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ARCHIVES AND THE “ARCHIVE”: DIALOGUE AND AN AGENDA OF RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Amon Barros*

Abstract

This text considers the “Archive” as a concept and a transitional space and to bring together discussions from history and organizations in relation to theoretical and methodological concerns involving the use of archives. It sets out from the supposition that broadening our understanding of these terms may support historical research in Management to advance new questions about a range of objects, including documents and archives. During this process we focus on the changes brought about by advances in information technology, particularly the internet, and put forward certain considerations concerning Organization Studies that rely on archives. The conclusion indicates that archives and the Archive are constituent elements of practices and structures, and that the field would benefit from a research agenda that took into consideration: 1) greater methodological awareness about the implications of the use of documents and archives; 2) discussions about organizations that archive and how archives shape practices within these organizations; 3) studies of already available documents, including those online; 4) an interrogation of knowledge in Management in relation to Archives.

Key Words: Organization Studies and History. Archives. Documents.

OS ARQUIVOS E O “ARQUIVO”: DIÁLOGOS COM E UMA AGENDA DE PESQUISA EM ESTUDOS ORGANIZACIONAIS

Resumo

Este texto pretende discutir o “Arquivo” enquanto conceito e enquanto espaço (em transição) e tem como objetivo aproximar as discussões em história e organizações das preocupações teóricas e metodológicas que envolvem o uso de arquivos. Parte-se do pressuposto que aprofundar o entendimento desses termos pode contribuir para que a pesquisa histórica em Administração avance como novos questionamentos sobre diversos objetos, inclusive os documentos e os arquivos. No percurso foi dado foco às mudanças trazidas pelo avanço das tecnologias de informação, especialmente da *internet*, e foram realizadas algumas ponderações sobre os Estudos Organizacionais que se valem de arquivos. A conclusão aponta que os arquivos e o Arquivo são elementos constituintes de práticas e de estruturas e que o campo se beneficiaria de uma agenda de pesquisa que considerasse 1) maior consciência metodológica sobre as implicações do uso de documentos e arquivos; 2) discutir as organizações que arquivam e como os arquivos impactam em práticas de atores na organização; 3) pesquisas sobre documentos já disponibilizados, inclusive *online*; 4) interrogar os conhecimentos da Administração em sua relação com Arquivos.

Palavras-chave: Estudos Organizacionais e História, Arquivos, Documentos.

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Introduction

The aim of this text is to discuss the “Archive” (concept), archives (spaces and document sets)¹ and management, specifically from the point of view of Organization Studies and History. Interest in this debate emerged from a perception that, although these terms permeate texts regarding the use of documents as historical research sources in management (COSTA & SARAIVA, 2011; ROWLINSON, HASSARD, and DECKER, 2014) and those that discuss administrative knowledge (BARROS, *et al.*, 2011), they are often not specifically addressed in works in this area. Furthermore, thinking “empirically” was important for previous studies. Yet, many that we consulted did not question the use of archives and documents, nor did they demonstrate a clear understanding of their characteristics – despite consulting a range of records in physical and digital archives. This led me to question whether these studies were documentary or archival and what the implications are for both forms.

In theoretical terms, this text contributes to Organization Studies by delineating issues about the potential of both the document and archives as research sources for this area. Furthermore, it sets out a debate that has been held in other knowledge areas and aligned to the historic turn (CLARK & ROWLINSON, 2004), which may extend self-knowledge in works that use archives and documents as databases. The text also seeks to broaden the debate about archives, leading to a more generic view, albeit one which concentrates on historical archives.

The motivation for this work emerged while conducting studies in which I reflected in a more detailed manner on the use of documents as sources for historical research and on the object of this text, the Archive, both in its active function in creating memory and as a philosophical concept to be permanently reviewed. In this text, we argue that a document refers to an archive, either in the sense of a set of other documents produced under the same rules, or as statements that enable the emergence of a specific materialized discourse in texts or other records. The broadening of our understanding of what could be considered an archive is the result of post-modern discussions (COOK, 2012a)².

The discussion has also been effected by the practical transformation caused by the web and information technology in general, which have expanded the capacity for the storage and dissemination of records. The use of the internet has provided space for a range of studies and has reduced the cost of storage and the availability of documents (which may be digitized to improve preservation and circulation). The internet has not only transformed research using historical sources, through the wider availability of digitized materials, but has also challenged the concept of the archive as a place, and questioned more traditional views related to “organic” emergence, as the natural effect of activities within a specific organization, as Schellenberg ([1956]2003), for example, argues.

The issue of the use of archives recurs in the field of History and Archival Sciences (COOK, 2012a; SCHWARTZ & COOK, 2002). To a lesser extent, it is also present in discussions about management (COSTA & SARAIVA, 2011; ROWLINSON, HASSARD, & DECKER, 2014), particularly in the areas of organizational memory and information systems (CORAIOLA, 2012; 2013). According to Schwartz and Cook (2002), as well as being a concept that has developed in philosophy, as seen in Derrida (1995), the archive is the object of an entire knowledge area (Archival Science) and is a physical (and, in the case of the internet, virtual) space, as well as being a specific profession (the archivist).

As L'Eplattenier (2009) notes, both in relation to historical research in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, and in the subarea of historical studies in management, and more specifically in archival research, few texts reflect on the specificities of archival research. One exception is the work of Decker (2013), who concentrates on the discipline of business history, and certain other discussions approach the theme, such as in the juxtaposition between organization studies and history undertaken by Rowlinson, Hassard, and Decker (2013) and the text by Mills and Helms Mills (2011),

which discusses how to address and operationalize the concept of the archive during research into three airline companies. However, since it is a relatively small subarea, it is understandable that few texts reflect in detail on the methodology and historical methods in management and organization studies, particularly in reference to the use of archives. In most cases, works are limited to recounting the process that enables archive access and sometimes to the auxiliary methodology and techniques of data classification and analysis.

Extending capacity to store information has increased the potential number of sources available for study, but has not eliminated the need to decide what should be left out of an archive (FEATHERSTONE, 2000). When deciding whether to archive (or discard), the function of an archivist working in an organization dedicated to maintaining archives has become more wide-ranging, as the capacity to store information has, in turn, become more generally disseminated. Nevertheless, absent data and the "veracity" of present data are inherent to archival studies: a judgement will always have to be made about what will, or will not, be preserved and this has not changed with the advent of the internet.

This work discusses the theme from the point of view of a management researcher, or more specifically one from Organization Studies, in the context of historical studies. The argument developed here is not exhaustive – that would be impossible –, does not seek to extract a concept which enables the operationalization of research in or about archives, nor does it provide a fixed definition for the concept "Archive", particularly since no single meaning for this concept exists (MILLS & HELMS MILLS, 2011). As we have said, as well as mass computer use and the digitization of an increasingly large number of documents, discussions about archives have also had a profound impact on questions arising from post-modern or post-structuralist philosophy and the debate about the possible transformations of the concepts that structure this field of knowledge remains open (see, for example, COOK, 2012a; ZIMMERMAN, 2007; SCHWARTZ & COOK, 2002; FEATHERSTONE, 2006; 2000).

As well as re-examining certain issues from debates about the Archive as a concept, and about archives, their causes and effects, this text discusses some of the implications of the World Wide Web and its potential for archival research of an historical nature. Its reflections are aligned with those of Coraiola (2012) – in a study that particularly concentrates on an analysis of the evolution of the legislation that deals with archives in Brazil – and Costa and Saraiva (2011) – who discuss the production of memory in organizations. Another, more practical, objective is to stimulate discussions about the importance of preserving archives, not only in public institutions, but also in private organizations, which can contribute to historical narratives, from both management and a range of other fields related to daily life, of which business, public and social organizations have been, or are, a part.

The Archive, archives

There are several potential interpretations of what we understand by the word "archive". It may refer to a place, a group of documents, or, more generically, a collection of disorganized data which has some, always attributed, connection. Delmas (2001) considers the short time since the archival sciences were established as having a direct influence on the lack of consensus in the area. Another important point resides in the permanent changes that new information technology brings to the debate. Cook (1998) indicates that archival theory and methodology originally developed out of the personal experiences of the first authors, particularly Hilary Jenkinson [1892-1962] and Theodore Schellenberg [1903-1970], based on the *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, published in Holland in 1898 and written by Samuel Muller, Johan Feith and Robert Fruin (TSCHAN, 2002). The manual's publication influenced all the archivists of Europe and the United States (BRICFORD, 1982; BARRIT, 1993), although, according to Ketelaar (1995), it directed discussions towards practical, rather than theoretical, aspects.

Delmas (2001) asserts that discussions regarding archives only began to take on a scientific aspect in the middle of the 20th century, which explains why debates have only recently begun to influence other disciplines (MANOFF, 2004). Stoler (2009) points out that if only a stricter perspective is considered, the “archive” refers to an institution or the document set it holds. However, the meaning of the word “Archive” has broadened and begun to refer to a metaphorical invocation that refers to a *corpus* or collection of sources.

From the point of view of Schellenberg ([1956]2003, p. 13), defining what constitutes part of an archive requires an analysis of whether the documents “[...] were produced in the course of purposive and organized activity, if they were created in the process of accomplishing some definite administrative, legal, business or other social end, then they are of potential archival quality.” Schellenberg (2003) stresses that the reason for which the material was archived should move beyond the purpose for which it was originally designated or the reason for which it was accumulated. The author also states that the archive should be maintained for use by people other than those who produced the objects. “Moreover, whenever historical manuscripts become part of the documentation of an organized activity [...] they also may be considered to be archives” (SCHELLENBERG, 2003, p. 18).

In this viewpoint, described as modernist by Cook (2012a), the role of institutions that archive records is to select items, not because of their individual values, but in relation to a series which documents a specific production. From this perspective, archives develop “naturally” out of the activities of a certain organization or, to a lesser extent, individual. The modernist approach questions the idea that there is a unique version in history objectively reflected by documents, which may be relied on by a neutral and impartial historian, but does not dwell on the intentions that underline the production of such documents. In other words, it accepts the idea that different points of view may be adopted to narrate a fact, but differs from the perspective that emerges in post-modernism, since it does not consider documental “proofs” to be the result of activities located within power relations that give shape to and define the discourse and possibilities of doing (and remembering).

Cook (2012a, p. 15) criticizes the understanding of Schellenberg and his followers, since, although modernists have criticized the uniqueness of history, suggesting that there are possibilities for interpretation (contrary to the notion that a document is a reproduction of empirical acts and facts), they are not concerned with the nature of the document or what it represents (or how it could be made). In this text, the Archive takes on Cook’s (2012a) definition, which, as Stoler (2009) suggests, expands the meaning of the concept beyond simply envisaging the spaces (the organizations that archive) and what they contain, to a metaphor related to a series of possibilities for saying (and doing), which is, according to Foucault (2008), preserved within power relations.

Post-modernism questions the possibility of a document or an Archive being perceived as something “natural” or “organic”.

The origins of our modern Archives already, in effect, involve the combination of a *group* (the “scholars”), of *places* (“libraries”) and *practices* (of copying, printing, communication, classification, etc.). It is, in a dotted line, an indication of a complex technique [...] These combine to create a new *job* (“to collect”), the satisfaction of new *needs* (the justification of family groups and recent politicians, thanks to the establishment of traditions, letters and specific “property rights”) and the production of new *objects* (the documents that are isolated, conserved and recopied) whose meaning, from now on, is defined by their relationship to the whole (the collection). [...] It is producer and reproducer. (CERTEAU, 2000, p. 81-82, emphasis in the original).

Thus, the Archive is constructed from human practices and subject to the vicissitudes which give shape to these activities. The relaxation of how sources are defined and utilized was described by Foucault (2008) as one of the methodological challenges of the “new history”.

The document, then, is no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said [...] history is now trying to define within

the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations. His-story must be detached from the image that satisfied it for so long, and through which it found its anthropological justification: that of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documents to refresh its memory; history is the work expended on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.) that exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized form (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 7-8).

The Archive may be understood as a legacy of activities that have already occurred, but which are no longer inscribed records (and not necessarily written). Stoler (2002) states that the archive (including physical spaces) is not only a source of knowledge, but must also be understood as an object for reflection, a topic to be analysed by those who venture to seek out content, an instrument of knowledge and power constructed in the intersection between these games (STOLER, 2009). When dealing with colonial archives, Stoler (2002; 2009) emphasizes that these may be understood as monuments erected by their supporters to legitimize and reflect back one particular view, above any other.

Thus, in order to go beyond questioning a document's veracity, it is necessary to think about what were (and are) its uses, the possibilities it opens up, as well as the pathways that are shut off. In order to consider the document as a monument (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 8), it is essential to be able to understand the actual dynamic that enables its preservation, since "[t]he document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally memory; history is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked." As Rago (1995) notes, texts from documents do not reveal the past in any way that "really" existed.

For their part, archives "[...] as records – wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies." (SCHWARTZ & COOK, 2002, p. 2). In this sense, we should consider documents, and the institutions and subjects that hold them, from a point of view of enquiry.

Documents refer to statements that extrapolate and are not only related to the archiving rules of the institutions that hold them or the people that select them, but also to a discursive apparatus that permeates the whole of society (FOUCAULT, 2008). Archives, and the right to access them and the documents they contain, are the product of social constructions that are also established by the information needs and values supported by governments and civil society (SCHWARTZ & COOK, 2002). Their existence is affected by material aspects, such as the development of technologies that have an impact on the records people produce.

The relationship with construction and preservation is a construct and also a sign that goes beyond individual agents, as Derrida (1995) notes. There is an interaction between those responsible for archiving the documents of an organization (whatever that may be) and individuals, who are also influenced by the context within which they are located, in order to decide what should or should not be produced, archived or discarded. Schwartz & Cook (2002) indicate that social forces must be taken into consideration, even when contemplating the production of an individual document (independent of its means of registration, be that video, photograph or text). In this case, the document is a form of mediation between its producer and its receiver, and its registration and availability are mediated by those responsible for the archive. Steedman (2009) suggests that, in fact, the notion of what is, or is not, historical is twice filtered. It is the interaction of the researcher with the data that makes something in history (or narrative).

In this context, we should consider how increased ease of storing and availability of information, at ever-decreasing prices, has extended the possibility and attractiveness of creating virtual databases which encompass aspects that would once have been considered irrelevant (GIL & ELDER, 2012). Thus, a large number of organizations, and even people, may become responsible for storing and disseminating information which they consider relevant to the extent that they

document one or other human activity. If previously only the “great names” had an archive that could become public or be consulted, the increased time and information produced and transmitted via the internet provides archive material – usually on the servers of internet service providers – about an individual at the exact time of recording³ As Cook (2012a) notes, the archivist is being called upon to let go of their passive position, in which they wait for an archive to be produced and then preserve it, to become an archive creator.

However, even when we take into consideration all the increased storage capacity, it is the decision to maintain something recorded, as part of a repertory which may be accessed – an action not far removed from the dynamics of power – that makes a record subject to analysis by a researcher. As Marques (2007, p. 14) states: “memory is constituted as a field of political struggle in which different reports of history confront each other in order to control the archive. Thinking about an archive thus requires careful consideration of how the memory operates, including the process of forgetting, and of its interconnections.”

An organization which archives within a physical space has also lost monopoly of the documents it maintains, given that these may be stored and grouped together by an increasing number of people and organizations⁴. For Featherstone (2000) the archive, beyond a specific space in which a range of records and cultural minutiae are deposited, is called upon to circumscribe all aspects of daily life. “The problem then becomes, not what to put into the archive, but what one dare leave out” (FEATHERSTONE, 2000, p. 170). This issue has always, if implicitly, been true for archives, but has acquired a new dimension, due, to a large extent, to the various technical means of storing and reproducing that have emerged.

Thus, the extended meaning of archive is partly due to the advent and dissemination of internet use, as well as to the growing number of digitized documents, which have increased both the possibilities for creating archives and their accessibility. As we will discuss in the next section, this new perspective has opened up pathways for research and enabled new questions to be posed and new answers to be found in old digitized archives, in archives that have become accessible through new regulations, or in archives formed out of a collection of sources not necessarily originating from the activities of only one organization.

Archives on the internet

As Certeau (2000) and Foucault (2008) assert, the writing of history is not limited to the mechanical collection and gathering of facts. It is the effect of the position of the author, of the context in which it is written and the elements of which it is comprised. Certeau (2000) also stresses the importance of the entire technical apparatus for the writing of history, which is modified as new means and possibilities of doing emerge. From Derrida (1995), one can assert that the internet and other technological developments have provoked changes to the constitution of archives and the relationships that societies establish with them: “which is no longer archived, nor experienced in the same way” (DERRIDA, 1995, p. 18).

The emergence of the internet has imposed changes on the meaning of the terms archive and archiving. As Gil and Elder (2012) note, where previously an essential condition for an archive researcher was their physical displacement to archives held by institutions, the current technological apparatus enables more people to access a digitally available document set at the same time. It also allows collecting to be undertaken using electronic tools which enable, for example, a search for, or the counting of, a word or expression. Thus, the researcher is liberated from the need to read each document, leading to a potential modification, not only in how research is undertaken, but also to the researcher’s global relationship with their data. Accessibility raises other questions, such as the possibility of experiencing some distress at not being able to analyse data exhaustively, exploring its entire complexity in all its detail (FEATHERSTONE, 2000).

Relating this notion to the demands of scientific research, the idea that every object is constructed and that this construction (or this focusing) will always leave out relevant information regarding what is being studied is increasingly important. Featherstone (2006) points out that the immense quantity of information, stored and accessed in a disorderly manner, may lose its meaning amongst the mass of documents and other sources available on the internet.

But, with the advent of digitization, the survival and usability of culture and history need not rest wholly on the availability of space for, or the physical composition of, the original tangible embodiments of cultural production, much less on any single institution's budget. It might now become possible to keep copies of anything that is deemed actually or potentially of cultural significance for centuries and to do so in a medium that, hopefully, will be comparatively easy to conserve and in a format that can readily be searched. Instead of benefiting a fortunate few, these riches would be available to anyone with Internet access and a computer at her disposal, at least once the resources are in the public domain (ZIMMERMAN, 2007, p. 993).

Caygill (1999) highlights the political ramifications of knowledge (while not absolute) on the web and the extent to which this potential is released. This occurs to the extent to which hierarchies that constitute traditional archives are revisited, either in relation to the distance between the institution that holds the archive and its rules of recording, organization and access or in relation to what might be archived or for whom. Since those who know the past are better able to formulate interpretations that impact on the present, access to archives and their subsequent interpretation have always been facets of power struggles.

Caygill's (1999) perspective values the researcher's work, since, even if the web is understood as a depository of knowledge, in other words, even as a place where knowledge already exists, it is necessary to ask questions and make the correct connections in order to acquire the requisite information. This process does not only involve searching, but also creating new knowledge which emerges from the links forged to arrive at the desired point. Ernst (2005) asserts that the internet changes the relationship with memory and that, since it does not establish a hierarchy of content, is closer to a collection than an archive. Thus, going beyond questions of the interpretation and construction of meaning, a number of researchers with internet access may produce a range of narratives about the same object in the virtual archive, given that, in a certain sense, it is the search process itself that guides discoveries.

According to Zimmerman (2007), accessibility is not limited to the trivial facility of access. The availability of documents on the internet allows research to be conducted which could not be undertaken in any other way (because of a lack of funds, for example) and enables a much greater level of detail by increasing the number of databases that may be consulted. For some, the internet functions as a kind of general archive of humanity. This notion is questionable, since something is always omitted, as seen, for example, in the work digitizing archives about the African continent's recent history, presented by Isaac, Lalu and Nygren (2005).

The question of so-called big data relates to this discussion. It is not uncommon to read that access to these enormous and growing information banks has the potential to transform several areas of human activity, a discussion that gained ground in the mass media with the text written by Steve Lohr (2012) in *The New York Times*. The implications of the exponential increase in information production and storage have only just begun to be considered. Bail (2014) notes that, in 2002, the volume of data accumulated in one year was the equivalent to all the data that had been amassed throughout human history to that point. In 2011, the 2002 volume of data was being collected every two days. The growing use of the internet and its associated elements is directly attributed to this explosion in the volume of information. It is worth remembering that the non-profit organization *The Internet Archive* has been dedicated to archiving web page content since 1996. For its part, Google© has digitized a large portion of content from books available in libraries around the world, as well as newspaper content. However, big data is not limited to texts uploaded to the internet, since much of the data produced is in multimedia form or in other types of electronic archives.

According to Bail (2014), it is important that the social sciences in general recognize the opportunities opened up by access to this big data, but remain clear about the difficulties of operationalizing research when dealing with such a large mass of potential information. The logic of archiving and the means of examining these databanks are crucial to making operational any research that uses big data. As we know, access to these banks (and even to computers) as well as digitization tools and the World Wide Web is not equitably distributed. To summarize, the internet is not one single archive. We understand that an archive must be composed of certain intentions which permeate it, providing unity and specificity to what it holds, having an underlying significance, which is shared and which assigns a logic to the archived set.

Furthermore, the availability of archives online does not place them immediately at the disposal of those who might be interested in them. Without the mediation of the organizations that produce and arrange the archives on the internet in a coherent way (which occasionally happens), they may be presented as a chaotic set of data, albeit linked by a common characteristic – such as belonging to the same era or the same state body or dealing with the same set of practices. For a document set to be considered an archive, it must be organized according to (always questionable and precarious) rules, but might also be considered part of a more wide-ranging Archive which links them together: the set of elements that narrates a specific practice disseminated by the social body, for example.

Yakel (2006) suggests that archivists play a fundamental mediating role in the relationship between the researcher and the archive. Since researchers know the documents, they are capable of responding to more elaborate problems which may not be solved in any other way (such as in interaction with an internet database). Yakel (2006) understands that the role of the archivist remains important, although it has been gradually modified through the emergence of new experiences in navigating the web which allows, for example, site visitors to “label” (adding key words and/or descriptions) the documents they analyse, and makes it possible for the pathways between one document and another created by others to remain on record for future visitors. Researchers who have previously passed through an archive may leave tracks or research clues for those who visit it later, but may also create a certain narrative out of the data. As Featherstone (2006) posits, the organizing of data into separate boxes and sections that gave some meaning to archives has lost ground in the face of the decentralization achieved by the availability of archives on the web.

Cook (2012b) stresses the importance of the role of both the archivist and the researcher, and asserts that the provenance of an archive, previously understood through the bureaucratic structures that produced it, must be rethought more broadly.

The focus on the principle of provenance has shifted to function, activity, discourse and behaviour, instead of, as it was in the past, being centred on structures, positions, mandates and origin [...] the meaning of provenance is transformed from its structural origins into a continuous discourse centred on functions, activities, processes, social forces and in the personal and organizational relationships and cultures that collectively lead to the creation of documents, within and through personal and organizational lives in constant evolution. The new provenance provides multiple perspectives and many orders of value, rather than a new fixed order (COOK, 2012b, p. 146-147).

Thus, the internet is home to a myriad of documents, which may be organized as archives before the researcher has contact with them and may later be (re)organized. The instantaneity and volume of communications that may be exchanged, maintained or archived, allows for new ways of viewing what could be considered research archive or material (GIL & ELDER, 2012) and researchers may make the document sets they collect available to other researchers. This data has to be (re)evaluated and (re)organized by each item or group that is interested in it, even when to do so it is sometimes necessary to undo orders and connections that have previously been defined. Those that have been previously organized are, in their own way, monuments to certain powers or views of the world, since, as Kurtz (2007) and Schwartz and Cook (2002) indicate, the archiving process is always political. The metaphor of the *flâneur*, on the other hand, may characterise a stroll through collections of sources initially seen as formless (FEATHERSTONE, 2006).

Management Research and the use of archives

As Manoff (2004) points out, several knowledge areas have set out discussions that seek to qualify an understanding about archives. In Brazil, few works utilize archives to develop reflections in the area of Management. One of the few diligent works on this theme is Coraiola's (2013) thesis. In part, this may be the result of difficulties in finding archives that enable the researcher to develop more profound reflections about their object of research. Saraiva and Costa (2011) assert that part of the problems arises from the fact that archives are selected memories and, since a great deal of research has been conducted on for-profit organizations concerned with their image, it has become less likely that archives will be maintained if they contain records that could be considered negative.

Few Brazilian companies direct efforts to the maintenance of their archives (COSTA & SARAIVA, 2011). Coraiola (2012) emphasizes that it was only after 1960 that the preservation of company documents for historical ends began to occur in Brazil, unlike in European companies who established the practice at the beginning of the 20th century, and the United States of America (USA), France and England, who began to do so after the Second World War. As Adkins (1997) notes, in the USA, company archives gained ground rapidly in the 1970s, then lost momentum following the wave of business process reengineering in the 1990s, one of whose mottos was the reduction of organizational costs.

For Adkins (1997), the legitimacy of maintaining company archives was strongly supported by research into Business History by economists. Further, the author stresses that, while initial efforts were directed at organizing material that could tell the company's story from a positive point of view and as a public relations exercise, over time archives began to be seen as an instrument for the company's memory. For the author, this is in part due to changes to the composition of company workforces, which have become increasingly less stable, so that workers have stopped being, in some sense, the repositories of an organization's memory.

Organizational memory is the object of studies arising from management, particularly by authors in the field of Organizational Memory Studies, which are generally concerned with aspects related to the organization's learning and longevity. Memory is an important theme in, for example, the construction of organizational image and is a complex concept beyond the scope of this discussion, but one which merits attention in relation to its ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects, given that its very nature may be questioned (see, for example, NORA, 1993).

For its part, the archive is composed of records that can be accessed by historians to reconsider what memory has presented as fact, constructing new narratives about what has happened (ROWLINSON, *et al.*, 2010). This not only applies to the company's own archives, which are subject to the organization's decisions about what to preserve and what to consign to oblivion (DECKER, 2013). Coraiola (2013) emphasizes the importance of "external archives" for reflections about organizations.

To operationalize his research into organizational archives, Coraiola (2013, p. 44) defined the concept as follows:

an organizational archive is a collection of documents and records produced by individuals, groups, organizations or states [1] which are organic in nature [2] are no longer used for the development of routine activities and [3] are preserved because their value goes beyond merely technical, administrative or legal aspects.

As can be seen, Coraiola (2013) defines a concept very similar to that of Schellenberg (2003), although he adopts a more open-ended view of archives in the rest of his work. The operational definition established by Coraiola is useful and pertinent, but should be put into perspective, to the extent that it circumscribes what the company archive is, defining it according to three specific elements, particularly the intentionality of the archive as a repository of memory. However, from the point of view adopted here, it is important to be aware of the intentionality of those who set up the archive (either person or company), thus accomplishing new possibilities

for linkages with narrated stories (MARQUES, 2007). As Marques (2007) confirms when talking about literary archives, company archives are also mediated by a myriad of discursive practices which permeate them. The meta-reflection about the logical purpose of archives that contain documents for study is an additional challenge for this kind of research.

Archives that form an important part of what becomes established as organizational memory are the source and focus of conflict. As Costa and Saraiva (2011, p. 1764) assert regarding the formation of memory, this is, in part, derived from the choices managers make. However, as Coraiola (2013) points out, workers and other agents can also record the events that an organization participates in (such as changes to the context arising from the installation of a factory, for example), at the same time as it is observed that the archivist adopts practices and tactics to negotiate what should be kept. Either way, "the intentionality attributed to the way that the past is represented cannot be disconnected from the power relations inherent in this 'recovery'" (COSTA & SARAIVA, 2011, p. 1764) and the capacity to exercise power in an organization is not equitably distributed.

Regarding public bodies, it is possible to speculate that some of the difficulties concerning access to archives and documents comes about through structural deficiencies in Brazil and in the federal bodies that maintain and preserve documents, as well as historically low levels of public accountability. We should also remember that concern with the publication of public documents has only recently gained force through Law No. 12527 of 18 November 2011, known as the Access to Information Law (BRASIL, 2011), which regulates access to public information, although discussions about maintaining archives have been going on since the promulgation of the Archives Law in 1991. It is therefore expected that the public authorities are still organizing themselves in order to meet the demands for information that are perhaps being made – not discarding the possibility that secrecy is used as a means of restricting access to relevant data and an instrument of power⁵.

As Alcadipani (2014) discusses in relation to ethnographies, achieving the transparency required to undertake research in public or private organizations is a separate challenge and one which has involved few academic debates. However, unlike ethnographic research, which maps the current situation in an organization, archival research may be less constrained, since it often deals with documents that have been filtered before being made available, particularly in private organizations. Not every organizational archive is subject to the same norms of creation and maintenance, particularly since it is the companies which define the policies about the documents they produce and the way they are stored (VALENTIN, 2012). The majority of archived documents in an organization tend to be linked to their daily operations, without having, in principle, a defined historical character, so that they have received insufficient attention, even from the archival sciences, which only began to witness more structured discussions on this theme in the 1970s (ARAÚJO, 2012).

For Sousa (2010) the preservation of the history of organizations may serve to strengthen their identity, by strengthening their brand and knowledge management, amongst other pragmatic features. The author, however, emphasizes the dimension of historical social responsibility, as part of corporate social responsibility, emphasizing that companies must take seriously their task of maintaining records of their interactions with society. However, preservation efforts are often linked to anniversaries or other celebrations, leading to unstructured preservation and maintenance activities. In general, company managers have little interest in maintaining archives, and a contrary movement has only been seen more recently in the creation of initiatives for the preservation and appreciation of memory (CORAIOLA, 2011). Either way, few advances have been made in accessing archives produced by public or private organizations in Brazil (CORAIOLA, 2012), aside from the Access to Information Law mentioned above.

Due to the restrictions discussed here regarding the use of archives in general, it would appear that there would be some merit, albeit not in an orthodox sense, in broadening the concept of what archives are and what should be subject to archiving. The relaxed notion of what constitutes an archive or an historical source enables a

questioning of historical narratives, and the use of materials that differ from those used by organizations, which are often maintained in secret. This discussion could originate from the perspective of production, accumulation and dispersal addressed by Foucault (2008). However, this view is no substitute for the need to dedicate ourselves to widening the accessibility of sources produced by a range of organizations that are often responsible for archiving them.

Final Considerations

We argue here that a researcher in management and organization studies with an interest in researching archives may advance their reflections about historical research by examining the documents available and the institutions that host them, while attempting to understand the practices that permeate the action of archiving. This research field has been expanded by the internet and the diversity of data made available online. Thus, we understand that incorporating archives not only as spaces in which documents are found, but also as institutions and a repertory of practices and knowledge, may contribute to the development of the subarea of historical studies and to management in general.

Interest in history within the field of Organization Studies has increased and discussing the Archive and archives may be important for these areas to come together more effectively. In this sense, I have returned to certain discussions which have been established outside management theories, but have also approached certain works from that area which address archives. I hope the text will contribute to developments by focusing greater attention on the use of archives and their importance, while, at the same time, advocating ongoing scepticism in relation to the information contained in them, since the archive itself may be the object of study.

The principal difficulty encountered during this work was attempting to delineate a concept (which remains provisional) that defines what is able to be archived and when a collection is an archive. This discussion, already addressed in archival studies, is important in assisting researchers in the area to acquire greater clarity about the material with which they work. Although the text has advanced these points, particularly the first, new developments are required in order to more precisely delineate the conditions that allow a set of documents or data to be considered an archive. In any event, imprecision appears to characterize this period, both from a conceptual point of view (in the questions posed by post-modernism) and from the perspective of the space that hosts the archives and archiving practices (transformed by technological advances, particularly the internet).

Cook's (2012a) text provides us with some indication about how changes are transforming archival practice and theory, but remains inconclusive, concentrating on pointing out trends. For his part, Featherstone (2000) makes it clear that the definition of what is or is not able to be archived changes according to the socio-cultural context of the practice. The value of what has been processed and archived itself alters over time and we have witnessed a paradigm shift in the meanings and practices that constitute archives, caused by the internet, by information technology in general (FEATHERSTONE, 2006) and by big data (BAIL, 2014).

In line with these changes, I suggest certain points to advance the discussion. Obviously, in doing this, I do not wish to determine the direction of discussions, but rather to indicate possibilities that may advance the debate. Such an agenda cannot ignore the fact that there is an entire field of debate established around the status of documents, archives and the Archive, particularly in History, Archive Studies and Philosophy. We can also not ignore certain practical points, such as those made by Montana (2013), which stress that organizations are incurring growing costs and operational risks in dealing with the creation, storage and discarding of data, something that will have an impact on the sources available in the future for works of an historical bias that pose questions for the archivist in the present. Bringing this debate to the field of management and, especially, organizational studies means entering into dialogue with these areas.

The *first point* on a research agenda regarding archives in Organizational Studies is to more clearly define how different archives can be analysed and what the limitations are for their use. This discussion must also address the nature of the documents and the impact the archivist and the institution have on their production and storage. Furthermore, the debate should consider the opening up of research sources in order to stimulate interdisciplinary debate about the conclusions found. In other words, what is posited is the need for reflections of a methodological and epistemological nature regarding archives, documents and the implications of their use in research in this area.

Following this approach, a *second point* to develop relates to research about organizations that archive, treating them as objects of study. This discussion could also be expanded to reflect on how documents from that archive may have contributed to defining certain organizational practices and structures (whose rationality could be called into question, should the documents that established them be analysed).

The *third point* refers to the possibility of exploring documents already available, both online and outside the World Wide Web. These include the Wikileaks (www.wikileaks.org) "leaks" or those catalogued by the "*Opening the Archives*" project run between the State University of Maringá and Brown University (<http://library.brown.edu/openingthearchives/>), or even documents that record agreements signed by multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/projects?lang=en>). One could also reflect on the revelations made by Edward Snowden about the surveillance activities of the National Security Agency (NSA) and their effect on businesses and companies that handle the information of millions of user-consumers (GREENWALD, 2014).

A *fourth* and ultimate suggestion is to advance reflections about what are the Archives (in terms similar to those proposed by Michel Foucault) that constitute management theories, as well as each of its subareas, as an episteme. One could also examine the role of educational materials as documents which archive certain definitions and discourses that formulate what is taught (and, to some extent, practiced).

We also recall that the availability of a range of documents in an archive is not an exclusive product of technology, but also arises from the availability of the people and institutions who make their archives accessible to the general public. In this sense, broadening discussions about archives in management theory and in historical studies within Organization Studies may stimulate the creation and availability of new public or private archives that lead to new questions about the development of the area and its present form. In the case of studies carried out in management, it is interesting to note that the documents analysed are usually embedded within networks that are, to some extent, limited: if, on the one hand, it is possible to link these documents to the social webs that engender them, on the other, they also have an effect, particularly on an organization within their specific context.

Stoler (2002, p. 107) observes that, "to understand an archive one needs to understand the institutions that it served". Not only those organizations that possess archives, but also institutions in a wider sense, which have recourse to such archives in order to establish, reinforce or legitimize certain practices. The archive is a crucial space for those who look to the past in seeking answers to the present, but it is also a constituent of the present and the future. Researching archives and documents, examining both what they reveal and what they disguise, can broaden our understanding of organizations and the processes they establish.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 We have differentiated between these terms using capital and small letters where we judge it important to underline the term, or evidence the given use.
- 2 We know that the definition of this term is controversial, but it is not within the scope of this text to outline this discussion. For an introduction, see Peters (2000).
- 3 Which has led discussions to emerge about the privacy not only of individuals, but also of social organizations and corporations. See, for example, Bruno's (2008) discussion, or, in the field of fiction, *The Last Enemy*, a series produced by BBC One (NEAL, MACDONALD & BERRY, 2008).
- 4 Clearly, it is not easy to make a large number of these records available on the web, because of costs, operational difficulties related to digitization and the quantity of records produced over human history.
- 5 As Derrida (1995) notes, it is possible to measure the effectiveness of a democracy by assessing its openness to the notion of society participating in and accessing archives so as to interpret and make investigations based on them.

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