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Archives and Classification: A Methodological Approach

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Abstract

The attention paid to the original position (initial deposit) of archive material in the phase of reordering is a sensitive subject within the archival praxis. This is the basis from which the reorganization model proposed in this contribution takes form. Keeping in mind this solicitation comes therefore exposed the criteria utilized for the treatment of information deriving from material preserved in a university building archive.

Keywords

archives, classification model, preservation of documents

1. Introduction

The reorganization of a documentary complex, in this case an archive (1) consisting of technical material, may become the occasion to redefine or create a classification system applicable to what preserved from scratch.

The verification of factors such as organization and disposition of documents in the state in which they are located consents to identify the action level from which to begin, in presence or not of structural elements (2) on which to reconstruct an appropriate reading system.

The material preserved is divided mainly for single intervention and therefore the various typologies of document produced by a specific operation are placed in a unitary way (3) The variants to this criterion of general nature regard mainly documents originated from maintenance operations effectuated in different places. Parallel to these two options, still remains valid the geographic criterion, namely the concentration of material resulting (deriving) from activities executed in the same site. Don't be missing documentary groupings deposited in absence of a connective matrix of any type.

2. Methodology

It is useful to premise, before affronting the arguments relating to a possible (new) classification system, the irrelevance in this specific context of the technical aspects connected to the IT structure of the database.

This is because the organizational architecture—therefore choices and modality relative to the disposition of data within an initial informatic container—becomes determining as mean of reading and comprehension of what is preserved. The final transfer of data into software suited to the complexity of the systemic setting is (becomes) the last act of a process defined previously.

The informatic distribution of data obtained from the material retained, photographs the documentary variability present, and renders available a wealth of information that reveal technical and historical aspects contained in the archive. Technical ones as pragmatic testimony of processes connected to the management of building patrimony. Historical ones as result of the valence acquired, over time, which elements (the documents) that reveal planning and administrative processes associated with the past.

The constitutive elements of the database are manifold and integrated as far as possible. (Appendix 1). The fields in which the information relating to every documenti is reported are 17 (seventeen). The following list reports their attributions in synthetic mode.

Table 1. Informatic Spaces and Their Attributions

Fields	Description of content
Field 1	Three-letter code relative to the different seats of University
Field 2	Brief description of the project from which derives the document
Field 3	Localization (first indication)
Field 4	Localization (second indication)
Field 5	Code relative to the folder in which the document is inserted
Field 6	Document type
Field 7	Document category
Field 8	Document identification
Field 9	Description of document
Field 10	Variable data
Field 11	Date of document
Field 12	Year of document
Field 13	First indication associated with the creation of document
Field 14	Variable data
Field 15	Second indication associated with the creation of document
Field 16	Collocation (Closet)
Field 17	Collocation code (closet/folder/document)

The schematization proposed in Table 1 also serve as itinerary by following to introduce the spaces coded numerically from 1 to 17. The description of every sector will proceed through the natural numerical sequentiality keeping into account, in any case, the relationships intercurrent between the different fields (4) (Appendix 1).

Table 2, shown below, subdivides the diverse seats (locations) of the University with a code (abbreviation) of three letters (field 1). Every acronym includes the material generated by activities involving structures placed (positioned) within the seat/campus indicated (5) (Appendix 2/Table 4) It is the first visible data on the generic localization associated with the content of the documents stored. The detailed information concerning the localization of technical interventions (new projects, maintenance services) are reported in spaces 3 and 4 in a comprehensive manner, with specific indications relating to campus/area/edifice involved (Appendix 2/Table 4).

Table 2. Codes and Relative Localities

Acronym	City/campus
CIS	MILANO CITTA'STUDI
BOV	MILANO BOVISA
COM	COMO
LEC	LECCO
PIA	PIACENZA
CRE	CREMONA
MAV	MANTOVA
LIN	LINATE
SED	DIFFERENT LOCATIONS (SEDI DIVERSE)

The Table 4 shown in Appendix 2 is also useful to recall some cases relating to space 2. Every operation may include a variable quantity of documents. This depends on the intervention extent (renovation, maintenance) from which they have been created. A maintenance intervention of contained dimensions will most likely produce a limited series of documents in numerical terms, while a functional recovery project regarding a part of edifice will have a major consistence in this sense. The brief description used in this space (field 2) regarding the technical intervention in general terms, and is extracted from the material produced by the different professional and administrative actions.

The proposed system has been formulated for the reordering of material generated by projectual activity, maintenance and management of the construction patrimony of an Italian university. It is evident how a technical archive presents distinctive peculiarities not findable in Funds of diverse nature. The cohabitation of specialist documents, cartography and papers of various types suggests a practice that takes into consideration the significant heterogeneity related to contents as well as the different typological matrix of which acts and documents are a part of. Therefore, some categories have been created and introduced by spaces 6 and 7 of which the list is reported in essential form, in the table

below.

Table 3. Categories of Classification of Archive Material

Field 6	Field 7
Text document	Certification (Attestazione)
Text document	Communication (Comunicazione)
Text document	Accounting (Contabilità)
Text document	Contractual document (Contratto)
Text document	Legal and regulatory acts
Text document	Generic documents (Documenti vari)
Text document	Technical documents (Documenti tecnici)
Text document	Report (Relazione-Verbale)
Text document	Book material (Materiale librario)
Cartography	Plan (Pianta)
Cartography	Structural section (Sezione)
Cartography	Front (Prospetto)
Cartography	Planimetry (Planimetria)
Cartography	Graphic scheme (Schema)
Cartography	Technical drawing (Disegno)
Cartography	View (Perspective-Axonometry)
Cartography	Picture (Immagine)

The subdivision and variability of the information connected to the single element are the consequence of an organisational structure finalized to the dispersion of data in multiple fields (spaces). This to simplify the insert operations of data and avoid an excessive concentration of information in the single digital space (field).

After having outlined the attributions of fields from one to seven (6), it is possible to shift the attention to subsequent spaces. The descriptive summary (synthesis) reproposed in table 1 relating to space eight speaks of document identification and various information. This means a space destinated primarily to different types of coding assigned to preserved material (correspondence-reports-drawings, etc.); it allows their recognition and also becomes useful for additional data. Appendix 2, in addition to reporting examples relating to field eight (Table 5) it is useful to introduce the space encoded as field nine (Tables 5/6) intended for the description of the document. Whilst in the other fields the visible information is essentially associated with the document, in this space the description in terms of content emerges. Therefore, its relevance as an information tool relating to what is treated. The fields that precede the ninth one serve to highlight its different belongings in terms of documentary grouping, geographic placement, category and so on. Thus, they anticipate the system in which the document is inserted, simplifying the reading of what is reported, the reasons for which it was produced, the connective network in which it is integrated.

The fields successive to ninth, from tenth to seventeenth, recall information of a different nature, complementary to the other spaces and conclusive on the document. After having briefly outlined their functions in table 1, it is opportune to highlight their finalities in a more efficient manner.

The interchangeability of data conferred to fields ten and fourteen (Appendix 2), consents a major adaptability of the database to the characteristics of material object of reordering. The secondary indications (7) findable, sometimes, in the spaces mentioned (Appendix 2 Table 6) simplify the accessibility to what sought and complete the knowing framework associated to the preserved material.

Indications regarding the dates (of documents) affect fields (spaces) eleven and twelve, with the format day/month/year in the first one and only the recall of the year, in the second one. The conferral of two options has allowed to insert a generic reference (year) to material without a specific date.

The citations connected to physical or juridical persons which appear on the different types of material (drawings, reports, correspondence, etc.) are legible in fields thirteen and fifteen. In these two spaces, the citations regard any entity (institution, company, etc) visible in the documents independently from the position detected by the same one. Consequently, for instance, the schematic representation of an electrical system may report the material executor of the graphic elaborate, the company responsible for the installation or even the client (customer). The inclusion in the two fields of a subject involved in the formation process of the document depends on its presence (regardless of role) on the same one. The priority is given to the author if visible, alternatively it will be inserted recognizable options involved in the document production in material or conceptual form and anyway in substantial mode (8).

The part pertinent to the positioning is the result of the different peculiarities verified during the analysis of the documentary complex The transformation of those that could be defined as physical characteristics of the archive in the pragmatic phase connected to retrieval (between cabinets and shelves) of what is researched. Fields 5 and 17 (Appendix 2/Tables 4-6) consent the identification, through alphanumeric codes, of the position in which the material is deposited. The first one in the recognition of the folder in which the document is inserted; the second one in the overall identification—through a code that considers the containers in dimensional sequence (closet/folder/document)—of collocative route.

3. Final Considerations

The classification system described above, relating to archival material produced by technical and projectual activities, becomes applicative and functional in presence of an appropriate software with informatic characteristics adhering to the different variables presented in this writ.

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Notes

Note 1. Building archive of Politecnico di Milano.

Note 2. The previous classification system of conserved material proposes a generic description formalized in a table in which synthetic information is reported. The scheme shows a subdivision of data in four fields as the following representative prospect:

Work number	Number assigned to work/intervention
Edifice	Number assigned to the building
Department	Name of the structure
Description	Specifications relating to the intervention

Note 3. An example, could be a restructuration related to locals positioned in the same edifice. Both administrative acts and technical material are deposited in the same place (closet/shelf).

Note 4. This signifies that fields connected by similar functions (of the same type) are described independently of their numerical sequence.

Note 5. The development of the University network with a headquarters and various external poles has influenced, in part, the aspects related to deposit and collocation of material originating from activities connected to the expansion/management of the diverse locations.

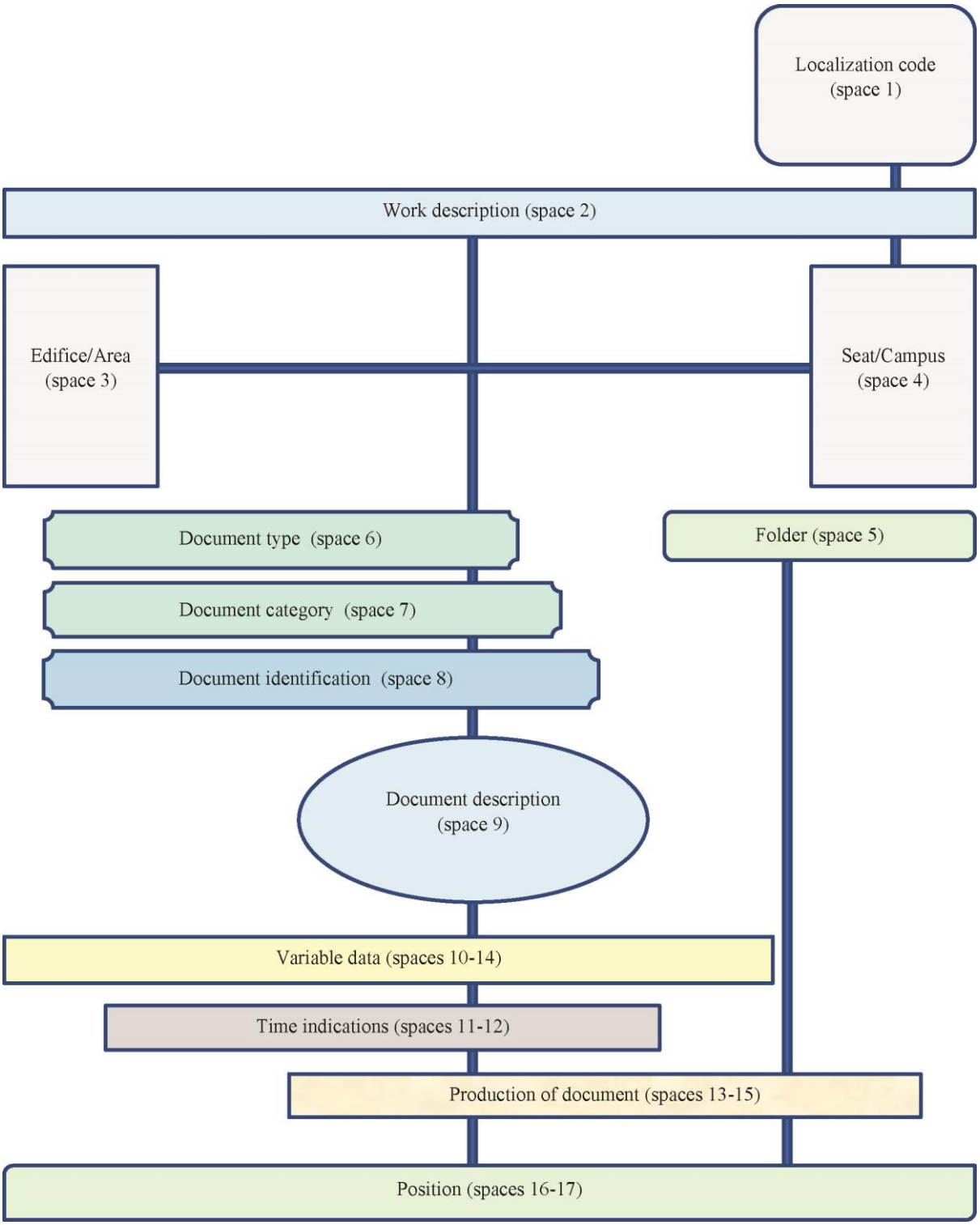
Note 6. The field 5 comes described in the part concerning the collocation of material.

Note 7. The expression secondary indications may include additional information that is not easy to integrate. Documents placed in a classic container could, in turn, find itself divided (fractionated) into ulterior minor folders (probably numbered) because of elements with single specificities. The numbered minor folder becomes a peripheral information insertable in spaces to variable content.

Note 8. The possible alternatives are the author, the receiver, the subjects involved in any form and present in the document (drawing, analysis, report, letter, etc.)

Appendix

Appendix 1. Synoptic Scheme: Colors Identify the Connections between Spaces



Appendix 2. Tables 4-5-6 Applicative Examples of Digital Spaces (Fields) and Related Contents

Table 4

ID	field 1	field 2	field 3	field 4	field 5
262	CIS	Recovery and adaptation of locals (premises) situated on the attic floor of the edifice denominated “Station of the paper”	Station of the paper	Milano Leonardo	STC.A
634	COM	Extraordinary maintenance, distributive modification of interior spaces and realization of mezzanine at CERT (Center of Excellence for research and technological and organizational transfer)	CERT	Como	COM.A
1834	BOV	Department of information technology for support of didactic and scientific activity of Ateneo. Project of remaking of the electrical distribution in the classrooms in Bovisa seat	Cosenz edifice	Milano Bovisa	INV.B

Table 5

ID	field 7	field 8	field 9	field 10
3083	Communication	Mbel	Installation of heating system in the edifice destinated to Technical Department. Authorization and estimate request	Institute of Electrotechnics and electronics
3084	Plan	drawing 835	Arrangement of telephone system equipment. Ground floor plan (1:20)	Siemens equipments type ST4-24V 15/90/24-1CL
3085	Graphic scheme	Drawing 5005	Project of new electrical and special plants. Scheme type: blocks	Institute of Industrial engineering
3086	Planimetry	Annex b	Leonardo-Bassini-Bonardi. General planimetry with Bassini area in evidence	Three copies

Table 6

ID	field 9	field 10	field 12	field 14	field 17
2479	Bovisa-General planimetry of the infrastructures	1:1000	*	Copy of drawing	C4.BOV/K.0313
2608	CNPM Linate-New electric cabin. Plan and sections (1:50)	Cabin of transformation	1969	*	AB.LIN/C.0139

2624	Staircase of edifice 4 – General planimetry with technical interventions (1: 100)	Executive project	1994	Work 939	E.ASC1.00B1
2734	Edifice 14-Distribution scheme of lighting system (plant)	*	1987	Provisional certificate - Law 818/1984	AF.ASI9.NOP14E12