600

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

Anderson Berbesi* and Natália Tognoli**

* **Fluminense Federal University – Graduate Program in Information Science (PPGCI/UFF),

Niterói/RJ – Brazil

*aberbesi@id.uff.br, **nataliatognoli@id.uff.br

Anderson Berbesi is a Master's student in the Graduate Program in Information Science at the Federal Fluminense University (PPGCI/UFF) and is member of the research group Archives, Libraries and Knowledge Organization, at Fluminense Federal University. He holds a bachelor's degree in Library Science from the Central University of Venezuela (UCV). His current research seeks to explore Critical archival studies as an emerging field within the archival studies and as an emergent domain in the context of domain analysis, particularly within the fields of Information Science and Knowledge Organization.

Natália Tognoli is a Professor in Department of Information Science at Fluminense Federal University, Brazil. She holds a bachelor's degree in Archival Science, a Master's, and a Ph.D. in Information Science. Her current research interests are the relationships between knowledge organization and archival science, focusing on critical studies and social justice. She coordinates the Information Science Graduation Program at Fluminense Federal University and is Editor-in-Chief of the Knowledge Organization Journal. Orcid: orcid.org/0000-0002-0609-498X

Abstract: This article explores critical archival studies as an emerging trend in the archival field, analyzing its relationship with domain analysis (DA), a methodological-theoretical approach within knowledge organization (KO). The objectives are: 1) to position critical archival studies as a research area of interest for KO, and 2) to evaluate their potential as an emergent domain according to DA. The methodology employed was a literature review, prioritizing seminal works on DA, critical archival studies, and their theoretical intersection. The findings highlight that critical archival studies, conceptualized as a theoretical-practical trend, aim to transform archival dynamics through critical perspectives but face challenges in its theoretical, institutional, and intellectual structuring, complicating its classification as a traditional domain. This prompts a discussion about characterizing critical archival studies as an emergent domain, understood as a type of domain in the phase of specialization and formation that features three main characteristics: 1) conceptual and epistemological heterogeneity, 2) developing organizational structures, and 3) consolidation potential. The study concludes that KO is a key discipline for supporting the establishment of emergent domains like critical archival studies, addressing both their external structures (e.g., groups, institutions) and internal structures (e.g., theories, discourses). This analysis broadens the discussion on emergent domains and strengthens the study of critical archival studies as a field in development.

1.0 Introduction

Critical archival studies represent an emerging trend in the archival field. They spark debates and divergent positions regarding the role of archives and archivists in addressing social, cultural, political, and ethical issues. These issues often relate to the histories and memories of groups, collectives, and individuals that history – and, frequently, archivists themselves – have systematically silenced.

This critical perspective seeks to rethink archives as passive information repositories and key actors in power dynamics, identity construction, and representation. Within this framework, Critical archival studies has gained recognition in sociology, memory studies, art, history, and, more recently, Information Science (IS) (Alencar et al. 2023b; Salerno 2024). These fields share common concerns about the role of memory and the active participation of professionals in addressing the harm caused by memory institutions.

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

601

Despite growing interest, this trend has been subject to limited theoretical reflection as an entity in and of itself, both within their originating field and in related disciplines. Their conceptualization through the lens of knowledge organization (KO), mainly using domain analysis (DA) as a specific approach, remains virtually unexplored. Yet, KO and DA offer key tools to understand the internal and external dynamics of emerging trends such as critical archival studies.

In this context, exploring the relationship between critical archival studies and DA becomes essential, understanding the latter as a methodological-theoretical approach within KO.

This article is based on two main premises: 1) the need to problematize critical archival studies as a research area of interest within KO; and 2) the opportunities and challenges posed by analyzing an emerging entity such as critical archival studies through the lens of DA.

This exploration leads to a discussion of whether critical archival studies can be characterized as an emergent domain, revisiting Barité's (2020) and Tognoli (2024) ideas on this concept.

To achieve this, the article is divided into three sections:

1. Contextualizing and characterizing critical archival studies as an emerging trend within archival studies.
2. Discussing the main features and elements that define DA as a methodological approach within knowledge organization.
3. Delimiting the concept of domain by analyzing and discussing its main characteristics. This discussion addresses whether critical archival studies can be considered a domain, highlighting the difficulties in applying a traditional domain perspective and introducing the concept of emergent domains as an alternative framework.

This work employed a literature review as its primary methodology, prioritizing seminal works on domain analysis in KO, theoretical explorations of critical archival studies, and research examining the intersection of critical archival studies and domain analysis. The findings are presented narratively in the following sections.

2.0 Critical archival studies

Critical archival studies, also known as critical archival science, represent a new theoretical-practical approach established within the archival field in 2017. Its emergence was marked by a special issue of the *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, introduced by Caswell et al. (2017), who framed it as an analytical stance on the social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions of archives, particularly in relation to the dynamics of knowledge production and identity construction.

Although this idea is not entirely new, the term was first articulated in the Anglophone world in 2010, its influences can be traced back to three pivotal moments: 1) Howard Zinn's (1977) earlier speech, shaped by the radical social history movements of the 1960s and 1970s; 2) Terry Cook's (Cook 2001; Cook and Schwartz 2002) postmodern ideas from the late 20th and early 21st centuries, which expanded archival concepts and practices; and 3) Andrew Flinn's proposals for community archives since 2009 (Flinn et al. 2009), which redefined the role of communities as document producers, representing their memory and history (Caswell et al. 2017; Caswell 2021; Gustavson and Nunes 2023).

However, critical archival studies introduces added value by being the first instance in which a variety of archival perspectives – unified under a single umbrella term – seek to question and promote the transformation of archival practices within the preexisting order (Hoyle 2023). As Botnick (2019) highlights, this step was crucial for identifying a lineage of past and future studies that "interrogate, rethink, and reframe archival concepts in critical ways. The act of naming was a formal recognition of scholarship that interrogated dominant archival concepts prior to 2017 and a call to action for archivists to continue this work" (153).

In particular, the publication of the special issue of the *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, as Gustavson and Nunes (2023) argue, established a framework to analyze institutional power, white supremacy within traditional archives, and strategies for promoting liberatory practices in archival stewardship. This issue strengthened "our understanding of critical conversations about whose materials archives collect, where historical oppressions are upheld and where they might be dismantled within archival institutions, and about new practices for recreating and re-envisioning the archives of the future" (7).

This trend presents a clear analytical and emancipatory purpose, capable of transforming both the archival field and society at large through a liberating praxis that opposes oppression (Caswell 2021). As Botnick (2019) explains, "CAS [Critical archival studies] is a call to action to examine power in record creation, keeping, and outreach. By breaking down what is taken for granted in this field, archivists might build a new archival practice that is liberating rather than oppressive" (153).

Following this perspective, critical archivists must advocate for a praxis that seeks to alter the dynamics of narratives and historically marginalized communities, centering their efforts on transforming the archive from a space of power and control into one of integration, cooptation, or adaptation (Alencar et al. 2023b; Hoyle 2023; Cifor et al. 2023).

This approach explicitly reflects the influence of Critical Theory ideals from the Frankfurt School, particularly Max Horkheimer's work, which inspires the field's three main ap-

602

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

proaches: theoretical, practical, and normative. However, as Caswell et al. (2017) observe, this model incorporates diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks, including critical race theory, postmodernism, and queer theory. While these approaches extend beyond the neo-Marxist model of the Frankfurt School, they connect critical archival studies with broader epistemological currents referred to as post-critical, critical theories, or social critical theories.

In another way, since its formulation, critical archival studies have integrated diverse proposals from various fields. Beyond enriching the archival domain, it has become a lens for other disciplines that rely on archives as tools of analysis or objects of study, particularly in examining the construction of memory, culture, and history (Botnick 2019; Salerno 2024). These disciplines see in this trend not only ideas and objectives but also methodologies and tools for analyzing their realities. This demonstrates the trend's impact both within the archival field and across the broader domain of the social sciences.

Efforts to characterize critical archival studies as an autonomous field are on the rise. These efforts not only rely on external disciplines but also stem from within the field itself. In this context, Tognoli's (2024) work stands out for proposing five degrees of specialization within the domain of critical archival studies. These can be readily applied as overarching thematic frameworks in the field:

– Power dynamics
– Prejudices, biases, and exclusion
– Decoloniality/Postcoloniality
– Social justice and activism
– Professional ethics

Despite these advancements, the vast array of influences and references – not only theoretical but also epistemological, social, and political – define this new field as an amalgam of perspectives. However, this diversity presents a significant challenge that the field has yet to overcome: the lack of homogeneity in the discourses, proposals, and theories that can be categorized as critical.

This issue is better understood when considering that the critical archival field is a recently established community. It lacks institutions dedicated to teaching, researching, and promoting these initiatives. Furthermore, most researchers who identify as critical archival thinkers often do not share common concepts, ideas, theoretical-epistemological frameworks, or even references. In many cases, these efforts favor a distinctly Anglophone focus, and the perspectives among various scholars are often quite disparate, making dialogue and interaction between groups particularly challenging, despite certain existing points of connection.

The previous comment aligns with the arguments presented by Alencar et al. (2023b), who discuss the scarcity of texts addressing critical and decolonial studies in the context of Archival Science, both globally and particularly in the Brazilian region. The authors demonstrate that this body of scholarly work is still very recent, with limited literature, predominantly in English, published in journals and books that are not open-access. Additionally, there are few research centers or reference entities worldwide that align with this perspective, with University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) in the United States being the closest example.

It is also important to consider that the conceptual and theoretical breadth of this field generates epistemological challenges that the community has yet to address. For instance: What can be considered critical in archival science? Is it anything that analyzes reality, or is this perspective too broad? Could other theoretical-paradigmatic trends or approaches – such as postmodern studies or community archives – be seen as subordinate to this trend when framed as an umbrella term, or are they of equal value, or even superior as direct influences? Can it be assumed that authors share common premises and understandings when conducting their studies and activities? Is there a particular inclination toward a specific theme, idea, or author guiding the discourse? These are just some of the many questions that remain unanswered.

These challenges emphasize the importance of treating critical archival studies not merely as a trend but as an object of study in its own right. Understanding its evolving boundaries, epistemological structures, and knowledge production requires a systematic framework. Here, the domain analysis emerges as a vital theoretical-methodological tool for addressing this complexity, offering to analyze critical archival studies both as an intellectual community and as a socio-epistemological construct, by examining its internal and external structures – its discourses, actors, institutions, and paradigms – AD provides a pathway to understand and articulate the dynamics shaping this trend as an emergent domain within the broader context of archival studies and Knowledge organization.

3.0 Domain analysis: a brief overview

Domain analysis (DA), as a concept within the context of knowledge organization (ko) and particularly information science (IS), has been explored and developed since 1995. That year, Hjørland and Albrechtsen (1995) published the seminal work *Toward a New Horizon in Information Science: Domain-Analysis*. In this study, the authors argue that the best way to understand information in the field is "to study the knowledge-domains as thought or discourse communities, which are parts of society's division of labor" (400).

Although this work helped popularize the term in the information field, its origins are not exclusive to IS. DA de-

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

603

rives from software engineering, where it was introduced by James Neighbors in the early 1980s. In this context, DA was defined as an activity aimed at identifying the common objects and operations of similar systems within a specific domain problem (Damus and Acuña 2019; Guimarães 2024).

While Hjørland and Albrechtsen's (1995) work does not represent the first introduction of the term to KO or IS[1], it is a critical milestone that established a novel methodological and theoretical perspective in the area. Their approach is characterized by a shift toward the contextual understanding of information, adopting a sociological vision that transcends the traditionally individual-centric cognitive approach (Guimarães 2014).

In this sense, DA was conceived as a paradigmatic alternative to overcome the physicalist and cognitivist approaches that dominated the early years of the discipline. These perspectives prioritized individualistic and internalist analyses, neglecting the social and cultural dimensions of information. In contrast, DA introduces a contextual perspective in which users are considered producers of information embedded in different cultures, social structures, and knowledge domains, connected through common languages and communicative practices. Thus, the meanings of information and knowledge are constructed through cultural, historical, and social processes shared among members of these communities (Romero Quesada 2013; Grácio 2020).

Under the socio-cognitive approach (Hjørland 2004), DA gains added value both as a research program and as a methodology within KO. This approach is characterized by two key aspects: analyzing the structures of knowledge domains and identifying the collective values and beliefs that shape their development and evolution.

Regarding the first aspect, Evangelista et al. (2022) argue that DA is essential for accurately understanding the composition and boundaries of a domain. This perspective focuses on characterizing work structures, ontologies, and communication patterns, or, in other words, analyzing "the circumstances under which activities occur and the constraints imposed by contemporary paradigms and research fronts" (7). In this context, DA conceptualizes knowledge as a social construct expressed through theories, paradigms, and epistemologies manifest in the activities and products of a scientific community. These expressions provide access to underlying information that helps reveal the structure and meanings of such domains (Guimarães and Tognoli 2015), offering tools to "uncover the contours of these nested and interrelated conceptual components of knowledge-producing domains" (Smiraglia 2015, 7).

The second aspect, also referred to as DA in a narrow sense, focuses on identifying the fundamental categories of a domain. This approach seeks to understand the perspectives, goals, values, and interests of the field by studying its theories, paradigms, and traditions (Evangelista et al. 2022; Hjørland 2024). This involves recognizing what is significant or meaningful in a specific field, facilitating the analysis of trends, patterns, processes, agents, and their relationships. In this way, DA becomes an invaluable tool for both information science and the scientific communities it studies (Guimarães and Tognoli 2015).

Despite its potential, DA faces a significant limitation that must be addressed before moving forward: the impossibility of conducting a completely neutral or a priori domain analysis. As Grácio (2020) points out, an adequate analysis requires "broad and deep knowledge of the theories of the studied domain, which means that domain analysis is not neutral, as it is always based on certain perspectives at the expense of others" (73). This assertion emphasizes that DA is inevitably influenced by the theoretical and methodological perspectives adopted by the analyst, necessitating the explicit justification of such choices.

This view is echoed by Damus and Acuña (2019), who argue that any analyst studying a knowledge community must first deeply understand the domain in question. This involves detailed knowledge of the social and cultural environment in which the domain develops, considering its practices and habits. Such an approach allows for identifying the essential elements of its structure and the internal and external interrelations that position it as a distinct sphere concerning others.

Although this perspective closely aligns with Grácio's (2020), it could be seen as somewhat naïve. It overlooks the diversity of viewpoints and inherent biases that any domain analysis may entail. As Kleineberg (2014 apud Hjørland 2016, 27) states:

> The knower as an agent of epistemic activity is always already embodied as a material organism and embedded in a social and cultural environment at a certain point in time and space. In other words, the prerequisites to create, represent, organize, and communicate knowledge or information are limited by preconditions which are investigated by theories of knowledge and constitute the epistemological dimension.

In line with this idea, every domain analysis is influenced by the analyst's social and theoretical interests, which in turn affect the outcomes. This highlights the importance of analysts explicitly justifying their theoretical and methodological decisions, as these shape the understanding of the reality being studied (Evangelista et al. 2022; Hjørland 2024).

With these elements in mind, the essential characteristics defining DA as a theoretical and methodological approach within KO have been identified. The next section explores one of the central concepts of this perspective: the domain and its possible interpretations. This analysis sets the stage

604

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

for addressing whether Critical archival studies can be considered a domain in theoretical and methodological terms.

4.0 Critical archival science: an emerging domain

To approach the idea of a domain, it is essential to begin with one of its most debated characteristics: its ambiguity. As Smiraglia (2012) argues, there needs to be a consensus on what constitutes a domain within the context of DA. Although efforts have been made to consolidate definitions, these vary according to interests and perspectives, encompassing disciplines, fields of knowledge, areas of expertise, and discourse communities, among other possibilities (Romero Quesada 2013). Below, the three most relevant definitions from the literature are briefly presented.

The first definition originates from the work of Hjørland and Albrechtsen (1995), who associate a domain with "thought communities or discourse communities integrated within the division of social labor" (400). From this perspective, a domain is linked to a theoretically coherent or socially institutionalized discourse or thought community. Members of such communities share a language, structure, and pattern of work cooperation, as well as common forms of communication and relevance criteria that reflect their objects of study (Evangelista et al. 2022; Hjørland 2024). This view highlights the importance of an established structure where activities are coordinated around shared goals and accepted norms, enabling the organization and legitimation of knowledge within the domain.

The second perspective comes from Jens-Erik Mai, who defines a domain as "a specialty area, a literary set, or a group of people working together within an organization" (Mai 2005, 605 quoted in Guimarães 2024, 649). According to this idea, a domain comprises a group of people working towards a specific goal. Here, the focus is on activities, collaboration, and the shared objectives that unite them. This grouping, in turn, has its own substance, defined by the institutional assumptions under which it develops (Barros and Laipelt 2021; Evangelista et al. 2022).

The third definition, one of the most frequently cited in the analyzed literature, comes from Smiraglia (2012, 114), who defines a domain as:

> a group with an ontological base that reveals an underlying teleology, a set of common hypotheses, epistemological consensus on methodological approaches, and social semantics. If, after the conduct of systematic analysis, no consensus on these points emerges, then neither intension nor extension can be defined, and the group thus does not constitute a domain.

This last definition offers greater clarity regarding the boundaries a domain must have. According to Smiraglia, a domain should exhibit an interaction between a coherent ontology, a unique epistemology defining its intellectual limits, and an effective discourse. As noted by Guimarães and Tognoli (2015), these characteristics only manifest within a "socially structured unit is formed" (563). The interaction between these elements depends on the pragmatic considerations of its members, including discourses, theoretical assumptions, and intersubjective agreements (Evangelista et al. 2022). Furthermore, Smiraglia (2012) emphasizes that if a clear consensus does not emerge after systematic analysis, the group cannot be considered a domain in the strict sense.

After presenting these three definitions, the divergent points between the various perceptions of the domain concept become evident. This not only reaffirms the plurality of definitions in the literature, as mentioned at the beginning of the section but also raises a different yet equally important question: which definition is most appropriate? Considering that each reflects specific interests and perspectives, this study opts to follow the definition proposed by Smiraglia (2012). This choice is based on three main reasons: first, Smiraglia's definition provides a precise delimitation of the structures and conceptual boundaries of a domain; second, it has been widely used as a reference by numerous authors within the field of DA, particularly in the Brazilian context (Guimarães 2014; Grácio 2020; Evangelista et al. 2022; Guimarães 2024); and finally, because this conception aligns with the specific goals of this analysis, which will be further elaborated in subsequent sections.

With this approach in mind, and before directly addressing whether critical archival studies can be considered a domain, it is necessary to define the intrinsic characteristics of a domain. This step will not only expand the understanding of the chosen perspective but will also provide a conceptual framework for future discussions.

The first element has already been addressed: every domain is a social construct, meaning its expression is shaped by the pragmatic considerations of its members (Smiraglia 2012). This process includes the generation of consensus around discourses, theoretical themes, and intersubjective agreements that delineate the knowledge within the field. Furthermore, it incorporates "forms of legitimation in formal expressions and models" (Evangelista et al. 2022, 6), thus establishing intellectual boundaries that differentiate one domain from another.

This description reflects the dual nature of domains noted by Hjørland (2024), who conceives them simultaneously as social and intellectual organizations. Complementing this idea with Smiraglia's (2015) proposals, it can be argued that every domain should be considered a group with a shared understanding of its knowledge base, marked by an underlying teleology and a shared goal that justifies the existence of the group.

In this context, the knowledge base of a domain, understood as its ontology (Smiraglia 2015), is the product of its members' activities and collective work. This base is identified through the analysis of the common vocabulary, whether in everyday speech or in their writings. From this perspective, domain analysis involves considering the interactions between the ontological, epistemological, and sociological priorities of the group. This situates the domain's work as productive, revealing its "critical role in both the evolution of knowledge and the comprehension of knowledge as a scientific entity" (7).

On the other hand, Smiraglia (2012) points out that the correlation between discourses, theoretical matters, and intersubjective agreements within a domain must be close and exhibit a high degree of conformity. But what happens when such consensus is absent? According to the author, the more dispersed its theoretical base, the less likely it is that we are dealing with a true domain. This leads to the argument that, for a group to be considered a domain, it must have a minimum agreement among its members regarding a set of shared assumptions and frameworks. If this consensus is lacking, it is difficult to speak of a domain in the proper sense.

In relation to this level of stability, Evangelista et al. (2022) make a significant remark on Hjørland's (2024) work, emphasizing that any domain analysis must start from a certain level of stability in its structures. This is based on a key premise: although the knowledge of a domain is given at the time of analysis, it is also constructed through the hermeneutic and investigative interests of the community that makes up the domain, which is simultaneously the object of study and the producer of knowledge. As the authors state: "These factors also determine the continuous character of science: even if one of the two elements – the institution or the content – changes during the studies, the other aspect remains stable." (5).

This idea introduces an essential characteristic of domains that deserves detailed analysis: their constant evolution. Several authors agree that domains are dynamic entities, subject to continuous change and transformation (Smiraglia 2012; Albrechtsen 2015; Evangelista et al. Guimarães 2022; Guimarães 2024; Hjørland 2024;). Tennis (2012) synthesizes this idea by emphasizing the need to operationalize domains to adapt to their changing nature:

> What we hope to make clear in this text is that we must understand the limits of our own analyses. The reason why this is important is linked, intimately, with the fact that everything changes. Our view of the domain changes and the domains themselves change (11).

According to Hjørland (2024), domains are neither unequivocal nor static entities; rather, they are characterized by processuality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy. Along these lines, Smiraglia (2012) argues that domains are dynamic because they play a symbiotic role in the evolution of both knowledge spaces and the real world. This idea can be expanded further by recognizing that domains are not photographic retentive systems, they are never frozen "in time and space but are always changing, even if it does not appear so to producers, users, or information mediators in everyday academic practice" (Hjørland 2024).

With these elements in mind, domains, at least from Smiraglia's perspective (2012; 2015), can be understood as social constructions with an internal teleology founded on four essential pillars: the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and semantic. However, although domains are often presented as relatively stable entities due to their organizational and intellectual structures, these characteristics are not immutable. Domains are in constant flux, driven by contextual dynamics and the interests of their communities.

This leads to a key question: Can critical archival studies be considered a fully realized domain?

To answer this question, it is worth noting that efforts have already been made to relate critical archival studies to DA. Among these are the works of Alencar et al. (2023b) and Tognoli (2024). The former seeks to explore the international editorial domain of archival studies, identifying critically and decolonially oriented works that reveal an emerging scientific and epistemic-bibliographic structure within the international archival field. Meanwhile, Tognoli (2024) identifies Critical archival studies as an emerging domain, deriving five degrees of specialization from a historical and epistemological analysis that could, in the future, "comprehend the domain's configuration through the study of its epistemic and discursive communities" (955).

Both studies are prospective and aim to establish a foundation for understanding and discussing the structure of Critical archival studies as a domain. However, Tognoli (2024) also warns that it is a community still under construction, both theoretically and organizationally. This suggests that this trend lacks a stable base, whether institutional or intellectual, which allows us to revisit the initial question.

If we assume that every domain must have a coherent and stable structure, grounded in a set of pillars derived from intersubjective consensus, Critical archival studies can hardly be considered a domain in the traditional sense. This is because the fundamental elements that define a domain do not align with the intrinsic characteristics of them.

This idea becomes clearer when analyzing the essential aspects of any domain, starting with the most basic: its name and its definition. As Tennis (2012) notes, any operationalization of a domain worthy of analysis requires basic elements for its identification, the first of which is its name.

In the case of Critical archival studies, the name presents no significant difficulties, as the possible semantic ramifi-

606

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

cations or derivations maintain a common link through the particle *critical*. This semantic connection is reflected in the various denominations adopted globally, such as *critical archival studies*, *critical archival science*, or *critical archiving and recordkeeping*. This fact evidences a certain level of agreement within the community, at least in this aspect.

The second element, the definition, is considerably more problematic. On one hand, this can be attributed to the limited theoretical efforts aimed at understanding what Critical archival studies are; on the other, to the multiplicity of perceptions within the community. Among American authors, some understand it as a trend born from an intellectual evolution since 1977; others consider it a subfield within Archival Studies; still others interpret it as a theory, while in Australia, under the denomination *critical archiving and recordkeeping*, it is perceived as a methodology based on Records Continuum Theory.

The conceptual divergence surrounding Critical archival studies not only complicates the attainment of a common definition to unify the community under a shared framework but also hinders the possibility of establishing agreements among its members. This issue highlights the limitations of considering it a domain in the traditional sense. However, for analytical purposes, a provisional definition is proposed to advance this discussion. In this study, Critical archival studies is understood as a theoretical-practical trend within the archival field that adopts an analytical stance on the social, political, cultural, and ethical dimensions of archives, particularly in their relationship with knowledge production and identity construction dynamics. This approach is marked by a diversity of theories, epistemological positions, and methodologies that, although often contradictory, converge in a common goal: to question the dynamics of domination and power exerted by and through archives, with the aim of promoting social emancipation and transforming archival structures.

On this basis, a second key question arises: Is there a clear ontological, epistemological, methodological, and semantic foundation in Critical archival studies that would allow its consolidation as a domain? To answer this, the essential questions posed by Smiraglia (2015) about domains are taken as reference.

Does the group share a common goal that is implicit or explicit in its knowledge base (ontology)? Defining a clear ontological foundation within the critical archival community is challenging. While shared objectives can be identified – questioning, emancipation, and transformation within and for archives – the ways these objectives are addressed often differ. Members of the community adopt specific aspects of these goals and analyze them from perspectives that do not always allow for consensus. For instance, criticism of archives as tools does not necessarily lead to a search for transformation or emancipation, and vice versa. This signif-

icant fragmentation raises an interesting question: Is this flexibility a strength that enables the inclusion of multiple perspectives, or a limitation that hinders the domain's consolidation?

Is there a theoretical paradigm in operation that unifies a set of shared hypotheses (epistemology)? A defining characteristic of critical archival studies is its epistemological fluidity. While some works have identified minimal epistemological elements to conceptualize this trend – such as the proposals of Frankfurt School Critical Theory (Caswell et al. 2017) or social critical theories – these encompass diverse approaches. These approaches often include perspectives that, while converging in their analysis of society, are divergent and frequently contradictory, as seen in the contrast between Habermasian thought and Lyotardian postmodernism. Therefore, critical archival studies cannot be said to have an exclusive theoretical paradigm but rather a plurality of approaches that may share related hypotheses without being unified.

Is there a methodological consensus? The epistemological breadth within the critical archival community translates into considerable methodological diversity. In fact, foundational texts have promoted this diversity as an essential characteristic of critical archival studies. Nevertheless, there appears to be an implicit consensus favoring qualitative methodologies focused on understanding rather than explanation. This methodological focus, while not exclusive, seems to align with the critical and transformative nature that defines this trend.

Do critical archival studies share a social semantics, understood as a set of terms and meanings shared by its community? It is evident that certain terms, such as decolonization, representation, and power in archives, are common within the trend. However, their definitions are not always agreed upon. Given the relatively recent emergence of this trend, its social semantics is still under construction, consolidating through semantic patterns disseminated in both formal and informal academic contexts.

This point brings us to another dimension of analysis: Does an institutional organization exist around Critical archival studies? Studies by Alencar et al. (2023a) and Alencar et al. (2023b) have explored this question in two specific contexts: the editorial, analyzing journals and series specializing in critical topics, and the institutional, examining the role of the Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) as an entity that includes specialists in critical studies among its members. Despite these efforts, there is no clear institutional organization solely dedicated to advancing, researching, and evolving this trend. Additionally, no epistemic communities or influential researcher networks have been identified in this field thus far.

Given these elements, can critical archival studies be considered a domain? Following Smiraglia's ideas (2012; 2015),

the lack of theoretical and institutional structure and cohesion, combined with its evolving ontological, epistemological, methodological, and semantic dynamism and the limited efforts of its community to define its boundaries and intrinsic characteristics, suggests that critical archival studies cannot yet be regarded as a domain in the classical sense.

However, this conclusion does not diminish the relevance of it. Instead, it highlights the need to analyze it as a domain under construction, open to defining its own boundaries and structures. This requires considering new perspectives to address it through domain analysis. In this context, Tognoli (2024) offers a promising conceptualization, proposing critical archival studies as an emergent domain, noting that such domains "develop from the intersection of disciplines like archival studies, cultural criticism, social and political studies, history, knowledge organization, and others, in response to social demands" (954).

The notion of emergent domains is not unique to Tognoli but follows Barité's (2020) ideas, who defines emergent domains as a type of domain developed in recent times (20 to 40 years) "as a result of the rapid process of specialization and reciprocal intersection between disciplines and/or thematic fields" (245). According to Barité, in their early decades, such specializations are "in the process of shaping and specifying" (245). Emergent domains reflect the expansion of interdisciplinary studies, technological developments, and the evolution of intellectual thought focused on social and cultural issues arising from the post-war era.

Barité's definition of emergent domains, particularly the idea that any recently developed domain is in a phase of formation and specialization, is crucial to understanding critical archival studies. However, certain aspects of this definition do not fully align with this trend and raise several questions.

First, the temporal framework proposed (20 to 40 years) seems arbitrary, especially when considering fields that have emerged more recently, like Critical archival studies, whose explicit development began in 2017. This prompts reflection on whether the proposed timeframe is suitable for all disciplines or requires adjustments according to specific contexts.

Second, Barité (2020) links the emergence of domains to historical processes derived from the post-war period. Here, one might ask: Is this period the only one capable of explaining the emergence of domains? Would it not be more useful to think of emergent domains as phenomena responding to specific sociocultural contexts, rather than exclusively tying them to a particular historical moment?

Lastly, the author does not address whether epistemological or ontological consensus is necessary for a field to be considered a domain. If such a consensus is required, can heterogeneous fields, trends, or perspectives lacking clear cohesion be considered emergent domains? This leads to a second question: What level of consensus is necessary to classify something as an emergent domain? This question becomes even more relevant considering that, at least in our area of interest, perspectives and approaches are highly varied and have only just begun to be mapped.

The proposal to analyze critical archival studies as an emerging domain invites a reconsideration of traditional approaches to DA and creates opportunities to understand and characterize fields still in the process of formation. Drawing from the ideas of Barité (2020) and Tognoli (2024), in this work emerging domains are understood as those still undergoing processes of shaping and specification, influenced by socio-cultural contexts closely tied to the present, and defined by the following characteristics:

1. A conceptual and epistemological heterogeneity marked by ongoing debates and negotiations, where multiple perspectives coexist without achieving complete consensus.
2. An absence of clearly defined organizational structures, though with emerging indications of both institutional and intellectual organization.
3. A potential for growth and consolidation as more researchers, institutions, and knowledge outputs contribute to its development.

Once an intersubjective agreement within its community regarding topics, perceptions, institutions, methodologies, objects, among other characteristics, is identified through analysis, it will be possible to properly speak of a domain.

Following this definition, DA should not merely be perceived as a methodology aimed at breaking down existing domains but should take on a more active and constructive role in relation to emerging domains. In this context, DA must focus on understanding, delimiting, and discovering the epistemological configurations of these developing domains. This includes analyzing both the external structure (social processes, organizational structures, epistemic communities, among others) and the internal structures (predominant themes, influential theories, developing discourses) that would form their identity.

Following Albrechtsen's (2015) words, DA, in relation to emerging domains, should not be limited to describing reality, but should be actively involved in its creation: "Domains are not terrains out there, waiting to be described and analyzed by the initiated few. Fundamentally, we may all create them" (561). This implies that DA does not merely observe and record but also, at least in the case of critical archival studies, would map its potential areas of consensus and fragmentation, understand its consolidation processes, and ultimately contribute to its characterization as a domain in formation.

608

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

5.0 Conclusion

Critical archival studies, understood as a complex entity still under construction, positions itself as one of the most disruptive efforts in recent years to question and transform the traditional dynamics imposed by archives. Its connection with established fields like KO broadens the scope of its proposals, allowing them to be analyzed from perspectives that enrich and diversify existing academic discussions.

This paper argued that critical archival studies cannot be perceived as a fully consolidated domain, which requires a rethinking of the boundaries of domain analysis to address entities still in formation. In this sense, the category of emerging domain is proposed as a reference framework that allows for analyzing these still-developing trends, considering both their external structure (groups, institutions, publications) and their internal structure (discourses, theories, themes).

However, this analysis is just a starting point. Although critical archival studies has been taken as a case study, further exploration is needed to determine whether the emerging domain proposal applies to other entities with similar characteristics. Additionally, there is a need to reflect on the role of DA in the construction of emerging domains: which theoretical and methodological approaches from Hjørland (2002) are most suitable for structuring both the external and internal dimensions of these domains? Is it possible to combine different perspectives to achieve a more comprehensive and robust analysis?

These questions open up space for future research that not only expands the discussion on emerging domains but also deepens the study of critical archival studies as a developing field. KO, in this context, positions itself as a key discipline to support and foster the progress of these domains, contributing both to their analysis and establishment.

Acknowledgments

Endnote

1. According to Hjørland (2024), the earliest connection can be traced back to the work of Prieto-Díaz, from the field of Software Engineering. Building on Ranganathan's faceted classification theory, Prieto-Díaz developed a synthetic analytical approach for classifying software components, which he termed domain analysis (Albrechtsen 2015).

References

Albrechtsen, Hanne. 2015. "This Is Not Domain Analysis". *Knowledge Organization* 42, no. 8: 557–61. https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2015-8-557

Alencar, Maíra Fernandes, María Brigida Nogueira Cervantes and Mario Barité. 2023a. "O contexto de uso do termo arquivos comunitários a partir da vertente dos estudos críticos e decoloniais: uma análise terminológica pontual". *Páginas a&b*, no. 19: 55–77. https://doi.org/10.21747/21836671/pag19a4.

Alencar, Maíra Fernandes, Natália Bolfarini Tognoli and Brígida Maria Nogueira Cervantes. 2023b. "Outros horizontes críticos e decoloniais nos estudos arquivísticos: em construção um mapeamento do domínio editorial internacional". *Encontros Bibli* 28: 1–26. https://doi.org/10.5007/1518-2924.2023.e92661.

Barité, Mario. 2020. "Terminología de urgencia y garantías para la representación temática: elementos para el análisis de dominios de emergencia súbita (DES)." *Informação & Informação* 25, no. 3: 239–65. https://doi.org/10.5433/1981-8920.2020v25n3p239.

Barros, Thiago Henrique Bragato and Rita do Carmo Ferreira Laipelt. 2021. "Uma análise de domínio da área de organização e representação do conhecimento no contexto do periódico em questão". *Em Questão* 27, no. 4: 438–68. https://doi.org/10.19132/1808-5245274.438-468

Botnick, Julie. 2019. "Archivists as Amici Curiae: activating Critical Archival Theory to confront racialized surveillance". *Journal of Radical Librarianship* 5, 153-72. https://journal.radicallibrarianship.org/index.php/journal/article/view/35

Caswell, Michelle, Ricardo Punzalan and T-Kay Sangwand. 2017. "Critical archival studies: An Introduction". *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 2: 1–8. https://doi.org/10.24242/jclis.v1i2.50

Caswell, Michelle. 2021. *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work*. London: Routledge.

Cifor, Marika, Carolina Alves and Martina Spohr. 2023. "Interview with Marika Cifor". *Estudos históricos* 36, no. 79: 129-40. https://periodicos.fgv.br/reh/article/download/89358/83894

Cook, Terry and Joan M. Schwartz. 2002. "Archives, records, and power: From (postmodern) theory to (archival) performance". *Archival Science* 2: 171–85. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435620

Cook, Terry. 2001. "Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts". *Archival Science* 1: 3–24. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435636

Damus, María Arminda, and Gabriela Noemí Acuña. 2019. "Aproximación al Análisis de Dominio (AD) desde la investigación En Bibliotecología y Ciencia de la Infor-

Knowl. Org. 51(2024)No.8
A. Berbesi, N. Tognoli. Critical Archival Studies: Exploring an Emerging Domain

609

mación". *E-Ciencias de La Información* 9 (2). https://doi.org/10.15517/eci.v9i2.37497

Evangelista, Isadora Victorino, Maria Cláudia Cabrini Grácio and José Augusto Chaves Guimarães. 2022. "The Concepts of Domain, Discourse Community and Epistemic Community: Affinities and Specificities". *Brazilian Journal of Information Science: Research Trends* 16. https://doi.org/10.36311/1981-1640.2022.v16.e02138.

Flinn, Andrew, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd. 2009. "Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream". *Archival Science* 9, nos. 1-2: 71–86. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-009-9105-2

Grácio, Maria Cláudia Cabrini. 2020. *Análises relacionais de citação para a identificação de domínios científicos: uma aplicação no campo dos estudos métricos da informação no Brasil*. Marília: Oficina Universitária.

Guimarães, José Augusto Chaves and Natália Bolfarini Tognoli. 2015. "Provenance as a Domain Analysis Approach in Archival Knowledge Organization". *Knowledge Organization* 42, no. 8: 562–69. https://doi.org/10.5771/0943-7444-2015-8-562

Guimarães, José Augusto Chaves. 2014. "Análise de Domínio como perspectiva metodológica em Organização da Informação". *Ciência Da Informação* 43, no. 1: 13–21. https://doi.org/10.18225/ci.inf.v43i1.1415

Guimarães, José Augusto Chaves. 2024. "A análise de domínio como perspectiva teórico-metodológica uma análise dos aspectos teóricos na literatura internacional na organização do conhecimento: uma análise dos aspectos teóricos na literatura internacional". *Revista Ibero-Americana de Ciência Da Informação* 17, no. 3: 644–77. https://doi.org/10.26512/rici.v17.n3.2024.53674

Gustavson, Andi and Nunes, Charlotte. 2023. "Introduction". In *Tranforming the Authority of the Archive: Undergraduate Pedagog and Critical Digital Archives,* edited by Andi Gustavson and Charlotte Nunes, 1–20. [Mountain View]: Lever Press.

Hjørland, Birger, and Hanne Albrechtsen. 1995. "Toward a New Horizon in Information Science: Domain-Analysis". *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 46 (6): 400–25. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4571(199507)46:6<400::AID-ASI2>3.0.CO;2-Y

Hjørland, Birger. 2002. "Domain Analysis in Information Science: Eleven Approaches - Traditional as Well as In-

novative". *Journal of Documentation* 58, no. 4: 422–62. https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410210431136.

Hjørland, Birger. 2004. "Domain Analysis: A Socio-Cognitive Orientation for Information Science Research". *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 30, no. 3: 17–21. https://doi.org/10.1002/bult.312

Hjørland, Birger. 2016. "Informetrics Needs a Foundation in the Theory of Science." In *Theories of Informetrics and Scholarly Communication*, edited by C. R. Sugimoto, 20–46. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Hjørland, Birger. 2024. "Análise de Domínio". *Em Questão* 30. https://doi.org/10.1590/1808-5245.30.140568

Hoyle, Victoria. 2023. *The Remaking of Archival Values*. London: Routledge.

Romero Quesada, M. 2013. "El Análisis de dominio y sus presupuestos teóricos-metodológicos". *Bibliotecas. Anales de Investigación,* nos. 8–9: 228–38. http://revistas.bnjm.sld.cu/index.php/BAI/article/view/288

Salerno, Daniele. 2024. "An Instituting Archive for Memory Activism: The Archivo de La Memoria Trans de Argentina". *Memory Studies* 17, no. 2: 332–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980221150900

Smiraglia, Richard P. 2012. "Epistemology of Domain Analysis". In *Cultural Frames of Knowledge*, edited by Richard P. Smiraglia and H. Lee, 111–24. Wurzburg: Ergon.

Smiraglia, Richard P. 2015. *Domain Analysis for Knowledge Organization: Tools for Ontology Extraction*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing.

Tennis, Joseph T. 2012. "What Does a Domain Analysis Look like in Form, Function, and Genre?". *Brazilian Journal of Information Science* 6, no. 1: 3–14. https://doi.org/10.36311/1981-1640.2012.v6n1.02.p3

Tognoli, Natália. 2024. "Estudos arquivísticos críticos: caracterização inicial de um domínio emergente na práxis arquivística." In *Diálogos Na Ciência Da Informação: Atas Do XIV Encontro EDICIC*, edited by Carlos Silva, Jorge Revez and Luís Corujo, 951–56. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa.

Zinn, Howard. 1977. "Secrecy, Archives and the Public Interest". *Midwestern Archivist* 2: 14-26.