

Archival appraisal in Brazil

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This paper analyses archival appraisal in Brazil.¹ The main goal is to inform the international archival community about the Brazilian experience. The paper shows that national academic literature, archival authorities and archival legislation conceive of archival appraisal as a tool for effective records management in government agencies. Therefore, the key underlying foundation of archival appraisal in Brazil regarding government records is the principle of ongoing appraisal throughout the records life cycle, in order to save time and resources, diminish the risk of improper destruction of records and promote accountability and transparency.

Keywords: acquisition; appraisal; Brazil; government records; ongoing appraisal; records management

Introduction

This paper analyses archival appraisal in Brazil. The main goal is to inform the international archival community about the Brazilian experience. It refers mainly to the period after 1991, when Act No. 8.159, otherwise known as the ‘Archives Law’, was created. The ‘Archives Law’ responded to the broad social and political context of re-democratisation after the end of the dictatorship in 1985. Over the following years, civil society, government and the archival community all pointed out the necessity of ensuring accountability, transparency and freedom of information. Since then, a solid body of archival legislation has been established, e-government practices have expanded and the number of archival science educational programs has proliferated.

The ‘Archives Law’ has established the National Archival Council (*Conselho Nacional de Arquivos* or CONARQ) – the institution in charge of defining national archival policy. CONARQ is the central body of the National Archival System (*Sistema Nacional de Arquivos* or SINAR), whose main function is to implement the national policy for public and private archives, in order to guarantee the management, preservation and access to records under their custody.²

This paper comprises eight sections. The first is a literature review of Brazilian academic work concerning appraisal. Five sections follow that discuss the official governmental approach to appraisal, as it has been developed by Brazilian archival authorities. These sections examine, respectively: the definition of appraisal in the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology*; the official appraisal policy for government agencies; the role of appraisal committees; the actual application of official policy; and the National

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Archives of Brazil's criteria for the acquisition of private archives. The next section refers to appraisal in private archives, whereas the last section summarises the main characteristics of the Brazilian experience with archival appraisal.

The main sources used in this paper are: Brazilian archival legislation; CONARQ's and the Brazilian national archives' websites; websites of several Brazilian archives; websites of professional associations; literature published in Brazilian academic journals; and theses and dissertations from Brazilian universities. Priority was given to national legislation and literature produced within the country by scholars and professionals who work in Brazilian archives, universities, research centres and government agencies. No field research – for example, surveys, interviews or direct observation – was conducted.

As this paper makes evident, the current prevailing approach to appraisal in Brazil stresses its role for effective records management in government agencies. The National Archives of Brazil took a prominent role in the development of this approach, which was profoundly influenced by the writings of Schellenberg, concerning the primary and secondary value of government records.

Brazilian literature on appraisal and acquisition

Over the last two decades, Brazilian academic literature on archival science has significantly increased. Among the factors contributing to this is the growing availability of undergraduate and graduate training in the field and the regularly promoted conferences held by professional associations, such as the Association of Brazilian Archivists (AAB).

One of the pioneering studies on appraisal and acquisition in Brazil is the article by Nilza Teixeira Soares, published in 1975. The author calls for a national appraisal and selection policy, directed by the National Archives of Brazil, in order to deal with the huge mass of documents in government agencies. Drawing upon Schellenberg, Soares proposes criteria to guide decisions about the primary and secondary value of documents and states the need for a detailed report about the functions and activities carried out by each public body.³

In what follows, a couple of studies and publications are mentioned as emblematic of the progression and current state of Brazilian literature on appraisal and acquisition, namely: the standpoint of CONARQ and the National Archives of Brazil, which focuses on the efficiency of records management in government agencies; surveys assessing the application and limits of archival legislation; case studies investigating how appraisal is carried out in specific archival institutions; and pragmatic manuals targeting professionals that suggest a set of rules to be followed.

Maria Izabel de Oliveira, archivist of the records management division of the National Archives of Brazil, wrote about the development of the Records Classification System for the Federal Government: Administrative Activities (*Código de Classificação de Documentos de Arquivo para a Administração Pública*) and the Administrative Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Government Agencies (*Tabela Básica de Temporalidade e Destinação de Documentos de Arquivo Relativos às Atividades-Meio da Administração Pública*). Interested exclusively in federal government records, the author sees appraisal and classification as inherently intertwined. She stresses their central role in ensuring effective records management procedures and promoting accountability.⁴

Also concerned with classification systems in government agencies, Renato Tarciso Barbosa de Sousa is particularly interested in their central role in facilitating appraisal and other archival activities. The author has conducted empirical research to investigate the extent to which CONARQ's official classification system has actually been implemented.⁵

Ana Celeste Indolfo analyses how the National Archives of Brazil promotes efficient records management in government agencies. She examines the role of this institution between 1996 and 2006 as regards: supporting the adoption of CONARQ's classification scheme and retention schedules by federal agencies; supporting the creation of appraisal committees; and officially authorising the disposal of records upon examination of disposal reports.⁶ The author believes that appraisal should be performed throughout the records life cycle, in order to foster effective records management, save resources and guarantee that records are actually transferred to historical archives.⁷

José Maria Jardim studies federal government information and archival public policy. According to him, over the last two decades, CONARQ has played a key role in enacting archival and information legislation and has developed significant tools, such as a dictionary, classification system, retention schedules and arrangement and description rules. It did not manage, however, to define a national archival and information policy, nor to properly implement the National Archival System (SINAR).⁸

Louise Anunciação Fonseca de Oliveira and Jussara Borges have conducted interviews in municipal and provincial archives – *Arquivo Municipal de Salvador* and *Arquivo Público da Bahia* – in order to find out how these institutions actually perform appraisal. The authors observed that both institutions have no formal appraisal policy, rules or methodology, and archivists do not routinely write appraisal reports. They concluded that the criteria involved varied every time that an appraisal was performed.⁹

The Association of Archivists of São Paulo (*Associação de Arquivistas de São Paulo* or Arq-SP) regularly offers workshops targeting mainly archival clerks. The instructor in charge of each workshop prepares a booklet, which is later published in a series titled 'How to do it'. This is the case with Ieda Pimenta Bernardes' contribution on appraisal from 18 October 1997. The author gives an operative definition of appraisal, succinctly indicates why it is necessary, suggests a set of practical steps and offers a compilation of pertinent Brazilian legislation on the topic.¹⁰

The works mentioned above, identified as representative approaches to appraisal and acquisition in Brazilian literature, suggest two important lines of enquiry that feature throughout this paper: first, the efforts of Brazilian archival authorities to rationalise records management in government agencies, as well as the obstacles faced in the process; and second, the need for appraisal policies, criteria and training in Brazilian repositories and a clear national archival policy.

Appraisal in the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology*

In 2006, the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology* was officially adopted by all entities participating in SINAR, which comprises all public archives and also private archives, by means of special agreements.¹¹ According to this dictionary, appraisal (in Portuguese, *avaliação*) is the process of analysing records, in order to establish retention and disposal schedules.¹² This definition implies that appraisal is carried out in organisations (governmental and non-governmental) that are about to develop and, at least to a certain extent, implement classification and disposal schedules. It is a broad definition, which clearly links appraisal to records management activities and makes no reference to manuscripts or personal records. It also indicates that appraisal is to be carried out before records are transferred to permanent repositories.

As both public and private archives can be members of SINAR, both types of repositories are to adopt the definition stated above. As explained in the next section of this paper, records created by government bodies and private corporations, as well as

personal records, can be part of Brazilian public archives, as these institutions are mandated to acquire private archives. That is, in repositories that are members of SINAR – both public repositories and a couple of private archives – all kinds of records can be found, including government records, manuscripts and personal records. As a general definition which emphasises the role of appraisal as a records management tool, the definition proposed by the dictionary does not address how to deal with the latter.

The definition is helpful with regard to records submitted for automatic transfers from governmental bodies to public archives. As it presupposes the implementation of an effective records management system, it indicates the direction of ongoing appraisal from the moment of the records creation. Brazilian archival legislation supports this approach – a matter which is discussed in the next section of this paper.

Two questions remain unanswered. The first one concerns the appraisal of records from government bodies that have been submitted to direct transfers to public archives; the second refers to appraisal for the acquisition of private archives.

Regarding the first question, the appraisal definition from the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology* does not help in dealing with situations where creating bodies have not managed to systematically apply classification and retention schedules. How should public archives proceed in such situations? Should they just accept all records? Or should public archives adopt selection criteria, before proceeding with transfers?

Concerning the latter question, the definition of appraisal proposed by the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology* does not refer to appraisal for acquisition. How should public archives appraise business and personal records that they are going to acquire from private corporations and persons? In cases where disposal has not been systematically applied, should public archives acquire all records, without any selection criteria? How should they proceed in the case of personal records?

As the next sections of this paper show, Brazilian legislation further clarifies the appraisal definition proposed by the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology*.

Appraisal of government records

In 1994, CONARQ established Technical Chambers (*Câmaras Técnicas*) to elaborate on norms and procedures aiming at the implementation of a national archival policy and national archival system. In 1995, the Records Classification Technical Chamber and Records Appraisal Technical Chamber (*Câmara Técnica de Classificação de Documentos* or CTCD and *Câmara Técnica de Avaliação de Documentos* or CTAD) were created. The CTCD was in charge of analysing and preparing classification systems, in order to allow for the systematic organisation of archival materials, speed up information retrieval and ensure that records reach their correct final destination.¹³ The CTAD, on the other hand, was in charge of proposing appraisal criteria and elaborating retention and disposal schedules, in order to make records creation processes more effective, reduce operational costs and consequently ensure records preservation and facilitate information retrieval.¹⁴

In 1996, the CTCD and CTAD proposed a Records Classification System for the Federal Government: Administrative Activities (*Código de Classificação de Documentos de Arquivo para a Administração Pública*) and an Administrative Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Government Agencies (*Tabela Básica de Temporalidade e Destinação de Documentos de Arquivo Relativos às Atividades-Meio da Administração Pública*). These instruments were the result of deep analysis of appraisal and classification criteria that were then in force, of national and international legislation and

guidelines, of users' needs and of the documents themselves that were then produced by public bodies, as well as the functions and activities to which they related.¹⁵

Both the classification system and the retention and disposal schedules for administrative records used the same numerical codes and nomenclature for functions and activities, making evident the need and effort to standardise records management activities in government agencies. A decimal classification system was adopted, which was hierarchically structured from the general to the particular and based on functions and activities, rather than document types. In addition, terminology was systematically standardised. Procedure manuals were included to help guide the implementation of the classification system and retention schedule. An index also helped users work with both tools. The general aim was to offer a simple but efficient system, which would not be seen by civil servants as an extra burden – that is, as an unpleasant addition to the tasks that they were already supposed to perform.¹⁶

In 2001, after several revisions, the above mentioned classification system and retention and disposal schedules for administrative records were officially made available to all archival institutions that were members of SINAR.¹⁷ Since 2002, the adoption of both instruments has become mandatory in bodies of the Brazilian federal government.¹⁸ Despite minor modifications – for example, the introduction of a new subclass in 2004 – these versions are still in force as of 2013.¹⁹

Regarding operational records, since 2002, each governmental institution is in charge of building its own classification system and retention schedules, which are to be approved by the respective public archives that will receive their records in the future.²⁰

The trajectory of the records classification system and the retention and disposal schedules for the federal government, from their development to official adoption, make explicit CONARQ's approach to appraisal, which it considers to be within the scope of records management. As a result of this approach, in 2002, CONARQ merged the Classification and the Appraisal Technical Chambers and created the Records Management Technical Chamber, due to the deep relationship between classification, appraisal and records management activities.²¹

In addition, the statute of the National Archives of Brazil reinforces CONARQ's initiatives, listing the following among the responsibilities of its records management division: to review the official versions of the classification system and retention schedules for government agencies for both administrative and operational records; and to revise the list of documents to be destroyed.²²

In 2003, the Records Management System for the federal government was established (*Sistema de Gestão de Documentos de Arquivo* or SIGA). Its purposes include guaranteeing citizens and federal government bodies fast and reliable access to records and the information that they contain; coordinating records management related activities within all entities subordinated to bodies of the federal government; publicising records management norms and procedures; streamlining the creation of records in government agencies; reducing operational and storage costs related to records management; preserving the documentary heritage of the federal government; and collaborating with other systems that directly or indirectly deal with information management at the federal level.²³

In sum, both CONARQ's and the National Archives of Brazil's programs concerning appraisal are aligned with the definition proposed in the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology*. This common approach, as well as the creation of SIGA, makes clear the efforts of Brazilian archival authorities to implement a conception of appraisal which focuses on the efficiency and rationalisation of government activities. Appraisal

is seen as a means to effective records management and is to be performed throughout the records life cycle.

This vision is enforced by Brazilian archival legislation regarding transfers of records from the federal government agencies to public archives. When these transfers take place, records must have been previously appraised, organised, cleaned and properly housed, as well as arranged and described.²⁴ This answers one of the questions raised in the previous section of this paper, regarding direct transfers from governmental bodies. In this case, archival authorities are trying to enforce proper and consistent records management procedures, in order to rationalise appraisal of government records and, consequently, make transfers more efficient.

In order to properly address the specificities of electronic records, CONARQ has established the Electronic Records Technical Chamber (*Câmara Técnica de Documentos Eletrônicos*). This chamber – which was originally created in 1995 and underwent a major restructure in 2002 – has managed, over the last decade, to put forward several pieces of legislation regarding the management of digital records.²⁵ Legislation put forward by the Electronic Records Technical Chamber stresses: (1) records management is the duty of the government, in order to protect and preserve records, guarantee their authenticity and enable citizens to have access to information in government records, no matter the medium; (2) governmental and private institutions, as well as citizens, extensively depend on the informational and evidential values of digital records to carry on their businesses and protect citizens' rights; (3) and digital long-term preservation is among the goals of Brazilian archival institutions. Moreover, in 2007, E-ARQ Brazil – the Brazilian Model Requirements for Electronic Records Management, which is based on MoReq2 – was issued. Finally, archival legislation explicitly mentions that electronic records are subject to the same rules and procedures regarding appraisal and disposal as paper records and specifies a set of particular requirements – including technical requirements for digital preservation – to enable transfers to permanent archives.²⁶ In sum, appraisal as a records management tool is the underlying reason for both paper and electronic records in Brazilian governmental bodies.

The central role of appraisal committees

An appraisal committee (in Portuguese, *comissão de avaliação*) is the multidisciplinary group in charge of appraisal and the building of retention and disposal schedules for all government bodies.²⁷ This definition, provided by the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology*, as well as the definition of appraisal (also found in the dictionary), focuses on records management. It also suggests that the implementation of appraisal practices in government agencies rely on a multidisciplinary team.

Appraisal committees have a permanent character and exist in the federal, provincial and municipal levels. They are not only put together when a specific appraisal decision is to be taken or an appraisal-related activity is to be performed, but rather follow a regular meeting schedule. Their main responsibilities are to make, implement and revise retention schedules and offer support and guidance to all administrative and operational departments of the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

At the federal level, the specific responsibilities of such committees were officially defined in 2002. They are to analyse, appraise and select records, in order to determine the ones to be destroyed and the ones to be kept permanently.²⁸ Membership of appraisal committees at the federal level generally includes: an archivist; civil servants who use the records; a historian; a lawyer; a specialist in the field that the records refer

to (for example, an economist, a physician, an engineer and so on); and other professionals deemed necessary, depending on the mandate, mission and organisation of each public body.²⁹

At the provincial and municipal levels, the specific responsibilities and composition of appraisal committees depend on provincial and municipal legislation, respectively. For example, in the provincial government of São Paulo, which is economically the most prominent Brazilian province with over 41 million inhabitants, there are currently 83 appraisal committees, within which 692 professionals are involved. In São Paulo, committee members are usually representatives of administrative, financial, juridical and registry departments, as well as archivists.³⁰

Even though appraisal committees seem to perform satisfactorily at the federal level, not all Brazilian provinces and municipalities have managed to establish them.³¹ This was the case in the province of Bahia, at least until 2007. In the provincial and municipal archives of Salvador – the provincial capital – there were no permanent appraisal committees. In both of these repositories in Salvador, an appraisal group was formed when an accrual to fonds already in archival custody was to be received. Consequently, appraisal criteria varied immensely, and they were not formally documented.³²

Public universities offer interesting examples of appraisal committees. Their diverse composition and different responsibilities demonstrate how the concept of multidisciplinary appraisal committees is flexible enough to ensure that specific needs and problems in all kinds of institutions are properly addressed.

The appraisal committee for the Provincial University of São Paulo Julio de Mesquita Filho (*Universidade Estadual Paulista Julio de Mesquita Filho*) comprises professionals from the university archives, registry, juridical, finance, administrative, informatics, teaching, research and outreach departments, as well as representatives from the university library and archival studies department. In this case, the archival faculty is directly involved in the appraisal decisions of the university archives, demonstrating an interesting (and arguably not so common) link between in-house researchers and professionals.³³

At the University of Brasília (*Universidade de Brasília*), one of the responsibilities of the appraisal committee is to make decisions regarding donations and acquisitions. In this case, the responsibilities of the committee go beyond records management, involving donor relations and appraisal for acquisition.³⁴ Finally, at the Federal University of Paraíba (*Universidade Federal da Paraíba*), members of the appraisal committee have to personally supervise records destruction and provide ongoing training to civil servants.³⁵

In sum, appraisal committees are central pillars of effective records management in Brazilian public administration. While they are satisfactorily efficient at the federal level, at the provincial and municipal levels, they are still struggling to establish themselves and work effectively. Their membership, attributions and performance vary, depending on the specific needs, challenges, missions and mandates of the institutions they serve, as well as the context and regulatory environment in which they operate.

The implementation of official appraisal tools in government bodies

This section examines the extent to which official appraisal tools proposed by CONARQ – that is, the Records Classification System for the Federal Government: Administrative Activities (*Código de Classificação de Documentos de Arquivo para a Administração Pública*) and the Administrative Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Government Agencies (*Tabela Básica de Temporalidade e Destinação de*

Documentos de Arquivo Relativos às Atividades-Meio da Administração Pública) – as well as related archival legislation, are, in fact, used by government agencies.

The Brazilian archival landscape in the decade before the ‘Archives Law’ suggests that federal public bodies performed poorly, in regard to appraisal and other records management related activities. In 1984, a survey among federal agencies showed that 48 per cent performed appraisal on a regular basis, 12 per cent had an appraisal committee and 22 per cent applied retention schedules. In 1987, a report from the federal government declared that public bodies did not perform appraisal according to consistent criteria, nor did they regularly transfer records to historical archives. The report stressed the lack of resources and absence of a national archival policy as the main reasons for this situation. In 1989, most federal institutions did not manage their records systematically: storage conditions were inappropriate; classification plans were absent and records were organised mostly by type or chronological order; records were not disposed of on a regular basis; and only a few institutions had appraisal committees in place.³⁶

In 1997, six years after the ‘Archives Law’ was issued and one year after the official classification scheme and retention and disposal schedules for administrative records of the federal government were proposed by CONARQ, a research study considering 41 federal agencies showed that the situation had slightly improved. By then, 68 per cent of the agencies stated that they were aware of CONARQ’s classification system and retention schedule, 39 per cent had appraisal committees, 61 per cent applied retention schedules and 32 per cent had a classification system in place. However, only 23 per cent of the agencies with a classification system used the official scheme proposed by CONARQ. That is, 7 per cent of all the institutions considered in the study adopted the official tool.³⁷

Between 1996 and 2006, an increasing number of federal agencies asked for CONARQ’s (and the National Archives of Brazil’s) training and orientation on how to implement archival legislation regarding the management of current records, especially the implementation of an official classification system and retention schedules for administrative records and the development of classification systems and retention schedules for their operational records. During the same period, only 2 per cent of federal agencies disposed of records with the required official authorisation of the National Archives of Brazil.³⁸

In 2006, four years after the adoption of the classification system and retention schedules were made mandatory in all bodies of the Brazilian federal government, a survey was conducted within the scope of all 23 federal ministries. All but one responded to it. The survey showed that 64 per cent of the respondents used the official classification system, and 71 per cent of those that used it had also developed classification systems for their operational records.³⁹

There is not enough data to thoroughly assess the application of archival legislation regarding appraisal at provincial and municipal levels or to compare the situation of provincial and municipal archives both before and after the ‘Archives Law’. At the provincial level, in the first half of the 1990s, records management tools were not extensively used, transfers to historical archives did not happen regularly in several provinces and historical archives and the provincial administrative structure often did not work together satisfactorily.⁴⁰ At the municipal level, at the end of the 2000s, only 51 per cent of provincial capitals had municipal archives. In most cases, appraisal was performed by the municipal executive power, without the engagement of municipal archives or appraisal committees. In addition, retention schedules were not regularly or consistently applied. There were only a few transfers from municipalities to historical

archives, and, when transfers did proceed, the records had not been previously classified.⁴¹ Furthermore, a case study conducted during 2007 in two repositories in Bahia – one provincial and one municipal – revealed appraisal committees had not been implemented. In this case, appraisal decisions were likely to be taken at the last minute, following no consistent criteria or methodology.⁴²

Some of the obstacles preventing adoption of the official appraisal tools at the federal, provincial and municipal levels include: the fact that the classification scheme presents several inconsistencies, which makes it difficult to use; the need for more professional archivists to be hired in permanent positions in governmental institutions; the lack of a more proactive attitude from the National Archives of Brazil to promote and support their implementation; and the need to properly implement the National Archival System and define a national archival policy.⁴³

Further empirical research is necessary to investigate how effectively Brazilian archival authorities have managed to put into practice their appraisal policies and procedures concerning government records. Despite all obstacles to the effective application of archival legislation, it seems that the development of the official classification system and retention schedules by CONARQ was a milestone in promoting systematic and efficient records management practices in Brazilian government, at least at the federal level.

Appraisal for acquisition of private archives

As stated previously, no guidance concerning appraisal for the acquisition of private archives can be found in the *Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology*. CONARQ does not offer any instructions in this respect either. This section examines whether Brazilian archival legislation is helpful in this matter.

According to Brazilian legislation, public archives encompass all of the documents made and received by federal, provincial and municipal bodies, as well as by public and private institutions that perform public services, as a consequence of carrying out specific activities.⁴⁴ Private archives, on the other hand, encompass all documents made or received by physical or juridical persons, as a result of their activities. The owners of private archives can deposit or donate them to public archives. When private archives are identified as being of public and social interest, because their records are relevant as historical sources or for national scientific development, the government has first preference regarding acquisition. Once they have been identified as such, even if the government decides not to acquire them, these archives cannot be partitioned or sent abroad.⁴⁵

In the past decade, several private archives have been declared as being of public interest, such as the business archives of significant corporations and professional associations (the Companhia Antártica Paulista, Associação Brasileira de Educação, Companhia Cervejaria Brahma and Atlântica Cinematográfica Ltda), as well as personal archives from prominent Brazilian citizens (such as those of journalist and lawyer Alexandre José Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, filmmaker Gláuber Rocha, anthropologists Berta Gleizer Riberio and Darcy Ribeiro, architect Oscar Niemeyer, activist Abdias do Nascimento and physicist Cesar Lattes).⁴⁶ In addition, all private records of Brazilian presidents (including those created both before and after their tenure of the presidential office) are considered to be of public interest.⁴⁷

None of the archives that have been declared as being of public interest have actually been physically transferred to public archives; instead, they remain under the care of other custodian institutions. Therefore, there has been no immediate need to approach

appraisal for acquisition in a systematic way. This is probably the main reason why no guidance concerning this question has yet been provided by Brazilian archival authorities.

Appraisal in private archives

This section examines how Brazilian private archives perform appraisal. The first institution to be considered is the Research and Documentation Center for Brazilian Contemporary History (*Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil*, CPDOC), which belongs to the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (*Fundação Getúlio Vargas*, FGV) – a higher education institution. CPDOC houses arguably the most significant personal archives of prominent Brazilian public persons. Currently, it comprises 200 fonds – all acquired by donation since CPDOC's foundation in 1973.⁴⁸ Within its Documentation Division, the Personal Archives Program (PAP) is in charge of managing these fonds. PAP also offers consultancy services regarding personal archives and its employees also undertake research. Even though CPDOC's website does not explicitly refer to appraisal and acquisition, these archival functions clearly figure among PAP's responsibilities. The website does stress that, as the creators of all fonds were involved in politics, the majority of records in them are official correspondence, reports, speeches and diplomas. This is indicative of PAP's priorities when selecting records.⁴⁹ PAP's publications include articles about arrangement, but none about appraisal and acquisition policies and criteria, or donor relations.

In addition, no pertinent information about appraisal and acquisition was found concerning private archives that have been declared of public interest – that is, of the kind featured in the discussion of the previous section of this paper. The same can be said about other prominent private archives, such as the Center for Scientific Documentation and Information of the Catholic University of São Paulo (*Centro de Documentação e Informação Científica*, CEDIC – PUC-SP), which houses records of Catholic political organisations and grassroots associations.⁵⁰

In sum, even though Brazilian private archives perform appraisal and acquisition on a regular basis and therefore are likely to follow a pre-established rationale or methodology, these institutions do not publish information about these activities on their websites, nor do they refer to them in publications. Empirical research that makes use of surveys, interviews and case studies is necessary to further pursue this interesting line of inquiry.

Appraisal in Brazil: findings and perspectives

Only recently has Brazilian academic literature about archival appraisal and acquisition started to refer to the theories and methods often discussed by international scholarship, such as macro-appraisal, reappraisal and documentation strategies, among others. As the literature review in the first section of this paper demonstrated, the main concern is government records and, specifically, the relationship between appraisal and records management. Current Brazilian scholarship relates primarily to the way that appraisal is seen by official archival authorities. CONARQ and the National Archives of Brazil, archival legislation and the creation of SIGA together represent a centralised effort to improve efficiency in government bodies. Appraisal-related activities have been designed to contribute to this outcome and ensure that this strategy is accomplished. The development of integrated classification schemes, retention and disposal schedules have been fundamental to this process.

The noteworthy increase of undergraduate and graduate educational programs in archival science over the past two decades, triggered by the passage of the 'Archives Law' in 1991, has led to the development and consolidation of the field within the Brazilian higher education sector. There are now 16 undergraduate archival science courses in Brazil. Three were created at the end of the 1970s, three in the 1990s and ten since the year 2000.⁵¹ As a result, future research is likely to explore new paths and be more engaged with debates taking place in the international academic community.

One of the main findings of this paper is that the key underlying foundation of appraisal in Brazil regarding government records is the principle of ongoing appraisal throughout the records life cycle. This approach intends to take advantage of the period when records are still in current use, thus making it easier to make informed decisions. Ongoing appraisal is therefore an integral part of records management, saving time and resources and also diminishing the risk of the improper destruction of records.

Ongoing appraisal is the general idea behind the current prevailing policy in several countries. It can be traced back at least to 1952 in Great Britain, during which period a committee was established to find solutions to the problem of the huge accumulation of records that required preservation as archives. The committee wrote a report, known as 'The Grigg Report', with recommendations regarding selection procedures for government records. The guiding principle of 'The Grigg Report' was that central appraisal decisions should be made soon after records were no longer in active use. The report proposed that government records should be submitted to two appraisal reviews: the first to be carried out five years after records had been inactive; and the second to be carried out 25 years after records were no longer in active use.⁵²

In Canada, for example, Jay Atherton explains how, in 1983, the federal government officially adopted an approach which integrated records management and archival functions. The responsibilities of the Dominion Archivist included the supervision of an overall program, which encompassed, among other responsibilities, records classification, storage and retrieval, retention, disposal and preservation.⁵³ At the provincial level, British Columbia was pioneering in their adoption of an integrated records classification scheme and retention schedules for both administrative and operational records. ARCS (Administrative Records Classification System) and ORCS (Operational Records Classification System), as they are now known, were both developed in the 1980s and are based on the Canadian Government's block numeric system of records classification. They use a standardised nomenclature and are applicable to all media. ARCS and ORCS are both considered to be central pillars of efficient records management and archival appraisal.⁵⁴ Other Canadian jurisdictions, such as Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Alberta and Prince Edward Island, have also adopted similar integrated systems.⁵⁵

In future years, this unified approach to records management and archival functions is expected to continue and even expand in the Brazilian governmental setting. Since the passage of the Access to Information Act of 1 November 2011, government bodies are expected to improve their records management activities, in order to ensure that records requested by the public are made available in a timely manner.⁵⁶ Accountability and transparency are therefore likely to push initiatives regarding ongoing appraisal in government agencies even further.

Endnotes

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