

Portuguese municipal archives on Facebook: “Like!”

[Ana Margarida Dias da Silva](#) looks at how social media such as Facebook is currently used by local municipal archives in Portugal, and the potential for future public engagement using such tools.

Introduction

The growing use of Web-based social platforms by archives, libraries and museums has raised interest in the analysis of Facebook use by the Portuguese municipal archives on their dissemination of and access to archival information.

The Portuguese municipal archives, responsible for the management of documentation and information produced and received by the city councils, as well as for access and outreach, are theoretically closer to the interests of citizens. This was the main reason for the choice of this type of archive as the object of this study.

The search on the Web 2.0 platform was done using the terms “municipal archive”, “municipal historical archive” and “municipal photographic archive”, in the first stage in November 2013, and in a second stage in April 2014. The paper starts, therefore, with the search for a definition of the Web 2.0 and Archives 2.0 concepts; then, an analysis of the presence of the Portuguese municipal archives on Facebook and the way the archives makes use of the social media tool in the outreach and access of archival information. These were the main objectives of the study.

An approach to the Archive 2.0 concept

Web 2.0, a concept that appears for the first time in 2004, is characterized by a change of attitude, more than a new technology (Alvim, 2011: 16), where active and collective participation are present in the creation, edition and publication of content. In fact, for Margaix Arnal (2007: 100) the real revolution is in the change of attitude in which users are no longer information consumers but participatory elements in the development and management of content. Limiting content to static HTML pages, when PDF documents, Word and other formats are already available (Acuña e Agenjo, 2005: 409), is not valid for the beginning of the 21st century. The connection to users, no longer passive actors but interveners in the process of knowledge construction, has had a great impact on the development of new services (Margaix Arnal, 2007: 95). The Web 2.0 concept changed the way institutions working with information act, since it includes a philosophy of openness, inclusion, tolerance of disorder and valorization of the “amateur” contribution (Carver, 2008: 3). More than the physical organization of documents, information is increasingly based on a net concept and circulation of knowledge (Cerdá Díaz, 2002a: 8), since accessing information is important regardless of the medium, physical location and holder.

For Adam Crymble (2010: 128)

Web 2.0 is not limited to expensive or technologically advanced services; neither does it have to involve tagging. An archive need not adopt all Web 2.0 services to offer an effective, web-based outreach program. There are many tools under the Web 2.0 umbrella that can help to serve the mandate of an archive without requiring heavy investments of time or money. These tools fall under the blanket terms of “social media” or “social networking,” which refer to an increasing number of online services, almost all free.

For O’Reilly (2005), the Web 2.0 applications are those that take advantage of the intrinsic features of the Web in a permanent upgrade of services, and improve as many people use it, including individual users, who offer their own data to be reused by others in ‘an architecture of participation’ net.

The relationship between archives, the Internet and the Social Web is unavoidable and the professionals who work with information must pay attention to all of these phenomena. According to Cerdá Díaz (2002a: 5), "Internet nos obliga por tanto a una gran esfuerzo de adaptación si queremos ocupar el lugar que nos corresponde en esta nueva geografía de la difusión y acceso a la información". The increase of the availability of archives in a digital format is also the result of the idea that information, which was previously available to a limited number of researchers, is now accessible to a large group (Samouelian, 2009: 43).

The collaborative tools available for Web 2.0 changed the way information is outreached and accessed, especially due to the participation of users, and archives, libraries and museums will tend to develop the ability to fit the cyberculture reality and to follow the evolution of technology.

Unlike other cultural domain, the policy of outreach of archival services on the web is largely focused on the value of documents. So, the archives’ services do not have the particular will to bring, via Social Web, users to the physical reading rooms as opposed to museums, which use the Web to increase attendances in their institutions. It is, therefore, possible to build a true massive dissemination of fonds and begin a collaborative scientific work like this, long distance. (Moirez, 2012: 191).

The Internet started a true revolution related to information access and use (Cerdá Díaz, 2002a: 1) and archives and archivists should take advantage of the possibilities that the Internet and collaborative technology offers. "The unstoppable urgency of the so called information society is a unique opportunity to give prestige to the archival function, since information is increasingly intended to be converted into a source of knowledge." (Alberch Fugueras, 2000: 6).

In recent studies, 48.8% of the Portuguese population over 15 years old is believed to use the Internet, and individuals who finished secondary education (88%) and university education (94%) are among those who regularly use the Internet (Leitão, 2011: 108), either for leisure or work.

The Internet is thus considered a primary vehicle for information communication and dissemination, and the archives that make content available on the Web are becoming more so (Cerdá Díaz, 2008: 153). Currently, Web 2.0 development has made available to archives a set of collaborative tools and platforms that allow more interaction and

new opportunities for institutional promotion (Nogueira, 2010: 1). The tools made available by Web 2.0 can be used by information professionals, since the ubiquity of the Internet allows greater visibility to a larger number of users, and being able to involve the public is a way of bringing archives out of the darkness and showing them as centres of culture, heritage and social concerns (Sinclair, 2011: 1), since the work developed by archives aims to meet the information needs of a countries' citizen (Sinclair, 2011: 6). Summing it up in a sentence: "Web 2.0 is about connecting people (Facebook, MySpace, Ning), in an interactive (instant messaging, multimedia) collaborative workplace (slideshare, flickr, technorati, tagging) that everyone can edit (wikis, blogs)" (Crowley, 2009: 1).

If, as António and Silva (2011: s.p.) state, "a disponibilização da informação através de guias, inventários ou catálogos deixou de ser a forma privilegiada de comunicação» by archives, the Internet allows the combination of «funções próprias da descrição e gestão dos documentos de arquivo com soluções de gestão de conteúdos através da nova visão dos Arquivos 2.0". So, archives open up to the participation and collaboration of users, when they choose to adopt the Social Web's technological tools.

Theimer (2011) proposes a broader definition of Archives 2.0, that is, it goes beyond the mere use of the Web 2.0 applications. This author actually establishes a comparison between Archives 1.0 and Archives 2.0 to highlight the changes that have occurred, presenting an opposition between, "the qualities of the present and future that I'm calling Archives 2.0 and general characteristics of Archives 1.0 that represent a rapidly fading past":

Table 1 Differences between Archives 1.0 and 2.0 according to Theimer (2011: 60-65)

Archives 2.0	Archives 1.0
Open	Not Closed
Transparent	Not Opaque
User Centered	Not Record Centered
Facilitator	Not Gatekeeper
Attracting New Users	Not Relying on Users to Find Them
Shared Standards	Not Localized
Practice Metrics and Measurement	Not "Unmeasurable" Results
Iterative Products	Not "Perfect" Products
Innovation and Flexibility	Not Adhering to Tradition
Technology Savvy	Not Technology Phobic
Value Doing	Not Knowing

In her paper, Nogueira (2010: 1) presents the impact and benefits of both Archives 1.0 and 2.0, as well as the resistance and disadvantages in the use of these tools. This author states that the use of these Web 2.0 applications affects the way services and their products are accessible to the public and that they benefit the image of archives through greater recognition from the public and accessing more diverse users.

Several authors already quoted consider the use of Web 2.0 collaborative tools as a way to increase the number of users and a mechanism for adding value to collections. These tools affect the way information is made available to the public and how the service is delivered. Nogueira (2010: 2) mentions some resistance due to a lack of knowledge and the non recognition of these tools as 'official' or valid applications. Nonetheless, more advantages than obstacles are acknowledged, such as their free and immediate access (ex: Facebook, Blogs, Wiki) which, because of the ease involved in editing, do not need IT support.

Portuguese municipal archives on Facebook

Social networks like Facebook are defined by the creation of public profiles of natural or legal persons, public or private, who share information, communicate and talk with other users in a network (Alvim, 2011: 18).

The users of this social network make an informed option to create a public profile and an account (Crymble, 2010: 129). In Portugal, this is the favourite platform of 4 billion users and is used mostly by adults (Leitão, 2011: 112). In the same work, Paulo Leitão states that Facebook is mostly used by 25 to 34 year old people, also pointing out a growth in the 45 to 54 and the 18 to 24 age groups, meaning a total of 30 000 new users in 2010 (Leitão, 2011: 111-112). In Spain, for instance, 4.7 billion users between 16 and 45 years old have a profile on a social network, and the major part of Facebook users are university students (Margaix Arnal, 2008: 592).

From the methodology point of view, in order to identify the Portuguese municipal archives that use Facebook, the terms 'municipal archive', 'municipal historical archive' and 'municipal photographic archive' were searched on this platform. The results are sparse: among the 308 Portuguese municipal archives, only 9 (2.92%) could be found on Facebook at the time of the search. They are Oliveira de Azeméis (district of Aveiro), Guimarães (district of Braga), Figueira da Foz (district of Coimbra), Alenquer and Lisboa (district of Lisboa), Valongo (district of Porto), Torres Novas (district of Santarém), Ponte de Lima (district of Viana do Castelo) and Mangualde (district of Viseu).

In his study, Crymble (2010: 135) identified 104 archives with Facebook pages and also 64 archives and 27 archivists using Twitter. The author studied the Twitter and Facebook usage by the archival community (archives and archivists) between August and September 2009, using the terms "archives", "archive" or "archivist", and found a total of 195 institutions and individuals. For the French scope, Pauline Moirez and Édouard Bouyé studied the use of the collaborative Web by the public departmental (101) and municipal (36 682) archives. Only 13 had a Facebook account, 6 a Twitter

account and about 20 services developed collaborative projects of indexing documents and image identification (Moirez, 2012: 187). 16 new projects of collaborative indexing were expected for 2012 (Bouyé, 2012: 9).

According to the Portuguese results, 3 municipal archives have profiles (Figueira da Foz, Alenquer and Mangualde) and the remainder have institutional pages. In order to join, the creation of a Facebook account is required, which can be a profile (mainly used by private individuals who add 'friends' and keep an updated profile sharing information, images, videos, and in which levels of privacy can be defined) or a page (very similar to a profile but especially directed to institutions due to its self-promotion features). The major difference between them is that Facebook pages are accessible to the public and can be seen by anyone who has a Facebook account and not only by pre authorised friends, which does not happen with an individual profile (Crymble, 2010: 131). For this work, these two situations will be treated equally, since analysing the way Facebook is used to access and outreach archival information is what matters. Likewise, the 'Likes' on institutional pages or the 'Friends' on profiles are an example of the archives' popularity on Facebook, as well as the number of followers and interested people in the content that is made available.

According to research, joining of the identified institutions to Facebook has been progressive and mainly in the second decade of the 21st century. The Municipal Archive Alfredo Pimenta in Guimarães is the oldest on Facebook (September 2, 2010), followed by the municipal archives of Ponte de Lima (December 13, 2011) and Oliveira de Azeméis (February 17, 2012), the Photographic Archive of Figueira da Foz (October 2013) and more recently the Municipal Archive of Lisbon (February 26, 2014). The remainder of the municipal archives does not mention the Facebook joining date but they joined by at least September 2013.

The most popular archive at the time data were collected was the Municipal Historical Archive of Valongo with 4,492 'Likes' on its Facebook page. It is important to mention that the 'Municipal Arxiu of Barcelona' had 1,671 'Likes' on the same date. The 'Alenquer Archive Museum' is the second most popular with 1,085 followers and the Municipal Archive of Torres Novas is the third with 1,071 Likes'. These are the only archives with more than a thousand followers at the time of the search. The remainder have a few hundred: Photographic Archive of Figueira da Foz - 815; Municipal Archive Alfredo Pimenta - 761; Ponte de Lima's - 675; Lisbon's - 641; Mangualde's - 575; and finally Oliveira de Azeméis' - 207.

In terms of the content, at the time searches were done the archives of Guimarães, Lisbon, Oliveira de Azeméis, Ponte de Lima and Valongo had on their Facebook page their mission, information about their services, a brief presentation and institutional contacts. Besides gathering, safeguarding, preserving and treating the documentation/information, outreach work was referred as a priority by the archives. The Municipal Photographic Archive of Figueira da Foz and the Municipal Archive of Torres Novas only showed institutional contacts and the municipal archives of Alenquer and Mangualde did not have information about the institution, and did not present their purpose or aims on their Facebook pages.

The following section focuses on how municipal archives use Facebook to develop outreach work and provide access to the archival information they manage.

The Municipal Archive Alfredo Pimenta and the Municipal Archive of Ponte de Lima establish a connection between the archive's Facebook page and the website, publicising new search tools and documents which have been described and made available through a link that connects the two platforms. The Municipal Archive Alfredo Pimenta, for instance, on sharing 'Highlights' and 'Historical Documents', takes the visitor to the archive's webpage through a link on Facebook. The Municipal Archive of Ponte de Lima shares on Facebook virtual exhibits available on the archive's website.

The municipal archive of Oliveira de Azeméis promotes the "My dummy will make history" initiative, which aims to gather dummies of the locals and Facebook is used to promote it to the community. The municipal archive of Valongo has the "Document of the Month" (with a link directing to the city council's portal). This archive presents the context of every available image, whether "Document of the Month", photos or albums of visits to the archive, educational activities and exhibitions that have taken place, and also a commemoration of the International Day of Archives. The municipal archive of Torres Novas promoted the "One Month, One Poem", by José Lopes dos Santos" (with a link to the document and the reference code) in 2013. These documents, which were made available every month, related to the 45th anniversary of the municipal stadium.

According to observations, all these services use Facebook mainly for sharing photos (single photos or albums, with or without archival context and reference code) which mirror the initiatives of the educational service and cultural extension sector, documental exhibitions and lectures on commemorative days, such as the anniversary of the archive or the International Day of Archives. The page is also a means of publicising activities of the archive or events related to archives and Archival Science. Some textual or photographic documents are sporadically presented with a description, reference code or sharing of information related to the city, its inhabitants, history and heritage.

The analysis shows that no archive uses Facebook for collaborative construction of knowledge, and this feature of Web 2.0 could engage Internet users in identifying and indexing photographs or helping to describe and transcribe documents. For example, the Municipal Archive of Barcelona, on its Facebook page, shows pictures and asks for help in identifying people and places. Another example is the Municipal Archives of Angoulême, on whose Facebook page, "lancent un appel à la population concernant le prêt de documents divers: photographies, affiches, tracts, bons de réquisitions, tickets de rationnement, correspondances, laisser-passer..." to the organization of an exhibition about the 70th anniversary of the town's liberation during World War II. The private documentation, correctly described and dated between 1940 and 1945, complements the information in the Municipal Archives of Angoulême. These are two examples of the engagement of the citizens in the construction of knowledge.

Conclusion

We may conclude, according to our study of identifying and analysing the Facebook accounts of the Portuguese municipal archives, that this Social Web platform is not currently of much interest to the 308 archives: according to the collected data, only 9 joined this platform. Facebook is mostly used to publicise initiatives related to archival information and initiatives organized by archives or, less frequently, to share findings.

However, the idea of participative archives, in which Internet users and non-professionals' knowledge and skills are used in collaborative indexing for the identification of images, that is, for a better understanding of archives and information access (Moirez, 2012; Theimer, 2011), is far from being a reality in the Portuguese municipal archives, according to our collected data. If these services are theoretically closer to citizens, virtual closeness in a digital environment should also result from this physical proximity, in which Web 2.0 collaborative tools would contribute to the sharing of knowledge and the use of collective intelligence. Nonetheless, concerning Facebook, this does not occur; that is, users may 'like' a page and its contents, may share and comment, but they are not invited to participate in their description, indexation and identification, characteristic features of Web 2.0 and archives 2.0.

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Date published: Monday, 8 June 2015