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AUDIOVISUAL DOCUMENT: WHAT IS IT? A BRAZILIAN PERSPECTIVE

Abstract:

This short paper aims at presenting and discussing some concepts of audiovisual document through a terminological approach in order to clarify and promote the understanding of what the audiovisual document in the theoretical dimension of Archival Science means. The discussion occurred through the exhibition of the audiovisual documents' definitions looked up on dictionaries, glossaries and official texts from the Information Science, Library and Archival Science, besides the etymology of the word "audiovisual" found on the Portuguese Language Dictionary. In this sense, the discussion of these concepts presented converged in clarifying the concept of audiovisual document, showing existing divergences which can answer questions about what the audiovisual document within the archival literature could be considered. Therefore through considerations and weightings derived from the theoretical discussion of terminology, the presented concept is believed to be the most appropriate to define audiovisual document in the archive environment to avoid misunderstanding towards management this kind of document genre.

Key words:

Audiovisual document, Record, Archival Science, Concept

Izvleček:

Avdiovizualni dokument: kaj je to? Brazilska perspektiva

Prispevek razpravlja o nekaterih konceptih avdiovizualnega dokumenta. Na podlagi terminološkega vidika želi razjasniti in spodbuditi razumevanje pomena avdiovizualnega dokumenta znotraj teoretičnega področja arhivske znanosti. Razprava se je porodila ob definicijah avdiovizualnega dokumenta, najdenih v slovarjih, glosarjih in objavljenih besedilih s področij informatike, bibliotekarstva in arhivistike, poleg etimologije besede »avdiovizualen«, ki je zapisana v slovarju portugalskega jezika. V tem smislu je razprava stekla v smeri razjasnitve koncepta avdiovizualnega dokumenta, ki lahko kljub različnim pogledom odgovori na vprašanje, kaj avdiovizualni dokument pomeni v arhivski literaturi. Skozi razmišljanja in razglabljanja, ki jih je izoblikovala teoretična diskusija o terminologiji, se predstavljeni koncept zdi še najbolj primerna definicija avdiovizualnega dokumenta znotraj arhivskega okolja.

Ključne besede:

avdiovizualni dokument, zapis, arhivistika, koncept

1 INTRODUCTION

The formulation of the concept of an audiovisual document inside archives began in the middle 1960s and it was consolidated in 1980 with the publication of the recommendations for moving images manual developed by UNESCO in its study group named RAMP¹. Since then, the concept has been undergoing changes that have caused

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¹ Records and Archives Management Programme.

several interpretations. As well, many definitions of this document genre (audiovisual) have emerged after the start of such studies involving audiovisual documents as archival documents. Among the diversity of definitions, many problems have arisen in relation to the true meaning of audiovisual document; other non-textual documents have been included in audiovisual genre and consequently some Brazilian custodial institutions, as well as the archival literature considered all documents containing mostly images as audiovisual documents. Based on these conceptual problems, we have taken up an interest in presenting the reasons for these problems in order to clarify what the audiovisual document actually is in Brazil, eliminating other non-textual documental genres that have been considered as audiovisual document.

As a methodological procedure, we have set a terminological analysis regarding the entry »audiovisual document« found in dictionaries and glossaries of Information Science, Library and Archival Science, along the etymological basis of the word »audiovisual« taken from a Portuguese Dictionary in order to guide the discussion, and afterwards, to give a clear and concise meaning of audiovisual document.

From the divergence of concepts, taking into regard the etymology of audiovisual, we can identify and demystify this document genre, showing what the audiovisual document is in the archival environment, defining its specificities in order to cut out the persisting doubts permeating the archival theory, bringing about great confusion. Thus, the audiovisual document has its own characteristics, such as the combination of sound and image at the same time, which distinguishes it from other documents that contain images or sounds singly. The explanation of this concept is essential because it bases the archivist or a responsible professional work in dealing with audiovisual documents at the time of appropriate dealing and archival organization aimed at these archival documents, regardless their life cycle. Moreover, the correct understanding provides basis for adjusting archival methodologies organization both for document physical and digital, as well as formulating new ways of organization.

2 CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Setting or reshaping a concept is establishing limits to support theoretical approaches regarding a particular subject, in other words, defining the concept of audiovisual document aiming at theoretically discussing it in archival science. Therefore, the discussion begins with a survey of the audiovisual term in a primary and basic way, but consistent, consulting the Portuguese Language Dictionary in order to investigate it etymologically. Thus, »*audiovisual: 1 which is designed or intended to stimulate the senses of hearing and vision simultaneously (it is said of any communication, message, resource, material etc.). 2 that uses sound and image in the transmission of messages (it is said communication medium)* (Houaiss, 2001, pp. 343).«

Basing the discussion and defining the definition of the audiovisual term becomes appropriate and consistent according to the origin of the word, that is relative or belonging to both hearing and vision in order to communicate, inform, and register. In this sense, materials or audiovisual documents, in general terms, have their basic language composed by sounds and images simultaneously in order to generate understanding of its content. In the case of archives, recorded information that will serve as proof of actions taken by an individual or an institution.

Therefore, basically any document, either archival document or not, containing audio and video simultaneously can be considered an audiovisual document. Thus, the

silent film cannot be considered a film or an audiovisual document, but as a cine's document², since it does not contain the basic characteristics of audiovisual language (image and sound simultaneously).

However, before etymological matters, the concept of the audiovisual document had been discussed in the universe of archives when they began strongly raiding institutions, as well as in document production of companies, because there was a need to understand this new document as well as how to deal with it. In trying to propose a definition that could answer questions and avoid indecision of the institutions about the concept of audiovisual document, the ICA in its Dictionary of Archival Terminology defines audiovisual documents as a »group of documents consisting in sounds reproductions recorded in any material.«

As stated above, the formulated concepts were numerous. They were composed by group of distant characteristics of the real meaning of audiovisual document. While the UNESCO defines as moving images those documents that are composed of picture or sound, the ICA³ entirely excludes one of the basic characteristics, it means, images in the composition of the concept of audiovisual document. Accordingly, terminological problems were emerging in the theoretical dimension of Archival Science, including the Brazilian publications.

The Brazilian Dictionary of Archival Terminology classifies audiovisual documentation as »documentary genre composed by documents that contain images, fixed or moving, and sound recordings, such as films and tapes« (Arquivo Nacional, 2005, pp. 73). We can identify that there is comprehensiveness and lacking of consensus, because they consider sound recordings and fixed images as audiovisual documents, which makes the inclusion of any kind of document that contains image or sound in this definition.

In contrast, the definition found in the Dictionary of Archival Terminology (Camargo, 1996, pp. 27) says that audiovisual is a »documentary genre that uses as basic language the association of sound and image.« This definition is more concise than the previous one, because it establishes that the audiovisual document is one composed of audiovisual language that simultaneously contain image and sound, excluding other documents comprising images devoid of audio.

In the definition proposed by Cunha and Cavalcanti (2008, pp. 133) found in the Dictionary of Library and Archival Science, the audiovisual document is defined as the »document that reproduces fixed or moving images, as well as sound recordings in any medium, and that requires appropriate equipment to be displayed or executed; audiovisual work.« In addition to including audio documents, another question quite frequently is the status of »work« assigned to audiovisual documents, along the misunderstandings of the concept seem to block the appropriate archival processing of these documents.

² *Document genre integrated by documents containing moving images with or without sound, as film and tapes. Also named cinematographic document (Arquivo Nacional, 2005, pp. 76).*

³ *René-Bazin (1990, pp. 12). International Council on Archives. Definition established in 1984 and published in the Dictionary of Archival Terminology.*

3 CONCLUSION

In summary, from a few concepts presented above, we can define the concept of the audiovisual document, eliminating of its corpus other document genres incorrectly included in the audiovisual category. Thus, audiovisual document is only one document with audiovisual language, that is, sound and image simultaneously to produce the sensation of a motion picture, independently from the medium (magnetic, optical or bytes) or format (VHS, U-matic, Beta-Cam, DVD, film, digital, etc.). On the other hand, audiovisual document is not a photographic document (there are images only), the document phonographic, sound or oral (there is sound only); iconographic document (there are only images produced by photographic technique or not), the film document (film mute) or other documents that contain images or sounds singly. Therefore, for the purpose of consolidation of the understanding of the concept, the audiovisual document, which must receive the same archival functions as used in textual documents, safeguarding their specific techniques, is understood as the genre that uses as basic language the association between sound and image, always moving.

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POVZETEK

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AVDIOVIZUALNI DOKUMENT: KAJ JE TO? BRAZILSKA PERSPEKTIVA

Prepoznavanje avdiovizualnih dokumentov kot arhivskega gradiva je rezultat novega dokumentacijskega žanra in razvoja medijev, ki so se začeli uporabljati za snemanje informacij ter jih integrirati v enote zapisov. Zaradi njihovih skoraj resničnostnih značilnosti, ki jih omogoča avdiovizualen jezik, jih institucije in ljudje uporabljajo pri zapisovanju svojih aktivnosti.

Skozi raziskavo in teoretično diskusijo smo lahko objektivno pregledali tako vlogo avdiovizualnih dokumentov v arhivih kot tudi razvoj primerne ravnanja s temi zapisi. V nadaljevanju smo govorili o prvih vprašanjih, ki so jih postavljali glavni teoretiki na mednarodnih konferencah, tudi na XI. mednarodnem kongresu arhivov leta 1988, ki je

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prevetрил avdiovizualne zapise in posledično prinesel razumevanje nasprotij, ki so se pojavljala v arhivskem okolju.

Prispevek predlaga pristop k osrednjim vprašanjem arhivistike v zvezi z obravnavo avdiovizualnih dokumentov v arhivih. Mreža vprašanj in pogledov ponuja boljše razumevanje avdiovizualnih zapisov kot skupine zapisov in pristope k vzpostavitvi postopkov za njihovo boljšo organizacijo. Po prepoznavanju in razjasnitvi problemov v arhivski teoriji menimo, da je potrebno te zapise obdelovati že trenutku njihovega nastanka, in to po arhivskih pristopih in tehnikah.