Types of Documents
Representations of Who We Are and How the Government Works

Abstract:
This article aims to present two different approaches related to the study of types of documents. Our research problem is to understand to what extent the identification of the document type reveals the persistent representation of the archival document. We will present two different approaches related to the study of types of documents: one about the types of documents as a social product, which represents social practices and recognizes that social practices control not only the behavior of the individual, but also the structure and form of the document. From this perspective we will analyze documents from personal collections created in the 19th century. The other approach focuses on the organizational environment of a federal public agency and how document types can be used as an instrument of transparency in a records management system. The research will focus on digital documents created in an electronic system. The study shows that document types also provide the basis for classification systems that are the foundation for acquisition, organization, description and evaluation. Being the closest representation of the acts, the records are taken as evidence, that is, they reveal the persistent representation of the archival document, contributing to the organization of knowledge about the collections, their producers and about society in a given historical period.

1.0 Introduction
The approach to the organization of knowledge has different perspectives. One of its main objectives is permitting knowledge to move from a purely theoretical nature towards the creation of different processes and activities that serve to disseminate information. This statement finds support in the statement of Guimarães (2017, 92), for which, among the dimensions of Knowledge Organization (KO) - epistemological, cultural and applied - the latter would translate into:

“manage and identify large pieces of information which leads on the other hand to the need to develop increasingly friendly tools, making the organization and knowledge representation processes less and less artificial and closer to the user's daily life” (Guimarães 2017, 92).

In other words, the author points out that the organization of knowledge permeates different actions that, in the end, contribute to the KO providing users with relevant and appropriate content for their needs. In this sense, we can affirm that in the field of archives the study of document types is one of those contributions.

In the context of records management the study of types of documents has been used more frequently as a tool for appraisal, classification and destination. This practice echoed the Madrid (Spain) school and has spread throughout Brazil. However, for the past ten years, the method has also been used in Brazil to understand personal archives. From these two applications of the document type analysis method the research discusses to what extent the identification of the type reveals the persistent representation of the archival document.

One scenario seeks to understand how the documents produced by the creator of a file in a given historical period can describe the connection between the individual and
society, while the other scenario focuses on the organizational environment of a public agency and how the identification of types of documents can be used as an instrument of transparency in an information management system. Both situations place records and files at the epicenter of the discussion on representation and therefore contribute to the organization of knowledge in a given social and historical context.

We consider that the type of document and its concept offer the means to understand the context of production, revealing its archival link and equally making access more instrumental. This occurs in so far as the archival document under any and all circumstances is a social product since it represents social practices. This study identifies the semantic and cognitive descriptions used to name types of documents and recognizes the connection with the action that is the source of the record. We emphasize that the recognition of social practices as tacit rules that control not only the individual's behavior, but also the structure and form of the documents, provides the key to understanding the context of the archive and improves the use of the archives.

Geoffrey Yeo points to the concept of record representation, defining that when we speak of a record we speak of “persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers of those activities or by their authorized proxies” (Yeo 2007). This concept was used as part of the theoretical foundation of the research.

In the context of records management, the identification of types of documents and the functions they represent provide the basis for the acquisition of knowledge about archival production, about the archival link that connects the producer and the documents, and about the mission and functions of the institution producing the archive. This knowledge will be used to guide access, management and appraisal policies, and finally, it will make documents accessible for accountability and active transparency.

In the end, the article will show that the use of both approaches enriches the process of understanding archives, provides a consistent production of knowledge about records and offers a perspective that meets society's wishes.

2.0 Archival representation and the archival document

The understanding of the adopted archival representation is based on ideas of Yakel (2005) and Yeo (2007). According to Yakel:

“The term archival representation will be used for the archival function commonly and variously identified as arrangement and description, processing and occasionally archival cataloging. The term “archival representation” more precisely captures the actual work of the archivist in (re) ordering, interpreting, creating surrogates, and designing architectures for representational systems that contain those surrogates to stand in for or represent actual archival materials” (Yakel 2003, 2).

For the author, it is important to revisit the representations elaborated in regard to the collections, since the cultural context of the production of these representations is dynamic. This action of revisiting them makes it possible to complete them and even correct them. The author also proposes that the production process of arrangement and description be continuous and fluid.

“The archival representation, then, demonstrate not only the evolving physical collections and intellectual understandings of collections, but also changing perspectives on collection arrangement, descriptions, and management. Each successive representation and representational system builds on its predecessors, recovering what was judged valuable in a given temporal and cultural context, incorporating or discarding what was deemed essential or not respectively” (Yakel 2003, 24).

For the author:
“Archival representations speak not only about the collections for which they act as surrogates, but also archival practice and archivists” (Yakel 2003, 25).

In Yeo's view, archival representation is intrinsically related to the archival document. The author, when approaching what he understands by archival representation, revisits the conceptions attributed to the archival document (evidence and information). He then defines the representation of the document as follows:

“To differentiate records from other kinds of representation, records can be characterized as persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers of those activities or by their authorized proxies” (Yeo 2007, 337).

Yeo also has three attributes to characterize the persistent representation of archival documents: the document has the ability to represent the activity that originated it over time and to allow its sharing; it represents the most diverse activities of actions carried out by individuals, not just the legal, economic and evidential transactions; and is produced by observers of, or participants in, the represented activity. Yet, we identified two characteristics that still lack further exploration in theoretical discussions regarding this area but that are fundamental for the preservation of documents: 1. they are also persistent in their ability to be a vehicle of information and 2. the stability of instrumental content supplies different interpretations of the same event or action.

In our view, the ability to represent the activity of the individual or institution that generated the document is what guarantees the different uses and functions that is ascribed to it. Thomassen (2001, 375-376) in his article "A first introduction to archival science" points out the following functions of the archive document: "memory of individuals, of organizations and of society, support operational management, agents of accountability, evidence and cultural and historical function". Society's use of documents and their subsequent importance touch, among other things, evidence, information, memory triggers, accountability, justice, identity, power, citizenship. Each of these purposes of the document's use also reveals society's own understanding of its instrumentalization and the socio-political context in which this occurs.

The activity of identification of the document type reveals, therefore, the genesis of its production and in this way we demonstrate the persistent representation that each archival document has and the vestige of its future use by society. In addition, the emphasis on the activity of production also indicates the relevant archival context. In this sense, the archivist is at the epicenter of archival representation in terms of the archival document itself, and also when the typological identification is performed in the application of the above formula by the archivist, thus ratifying what Yakel and Yeo understand by this type of representation.

3.0 The document type applied in the organizational environment and in personal files

This section will present two approaches to the application of the document type identification methodology from two perspectives: that of personal archives and that of institutional archives. With regard to personal records we have applied the following definition by Oliveira (2012):

“We understand "personal archives" as a set of documents produced or received and maintained by an individual throughout his life as a result of his activities and social functions. These documents, in any form and on any medium, represent the life of the holder and their personal or business networks. They also represent intimate and personal aspects, as well as the creator's deeds, etc. They are obvious records of the creator's broad role in society” (Oliveira 2012, 33).
Carmargo affirms that personal archives are indeed archives and must be anchored in the context of their production so that they do not lose the representative aspect that makes them unique and singularizes them. The author states that:

“In order to guarantee support for the different possibilities of interpretation that the reading of their content can raise over time, personal archives must be treated as proper archives, that is, they must be anchored to the context in which they were produced. When this relationship is subverted, that is, when the potential for use, taken in its inexhaustible and imponderable magnitude, enters as a component of the treatment of the archives, replacing actions that justified their production, the documents lose the representative aspect that makes them unique” (Camargo 2009, 36).

Institutional archives are the set of documents received and produced by an organization when carrying out its activities. This understanding underpins the very concept of these archival documents.

Before presenting our understanding of document types we will present the kind of document which is the configuration that a document assumes according to the disposition and nature of the information contained therein (Camargo and Bellotto 1996). The concept of document type defended by Antonia Heredia Herrera consists of: “The structure, the material form in which the content is materialized” (Herrera 2007). Bellotto defines it as follows: "document type is the documentary form assumed according to the activity that generated it, its fixation is complex and punctual” (Belloto 2002, 91). From the definitions above, when identifying a document type we apply the following formula: kind plus activity.

The applied methodology broadens the study in the field of personal archives since the individual in his legacy of documents gathers records relating to his intimate life and to a life subject to a society structured by rules and legislation. This breadth enriches the study of the personal archive and enables the production of knowledge regarding a historical period. The analysis is based on a methodology developed and tested in continuous research projects since 2003 that were developed and coordinated by Oliveira using a typological identification form that contained 10 fields: kind, activity, type, date, location, recipient, activity (-ies) / reason that originated the document, specific typical characteristics and standard elements. The filling instructions are detailed below:

“1 - The Kind field aims to demonstrate the configuration that the document assumes according to the nature of its information. 2 - The Activity field seeks to identify the objective that drove the production of the document. 3 - The Type field seeks to define the configuration that the documentary kind assumes according to the activity that generated it (kind + activity). 4 - The Date field marks the period in which this document was produced and, consequently, in which social posture code it fits. 5 and 6 - The Location and Author fields help us to locate these documents. 7 - The Recipient field allows us to identify whether the document was produced for personal or professional purposes and for whom it was produced. 8 - The Activity (s) / reason field that originated the document explains the circumstance in which it was produced. 9 - The Specific Typical Characteristics field helps us to describe the characteristics present in the document and which relate it to the event to which it belongs, either in written form or through its symbols. 10 - The Standard Element field allows us to find the constant elements found in the documentary set referring to the specific event and which give rise to their typology” (Oliveira and Penna 2013, 483).

As we mentioned, the research makes use of documents preserved in personal and institutional archives. We will use a sample of documents from each context (the management of archives and personal collections and documents produced by a public institution) since there are more than 800 types of document defined so far. It should be noted that the work of identification continues and this number may be changed. In this sense,
we work with 30% of the group. The study provides a comparison of the two systems and analyzes the need to keep all the acts represented over time.

When we preserve personal archives we generally acquire documents that reflect the professional activities of the owners of the archives and the legacy that proves the notoriety of the individual or individuals who originated the documents. Records of intimate or ordinary life in general are not preserved. The set of archives with which we work has this ordinary and human dimension that allows us to get to know more closely the social and cultural context in which the producer of the archive and the individuals who were part of their network of relationships lived. The analysis methodology involved researching the types of documents identified, their concepts and their relationship with the archive and with the historical context. For the purposes of illustration we have chosen two types of documents: a rural property management report and a slave birth certificate.

Rural property management report: Report on decision-making activities for the development of activities on a rural property.

![Figure 1: Rural Property Management Report – CFBO SP DFBV05 (http://www.memoriaescravidao.rb.gov.br/exposicoes/Catalogo1/#p=19)](http://www.memoriaescravidao.rb.gov.br/exposicoes/Catalogo1/#p=19)

We observed that the form of the document could induce, in a faster analysis, its identification as a letter, which among its most striking characteristics is that it is a written message sent from one individual to another, containing place, date, name of the recipient and signatory, and if an official message it would typically contain number, letterhead and address. The form of treatment depends on the nature of the letter, whether personal or official, and the degree of intimacy between the interlocutors. This should be noted at the beginning, when the recipient is mentioned, and at the end of the farewell when the sender signs. In private life identification is often by nicknames.

The report (the documentary form) has some of the characteristics of a letter, so in a hasty analysis it can be mistakenly identified. The report type is understood to be the recorded narrative or exhibition about a certain event or fact and its content must be about expenses, activities and commercial transactions. Its frequency is variable and there is usually a subordinate relationship between the author and the recipient that must be identified as well as their position or role. The motivation for producing the report
must be clear and have a date. In the end you may or may not have a recommendation. The understanding of the document's function is that it will give the precise indication of the type and with this information and construction of a concept that standardizes its use by archivists and by users it is possible to consolidate knowledge about the archive, the producer and its functions, persistently loading this metadata over time for access and retrieval.

The second example is produced in the family environment but follows legal guidelines so that it can be accepted in society. The declaration (documentary form) is considered as a written statement about a fact, event or right. Usually, it has the title of Declaration, the name and identification/title of the declarant, what is being declared, place, date (of the fact and of the document) and signature of who is declaring the fact.

![Figure 2: Slave birth certificate CFBO SFJ DAAFJ 244](http://www.memoriaescravado.rb.gov.br/exposicoes/Catalogo1/#p=40)

The declaration of the birth of a slave (the type) was mandatory since it was used to notify the registration officer of the birth of a slave and then the slave was registered with the municipal body. Its structure was defined by Decree no. 4835 of December 1, 1871, which approved the regulation for the special registration of slaves and free children of slave women. The declaration should contain the name of the owner, the day of the child's birth, the mother's name, the child's sex, the child's first name and color. In addition, there should be the mother's two registrations, the one made by the owner and that of the municipality, as well as her activity.  

1 In Brazil, on September 28, 1871, Law No. 2,040, known as the “Free Womb Law”, was signed. The Law declared the children of slave women born in Brazil to be free. However, the child stayed until the age of eight with the master of his mother.
The precise definition of this document type reflects the practice governed by legislation to control the birth of children of slaves and the state’s information on slave activity, thus permitting a thorough study of the period and the relationship between the state, slave masters and the slave and her children in a period of transition.

At this point, we will detail the second approach related to the study of the document type, applying it in an organizational environment. For the purpose of clarifying the origin of this approach it is necessary to know that the Federal Government of Brazil, in 2015, created a legal instrument for the establishment of the national electronic process, Decree No. 8,539, of October 8, 2015 (Brasil 2015) which provides for the use of electronic means to carry out the administrative process within the bodies and entities of the direct, autarchic and foundational federal public administration.

This decree determined that public agencies of the executive branch would have two years to implement software designed to produce and process administrative processes electronically. The Brazilian government chose the Electronic Information System (Sistema Eletrônico de Informação) SEI software. As a result of its implementation the procedural process was speedy and the acts were transparent.

In this article, we will deal with the results of the implantation of the SEI at Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa (FCRB) specifically about the reflections around the identification of the document type as an instrument of access and transparency. FCRB fully implemented the software in 2017 and one of the activities that preceded the implementation was the identification of the document types that integrated the administrative processes and the insertion of the software layout. These actions were developed by the institution's team of archivists. The methodology for identifying document types proved to be crucial for the reproduction of the business flow and the team followed the same method adopted in the previously mentioned personal archives.

This project was entitled PenSei² digital and was carried out within the scope of the agency's Document Management Program that strives for archival classification, for maintaining the filing of administrative proceedings, for the typological identification of documents and for the archival control of documents produced and processed within the software (Panisset and Jaccoud 2019).

The process of identifying document types was carried out before the software was implemented and emphasized the application of the first three fields defined by Oliveira and Penna (2013), as we were creating document templates that had not yet been produced which meant that consequently it would not be possible to identify the date and circumstance of the document production. Brazilian legislation that regulates administrative procedures for operation, purchase and services in the Brazilian Public Administration was also used for decision making regarding the identification of the document type, in addition to manuals on administrative procedures of public agencies and specialized dictionaries. For the purpose of demonstrating that the document type is the closest archival representation of the act and the reason for the production of the document, we will use the archival collection acquisition activity.

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² The project name is a combination of the acronyms of the National Electronic Process (Processo Eletrônico Nacional) - PEN and Electronic Information System (Sistema Eletrônico de Informação) - SEI. SEI was developed by the Federal Regional Court of the 4th Region. The software is an administrative process management system, composed of functionalities for administrative optimization.
The regulation of this activity provides that the acquisition of collections should be formalized in an administrative process that contains a list of documents, the most important being the donation contract, a document that provides for the common agreement between the parties involved (the donor and Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa) that demonstrates the willingness to donate, the identification of the documents to be donated, the conditions of access, reproduction and preservation. In addition to the contract, the process comprised: the request to acquire a personal archive; the decision-making order; donor identification and civil registration documents; the identification list of the archival collection; the declaration of sole heir; the checklist of administrative acts and documents, legal opinion and donation contract (with or without copyright).

Below is an image of the set of documents that comprise a collection archiving process and the acquisition contract (where the personal information of the donor has been deleted).

![Figure 3: Pensei’s homepage](https://doi.org/10.5771/9783956507762-338)

*Figure 3: Pensei’s homepage/ SOURCE: SEI*
Currently, the software has 677 document types, 182 with models (documents produced within the software) and 495 without models (documents that are digitized and captured into the system). The study and use of the identification and definition of document types in Document Management promotes the appropriate choice of the archival document to be produced and further enhances access to this document both to support management in the decision-making process, as well as to serve society and give transparency to administrative acts promoted by Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa.

4.0 Final Considerations

Both approaches adopted in this article point out the relevance of the typological study to obtain the improvement of processes that are crucial to public administration and society. In response to our research question, we understand that the identification of the document type is essential for the persistent representation of the archival document, which may have different purposes, since it records the genesis of the documents and links the document to the processes in which the producer of the archive participates and unveils the context in which the actions took place, as well as their actors and developments. It is the closest to the functionality and dynamics of fact and consequence, and it is undoubtedly the mechanism that sustains the typical persistence of archival documents.

The study pointed out that the types of documents provide the basis for the classification systems, which are the fundamentals of acquisition, organization, description and evaluation, and an important axis for the evaluation analysis, since it brings out the essence of the represented action. Being the closest representation of the acts, the records are taken as evidence. But they can be more than that, as they are social products and a trigger for our individual or collective memory.

We understand, with the application of the methodology in the different circumstances, that the document type is a social product and the persistent representation of
both the activity producing the document and the document itself. Therefore, aligning the concepts of knowledge organization and document types, we realize that this process of archival nature meets the demands of the KO, recognizing the importance of its use and application in different contexts that require theoretical and practical understanding of the role of the archive, the archivist and, in particular, archivology in the promotion and diffusion of organizational or social knowledge.

References