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THE ORGANIZATION OF DOCUMENTS AT THE MUSEU DO DOCE: SANITATION, CATALOGING, AND DISSEMINATION PRACTICES

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Abstract: This article analyzes the experience of organizing the documentary collection of the Sweet Museum, linked to the Federal University of Pelotas, with an emphasis on the sanitation, classification, cataloging, and digital dissemination practices developed between 2024 and 2025. Based on the continuity of activities initiated in 2023, the work began with a diagnosis of document dispersion and inadequate storage in administrative and technical-scientific collections produced and received by the institution. The study discusses the role of museum archives in preserving institutional memory and supporting research, highlighting the need for systematic archival treatment to ensure both physical conservation and qualified access to information. Methodologically, the intervention involved reception, registration, cleaning, identification, classification, arrangement, storage, description, and creation of consultation tools, in addition to experimentation with the Tainacan platform for digital dissemination of the collection. The results point to improved preservation conditions, increased intelligibility of the documentary collection, and strengthening of the public function of the Museu do Doce. It is concluded that the articulation between archival practices, university extension, and digital tools expands the museum's potential as a space for memory, research, and access to documentary heritage.

Keywords: Museum archive. Documentary heritage. Cataloging. Institutional memory. Tainacan. Museu do Doce.

INTRODUCTION

Located in Praça Coronel Pedro Osório, the Sweet Museum of the Federal Uni-

versity of Pelotas is a reference institution in the preservation of the memory of the confectionery tradition of Pelotas and the surrounding region. The museum's relevance is not limited to its exhibition collection or cultural activities focused on intangible heritage. Its headquarters, housed in a historic 19th-century building, and the documentation produced in its administrative, technical, and scientific routine are also part of a heritage collection of great value to institutional history and academic research. In this context, the organization of its permanent archive becomes an essential task to ensure the conservation of records, their intelligibility, and their public accessibility.

The work carried out here originated from the continuation of practical activities initially carried out in 2023, within the scope of courses focused on the organization of historical and special archives, and then between 2024 and 2025, in the Special Archives course of the Bachelor's Degree in History at UFPel. The intervention focused on the documentary collection originating from the Museu do Doce (Sweet Museum), especially the administrative and technical-scientific documentation that was scattered, stored in inadequate conditions, and without comprehensive consultation mechanisms. The proposal therefore sought to respond to a concrete problem of preservation and access, combining academic training, university extension, and archival treatment.

Based on this framework, the objective of this article is to discuss the experience of organizing the documents of the Museu do Doce, with an emphasis on the practices of cleaning, classification, cataloging, and digital dissemination. It is argued that a museum's institutional archive should not

be understood as a secondary or merely administrative sector, but as a constituent part of the museum's own heritage. By recording the museum's projects, decisions, procedures, educational activities, and history, this collection of documents makes it possible to understand the institution's history, how its collections were formed, and the relationships it establishes with the community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Museum archives, institutional memory, and access to information

Museum archives occupy a unique position in the field of cultural heritage. Unlike current administrative collections, these document collections preserve traces of the institution's operations, its acquisition policies, its research activities, its exhibitions, and its outreach activities. Therefore, their organization requires recognition that archival documents have probative, informative, and historical value. In permanent archives, this value is deepened by their ability to support research on the institution itself, the social contexts in which it operates, and the heritage processes that legitimize it.

Archival literature emphasizes that document preservation depends on coordinated technical procedures and adherence to principles such as provenance, organicity, and respect for collections. In other words, it is not enough to gather documents in folders or lists; it is necessary to maintain the relationship between the documentation and the structure that produced it, identify their functions, establish documentary series, and record the information necessary for future retrieval. In the case of university museums, this demand takes on special

significance because the documents interact with administrative management, teaching, extension, and research, constituting records of a complex and multidisciplinary institutionality.

It is also necessary to consider that the physical preservation of documents is inseparable from access strategies. A poorly organized archive, without consistent classification and without research tools, becomes of little use to both internal staff and external researchers. From this point of view, catalogs, descriptive spreadsheets, and digital management systems are not mere auxiliary resources; they are devices for mediating between the collection and its users. By making previously scattered collections visible, these tools enhance the social function of the archive and expand the possibility of public use of the documentary heritage.

Digital dissemination, in turn, is becoming increasingly important in museums and archives. Platforms such as Tainacan, structured in free software and integrated with web environments, allow collections to be organized, description fields to be standardized, and items to be made available for remote consultation. Digitization and availability in a virtual environment do not replace the care taken with physical media, but they do expand the capacity for access, navigation, and knowledge production. Thus, when combined with rigorous archival treatment, digital dissemination strengthens the democratization of information and the fulfillment of the public function of memory institutions.

Documentary extroversion and university museums

Reflection on the organization of archives in university museums requires consideration of the specific nature of these institutions. Unlike museums that are not linked to the academic environment, university museums combine administrative routines, research, teaching, extension, and student training. As a result, they produce heterogeneous document collections, formed by administrative files administrative files, exhibition projects, research reports, educational activity records, communication materials, and technical and scientific documentation. The organization of these documents not only responds to an internal need for control, but also allows the institution's own history and social insertion to be reconstructed, providing a basis for new studies on memory, heritage, and material culture.

From this perspective, documentary extroversion should be understood as a constitutive stage of preservation. Making the archive visible does not only mean publishing lists or making digitized images available; it involves selecting description criteria, contextualizing the documentary collections, and creating mediation tools that make the collection intelligible to different audiences. Catalogues, arrangement tables, guides, and digital platforms fulfill precisely this function, as they convert a scattered set of papers into a searchable heritage. At the same time, they promote institutional transparency and reinforce the social function of the museum by allowing the community to learn not only about the objects on display, but also about the work and memory production processes developed by the institution.

It is also necessary to recognize that the digital dissemination of museum archives involves technical and ethical challenges. Not all documentation can be exposed without mediation, either because it contains sensitive data or because it requires prior review of metadata, authorship, and production context. Therefore, the use of digital platforms must be linked to institutional policies on description, access, and preservation. Instead of opposing conservation and dissemination, the experience of university archives suggests that both should go hand in hand: the better structured the procedures for identification, classification, and control are, the more consistent the opening of the collection to remote research and qualified public use will be.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The experience analyzed was developed in successive stages, focusing mainly on the administrative documentation of the Museu do Doce, since the only documentation related to the museum collection has specific routines monitored by museology professionals. The starting point was a diagnosis produced in previous activities, which identified the dispersion of documents, the absence of descriptive standardization, and the inadequate storage of materials from the administrative and technical-scientific centers. Based on this survey, an intervention was defined aimed at physical preservation, intellectual reorganization, and the future extroversion of the documentary collection.

Methodologically, the work involved receiving and registering the documents, mechanical cleaning, identification, preliminary evaluation, classification, arrangement, and storage. The cleaning allowed for

the removal of dirt and reduced the risk of deterioration, while the physical reorganization brought together sets that were separated into different folders and media. Next, classification was carried out according to

institutional origin, administrative function, and document type, seeking to preserve the organic nature of the archive and facilitate the retrieval of information.

For description and cataloging, digital spreadsheets were used with identification fields such as document type, content, date, medium, and physical location. This procedure made it possible to standardize the recording of information and build a research tool capable of synthesizing the document collection more clearly. At the same time, a catalog in text format was developed as support material to guide researchers and visitors regarding the archive's content and consultation possibilities.

An additional step focused on digital dissemination. As part of the documents organized in 2023 and 2024 still remained restricted to internal spreadsheets, experimentation with the Tainacan platform began in a testing environment associated with WordPress. By importing spreadsheets in CSV format, it became possible to start inserting metadata and structuring the collection into fields such as title, date, group, and location. This methodological approach allowed us to test ways for the future publication of the archive and to evaluate the compatibility between the description routines already built and a remote access system.

Another important methodological aspect was the definition of a workflow capable of articulating physical treatment and intellectual description. The gradual gathering gradual gathering of documents, their

initial identification, and the validation of information based on the museum's institutional structure prevented cataloging from becoming a simple decontextualized listing. This methodological care made it possible to maintain the relationship between the documents and the sectors that produced them, a fundamental aspect for preserving the organic nature of the collection and enabling more consistent historical readings of the collection.

The production of the textual catalog and informational poster also integrated this methodological logic of mediation. Instead of restricting the organization of the archive to an internal technical circuit, we sought to translate part of the information produced into tools that were more accessible to non-specialized users. This move is relevant because, in museum institutions, document organization needs to dialogue with the educational function and public communication of heritage. Thus, the consultation tools developed were not understood only as final products of cataloging, but as means of bringing the archive closer to researchers, students, and visitors interested in the institutional history of the museum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ongoing intervention in the Museu do Doce archive produced relevant results in at least three areas: preservation, intellectual organization, and dissemination. On the physical level, the cleaning and reorganization of the material reduced the risk of damage and freed up space, allowing for better accommodation of the documents and more adequate storage conditions. This result is particularly important in institutional collections, where deterioration often

stems less from the age of the medium and more from disorderly accumulation, improper handling, and a lack of systematic treatment routines.

On an intellectual level, the creation of standardized spreadsheets and a document catalog consolidated a qualitative leap in the intelligibility of the collection. Previously scattered documents now form an identifiable, described, and searchable set, which facilitates both the internal work of the team and future consultations by researchers. The description Standardized cataloging, by recording elements such as date, type, and location, not only facilitates information retrieval, but also contributes to the consolidation of institutional criteria for document management.

These advances demonstrate that archival management in museums should not be reduced to a bureaucratic task. On the contrary, it participates directly in the institutional mission of the

museum, as it organizes the records that bear witness to the very construction of its activities. In this sense, the documentary collection of the Museu do Doce allows us to follow the history of the institution, its articulation with the university, its initiatives for the preservation and dissemination of the confectionery heritage, and the ways in which institutional memory is produced on a daily basis. When this collection is treated systematically, the museum's capacity to produce knowledge about itself and the heritage it represents is expanded.

The digital dissemination stage added a strategic dimension to the work. Tests with Tainacan indicated that the platform has the potential to transform the documentary collection into a more open and

navigable environment, bringing physical preservation closer to a policy of expanded access. Although still in the experimental phase, the importation of spreadsheets and the configuration of description fields demonstrated the feasibility of integrating the archive into a remote consultation structure. This is decisive for a university institution committed to teaching, research, and extension, as it broadens the social reach of documents previously restricted to the physical environment.

From an educational standpoint, the experience also highlights the importance of bringing together courses in History, Museology, and Conservation. By working in a real permanent archive, students face concrete challenges of preservation, description, and access, developing technical skills and critical thinking about the social role of archives. At the same time, the institution benefits from the production of research tools, the reorganization of its documentary collection, and the opening of new perspectives for dissemination. The integration between teaching and outreach, therefore, proves to be one of the most significant gains of the initiative.

In analytical terms, the results allow us to affirm that the documentary organization of the Museu do Doce is not just an internal rationalization procedure. It is a heritage action, as it preserves the traces of institutional experience and ensures conditions for them to be appropriated by different audiences. By transforming accumulated documents into accessible and intelligible heritage, the work strengthens the museum's public function and reaffirms the centrality of archives in the preservation of social memory.

Another important result was the strengthening of research conditions on the

history of the Museu do Doce itself. A systematically organized and described archive allows for the location of evidence on the creation of the museum, the restoration and occupation processes of its headquarters, its relationship with the Federal University of Pelotas, and strategies for safeguarding the confectionery tradition. In other words, document organization expands the institution's capacity for reflection, as it provides sources for evaluating its policies, reconstructing trajectories, and producing new narratives about the region's cultural heritage. The archive is no longer just a repository for accumulated papers, but now serves as a basis for historical research and the production of institutional memory.

From the perspective of the social function of heritage, the intervention also contributed to shifting the image of the archive as an invisible or accessory space within the museum. By organizing the documents and creating consultation paths, the work demonstrated that institutional memory does not reside only in exhibitions, preserved objects, or public narratives about the confectionery tradition. It also materializes in letters, projects, reports, event records, plans, and correspondence that document the institution's daily life. The appreciation of this collection broadens the understanding of what should be preserved when it comes to museum heritage.

There is also an important pedagogical effect resulting from this process. When students participate in the organization of a real archive, they come to understand that the production of historical knowledge depends on material conditions of preservation, classification, and access. Contact with the Museum of Sweets archive shows, in a concrete and very way, that memory and he-

ritage are not natural givens, but constructions that require

technical work, institutional choices, and public responsibility. In this sense, the experience contributes to training professionals who are more attentive to the political dimension of collections and the need to reconcile methodological rigor with social commitment.

At the same time, the experience highlighted challenges that accompany the consolidation of a preservation and access policy. The maintenance of research tools, the revision of descriptions, the incorporation of new documents, and the continued feeding of the digital platform require time, technical training, and institutional stability. Without this continuity, there is a risk that the collection will once again become scattered or that digital dissemination will be restricted to an experimental stage. Thus, the results obtained point not only to achievements but also to the need to institutionalize permanent document management routines, integrating them into the museum's planning and the university's teaching and extension activities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The experience of organizing the documentary collection of the Museu do Doce shows that the preservation of museum heritage also depends on the systematic care of the documentation produced by the institution itself. The cleaning, classification, cataloging, and dissemination practices developed between 2024 and 2025 demonstrate that archival management, when guided by technical principles and linked to digital tools, simultaneously increases the security of

the collection and the possibilities for accessing information.

The results obtained indicate that the intervention produced concrete benefits: better storage of documents, creation of research tools, descriptive standardization, and the opening of a consistent path for the digital extroversion of the collection. More than solving specific physical or administrative problems, the work reinforced the understanding that the institutional archive is also heritage, as it holds the memory of the museum's functioning, choices, and practices choices, and practices of the museum.

It can therefore be concluded that the case of the Museu do Doce is an exemplary experience of articulation between teaching, extension, and documentary preservation. The continuity of actions, with adjustments in description and expansion of remote availability, tends to further strengthen the capacity for research on the documentary collection and the institution's public mission. In a context in which access to information is a fundamental part of the right to memory, investing in the organization of museum archives means expanding the ways of producing, preserving, and sharing cultural heritage.

The future expansion of the archival description, the consolidation of Tainacan as a consultation environment, and the maintenance of teams involved in the treatment of the documentary collection tend to deepen these results. In this context, the case analyzed reinforces the importance of preserving museum documents and also preserving the traces of the practices through which heritage becomes public, recognized, and socially shared.

For this reason, the experience of the Museu do Doce can serve as a reference for other memory institutions facing similar problems of accumulation, dispersion, and low visibility of their permanent archives. Even in different contexts, the articulation between diagnosis, cleaning, descriptive standardization, and digital dissemination offers a consistent methodological path for transforming inaccessible document collections into more preserved, understandable, and socially useful collections.

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