From archives to archival science
Elements for a discursive construction

Abstract
This work tries to outline the theoretical background established by archival science manuals, based mainly on discourse analysis as a key discipline to understand which the differences are and points of conceptual commonality in archival science traditions studied that to some extent, are additional. As archival science is a product of historically constructed knowledge, the context of conceptual production ultimately reflects in the different schools of thought and in the methodological approach. The manuals discussed here were selected by their canon and their wide dissemination in the archival science field, and are: the Manual for the arrangement and description of archives of the Association of Dutch Archivists (1898), and Jenkinson’s A manual of archive administration including the problems of war archives and archive making. We considered how in these manuals two key concepts are discussed as for organization methodology in archival science: description and classification, establishing, from these concepts, which are the intertwined discourses in these texts and relating them to their historical aspects.

1: Aim and scope of the study
The archival science as well as other areas of information science and contemporary Science must be constantly reviewed and, through the review, expand their methodologies and approaches. Thus, we seek to study the known concepts that are fundamental to the treatment of methodology/organization of the archival science, because these concepts are part of the theoretical tools that the archivist has to organize and treat.

We use for this research primarily the theoretical basis of discourse analysis as a methodological tool for understanding the concepts worked and their related fields (sociology, textual linguistics, philology, etc.).

The problem is configured to identify and analyze the discourse produced by the archival science methodology from their key functions: the description, and what is conventionally called the organization placed in its two phases: classification (current archives and intermediate archives) and arrangement (permanent archives). For this, two manuals were analyzed, the Manual for the arrangement and description of archives (Handleiding voor het van ordenen in beschreijven Archieven) of the Association of Dutch Archivists by Muller, Feith, and Fruin (1st ed. 1898), and Hillary Jenkinson’s A manual of archive administration including the problems of war archives and archive making (1922). We decided to replace the analysis of Eugenio Casanova’s manual by the manual of Hillary Jekinson, because its impact on the constitution of the discipline thought is much deeper, especially in Anglo-Saxon archival science.

2: Method: the discourse analysis
Connected to history and sociology, discourse analysis researches for the meaning, or meanings produced by the subject that formulates a discourse, his intentions and how this discourse is received by those who heard or read his words. Therefore, Pécheux (1991) defines discourse as effect of meanings between interlocutors.
If discourse analysis can be understood as a discipline whose objective is the contextualized text, thereby producing an effect that is conventionally called discourse, it is a phenomenon that can be individualized by its fundamental element, the *statement*. The statement is crucial because it is the most basic set of senses that can be individualized within the discourse.

The discourse can be understood as an order in which there is a field of experience, in other words, a reference. The discourse is a place where the field of experience and possible knowledge is circumscribed, with a field of experiences, targeted, contextualized, assumed (Charaudeau & Maingueneau 2004).

You can lay out that the discourse analyst is also based on four basic precepts of analysis: history - ideology, language - meaning. Brandão (1997, 37) states that:

“Speech is one of the instances where the materiality of ideology is made, in other words, it is a material aspects of material existence of ideology.”

Therefore, discourse analysis can serve as a tool for understanding the discourse produced in any field.

**3: The Dutch manual**

The archival science practice and the theory of archives have their high point in the late nineteenth century with the publication of the *Manual of Dutch Archivists*. This manual establishes the discursive formation of the archival science in that there is a confluence of statements set out previously, summarized in this publication. The emphasis in this manual is consensus in the area since it was the first and reaches/reached Canadians Brazilian, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. archivists. Ketelaar et al. (2003, 249) state that:

“The *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (1898) is usually regarded as a starting point of archival theory and methodology.”

The publication of this manual is due, among other things, to archival science strategies applied in the Netherlands. According to Ketelaar et al. (2003, 249),

“Dutch administrators began to consider records as a source of knowledge about the history of their cities and thus about the heroic acts of their own forefathers.”

According to the authors, this is due to the changes that occurred in Netherlands in the late eighteenth century, because the Republic of the Netherlands has been replaced by the Republic of Batavo, making the archives from the old regime miss their administrative function, remaining their historical function. Then, the archivists of that period had to assemble the documentation of the old regime.

The French Revolution and the French Empire were responsible for the changes that happened throughout the nineteenth century. This change of scenario caused the evolution of Dutch Archival science. In the early nineteenth century, it began to apply methods of diplomatic to the arrangement and description in medieval archives, serving as subsidies to trace the Dutch historical course.

In a second moment, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the approach of Dutch archivists is perceived with the most modern ideas of the the *École des Chartes*. Terry Cook (1997, p. 21), in his work on the historical principles of archival science, makes the following meanings about the manual of Dutch archivists:

“Muller, Feith, and Fruin produced their manual for the Dutch Association of Archivists, in cooperation with the State Archives of the Netherlands and the Ministry of the Interior. Each of the one
hundred rules advanced in the Manual was formally debated by the Society during the 1890s. Typical of a work written by committee, the accompanying text bears many marks of careful qualification and elaborate examples, even if the rules themselves are forcefully stated. The Manual also reflects Muller’s exposure to French archival theory from his attendance in 1873 at the École des Chartes in Paris and the introduction from Germany of the concept of provenance into several Dutch archives.”

This Manual can be seen both as a milestone for the discipline in the strict sense, and as the creation of a new discursive formation, in that it establishes the basic requirements for the classification/arrangement and description in archives and assembles in its discussion most of the statements previously promulgated in the area. The contribution of this manual was to articulate the key principles (rules) related to the nature and treatment of archives.

The manner in which the Dutch authors understood the archives and their organizational structure was related to a very stable administration and an archive predominantly characterized as historical, the common scenario in the archives throughout the nineteen century.

The merit of this book is undoubtedly not only to unite the two initial centuries of the Archival science discipline, but to name them differently, since this manual begins a series of actions, in Europe, that lead to the development of concepts and methods of the archival science.

3.1: Classification

The classification and description in this manual were quite rudimentary, but it is already possible to find the principles which establish the discipline. Classification in this work gets confused with the ordinance, which is currently in the practical application of archival science classification, in other words, the chosen filing method. It’s possible to find the justification for the organization in funds based on established principle of respect des fonds. We can find such justification in the 16th rule:

“The system of arrangement must be based on the original organization of the archival collection which in the main corresponds to the organization of the administrative body that produced it.” (Muller et al. 1968, 52)

At the time of its publication, the respect des fonds was already heavily present in the scenario of the European archives. The authors justify this decision in an interesting way:

“The first adopts various headings arbitrarily set up (e.g. Administrative Body, Finance, Relief, etc.) [...] The other system, on the other hand, does not set up an arbitrary headings, but only those that are suggested by the character and organization of the archival collection itself; [...] to the section “Administrative Body” in one system, that of “Archives of the Council” appears to correspond in the other.” (Muller et al. 1968, 52)

Therefore, from the original order and respect des fonds, the organizational structure of the Archival science institution is completely modified. Before the publication of the manual, it was possible to find archives organized only from the chronological order, causing a series of problems for their recovery. Thus, the authors advocated a change of attitude toward the classification, based on the principles used in the École des Chartes.

This profound change in the classification of the archives is the result of the development in the area in the nineteenth century. At this moment the subject of a
certain document fades away and the structure of the institution comes in, a focus undeclared in the management of archives.

3.2: Description

In the case of description, it is also in a very primitive stage. However, the concepts that formed the basis for reasons of the discipline are present. The 36th Rule is described as follows:

“In the description of an archival collection the important point is that the inventory should serve merely as a guide; it should therefore give an outline of the contents of the collection and not of the contents of the documents.” (Muller et al. 1968, 100)

Despite the initial stage, the role of description as a tool to assist in research is already perceived. At the time of its publication there wasn’t any series of tools and perceptions of archives, so description is not taken as a typical activity of historical archives. There wasn’t any structure of research tools, it’s possible to find the guides (generic instrument describing the funds) and inventories (was understood as a detailed description, or as a description of piece by piece). The application of the principle of respect des fonds in the description takes the practice of the whole to the part, in other words, to the funds parts.

4: Hillary Jenkinson

The title of the manual, *A manual of archive administration including the problems of war archives and archive making* already says something about the period in which the author lived and a possible idea of how he worked with the archives, that is, during the World War I, when a great technological breakthrough ran, a massive production of documents related to many different spheres, but mainly related to the arms industry.

Like most of the archivists of the nineteenth century, Jenkinson began his studies from the work with medieval archives, studying palaeography and diplomatics (Stapleton 1983). This fact has influenced all his published works, since he understood the archival science in a very strict way.

Eastwood (2004) in his article, published as an introduction to a new edition of the work of Jenkinson, explains that in this period in England there wasn’t any formalized school of archival science, therefore the study of the archives was done, first of all, with practice.

“It was one of these historical scholar-archivists, C. G. Crump, under whom Jenkinson was apprenticed upon his arrival. His mentor introduced him to the intricacies of the study of early records, how to read the documents (for they were in unfamiliar, handwritten script), and how to understand them in the context of the administrative procedures of the office of origin” (Eastwood 2004, 33)

In Jenkinson’s Manual appeared for the first time the stronger statements that had placed the archival documents in an apparent state of inertia. But, firstly, it’s necessary to understand that the works of Jenkinson are limited in space-time and, therefore, they will be a reflection of its time.

Jenkinson is regarded as the great naturalist of archival science, thus it’s possible to find throughout his work a series of statements, such as in a biography of the author (quoted in Davis apud Cook 1997, 23):

“The Archivist’s career is one of service. He exists in order to make other people’s work possible [...] His Creed, the Sanctity of Evidence; his Task, the Conservation of every scrap of Evidence attaching to
the Documents committed to his charge; his aim to provide, without prejudice or afterthought, for all who wish to know the Means of Knowledge [...] The good Archivist is perhaps the most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces.”

From this quotation, it is possible to understand the very positivist view that the author had on archives and archivists: the archivist is objective and neutral, invisible and passive, he is seen as a guardian of the documents. The document is seen as a waste of administrative activity, the archivist is not responsible for the selection of documents and does not interfere, consciously, in the documentation that he guards and organizes.

The author’s look clearly turns to the crystallized vision of archives and archivists of the nineteenth century and deviates even than what the Dutch manual promulgated.

Despite a rather conservative in a number of issues, Jenkinson (1922) understood the principle of respect des fonds in a very sober way:

“The Archive Group thus established is what the French call Fonds. Here we meet with our first difficulty; for the French definition limits the true, autonomous, fonds somewhat rigidly by the nature of the archives it contains; and on the other hand we find our Exchequer, for example, dividing in to a number of special departments [...] Fonds we may render, for lack of a better translation, Archive Group, and define this as the Archives resulting from the work of an Administration which was an organic whole, complete in itself, capable of dealing independently, without any added or external authority, with every side of any business which could normally be presented to it.” (Jenkinson 1922, 83-84)

The author is the first to begin to understand that, to organize an archive, first of all, it’s necessary to separate it into smaller groups than solely on funds. We can see that he understood the fund as one more restricted concept, therefore, as a unit that cannot be organized in every detail. From this, it’s understood that it’s necessary to create a new wider concept than the concept of fund. Thus, it creates the archive group, and this separation also corresponds to the principle of respect for the funds or source, but as an extension of the concept.

Unlike the Dutch manual, based mainly on technical practices in order to the arrangement of archives, for Hilary Jenkinson the archive is, first of all, an institution of custody, and the archivist a custodian of documents. However, it is noticeable, throughout his work, a concern with the purpose of the institution. For him the archive as well as being a deposit, it is an institution that has the ability to inform, in other words, he is concerned with the use made of the documents.

4.1: Classification

The presentation’s structure of classification in Jenkinson is quite interesting: the author establishes value levels of importance for the two activities. Classification is seen as an activity more fundamental than description.

As mentioned, to Jenkinson, the archivist is primarily a custodian of documents, which reflects the whole process of organization. For him, classification is understood as follows:

“This will fall clearly into two parts: the first, study of the Administrations concerned, their history and organization; the second, division of the Archives into Classes, subdivision of these, and again subdivision” (Jenkinson 1992, 81)

For him, the classification is divided into two phases: one related to the study of context, where the study by the producing institution of the documents can be
established from the documents themselves and another, with the establishment of classes. Jenkinson is the first to establish classification as such.

According to the author, about the first phase, the study by the producing institution of the documents can be established from the documents themselves and in the second phase, it is to establish the classes based on their original order.

Divided from the group concept, which for the author is much wider and applied to archives at the beginning of the twentieth century, also linked to the concept of provenance, as a new way to understand the modern records.

4.2: Description

Description is understood by the author as part of a set of complementary activities in the organization of archives, and it is divided into two types of instrument, guides and descriptive indexes, which are divided into repertories and calendars. According to Jenkinson (1922, 108):

“We will suppose, then, that the completion, temporarily, of all essential Archive work leaves the Archivist free to produce work to meet the special requirements of students”

So, for the author, the description is a secondary activity; his thought on this is very contradictory, in the case of a manual with over 80 years, because he considers the transcription of documents as a part of the descriptive activity.

About the research tools, the first is the guide that deals, according to the author, with a general description as an inventory of the funds contained in the archives, and the descriptive indexes, it is the complementary instruments to reach the documents by the search of users.

The description on Jenkinson presents some regression in relation to the Dutch manual, since he does not relate the description to the provenance and as a secondary activity.

5: Conclusion

Both manuals were fundamental to the construction of archival science as a discipline, since they were the first to think the organization of archives by a more theoretical view.

However, though they seek a theoretical approach, as all the discourses and linguistic productions, their concepts and their approaches are dated by their historical and social space.

Why do we have to turn back today to study the principles of discipline? Because archival science quests today to find its place, either as an autonomous discipline as some traditional authors advocate, or as a discipline related to information sciences. For this exchange to be fair and real, it’s necessary to draw its historical course, in order to check that their bases and their fundamental thoughts. Because it is only from the understanding of the archival science bases that we can perceive the place of the discipline, its concepts, strengths and deficits.
References