Archival Classification and Knowledge Organization:
Theoretical Possibilities for the Archival Field

Abstract
The main goal of this study is to outline a possible relation between archival classification and knowledge organization theory. In this sense, we seek to contribute to the conceptual classification in Archival Science, since there is a lack of systematization about archival classification; not just classification, but even the study of historical and conceptual aspects of the discipline. In the context of knowledge organization there is a considerable amount of research on how to build classification schemes and indexing systems that can help contribute to and expand archival classification theory. In order to comprehend this vast field of theories and methodologies we construct a parallel comparing the classification concepts in both areas and analyzing these concepts.

Contexts: The Archival Classification
The Archival Science has been looking to demarcate its actuation space, with studies related to a reconsideration of its methods and techniques. We seek in this article to demonstrate some possible contact points between archival classification and knowledge organization especially in terms of contributions from the second for the theoretical growth of archival classification. Thus this work is also related to conceptual classification, since there is a lack of systematization about archival classification. Theoretical discussions are essential for maturation of the discipline in order to fill gaps in historical and epistemological frames.

Several authors have written on classification as a concept and its theoretical and practical applications, e.g. Laura Millar (2002), Terry Cook (2004, 2005), Brien Brothman (1999, 2006) e Chris Hurley (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000) Tennis (2010, 2011) and Dahlberg (1993, 2006). In the context of knowledge organization there is a considerable amount of research trying to understand how to build classification schemes and indexing systems. These studies can, in a broad sense, help to contribute and expand archival classification theory. So we try to link the discussion of functional classification promulgated in the current archival theory, with the development of classification schemes and classification as an area of study in knowledge organization (see for example, the articles by Tennis (2010, 2011).

So, we seek to compare the notions/concepts of classification not to find a definition or a unique sense for both areas, but to understand the differences and similarities in thinking about a reconsideration of archival classification, but also having in mind the archival classification specificities. In archival field there is a plurality of terms to designate the activity of classification of documents.

Currently Archival Science – in terms of both theoretical and practical aspects - is undergoing profound transformation. A number of publications have tried to define the boundaries of the field and there is also research on functional classification for the organization of modern records. These have been studied in Australia and Canada as a response to the current understanding of the archival institutions. We can highlight the important contributions of Laura Millar (2002), Terry Cook (2004, 2005), Brien Brothman (1999, 2006) and Chris Hurley (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 2000), Terry Eastwood (2000) responsible for the changes in automated description, assessment and functional analysis of the records. All these changes have implications for understanding the concept of
provenance vis-à-vis *respect des fonds*, affecting the processes of classification, because provenance is the guiding principle of classification. Millar (2002, p.6) highlights this:

The *fonds* implies a wholeness, a completeness, a totality. I would argue that no archives now has, ever will have, or ever has had, "the whole of the records" of any creating agency. Records are destroyed, or lost, or transferred, or changed even before they get to the archives. Once they are in custody, they may be culled, and weeded, and selected. Archivists don’t just manage records; they actively decide what will be kept and what will be removed, through the very process of appraisal.

This concept of provenance has caused changes in the understanding of the concept and process of classification; This new way of understanding is based mainly on a more elastic concept of provenance as we can see in the texts of Hurley (1995, p. 22), one of the major authors in this context:

Context comprises both the data carried by the record and the knowledge brought to the record by the user. Contextual knowledge forges the link that is the basis of understanding. Efforts now being made to regularize the process whereby knowledge of context is captured as metadata for electronic record-keeping should not blind us to a fundamental truth. Because records themselves are time bound, metadata must be verified within a context that is both current and historical.

Therefore, the provenance is not understood narrowly as in the works discussed above, it can mean different things depending on the context in which documents are included, the institution and its users. Hurley (1995, p.10) complements this idea by talking about his understanding of the functions: "Functions themselves have a history and a character independent of the recordkeeping agent that is being described."

And in this sense, this is a major difference in the archival classification due to the materials of an archive.

**Contexts: Knowledge Organization and Archival Classification**

In the context of the current practice of classification, it is possible to say that archives organization resembles what is practiced in the knowledge organization (KO) field to the extent that knowledge organization is a conceptual-theoretical framework that deals with recorded and socialized knowledge. This supports the view that exists in KO, classification, concept theory and other areas of information retrieval with focus on representation of descriptive and subject knowledge irrespective of the form of the resource – physical, digital and virtual.

For Barité (2001, p. 38 our translation), the KO, while a professional activity, "[...] aims to present theoretical support (and feedback on itself) with all that is relative to information treatment, particularly with the treatment of thematic information, and less specific - but not less important - with the management of the social use of information."

Thus, the KO area, "[...] is used primarily for socialized knowledge [...]" (Barité, 2001, p. 41 our translation) and registered, thus played a crucial mediating role between a production context and use of information.

As a discipline, "[...] covers the development of techniques for construction, management, use and evolution of scientific classifications, taxonomies and documentary languages. On the other hand, brings methodologies, use and retrieval via natural language "(Barité, 2001, p. 41, our bold and translation).

In this sense, KO, as Guimarães (2000, p. 210 our translation) suggests, that the KO field works with circle "[...] considering the possibility of organizing a recorded knowledge from the perspective of generating new knowledge that, once registered, will transform in information (knowledge in action, in the design of Dahlberg, 1993, p. 214) to generate new knowledge."

The knowledge according to Dahlberg (2006, p.12) can be defined by its construction processes or its degrees of complexity:

- Knowledge elements, by which we understand the characteristics of concepts that can be gained by predicating the properties of or making statements about referents (characteristics as knowledge
elements – elements of knowledge units (concepts) – should not be confused with features of concepts, e.g. broader, narrower, related, etc.);

– Knowledge units, which we equate with concepts. They are the synthesis of the concept characteristics, gained by said statements about referents and represented by a sign (word, name, term, code);

– Larger knowledge units, which are concept combinations, e.g. in statements or in definitions or just in texts; and,

– Knowledge systems, which are entities composed of knowledge units arranged in an adequately planned, cohesive structure

Esteban Navarro and Garcia Marco (1995, p. 149, our translation) have a good definition for what we can related to the KO field:

[...]

As said in the in the quotations, it is possible to related the archival classification and its practice to the KO field, in - organization – as an fundamental intellectual activity, for the structuralization in classes of records and documents. We can see the classification as a key practice for the proper accesses and retrieval of documents and records, the archival science lacks of terminology and methodologies for the scientific study of archival classification, the KO area have a major frame work in that area and can help the study of classification in the archival field, in most prestigious way.

Terry Eastwood (2000, p.93-94 our bold) endorses that when he says:

The choice of the word “arrangement” as the name of this process is unfortunate. It denotes placing things in proper, desired, or convenient order, as in arranging books son a shelf. The word classification is no more satisfactory, for it denotes arranging or ordering things by class and is a term better reserved in archival science for the process of organizing active records. By contrast, the essence of archival arrangement is the identification of the natural accumulations of archival documents or records which take shape during the process of their generation

The archival classification had evolved in the past 30 years. However, if we compare with KO field, archival classification is still in an embryonic activity, because the major standardization in the areas started only in the past 10 years, making difficult to the recognition of organization patterns in arrangement/classification concepts and most important the study of classification itself. Terry Cook (1992, p.58) says that the lack of standards "when reflected in national networks of archival description could be extremely misleading to researchers."

So, the archival classification urges for standardization and, most important, the study of how these standards behave in archival classification schemes, and perhaps is exactly where the KO theory can help the Archival Science.

Its obvious, that the archival classification have major differences compared to the knowledge organization, most of them are because the type of documents that we archivists works, organic and administrative documents and records and our main principal – the provenance – this concept that bound us in a field is the one responsible for the construction of a new kind of classification schemes, what we can call as funcional-organic classification.

Archival classification schemes are more general. If we compare to the library classification schemes, the archival provenance works in two ways:
There are two aspects to the structure of archival fonds. On the one hand, archival documents are systematized according to the way their agent of provenance organizes or structures its activities. This external structure of provenance identifies and explains the various administrative relationships governing the way organizations and persons conduct their business, which in turn governs the way they create and maintain their archives. On the other hand, every archival fonds also has a documentary structure established by the way the documents are ordered during the conduct of affairs. This internal structure of provenance identifies the relationships among the documents as they were organized by the agent accumulating them (Eastwood, 1992 p.4).

These pre-establish organization generates more problems than we can solve. As all institutions have its inner and outer provenance makes, the classification data almost impossible to be applied in different institutions and it is difficult to see the classification as a combined idea possible to apply as standard in any institution.

The KO area can help us in some ways in this problem as, for instance, studies as the ones carried out by Tennis (2010, 2011) in how some classes change or not in the past and in now days in the CDD, we have the same kind of "movement" in archival classification, as the classification scheme works as a simulacrum of its development time.

For instance, the past understanding of arrangement in the Jenkinson, and Muller, Faith and Furin manuals is mostly related to defunct or closed funds, making the arrangement work easier to do and to theorize about it. These kinds of funds still exists in the archival institutions, however, we cannot see the then as a rule, because in day-by-day documentation most of the funds still open and still receive new series and documents, making the arrangement/classification more difficult to work. These movements happen in the theory of the archival field but more important than that, change the face of how we do it in practice.

The work between these two fields can help the growth of both areas, in archival science helping with the standardization of its process, and in KO, as a counterpoint to its classification view.

**Aims and Methodology**

As general objective, this paper intended to offer contributions on Archival Classification in the light of the knowledge organization theory. As specific objectives, we perceived the similarities and divergences between these two areas in what is related to the classifications schemes thinking in a theoretical contribution for the Archival Science.

As methodological procedures, the study began by a bibliographic analysis on Archival Classification, and Knowledge Organization related to the classification as a practice and theory.

**Conclusions**

As was discussed earlier, the Archival Science classification theory is part of a key activity for the organization of digital and physical records, within a public or private institution. In the present time, the classification activity has been redesign, however, the classification scheme or even the classification concept are still not clear, or how we can do the classification in Archival Science and how we define this activity.

In order to discuss the difference and similarities between two fields we presented some key aspects of the historical development from the archival classification as an activity and how things are in the present time and also some conceptual of the knowledge organization field.

Based on that we perceive with this article, we pointed out some theoretical possibilities to the Archival Science in the light of the Knowledge Organization in what’s related to the epistemological foundation of the classification schemes.

The contribution for the KO field in what is related to the archival classification perspective is that we need to comprehend the concept of knowledge in a broad sense, that
not only the scientific knowledge can be reliable field. The administrative and organic documents can be part of this universe. The documents that need to be preserved and work as evidence of something also can be taken into account, and may work as a different view or a counterpoint not only for the knowledge concept but also to the scientific studies in knowledge organization.

References