This thesis explores the relationship between organizational theory and archival appraisal theory in an effort to develop better ways of appraising the eventual record as it emerges from the complex networked organizations now prevalent in society. It begins by reviewing the historical perspective of "classic" or pre-industrial organizations and "modern" or industrial bureaucracies as a prelude to more fully understanding "contemporary" or complex networked organizations and their record-keeping systems and practices. The thesis explores how "classic" and then "modern" organizations were qualitatively transformed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through to the present, by focusing on the contributions of several organizational and management theorists as well as the implementation and use of information technologies for creating, organizing, and using records. The types of organizations examined in the study are primarily industrial and bureaucratic in nature rather than those that are religious or educational.

The remainder of this thesis analyzes the implications for archival appraisal stemming from views on how the organization functions and how it creates and uses institutional records. Broad structural and managerial changes in organizational work and workplace culture provide a critical context that archivists must understand when appraising records from the information systems of such organizations. The writings of contemporary appraisal theorists reflect, to varying degrees, that managerial and cultural theory about organizations inform appraisal decisions concerning which records to keep and which to destroy, allowing in turn for more efficient and effective records disposition in contemporary and future organizations. The thesis concludes by suggesting that archivists have to not only keep an eye on the organizational experience or context and be prepared to react accordingly, but also remain active in guiding the records creation and record-keeping processes. Future organizations and archivists will need to continue making necessary adaptations in the face of changing conditions, because the transformation in organizational structures, functions, management, and culture has a direct impact on why and how records are created and communicated, and thus provides the context for assessing their relative values in appraisal.