



## **“Paper” Citizenships: power, politics and archival social accountability**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The social invisibility of documents and archives represents one of the greatest difficulties in training technically competent archivists who are socially committed and politically aware of the place they occupy in the power relations that they operate through the technical activities of managing administrative documents. To help overcome these difficulties, we propose more complex readings that, not limited to the strictly disciplinary parameters of Archival Science, allow for a conscious interdisciplinary reflection necessary for diagnoses and propositions of solutions to the technical difficulties they face. Understanding that social phenomena result from diverse institutional actors and interests, as a general rule, external to the administrative unit in which they operate, they will be able to gain an ethical-professional awareness that justifies not only a competent technical professional practice, but also awareness that the extent and complexities of the origins of the problems they face, as well as the actions to correct them, result from political dimensions, rather than from the technical limitations of the professionals involved. Thus, combining theoretical issues with people's daily demands for different types of documents, we believe we can contribute to the achievement of awareness that allows students to see themselves not only as protagonists of social relevance that encourage them to invest in competent and politically-committed technical training, but that are also capable of creating alternative dialogues with social movements, institutions and people about the place of documents, records, archives as fundamental social facilities, and archivists as essential political subjects in the achievement of a more just, democratic and humane society.

**Keywords:** professional archival ethics; citizenship; politics and power; social accountability.

## INTRODUCTION

[...] toda a civilização – pelo menos nos seus elementos mais delicados e essenciais – está ligada à matéria mais frágil que existe: o papel ... nada de resistente nem duradouro: um pouco de pasta de madeira e de cola, substâncias deterioráveis, é o que a que se confiam os bens e os direitos dos homens, os tesouros da ciência e da arte. A umidade, o fogo, a traça, os ratos, podem desfazer e destruir essa massa imensa de papel sobre que repousa o que há de mais caro no mundo. Símbolo de uma civilização que sabe será efêmera, ou de incurável imbecilidade? (Papini, 1931 *apud* Amaral, 1978, p. 1)<sup>1</sup>.

Considering that the attacks on public universities resulted not only from the small number of people who enter them, but also from our difficulty in training subjects who, more than just competent technicians, are also critically grounded and socially committed, our proposal consists of facilitating activities that, in dialogue with relations of power, politics and ethical-professional responsibility, help us overcome such deficiencies.

Without the intellectual instruments required for criticism, subjects accept as truth a whole range of decontextualized and even false information, contributing, even if unconsciously, to social developments that further undermine our dignity.

Without elements that allow them to assess the credibility of information and sources on which they were formulated - rigorously collected, based on documents from public agencies specialized in the matters to be faced -, which subsidize our open and sincere dialogue, the subjects who uncritically share these attacks will be unable to break the simplistic proposal of a minimal, patrimonial, prejudiced and meritocratic state on their own.

The relevance of our project lies within this understanding, despite, and above all, the current circumstances in Brazil and the world.

Without the awareness that the quality of our lives – health, education, security, transport, leisure, etc. – is conditioned not only by our understanding of the bureaucratic administration to which we are all subjected – even if involuntarily and unconsciously –, but also that, without the effectiveness of a document management policy at all levels of government, our efforts in search for a better informed, free, responsible and conscious society to make its own decisions will be ineffective.

In this understanding, reaffirming the commitments of public universities, especially those of Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), the Center for Human and Social Sciences, the Department of Archival Science and the School of Archival Science, committed to technical training that is efficient, humanistic and socially engaged with human values. Our project seeks, from the administrative, legal and social places of documents produced and received by the government, the materialization of its acts, the effectiveness

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: “[...] the entire civilization – at least in its most delicate and essential elements – is linked to the most fragile existing matter: paper... nothing resistant or durable: a bit of wood pulp and glue, perishable substances, is what the goods and rights of men, the treasures of science and art, rely on. Humidity, fire, moths and rats can unravel and destroy this vast mass of paper upon which the most precious things in the world rest. Symbol of a civilization that knows it will be ephemeral, or of incurable stupidity?” (Papini, 1931 *apud* Amaral, 1978, p. 1, editorial translation).

of its services – such as access to food, housing, education, health, culture, social security, leisure and security – to highlight the social importance of archivists, socialize the basic notions of knowledge that justify the production, organization and uses of records by the government, with people and social movements, including documents, archives and archivists in a State policy agenda. Expanding not only the possibilities of appropriations that subjects will make of these collections and information, but, mainly, by the urges they can make based on the understanding that the technical quality of organizing files, implemented by a document management policy, qualify our citizenships.

It is towards these horizons that, however ambitious they may seem, we direct our efforts towards a more careful and diversified look at the uses we can make of documents and archives and, based on dialogues with different social segments, consolidate the social importance of Archival Science and archivists, hence justifying our “Paper Citizenships”.

Reinforcing the importance of public universities, theoretical and applied disciplines, aimed at training professionals with humanistic profiles who are socially committed, inclusive and critically oriented, project “Paper Citizenship: training, cooperation and archival social accountability” proposes the highlighting of the central role of documents (notably public documents), archives and archivists in today’s societies.

With these structured premises of the State’s bureaucratic administration - as well as its structuring premises -, in which notary formalities are non-alienable, we intend to help the dialogue to build awareness that, based on an increased understanding of how documents are intimately linked to our daily lives, rights, duties, demands and desires, are capable of valuing not only their own personal documents, but also becoming multiplier agents of our document relationships – archives – society – State – Government – archivist – rights – duties – citizenships.

If our students have no clarity about this social place of documents and archives, they will find it difficult to see themselves as subjects with specialized professional knowledge that is required for collective life in its multiple dimensions. Without this understanding of the social importance of their professional activities, they will not find reasons to invest in training. Why invest in something whose importance is, in addition to being ignored by those seeking training, overlooked by those who will benefit from their services?

Believing in the multiplier effect of this awareness, initially from the students, but also from the subjects we have come in contact with throughout the project, or even in the enthusiasm of their conversations with friends and family about what they do for other people, we hope these students are capable of strengthening a collaborative network to value Archival Science, documents, archives and archivists, as well as the university itself in its multiple scientific, political and social dimensions.

Certain that such considerations allow us different forms of assessing these matters, I have incorporated into them some ideas presented at the II International Meeting of Archives, Libraries and Museums, held in November 2022, at Universidade do Porto, when I sought to emphasize, from title “**Entre corpos e almas: complexidades de produção, usos e**

**preservação de objetos na formação de Arquivistas, Bibliotecários e Museólogos”** (Silva, 2022, p. 47, emphasis added)<sup>2</sup>, the relationships between the physical object, indicated in “**bodies**”, and the values of appropriations that, present in “**souls**”, indicate the subjective and symbolic values that justify the production, uses and preservation of these objects, whose historicities of the subjects, individual and collective, involved in these processes, demand technical, distinct and specialized skills from the training of archivists, librarians and museologists, capable of consolidating institutional spaces for social mediation that, despite their complexities, they sometimes seem to ignore.

If, initially, our students’ contact with the effective uses of documents in people’s daily lives can significantly contribute to building awareness of the social importance of Archival Science, motivating them to make greater investments in their training, we cannot ignore that this motivation is also required by other actors with whom they come in contact in their daily lives.

Without socially valuing their career choice, Archival Science will only mean, above all for our students, financial support and their livelihood, never a fundamental, obligatory, pleasurable and socially important part of a State functioning mechanism that guarantees quality and extension of their services as basic human rights.

In our proposal, the problematization of concrete cases of denial of rights and services due to lack of documents allows subjects (students and other project participants) to build a direct and objective relationship between documents, files and archivists with the activities performed by different levels of governments (federal, state, local and district), with regard to their duties in education, health, culture, public security, transport, economy, leisure, etc. and the satisfaction of their needs.

Understanding these relationships will mean – this is a hypothesis and one of the goals of this project – that our students, aware of the social consequences of our technical activities, will assume greater responsibility for the care required to be taken since graduation.

By understanding their technical-professional and social importance, these subjects will have a rare, but fundamental, differentiating and characteristic ability to combine, based on their self-esteem, a social dimension of belonging and responsibilities regarding how what they do socially impacts the lives of people who, as a rule, equally unaware of such dimensions, do not give proper care to their documents, institutions and professionals who take care of them.

Why are our basic rights – for example, legal and social identity, education and health, or emergency social benefits – denied due to lack of or impossibility of submitting documents? What are these “public documents” and what justifies their demand as conditioning determinants of our rights, including those of survival and dignity?

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2 Translation: “Between bodies and souls: complexities of production, uses and preservation of objects in the training of Archivists, Librarians and Museologists” (Silva, 2022, p. 47, author’s emphasis, editorial translation).

Why are these documents required from us by the same actors who have, exclusively, the legal-administrative responsibility of providing them to us? How are these issues related to the technical-professional activities of archivists? How important is this for people's daily lives?

How to accept the fact that the requirements to be met for the enjoyment of nonalienable rights are exactly the reasons why people sought the government to escape the conditions of social vulnerability in which they were placed as a result of not having their fundamental rights guaranteed ?

How can we justify this double constraint of social mobility and dignity? If the State was negligent when it did not offer them an efficient administrative apparatus capable of guaranteeing their legal existence, guidelines and conditions required for them to obtain such documents, it remains equally silent, so why is it not held accountable when asking us to take responsibility for something that is their sole responsibility?

Helping to understand these processes related to documents, archives and archivists, based on specific demands, but based on literature and the bureaucratic logic of duties that underlie all government activities, we aim to guide people on how and where they can request their documents.

Therefore, having their desires, obligations and capabilities of conscious participation in everyday political life, and the decisions that affect them cast aside, these students have their desires and energy directed towards other paths, which are not always successful.

Thus, by identifying a path of effective, affective and conscious, non-partisan political participation, by means of the professional practice of Archival Science, these subjects will be able, based on the satisfaction of the social consequences of their actions, to project as their own the achievements of rights that, through the technical exercise of their professional document management activities, they enabled in favor of one or more subjects.

Not without reason, as Marilena Chauí claimed, based on Machiavelli:

Distanciando-se dos filósofos antigos e da teologia política, Maquiavel afirma que a política não diz respeito à justiça nem à graça divina e sim ao exercício do poder. Toda sociedade, diz ele, é atravessada por uma divisão originária, pois se divide entre o desejo dos grandes de oprimir e comandar – movidos pelo desejo de bens – e o desejo do povo de não ser oprimido nem comandado – movido pelo desejo de liberdade e segurança. Em lugar de tomar como ponto de partida a ideia clássica da comunidade, Maquiavel parte da divisão social, e por isso, para ele, a política é o exercício do poder com o propósito de domar, frear e contar o desejo dos grandes e concretizar o desejo do povo por liberdade e segurança. (Chauí, 2007 *apud* Novaes, 2007, p. 30)<sup>3</sup>.

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3 Translation: "Distancing himself from ancient philosophers and political theology, Machiavelli states that politics does not concern justice or divine grace but rather the exercise of power. Every society, he says, is crossed by an original division, as it is divided between the desire of the great to oppress and command – driven by the desire for goods – and the desire of the people not to be oppressed nor commanded – driven by the desire for freedom and security. Instead of taking the classical idea of community as a starting point, Machiavelli takes social division, and therefore, for him, politics is the exercise of power with the purpose of taming, curbing and counting the desires of the great and realizing people's desire for freedom and security." (Chauí, 2007 *apud* Novaes, 2007, p. 30, editorial translation).

From this perspective, or these perspectives, the professional practice of Archival Science ceases to be – initially and especially for our students – what common sense allows us to understand, providing us with other paths, possibilities, challenges, actors and proposals.

## **METHODS**

The methodology that guides this research is referenced both in the theoretical bases of Archival Science, the area of knowledge of our research and training, and in the interdisciplinarity of dialogues with Anthropology, Law, Social Sciences, Social Memory, Administration, Psychology and Education, for example.

Based on these fields, we focus on concrete cases that, resulting from people's demands for documents that guarantee their rights, offer us the possibility of understanding the relationship between theory and practice, including the power relationships underlying policies, which condition us by means of effective and mandatory contact with "disciplinary institutions", on the moral values that guide our actions.

Having selected the students for project "Paper' Citizenships: training, cooperation and archival social accountability", we are able to establish the parameters for leveling the team which, assuming their diversities of training and understanding of the research topic, as well as the particular interests they may have within the proposal, we define readings, discussions and activities.

The results of this process, which we call basic training, will allow us to develop the field research: identify cases and people, institutions and social movements that are willing to participate collaboratively in the project. Not ignoring other actions stemming from the results of the initial studies, we are attentive to other possibilities that set out the next steps, as well as the need or not for new approaches and new subjects.

Among the most objective and pragmatic products, we have round tables/seminars that allow us to dialogue with the government (and from there), social movements and people, as a way of raising awareness about the importance of documents in achieving and maintaining rights; in the affectivities that mediate and consolidate; in the proof of acts; and as a source of multiple uses.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Building, based on the understanding of the importance of documents, archives and archivists in the achievements, guarantees and full exercise of citizenship, awareness of the ethical-moral responsibilities of archivists that is capable of stimulating solid and socially committed investments with the technical quality of their obligations;

Analyzing, based on the bureaucratic logic of the State, and its interdisciplinary relationships, the functions of documents, archives and archivists in achieving and maintaining fundamental rights, as well as the consequences arising from the technical work of archivists in their different administrative, legal, political, social and cultural dimensions;

Mapping the collections of public and private education and health institutions that, extinct and/or restructured and physically transferred to other administrative units, can collaborate with locating, accessing and obtaining copies of the required documents, or subsidizing the competent authorities in issuing statements and certificates that enable services and guarantee basic human rights;

Formulating basic technical guidelines for public institutions, social movements, class entities and individuals on how to proceed with the organization and preservation of their records and documents; and

Encouraging social movements and people to produce their own records, their organizational logic, technical preservation and the social uses they can make of them.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The lack of birth registration has been, in many cases of denial of welfare rights, including in large urban centers, one of the major problems impeding the exercise of basic human rights.

Regarding this matter, which we know to be international, as is the case of exiles and political refugees, we find in the “Fundamental principles of citizenship and human dignity” the understanding that every individual has the right to acknowledgment of their legal personality, as set out in Article 6 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Brazil is a signatory.

The guarantee that every person has the right to a given name and the surnames of their parents (or one of them) is established in Article 18 of the Pact of San Jose of Costa Rica. In Brazil, in accordance with Decree No. 6.289, of December 6, 2007, the National Commitment for the Eradication of Birth Sub-Registration and Expansion of Access to Basic Documentation was established.

However, the truth is that this condition of “mere formality”, although important from a legal and bureaucratic point of view, which authorizes us to demand actions from the competent authorities, has not been enough, especially for a large portion of Brazilian society which – due to the negligence of officials, generally as a conscious product of a social project carried out by successive governments – were considered “non-subjects”, that is, they are individuals who, because they have no birth certificate, address or dignity, were, are and will continue to be made invisible by the State itself, which is responsible for ensuring them full citizenship.

To have an idea of the possible impacts of this research proposal, even if we only focused on one of its dimensions – which is to provide guidance on the importance of civil

birth registration or where to obtain it –, we note that, according to the Rio de Janeiro State Prosecutor’s Office, the birth sub-registration rate in Brazil in 2013, estimated by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), is approximately 5.1%.

Based on the 2010 IBGE Census, according to the institution, this percentage amounts to around 600,000 children aged 0 to 10 with no birth registration. Of this total of “non-subjects”, 28,731 children are in the State of Rio de Janeiro.

And, furthermore, if we consider the prevalent project in our country, the dismantling of the already fragile structure of the existing government for the provision of basic services, cuts in financial resources for education, health, infrastructure, etc., for the next 20 years, along with the contingent of children outside that age group, as well as teenagers, adults and elderly people who, victims of this project of neglect, or resulting from losses and theft, no longer have their basic documents – such as birth certificates, diplomas, work permits, certificates etc. – we will certainly be able to assess the importance of carrying out these draft guidelines on the importance of taking special care of such documents, how to have access to them and information on how to properly preserve them.

How could they care for their documents, no matter how important, if they don’t even have a home or food?

In these terms, unfortunately, there seems to be little use for the international treaties to which we are signatories, or for legislation based on a Constitution that, systematically mutilated in favor of a national and international financial elite, we insist on viewing as endowed with citizenship, since a significant portion of society does not have access, due to lack of documents – such as certificates, affidavits, work permits, proof of income and residence – and guidance on how to obtain them, their legal identity and access to basic services that would characterize part of their human dignity.

Despite being well formulated and intentionally fair, as our good faith would make us wish to believe, many other standards directly and specifically related to document and archive management policies are likewise largely ignored, making their social benefits unfeasible.

It is these legal norms, in addition to technical document management procedures, that seek to legitimize public documents as reliable representatives of State acts. Without these document management technical parameters that provide security or legal-probative presumption to documents, we will not be able to guarantee the properties that provide public documents their legitimacy. The documents we produce within public institutions are exclusively due to the activities we conduct on behalf of the State. It is not we individuals who do this, but the State itself.

Understanding that public documents are the only, exclusive and mandatory technical resources that materialize the State’s acts, resulting from the exercise of its official public duties, their presumption of truth is absolute and worthy of faith. It is this legitimacy, this public faith, based on which we are led to obey what is determined and appeased, and often generate conflicts, that becomes effective through the document management technical procedures.



This understanding highlights the need for one not to be naive in simplistic criticisms about the impacts of individualistic values inherent to liberal projects, nor to advocate “freedom of speech” as an absolute value incapable of holding one accountable for lies that, like criminal acts, allowed the death of thousands of people in Brazil. By treating the categories of truth and falsehood, evidenced by the “public faith” of public documents, as irrelevant, “replacing them with the notions of plausibility and reliability.

Os fatos cedem lugar a declarações de ‘personalidades autorizadas’ e de ‘formadores de opinião’, que não transmitem informações, mas preferências que se convertem imediatamente em propaganda. Qual a base de apoio da credibilidade e da confiança? A resposta encontra-se no apelo à intimidade, à personalidade, à vida privada como suporte e garantia da ordem pública. (Chaui, 2007 *apud* Novaes, 2007, p. 28)<sup>4</sup>.

This legal-bureaucratic assumption allows one to affirm that every public document has legal relevance, as they represent the acts carried out by means of the relationships of rights and duties existing in the documents they produce and maintain as exclusive capabilities of their existence.

Once the importance of public documents is established, as an output and input of the public services offered, the State, especially if democratic, has the exclusive responsibility for their special protection. Based on this special obligation – provided for in the 1988 Constitution and reiterated by Law No. 8.159, of January 8, 1991, and other statutory provisions – document management represents a service of fundamental importance for the government, whether as a mechanism of efficiency of administrative activities that result in the quality and supervision of public services offered, or as an instrument of transparency that reinforces its efficiency and democratic character.

By not having a document management policy in place, the government is subject to liability for the losses caused – which are also foreseeable – resulting from what I consider a wrongful act.

It just so happens that, for a government official, it does not seem convincing to us that one can claim not to have knowledge of – which in itself constitutes a crime – a list of statutory provisions that impose specific legal obligations on such official, as well as control over their acts and those of their predecessors, allowing such official and future holders of such position to continue serving as a government official, qualifying the planning and continuity of services offered without this necessary and mandatory legal determination of special attention to public documents.

Thus, the absence of a document management program is not just limited – as if this were something of less relevance – to losses in document media. By making the effective use of documents unfeasible, in all their multiple administrative responsibilities, with the degree of informative complexity and the basis for the formulation of public policies existing in them,

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4 Translation: “Facts give way to statements from ‘authorized personalities’ and ‘opinion leaders’, which do not convey information, but preferences that immediately become propaganda. What is the basis for credibility and trust? The answer lies within the call for intimacy, personality and private life to support and guarantee public order.” (Chaui, 2007 *apud* Novaes, 2007, p. 28, editorial translation).

government officials should also be responsible for the extent of the damage caused to people and services under their jurisdiction – health, education, etc. –, as well as for destruction of public property, negligence, embezzlement, complicity and torture, given that these documents reveal the inhumane conditions to which people were submitted by this set of facts.

As long as government officials, and those in the exercise of their duties, fail to recognize and be held administratively, civilly and criminally liable for the lack of the required special care for documents - and, also, for the extent of the damage caused to people, individually and collectively, resulting from the absence of a document management policy – we will experience great difficulty in building a more just and fraternal society, especially if the social space of documents, archives and archivists are not clear in this process.

In these cases, one cannot question the negligence, or bad faith, either on the part of the official or of the agencies responsible for supervision and control. How not to attribute the wrongful conduct, as a conscious act of the material and immaterial consequences – and, often, to people’s physical integrity and life –, resulting from the absence of a document management policy, if without a document there is no legality in what the government says and does?

There is no housing, medicine, medical care or education with no documents. There is no other way for the State to express itself, including about its own institutional existence, if not by means of its documents and agents. Without the documents that delimit its territory, establishing geographic areas of competence, there is no State, there are no boundaries of competence between the states, municipalities and the Federal District.

Therefore, the materiality of the government official’s intention must be explicit, concrete and materialized, both due to the absence in itself of the document management policy that they are obliged to implement - which, due to this absence, is also complicit in the destruction, on account of the disappearance and neglect of documents, as well as the lack of provision of services or the poor quality of such provision – as well as rights, archives, archivists and other professionals that are required for the effectiveness of document management policies and services necessary for the population.

This same reasoning applies to the wrongful conduct that we must attribute – and even more aggravatingly – to the inspection and control agencies (accounting courts, public defenders’ offices, prosecutors’ offices and federal, state, district and municipal legislative branch), which, for the same reasons described above, and due to the absence of instruments and acts that cover such measures from officials or provoke the judiciary in their spheres of competence, allow all these types of problems.

The silence of inspection and control institutions so that the government, within its scope of competence, implements a document management program as a constitutional and infra-constitutional determination of administrative efficiency policy, quality of its services, transparency, access to documents and information, and protection of assets, not only contributes to the ineffectiveness of existing formal precepts, but also makes them complicit,

I emphasize, by means of the flagrant omission of their duties and the social consequences arising from the lack of implementation of document management policies, adaptation of spaces, infrastructure and hiring specialized professionals.

They also contribute to a distorted view – if in good faith – about the importance of documents and the social benefits of a document management policy carried out by professional archivists, court rulings that, although well-intentioned, reinforce a vision of common sense on an argument that

*[...] bastaria um planejamento minimamente sério para que o serviço fosse implantado, mediante melhor aproveitamento de pessoal da própria administração e uma gestão eficiente na parte documental, sendo certo que a omissão deixa o município ao acaso, sem ao menos um inventário seguro de requerimentos, documentos e dados que entram e saem da administração pública. (Miranda, 2017, p. 4)<sup>5</sup>.*

In the combination of these factors, the wrongful conduct of the government due to the lack of effectiveness of a document management policy that includes regulatory acts, material infrastructure, hiring of specialized professionals, and the silence of control and inspection agencies combined with a limited vision of what public documents socially represent, leaves us not only hopeful about the future of our documentary heritage – here understood by administrative documents in their current, intermediate and permanent phases – but also surprised by the fact that many of our archives still exist.

Due to this set of factors, arising from a society that, as victims of a project of a society with no rights, ignores documents and public archives as social facilities of the first magnitude, our students also ignore the social and political duties of archivists themselves.

The overwhelming majority of our students, before taking Archival Science course, believe they have never had any contact with the field of archives, much less have their lives related to them. They are not aware that the social space, which they occupy based on their condition as a political subject, citizen, student, patient and dependent on public services, results from a bureaucratic structure of government to which we are all, consciously or not, subjected.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this scenario in which the derogatory notion of bureaucracy seems to guide and be guided by a project of society that nurtures the lack of importance we attribute to politics, documents and archives, and whose professional choice is not related to a desire fueled by the social *status* of admiration for the profession, or previous contacts with the uses of archives, our proposal seeks to consolidate a choice that, initially guided by an economic demand for

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5 Translation: “[...] minimally serious planning would be enough for the service to be implemented, through better use of personnel from the government itself and efficient document management, given that the omission leaves the municipality to chance, without at least a secure inventory of applications, documents and data entering and leaving the government.” (Miranda, 2017, p. 4, editorial translation).

self-sustainment and survival, “opening other doors”, helps them to see themselves as social subjects capable of adding to the financial needs, which initially guided them in their career choice, the satisfaction of being socially important.

To this end, based on examples from our daily lives, we must be able to draw attention to the fact that the understanding of the bureaucratic functioning of the State not only conditions and guides our social life, but also accounts for the legitimacy that, despite being undermined, has sustained our obedience to the determinations of public agencies, to the legal-bureaucratic functioning that is operationalized, exclusively and obligatorily, by the documents produced, received and accumulated by governments at all levels.

Considering that, even among people with university education and in segments of government, at its different levels, a mistaken view of what documents, archives and archivists represent beyond the daily administrative activities they carry out prevails, we must contribute for a broader view of how much the legitimacy attributed to public acts is conditioned on them.

As well as, understanding the social importance of this legitimacy, which is only effective through obedience to the bureaucratic procedures required by the regulatory procedures for document management, which are carried out (or should be carried out) by archivists and archive technicians, above all, we believe we are able to stimulate a process of resignification among Archival Science students, which could mean less dropout rates, more students and political subjects aware of the social complexities and institutional duties that constitute us.

From this process of greater understanding of the uses resulting from the technical work developed, by means of the awareness gained by these professionals – who, although isolated with the documents they produce, handle and archive –, we will be able to stand our ground on our technical skills, even if ignored by significant portions of society that documents and archives serve in their different administrative, legal, political, social and cultural dimensions.

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