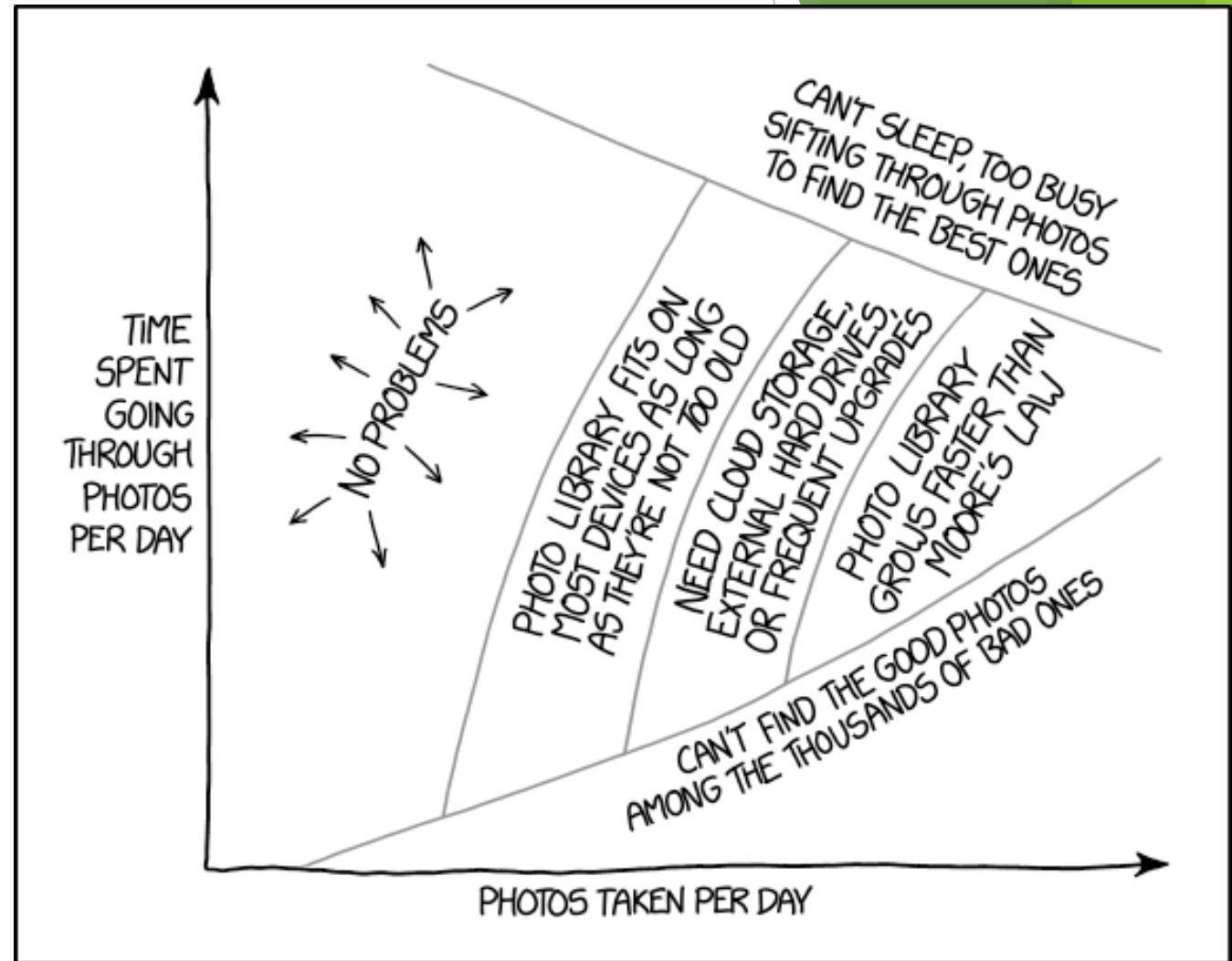
- ▶ Does the material concern actions or events of significance?
  - ▶ e.g. tied to historical events
    - ▶ Local
    - ▶ Regional
    - ▶ National
  - ▶ Documenting decisions in a person's life

# UNIQUENESS

- ▶ Unpublished
  - ▶ Not a book, newspaper, or record album, for example
- ▶ Only copy
  - ▶ A text message chain between individuals
- ▶ Original copy
  - ▶ Handwritten manuscript of a book later published

# FORM

- ▶ Concentrated information
  - ▶ Not too spread out over a large volume of material
- ▶ High research value
  - ▶ Will researchers of the future find this useful?



xkcd.com

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  - ▶ Evidential
  - ▶ Informational
    - ▶ Uniqueness
    - ▶ Form
    - ▶ Importance



# WRAP-UP

ASSIGNMENTS

# This Week's Discussion

Can you think of something that is both unique and important that should be preserved for its informational value?

# This Week's Group Activity

- ▶ You're archivists at a small county historical society. A donor approaches you with material they think you should take.
- ▶ Based on what you've learned today, decide whether you should accept the materials as a collection or not.
- ▶ Remember, your organization has a very small staff and budget!
  
- ▶ **SCENARIO 1:** Fifty boxes of records from a local business. The business was around for about 45 years from the 1950s through the 1990s, and was a staple of the community before it closed.  
*Contracts, receipts, purchase orders, photographs, VHS tapes of local news recordings, film reels of Thanksgiving parade floats sponsored by the company.*
  
- ▶ **SCENARIO 2:** Eight boxes of personal papers from a local family. The family has been in the community for three generations, and family members have been local elected officials, college teachers, and professional contractors. Dates from the 1920s through 2000s.  
*Family photographs, diaries, newspaper clippings, books, and trophies.*