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Documentation Influence in Brazilian Library and Information Science: the Case of University of São Paulo

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Introduction

Documentation has been influencing Brazilian Library and Information Science for a long time. Juvêncio (2016) traced its origins to 1898, when R. Villa-Lobos, in his introduction to the alphabetical catalogue of the Brazilian Senate Library, paraphrased a statement made in 1895 by Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine.

In 1899, only four years after the establishment of the International Institute of Bibliography, this institution already had a Brazilian member, psychiatrist Juliano Moreira, and in 1901, engineer Victor Alves da Silva Freire published an article that “was the first work in the Portuguese language to receive the official publication number of the IIB [International Institute of Bibliography]” (Fonseca, 1973, p. 40). Freire wrote about the necessity of Brazil taking part in the effort for the international organisation of scientific bibliography, and reported that in the city of São Paulo there already were people who subscribed and ordered International Institute of Bibliography’s publications (Fonseca, 1973).

In the first decade of the 20th century, more Brazilian publications started to refer to the work that was being done by the International Institute of Bibliography, and the first libraries in Brazil adopted the Universal Decimal Classification, (Fonseca, 1973; Juvêncio, 2016; Sousa, 2006). Moreover, the Brazilian National Library and the Brazilian Navy Library are mentioned in the bulletin of the International Institute of Bibliography as institutions that are cooperating in the international organisation of documentation through their application of the decimal classification (Institut International de Bibliographie, 1908).

In 1911, the Brazilian National Library started a direct relationship with the International Institute of Bibliography as the library’s director Manuel Cícero Peregrino da Silva launched the Brazilian National Library’s Bibliography and Documentation Service (Juvêncio, 2016). According to Silva (1916) himself, this service “comprehends the organisation of the Brazilian bibliographic repertory, the acquisition of cards from foreign repertories, the organization of the collective catalogue of the country’s libraries, and the public use of this catalogue and those repertories” (p. 6-7). Silva (1916) proceeded by stating that the Brazilian repertory would contribute to the International Institute of Bibliography’s Universal Bibliographic Repertory, and would therefore follow the decimal classification system.

According to Rayward (1975), what was probably “the greatest event in the history of the distribution of the RBU [Universal Bibliographic Repertory] was the receipt of a request in 1911 from the National Library of Rio de Janeiro for 600,000 cards to form a general subject repertory” (p. 123). The first 230,000 cards were transferred to the Brazilian ambassador in a reception held for this very purpose, and more cards were dispatched to Brazil until 1914; nevertheless, the total sum of cards was never fully met (Rayward, 1975). To the present day, the Brazilian

National Library retains 1,800 of the over 300,000 cards that the International Institute of Bibliography sent it (Juvêncio, 2016).

Juvêncio (2016) even identified that from August 1913 to December 1913, Cícero de Britto Galvão, an employee from the Brazilian National Library, studied at the International Institute of Bibliography, although there are no records of in which manner Galvão's learning took place.

Unfortunately, when Silva left his position in 1921, the Brazilian National Library's Bibliography and Documentation Service was discontinued (Fonseca, 1973; Juvêncio, 2016). After that, some individual efforts were made related to activities considered within the realm of Documentation, but it was only in 1954, when the Brazilian Institute of Bibliography and Documentation was founded, that Documentation received prominence once more (Fonseca, 1973).

According to Lemos (1986), the Brazilian Institute of Bibliography and Documentation "focused its activities on the issues of access to primary documents, bibliographic control of the national scientific production, and improvement of human resources" (p. 108). However, the Brazilian Institute of Bibliography and Documentation progressively changed its approach to that of Information Science, becoming in 1976 the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology, and focusing on issues regarding scientific and technological information (Cunha, 2005; Oddone, 2006; Ortega, 2009).

Documentation would be prominent in Brazil again in the 1980s, after Johanna W. Smit became a professor at the Library Science and Documentation Department of the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo. After graduating as a librarian at University of São Paulo in 1970, Smit moved to Paris, where she obtained a master's degree in Documentation from the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1973, having been advised by Jean Meyriat, and a PhD degree in Discourse Analysis from the Université Paris-I in 1977, having been advised by Jean-Claude Gardin. Upon becoming a professor at University of São Paulo in 1981, Smit introduced to it the then current developments in French Documentation, mainly those related to documentary analysis. In 1986, a group of professors of the Library Science and Documentation Department of the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo founded TEMMA Group, a research group devoted to issues concerning document organisation and representation, which lasted for 30 years and incorporated professors of São Paulo State University.

In this paper, I will present to a wider public the research related to document organisation and representation that was produced by the professors of the Library Science and Documentation Department of the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo from 1981, when Smit became a professor. I will focus on TEMMA Group members' research, presenting key concepts developed by them and compiled by Lara (2011). Then, I will explain

how the studies of the group still influence University of São Paulo, and how their developments are relevant to current document studies.

TEMMA Group

TEMMA Group was created in 1986 to discuss how to better integrate the courses offered in the Bachelor of Library Science at the School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo, but its scope broadened and it became devoted to what is known in Library and Information Science as knowledge organisation and representation (Smit, 1987, 2012). According to Moura et al. (2018):

The group's name, incidentally, is not an acronym: it is a play on the word *tema*, Portuguese for theme or subject. Since the subject was itself the main subject of investigation of the group, the word was chosen for its name, with an added « m » for flair. The name also emphasizes the collective nature of the project, with the word *grupo*, Portuguese for group, adopted as integral part of the name: *Grupo TEMMA* (p. 168).

The inspiration for the group was Group μ , which dealt with the semantics of public space, and that Smit learned about while studying in France (Smit, 2012). Due to this inspiration, the Brazilian group aimed at being “a shared, collective and collaborative work, representing much more than a juxtaposition of research, but projects developed by several researchers in an articulate manner” (Smit, 2012, p. 222).

TEMMA Group aimed at “the substitution of the traditional procedures of text representation based on ‘good sense’, or ‘common sense’, for procedures anchored at theoretical references” (Lara, 2012, p. 183).

To achieve its goal, throughout time, the group adopted an interdisciplinary approach, combining the theoretical-methodological basis of French documentary analysis with communication studies, cultural policy, cultural studies, informetrics, linguistics, logic, and the discipline of terminology (Lara, 2012). The result were “rigorous, theoretically consistent methodologies for Documentary Analysis, indexing, abstracting, and the construction of documentary languages” (Moura et al., 2018, p. 167-168).

The group was extinguished in October 2016 due to the fact that, although its members remained interested in topics related to documentary analysis, they progressively took different research paths, which no longer presented the necessary cohesion that was felt to be required for the continuation of the group (M. Lara, personal communication, August 5, 2021).

The key concepts developed by TEMMA Group

In 2011, Lara compiled the key concepts developed by the researchers of TEMMA Group. They are documentary analysis, documentary reading, documentary information, documentary language and documentary linguistics. According to Lara (2011), these concepts “are in the basis of the development of the Brazilian research developed by the members of TEMMA Group” (p. 97).

The concept of documentary analysis originated with the works of Maurice Coyaud and Jean-Claude Gardin, and referred to “the semantic operations that transform an original text in one or several keywords, or yet, paraphrases aiming at facilitating the representation of ‘contents’ and information retrieval” (Lara, 2011, p. 97). While Gardin’s documentary analysis focused on scientific texts, TEMMA Group broadened the scope of documentary analysis, developing procedures for other types of texts, such as images and statistical data (Lara, 2011).

According to Lara (2011), “documentary reading is a specific modality in the global process of reading from which the operations of documentary analysis proper begin” (p. 100). The concept arose to improve documentary analysis (Lara, 2011). Through this type of reading, the documentalist is able “to identify textual typologies and to recognize the terminology of texts”, which, “added to the knowledge of the institutional objectives, and of the users’ profiles”, leads the documentalist “to build documentary information” (Lara, 2011, p. 102).

Documentary information is a term that appeared in Jacques Chaumier’s work in the 1970s, although it had previously been used by Alexander I. Mikhailov, Arkadii I. Chernyi and Rudhzero Gilyarevskyi in the 1960s (Lara, 2011). Lara (2011) explains that:

Documentary information is the product of documentary analysis, that is, the representation of a text to integrate document-information systems. It can take different forms, characterising different documentary products, from the simplest – lists of words taken from texts, keywords, uniterms – to the most elaborated, like abstracts and indexes (p. 102).

The fourth concept is that of documentary language. TEMMA Group follows Gardin’s understanding that a documentary language is a set of terms used to represent the content of documents for the purpose of document search and retrieval (Lara, 2011). From the 1990s onwards, the group began to draw on linguistics and the discipline of terminology to build documentary languages (Lara 2011).

The last key concept Lara presented is documentary linguistics. It “constitutes a subfield of Information Science whose objective is to study the problems that characterise documentary language as a specific form of language

inscribed in the universe of general language” (Lara, 2011, p. 114). From it, TEMMA Group seeks to understand how language works, so that documents can be organised. The term was originally proposed by Antonio García Gutiérrez, but the subfield was developed with its own specificities in Brazil by drawing on the discipline of terminology.

Lara (2011) ends her exposition by declaring that the outline of the concepts and their terminology is interdisciplinary. Moreover, she concludes that the work done by TEMMA Group is founded on the understanding that:

- It is impossible to use a universal language to represent texts.
- Representation is not reproduction.
- Content is not seen as something that can be identified objectively.
- It is necessary to take into consideration that documents and communities of users are diverse, and, consequently, that they have different universes of meaning and different conditions of appropriation.

Continuing influence at USP

TEMMA Group was dissolved in 2016, as previously stated. However, its influence is seen to this day at USP in the bachelor of Library Science and in the Postgraduate Programme in Information Science of the School of Communication and Arts, in the São Paulo campus, and in the bachelor of Library and Information Science of the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters at Ribeirão Preto, in the Ribeirão Preto campus.

By analysing the current curriculum of the bachelor of Library Science (Universidade de São Paulo, n.d.a), I identified seven required courses whose programmes of study are infused with the theoretical and methodological framework developed by TEMMA Group: Audiovisual Documentation, Documentary Languages I, Documentary Languages II, Documentary Linguistics, Elements of Logic to Documentation, Indexing: Theory and Methods, and Introduction to Documentary Analysis.

An analysis of the curriculum of the bachelor of Library and Information Science (Universidade de São Paulo, n.d.b) evidenced that the outlines of four required courses are related to the group’s thought: Foundations of Library and Information Science, Indexing and Abstracts, Knowledge Organisation Systems I, and Knowledge Organization Systems II.

I also analysed the information regarding the objectives and details of the Postgraduate Programme in Information Science (Escola de Comunicações e Artes, n.d.), and I verified that one of the three lines of research of the programme, Information and Knowledge Organisation, is pervaded by approaches developed by TEMMA Group.

Current document studies

The research conducted at University of São Paulo is directly related to the continuing developments of Documentation in France. It not only applied the French theory, but it built on it, creating a specific Brazilian strand in Library and Information Science that has a strong Documentation component.

Other than that, my analysis of the current courses' bibliographies and of the publications of University of São Paulo's members of TEMMA Group¹ has shown that the studies developed at the institution are also building upon the work of neoducomentalists Michael K. Buckland, Ronald E. Day, Bernd Frohmann, Niels W. Lund and W. Boyd Rayward.

The theories and methodologies developed at University of São Paulo are relevant to current document studies for their rigour in reflecting upon documentary practices and their development. Such theories and methodologies, being interdisciplinary and built upon a variety of approaches from around the world, can greatly supplement document studies. Further research on this subject can better evidence this contribution.

Certainly, it is necessary to make the work developed at University of São Paulo known abroad, since a search for publications revealed that there were few attempts to divulge it outside of Brazil (Guimarães, 2018; Moura et al. 2018; Smit & Guimarães, 2017).

Conclusion

Documentation has had a long influence in Brazilian Library and Information Science. Specifically in the case of the research conducted at University of São Paulo, it is possible to state that Documentation was fundamental to the development of a consistent body of both theoretical and practical knowledge related to document organisation and representation for its retrieval. These developments are crucial within University of São Paulo to this day, having influenced hundreds of its graduates and, consequently, Brazilian documentary infrastructures such as libraries and documentation centres.

Moreover, it is possible to conclude that the work of University of São Paulo's professors is relevant to document studies in an international context. Surely, there is a need for more divulgation of TEMMA Group's developments outside of Brazil, and I hope to have contributed to it with this paper.

¹ A. M. M. Cintra, N. Y. Kobashi, M. G. L. Lara, V. M. A. Lima, G. D. Maimone, D. M. A. Sabbag, C. A. C. M. Santos, J. W. Smit and M. F. G. M. Tálamo.

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