Review

Users of information units as central elements for access to information and culture

Usuários de unidades de informação como elementos centrais para o acesso à informação e cultura

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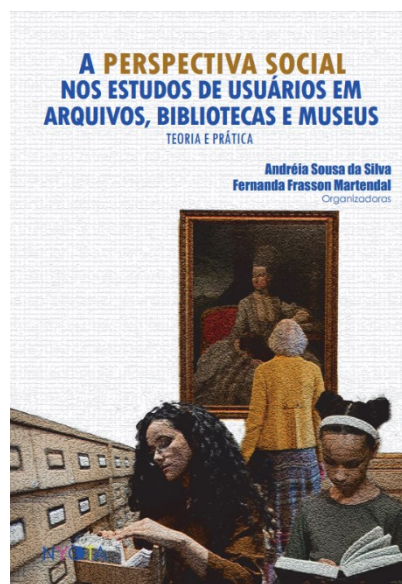## Authors' correspondence

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With an understanding of the role of the subject in the process of mediation and acquisition of knowledge, user studies of information units have become the subject of debate in the field of information science. In this context, this review provides a critical reflection on the research contained in the book "A perspectiva social nos estudos de usuários em arquivos, bibliotecas e museus: teoria e prática" (The social perspective in user studies in archives, libraries, and museums: theory and practice). The collection, edited by Andréia Sousa da Silva and Fernanda Frasson Martendal, is divided into twelve chapters and a preface. Published by Selo Nyota, the book has 268 pages and presents the social perspective of user studies, categorized into epistemological discussions, teaching, and practice.

With a background in library science, the organizer, Andréia Sousa da Silva has experience in "[...] anti-racist information and information subjects. She produces research in the field of information science, with a focus on librarianship and archivology, with the following themes: Social and Ethnic Memory, Ethnic-Racial Relations, Afro-Brazilian Studies, Social Movements in Librarianship, Ethics, and Politics in Librarianship, Information Sources, Information Users and Community, Social Media, Community Libraries, Public Libraries, and School Libraries" (Silva; Martendal, 2021, p. 257). Fernanda Frasson Martendal is an archivist with interests in knowledge organization, document management, and studies of information practices and culture.

The book is divided into four parts: a preface, epistemological discussions, teaching, and user studies in practice, with chapters dedicated to the three proposed areas. It is worth noting that the topic of user studies in the museum field is little explored in the book, being presented only in a chapter that suggests epistemological discussions. In this sense, it can be said that the book does not provide enough information for readers seeking to understand the topic in the museological field. In addition, there is a predominance of theorists from the field of library and information science, even in the texts that deal with user studies in the fields of archivology and museology.

The first part (Part I) "*Preface*", by Carlos Alberto Ávila Araújo, highlights the diversity in the field of user studies and the complexity in constructing views on the relevance of users. The author points out that user studies are approached from a social perspective, which replaces the functionalist perspective. For Araújo (2021, p. 11),

> the study of the ways in which people relate to documents, records of knowledge, and memory (in short, information) can benefit from cross-cutting perspectives that consider the different institutions and information practices and the different types of documents.

In Part II, "Epistemological Discussions", the book is structured into four chapters. With the aim of presenting the trends and challenges of user studies, Pinto and Geraldo (2021) present the history and evolution of the subject in the field of Librarianship. With a generic title and opening the book, it was hoped that this chapter would introduce the reader to the trends and challenges of User Studies from the three perspectives. However, the authors developed the research in only one of the three areas.

They report that "User Studies had their genesis in Information Science and Librarianship in the 1970s, with the social perspective beginning in the 1980s and scientific studies gaining momentum in Brazil from 2010 onwards" (Pinto; Geraldo, 2021, p. 35). The chapter proposes an analysis of user studies using a social approach as a trend, influenced by the global sustainable development goals (SDG Agenda 2030, Unesco).

The second chapter, in part II, discusses "*Reflexiones sobre la biografía institucional y las narrativas biográficas en los estudios de usuarios de archivos de institutos de educación superior*". Fernanda Martendal (2021, p. 42) defines

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It discusses the elements of the formation of archives and the users of these institutions, where the history of institutions and users allows for an understanding of the contexts. Despite the consistent theoretical framework presented in this chapter, there are no recent references that deal with subjects in the field of archives, such as the study by Rangel (2017; 2020).

The next chapter, by Medeiros, deals with "Subject indexing in archives: contributions to information retrieval by users". He describes that "[...] the consistency of the subject indexing process and the quality of its representation depend, among other things, on the identification of the forms of consultation used by users" (Medeiros, apud Pinto, Geraldo, 2021, p. 76). The role and importance of users also appear in the following research: "Archives, libraries, and museums as devices for the mediation of information and the recognition of the identity and memorial characteristics of users" (Santos; Sousa, 2021).

The third chapter, entitled "Archives, libraries and museums as devices for mediating information and recognizing users' identity and memorial traits", written by Raquel do Rosário Santos and Ana Claudia Medeiros de Sousa, discusses the process of mediating information and recognizing users' identities based on this process. Throughout the text, there is a lack of authors from the archival and museological fields. In addition, there is a lack of explanation of the mediation process in the three fields, making it impossible for the reader to see the differences, approximations, and distances. For example, the archival context could have been explained as a differentiating element between libraries and archives. Authors such as Lousada and Almeida Júnior (2012), Ferreira and Almeida Júnior (2013) were not found in the work. It is worth noting that there is a thesis in the field of Archivology dedicated exclusively to the subject of the chapter, namely: The mediation of information in archival theory (Lousada, 2015).

The third part of the book presents three texts dedicated to the discussion of user studies in the teaching modality. However, in this section, there is no text dedicated to the discussion and presentation of the teaching of user studies by the Schools of Archivology, Librarianship, and Museology in Brazil. There are two chapters by foreign authors on strategies for teaching the design and implementation of user studies in archives and libraries and on a user group in a university experience, both texts based on the reality in Argentina. Museology is also not mentioned in this section.

Entitled "*Estrategias para enseñar a diseñar e implementar estudios de usuarios: punto de partida para la innovación desde las necesidades de los usuarios de archivos y bibliotecas*", the text by María Carmen Ladrón de Guevara describes the context, the process and the strategies for teaching the subject to students of Archivology and Library Science at the *Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades de la Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*. The text presents in a didactic way the process of preparing user studies, which have the following stages: preliminary, design, and implementation. It points out the strategies needed to teach students procedures and resources. For the author (Guevara, 2021, p. 107), the

enseñanza de los estudios de usuarios (EU) contempla conocer a los estudiantes y proponerles, por un lado, a través de estrategias de aprendizaje, construir un conocimiento profundo en torno a la necesidad e importancia de estos estudios y por otro, los métodos, técnicas e instrumentos.

Next, the paper by Mariana Zattar and Nyzia Sá discusses "The relationship between information competence and informational practice: an experience report on teaching, research, and university extension". This relationship between information literacy and user studies is established through the information paradigm coined by Capurro (2003): physical, cognitive, or social.

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The next chapter, entitled "*Usuarios en comunidades vulnerables: bibliotecología social y experiencia universitaria docente argentina*" (Díaz-Jatuf; Appella), discusses the social, political, and cultural processes that cut across the notion of citizenship and social inclusion in libraries located in vulnerable communities. The paper presents a case study on the training and education of individuals in vulnerable communities, based on the teaching experience gained at Argentine universities, with a particular focus on the development of understanding regarding empathy, human rights, socio-political aspects of vulnerable groups, and critical thinking.

In Part IV of the book, the organizers present the topic of "User Studies in Practice" in five chapters. In this section, there is little information on the methods, procedures, and tools of user studies used in the research presented. In one of the works, it is possible to objectively locate the practical application of user studies, working precisely with the reader's recognition of the techniques/procedures used.

The first chapter by Costa, Campos and Sousa deals with "Recommendations for librarians to act in the face of the information needs to be imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic". It theoretically addresses the challenges and information problems posed by the pandemic, library practices with a social bias for providing access to information, and the work of library professionals in identifying and combating fake news.

The second chapter, from Part IV, by Santana, Rezende and Carvalho (2021), discusses "The profile of high school readers in the school library of Escola Estadual Brasília and the relationship with the advance of technological information, in Porto Velho-RO". The understanding of the profile of these readers is consolidated in this research of an applied nature through discussions of user studies in school libraries applied to the chosen institution. It lists the profiles of the readers and some recommendations made by them, within the framework of the research library, without detailing the methodology.

Glaucia Vaz (2021, p. 187) tries to figure out the social context of the users of the Public Archives of Minas Gerais and connect it to their research process. Throughout the text, the author identifies the main barriers that prevent access, both remotely and in person. She uses a comparative matrix to analyze users' perceptions, which point to the need for integrated actions in archives to develop information skills and competencies.

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Representing the application of user studies in university libraries, Silva and Costa (2021) dedicate their chapter to "Learning about the level of satisfaction of students and researchers using the Physics Course Library at the Federal University of Ceará (UFC): a study with teachers and students specialized in the area of physics". The research brings together the theoretical-conceptual approaches that underpin the concept of users' information behavior, moving through the information search process, the mediation of information in university libraries, and the characterization of the information behavior of PPGFIS teachers and students. They conclude that "the research subjects are aware of the choices that favor the productivity and innovation of their results" (Silva; Costa, 2021, p. 226).

Following this approach, the last chapter of the book, entitled "User access to information in Peruvian historical archives: a view from the interior of the country", was written by Elizabeth-Ascencio and Elizabeth-Huisa. For the authors, the study of archive users provides an insight into the country's community and the archives that hold the documents that make up Peruvian memory. The research starts with the scarcity of archival literature in the country and prioritizes the study of users of regional archives in Cusco and Lambayeque. It concludes that the users interviewed recognize the relevance of archival documents for the constitution of the country's identity and their preferences regarding consultation and access to the collection.

Throughout the book, the issue of user studies is raised as a relevant topic for the process of mediating and guaranteeing access to information resources. Presented in a tentative way in the fields of museology and archivology, and explored in an expanded way in the field of librarianship. The chapters presented reflect the presence of the subject in these fields of

knowledge, with a greater breadth in librarianship and still in consolidation in archivology and museology. However, the relevance of the efforts dedicated to the construction of this work to the field of Information Science in Brazil is noteworthy.

Reviewing a collection is always a challenging endeavor since it poses the question of how to present the works of various authors to the reader in a manner that highlights their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their logical divisions. The work in question has the merit of being one of the few entirely dedicated to the subject of user studies in Brazilian literature, presenting some international experiences. It offers a theoretical and epistemological reflection as well as a tentative rehearsal of some practices on the subject in the fields of archives and libraries, except museums.

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