

InterPARES PROJECT – 1999-2018

CLAID TEAM – 2005-2018

(CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA InterPARES DISSEMINATION)

BRAZIL: An amazing experience!

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The contribution of InterPARES Terminology Task Force to Archival Terminology and Practice in Brazil

Abstract

The contribution of InterPARES Terminology Task Force to Archival Terminology and Practice in Brazil is shown with the analyses of key terms like record, document, set aside, archival bond, bounded variability, chain of custody and chain of preservation. This analysis is preceded by brief considerations about the act of conceptualizing, the concept of concept and the differences between concept and notion and concept and definition.

The reflections on the terms mentioned above take in consideration those which can be conciliated with the terms adopted by Brazilian archival community and those which should be absorbed by it.

Finally, the importance of taking part of InterPARES Terminology Task Force, from InterPares Project and CLAUD Team, is mentioned from the collective and personal perspective.

Introduction

The challenge of presenting this paper on terminology must, in our conception, be preceded by the presentation of some reflections about the act of conceptualizing. This is what we propose to do in a few words now.

According to Yeo¹, “definitions have had a bad press in recent years. Many philosophers and cultural theorists no longer believe in them. Many linguists are unsure of their value. In archives and records management, as in many other professional disciplines, writers and practitioners debate how far it is possible to provide adequate definitions of the key concepts with which the profession is concerned.”

Then, Yeo² makes some considerations about the influence of the decline of positivism and essentialism on definitions. He also mentions Wittgenstein to whom “... the meaning of words and concepts is not absolute, but is determined by social custom and by the way that words are used”.

¹ Yeo, Geoffrey. Concepts of Record (1): Evidence, Information, and Persistent Representations. *The American Archivist*, v. 70, 2007, p. 315.

² Wittgenstein, Ludwig (apud Yeo, Geoffrey 2007) *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwee, 1953).

The influence of postmodernist ideas is considered by Yeo³ too. According to these ideas “...all definitions are dangerous”.

However, Yeo really believes in definitions. According to him, sharing meanings, mainly among professional communities, is a legitimate action. He argues that “definitions are necessarily shaped by the cultural epochs to which they belong, but they are effective in demonstrating how concepts are perceived and understood within the professional community where they are employed.”

Another preliminary reflection which we consider necessary to do is on the concept of concept.

According to Brentano in the words of Safranski⁴, “concepts are not something purely intern but are always concepts ‘of something’. They are the awareness of something. An entity that exists, or more precisely, that offers and exposes itself to me”.

Brazilian author Minayo⁵ goes further and makes the difference between concept and notion. According to her, notion is related to ideas that are not clear enough to explain something real. So they are “mental operations” that have not been formalized yet, while concept is the opposite. Good examples are terms coined by information technology such as metadata whose meaning in the very beginning was not clear to many archivists and then, it was a notion, but now it is a formalized concept.

There is still a difference between concept and definition made by Campos⁶, another Brazilian author. Campos argues that concept is an idea that we have about an object while definition is the description of the concept. Let’s consider the following example: table – an object we use as a support to have meals, to write and so on. In this case “table” is the term that materializes the concept, that is, the idea that we have about this object, while definition is the explanation that comes after the term.

Once made these preliminary considerations, let’s turn to the very theme of this lecture itself which is “The contribution of InterPARES Terminology Task Force to Archival Terminology and Practice in Brazil.

Conciliating old terms and absorbing new ones

Concerning terminoly, InterPARES Project started with a glossary (Interpares 1), then evolved to a Terminology data base with a dictionary and a glossary (Interpares 2 and 3) and arrived to Interpares 4 with a Terminology data base constituted by a glossary, a dictionary, an ontology and a multilingual

³ Yeo, Geoffrey. Concepts of Record (1): Evidence, Information, and Persistent Representations. *The American Archivists*, v. 70, 2007, p. 316.

⁴ Safranski, Rüdiger. *Heideguer, um mestre na Alemanha entre o bem e o mal*. (Geração Editorial, São Paulo, 2005), p. 52.

⁵ Minayo, Maria Cecília de Souza. *O desafio do conhecimento: pesquisa qualitativa em saúde*. (Hucitec-Abraso, São Paulo, 1992), p. 92.

⁶ Campos, Maria Luisa de Almeida. *Linguagem documentária: teorias que fundamentam sua elaboração*. (Eduff, 2001, Niterói), p. 71.

work which is the Multilingual Archival Terminology, organized in partnership with the International Council of Archives.

This lecture focuses only on the glossaries of the four phases of the project and on some of the three hundred and six (306) terms sent to us to be translated to Portuguese. How was expected, our terminology group worked hard trying to conciliate some terms to our archival practice and to assimilate new ones as well.

It's important to highlight that, for the purpose of this lecture, we took in account only the terms in the scope of diplomatics and archival science, that is, we did not consider information technology terms since we think they have a more universal meaning.

The term *record*

In her two previous talks presented in InterPARES meeting in South Korea (2009) and Malaysia (2010), the coordinator of Team Brazil, Claudia Lacombe Rocha, spoke and wrote about a key term of archival science, that is, the term *record*. In her first paper Rocha stated: "...the translation of **record** to *Documento arquivístico* was recently adopted in Brazil, and it is important to note that InterPARES Project findings strongly contributed to that change." This is very true and, little by little, we see Brazilian archivists using the term *documento arquivístico (record)*, instead of *documento de arquivo (document of archives)* which has always been the favorite of Brazilian archival community. However we must say that the change that we begin to note now, hasn't occurred so peacefully. Actually, we can detect a certain grade of tension and even a dispute between those in favor of the term *documento arquivístico (record)* and those in favor of the term *documento de arquivo (document of archives)*. The latter group argues that the term *documento de arquivo* is a Latin name, being adopted by countries of Latin origin, such as France, Italy etc., and by Latin America archival communities. Despite being a very solid argument, it can be confronted with a new conception which has its origin in the scope of InterPARES project. Let's see. The term *record* is a synonym of the term *archival document* which means *documento arquivístico* in Portuguese. The terms *archival* in English, and *arquivístico* in Portuguese, are adjectives and, as such, identify the entity in question more appropriately since they qualify it. By this moment it might be appropriate to remember Jenkinson's words and by replacing the term "archives" for "records", we could say that records "... are documents with a qualification." So the entity is an archival one. And why is it so? For its own nature, that is, it is "...made or received in the course of a practical activity, and set aside for action or reference." By its turn, the term *documento de arquivo* can give an idea of place, that is, the document is in an archival institution or department.

There is still another consequence of the term *record* in the conception of the archival entity by Brazilian archivists. It shows us the importance of conceptualizing the archival unity, using singular, not plural as we always do when we employ the term *archives* each time we want to conceptualize the entity. The perception of our mistake gains strength when an important author from Spain, Heredia Herrera, makes a self-criticism in her book of 2007 saying that mentioning the set of documents when conceptualizing the archival entity, she herself, "... deviates and does not define record but fonds."

At this moment it's important to remember Rochas's words in the meeting in South Korea when she clarified that in Brazil the term archives is used "... for both record and *archives*, while Americans often use the term **record** only for current and semi-current documents and reserve the term **archives** for non-current documents that are preserved due to their enduring or secondary value." I would add that nowadays, in English speak countries, the term *record* is also used by archivists to designate the archival entity itself.

Finally, we must say that the work of translation of the term *record* in the scope of InterPARES project has enhanced the comprehension of its meaning among Brazilian archivists.

The term *document*

According to InterPARES 2 Terminology data base, "document is an indivisible unit of information constituted by a message affixed to a medium (recorded) in a stable syntactic manner. A document has fixed form and stable content."

This is really a very important and consistent definition since it mentions the requirements of fixed form and stable content for an entity to be considered a document. From these requirements we can grasp the difference between document and information, mainly in the digital environment, and from this difference we can argue against the term *archival information* which has been adopted for many archivists in Brazil lately.

The term *set aside*

This is really a new term for Brazilian archivists. This is also a case where the absorption of the term for our community is clearly indicated. Let's see.

Actually, the term *set aside* identifies an action which characterizes itself as one of the archival procedures adopted in the archival practice worldwide. According to Duranti it means the inclusion of the record "... in the whole body of records – or archival fonds – of the physical or juridical person who made or received it for action or reference." From this point we can infer that to *set*

aside means to establish the archival bond among the records which, by its turn, is revealed through the physical ordination of the record or through its classification code.

As I have already put, this is a well-known procedure in the archival field although not every country, namely Brazil, has specific term to designate it.

The term *archival bond*

The term *archival bond* involves a picturesque story for the reaction it has provoked in the Brazilian archival community. There is a well consolidated term in Portuguese to designate this characteristic of archival documents and it is *relação orgânica*, or organic relation, in a literal translation. Hence, the Brazilian terminology task force, kept it when making its translation work. However, surprisingly, the English expression *archival bond*, which in Portuguese is literally *vínculo arquivístico*, has fascinated a group of Brazilian archivists, the same that have rejected the translation from record to *documento arquivístico*. Actually, nowadays, there is a tendency among Brazilian archivists to keep using the term *relação orgânica*, or *organic relation*, since, as I have already said, it is really consolidated among us. However, the positive reaction of some Brazilian archivists to the new term was very curious indeed. What would be the reason for it? I guess it is the fact that *vínculo arquivístico*, or *archival bond*, sounds more meaningful than *relação orgânica*, or *organic relation*.

So it is that, concerning the term archival bond, we have an example of a term that does not need to be conciliated or absorbed by Brazilian archivists. However it seems to have really stirred the calm waters that used to exist.

The term *bounded variability*

Here we have what I repute as one of the most important terms created in the scope of InterPARES Project. It is defined as “the changes to the form and/or content of a digital record that are limited and controlled by fixed rules, so that the same query, request or interaction always generates the same result.” Its applicability to digital environment permits the conciliation among the dynamism of the digital objects with the requirements of fixed form and stable content to documents and, even more, to records, after all, in the words of Duranti and Thibodeu “the essential function of a record is to serve as a bridge over time, to carry information about an action, event, or state of affairs forward for when it is needed in subsequent actions or for reference about what happened or was described or said in the past.” So, concerning the term *bounded variability*, it consists in one more case of a term which must be adopted by Brazilian archival community.

The terms *chain of custody* and *chain of preservation*

These terms appear in InterPares 4 glossary and are very important since they make clear the difference between both terms. *Chain of custody* relates to the chronology of entities that held the records over time and, exactly because of this, can demonstrate their authenticity. It's a juridical concept. It doesn't have to do with any action to preserve records over their lifecycle. On the other hand, *chain of preservation* relates to exactly the actions that have to be implemented in entire lifecycle of records to ensure their authenticity. Unfortunately I have just realized that this second term wasn't sent to us to be translated but it is still time to be included and it will be. The difference between these two concepts is very important to us since, by this time, in Brazil, they have been misunderstood and seen as one single concept.

Conclusion

This is a small picture of the repercussion of InterPARES Terminology Task Force in the Brazilian archival community. And I have analyzed here only six terms! I wish I had had time to write about terms such as *activity*, *accuracy*, *context* (the 5 kinds), *reliability*, *completeness* to mention only a few. Actually, due to our participation in the InterPARES project, these terms were included in the glossary of our "Technical Chamber of Electronic Documents" which belongs to the National Council of Archives. Besides that, we have managed to disseminate some of them in our national meetings and among archival science students.

Thus, there seems to be no doubts about the contribution of InterPARES Terminology Task Force to Archival Terminology and Practice in Brazil.

Another point to be considered is that having integrated the group in charge of InterPARES terminology in my country was one of the most enriching experiences I have ever had in my professional life. The tense and warm discussions of our group in so many meetings in the National Archives marked our work in trying to grasp all the concepts and to make the best translations. So many questions! So many answers! So many uncertainties! In the end those meetings were in fact a collective study which enlightened our minds towards an endless search for knowledge. At least we are not alone as we have the support and beauty of Heidegger's words, according to whom "questioning is the devotion of thinking."

For all these aspects I'd like to say thank you to Luciana Duranti for having provided us with such an amazing experience. Actually, after 13 years of intense work whose conclusion we celebrate here, I would finish this paper paraphrasing the words of a very famous Brazilian song that says: "I would start all over again if it were possible my friends".

