



## Ranganathan's Documentation in Opposition to European Documentation: a Position based on Library Science

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The European discourse of Documentation was shaped without significant opposition, with the exception of Ranganathan's critique. He opposed the idea that there was a need for a new field, instead placing Documentation within the scope of Library Science. With the aim of contributing to the epistemological debate in Library and Information Science, this article presents the contrast between Ranganathan's discourse and that of European Documentation, highlighting the defence that Ranganathan made of the theoretical space of Library Science. We conduct a contrastive reading on the works *Traité de Documentation* by Otlet, *Documentation* by Bradford, and *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* by Briet, to delineate the European discourse, and *Documentation: Genesis and Development* by Ranganathan. Our analysis identifies the common ground between the discourses based on their subjects, objects, and processes, and finds that there are more similarities than differences between the discourses, this supports Ranganathan's criticism that Documentation is not a separate discipline but rather a practice within Library Science. We conclude that the Indian librarian made a strong defence of the epistemological space of Library Science.

**Keywords:** Documentation; Library Science; Discursive tensions; Ranganathan.

### Introduction

Among his many other contributions to Library and Information Science (LIS), Ranganathan developed a theory of Documentation that has some affinities with, but also exhibits striking differences from, the tradition of European Documentation that emerged in the first half of the 20th century. The epistemological tensions between these two different perspectives on Documentation have not hitherto been properly explored and discussed in the literature of LIS. On the European side, there is a discourse that is strongly articulated through treatises, such as those by Paul Otlet (from 1934), Samuel Bradford (from 1947) and Suzanne Briet (from 1951), that, with due regard for their differences, converge in the task of consolidating Documentation as an emerging and autonomous field. On the Indian side, in contradistinction to the idea of the emergence of a new field, there is the vision of Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan, who positions Documentation as an activity inherent to Library Science.

Contrary to the European trend, which regarded Documentation as a new field and saw the documentalist as a distinct professional from the

librarian, Ranganathan, in the work *Documentation: Genesis and Development* (published posthumously in 1973), argued that Documentation is a set of activities analogous to cataloguing and reference services, processes carried out by librarians. In the European discourse, it is possible to see the intention of establishing a new field through the perspective of Otlet, who stated that Documentation was a scientific movement within Bibliology. In addition to Otlet, Bradford defended the emergence of the new field by defining Documentation as the process of collecting and classifying by subject all the records of new observations and discoveries coming from the scientific and industrial spheres, emphasising scientific and specialised journals. Still within the European context, Briet was concerned with scientific, industrial, commercial, administrative activities, and more, and asserted that the main function of documentation services was to produce secondary documents (derived from primary documents) such as translations, abstracts, bulletins, files, catalogues, bibliographies, photographs, microfilms, literature reviews, and encyclopaedias, among others.

In contrast to this European perspective, which sought to emancipate Documentation from the scope of Library Science, Ranganathan attributed greater scientific authority to Library Science and approached Documentation solely as a library-related activity. We discuss this discursive tension in this article through a 'contrastive reading' of the following works: *Traité de Documentation* by Otlet (we used the 2018 Brazilian edition)<sup>1</sup>, *Documentation* by Bradford (we used the 1961 Brazilian edition)<sup>2</sup> and *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* by Briet (we used the 2016 Brazilian edition)<sup>3</sup>, on one side, and *Documentation: Genesis and Development* (by Ranganathan)<sup>4</sup> on the other. 'Contrastive reading' is our term for referring to an approach allowing us the freedom to read, interpret, and compare the mentioned works in their broader aspects, without committing to a detailed analysis focused on the observation of every item in each work. Ultimately, the aim is to examine how Ranganathan, practically alone, confronted the European Documentation discourse in order to defend the epistemological domain of Library Science.

The article is divided into four sections that sequentially present: Documentation from the European perspective; Documentation from Ranganathan's point of view; Ranganathan's defence of the epistemological domain of Library Science; and final considerations.

### **The perspective of European Documentalists: Documentation as an Autonomous Field**

Documentation had its guiding principle rooted in bibliographic activity, but acquired its own terminology and body of literature from the early decades of the 20th century, most notably through the contributions of Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine. Documentation was theoretically defined by the publication of the *Traité de Documentation* (from 1934), a work that systematised a practice that had been applied and refined for at least four decades in the European context. Even before the publication of the *Traité*, the term "documentation" had already been used to refer to the activities and productions of the group of documentalists mainly organised around Otlet<sup>5</sup>.

One of the key projects undertaken in the field of Documentation was the conception of the Universal Bibliographic Repertory (RBU), a catalogue composed of bibliographic information cards<sup>6</sup>. Its aim was to compile all of humanity's intellectual production, with the ultimate goal of providing universal access to

recorded knowledge. It served as a tool to update specialists about the most recent developments in their research areas.

This international movement began with the First International Conference of Bibliography held in 1895, during which the International Institute of Bibliography (IIB) was founded, with its headquarters in Brussels. Later, in 1931, it was renamed the International Institute for Documentation (IID), then the International Federation for Documentation (FID) in 1938, and, since 1986, it has been known as the International Federation for Information and Documentation<sup>7</sup>.

Otlet's *Traité* aimed to establish a new and comprehensive scientific field called Bibliology, of which Documentation would encompass a significant portion of the methods and intellectual operations. The fundamental role of Documentation was to operate in science and culture by collecting detailed and standardised information records, with the aim of systematising and making them available through a central hub that would coordinate an extensive network, which, in turn, would serve as the interface for potential users to interact with the information system<sup>1</sup>.

For Otlet, Documentation involved working on documentary records, whether they were books, articles, photographs, historical artefacts, or others. From this perspective, a document was defined by its documentary "function" rather than its "form". For this reason, the notion of document or book should be understood in a broad sense. Therefore, Documentation, as a series of operations that acts upon a document, occurs within the chain of development of the latter, involving various institutions and professions<sup>8</sup>.

In this context, Documentation is understood as a collective effort in the treatment of books, which should occur through international cooperation in order to make information indexing and retrieval processes more precise. The intention was to create, from the accumulation of "facts" gleaned from writings gathered together in the RBU a "universal book" that would enable a centre for processing and accessing information, grounded in documentary practices<sup>1,9,10</sup>. For this purpose, in addition to the techniques traditionally applied by bibliographers and librarians, the involvement of documentalists in the development of new tools focused on abstracting and synthesising the subjects of various documents would

be necessary<sup>10</sup>, and would ensure the fluidity of information and its mobility between its original sources and documentary products, thus driving the diversification of secondary and tertiary sources.

In agreement with Otlet, Bradford also regarded Documentation as a cooperative and altruistic field centred on access to recorded information, with a focus on advancing society. However, unlike Otlet, Bradford preferred to define Documentation as a practical art, the art of collecting, classifying, and making accessible records of all forms of intellectual activity. While Otlet clearly intended to establish Documentation as a new scientific field and Bradford approached it more as a technical endeavour, it's evident that there are convergences between both authors. According to Bradford<sup>2</sup>, Documentation emerged from the need to organise the ways of acquiring, preserving, and providing access to information of all kinds, a concern also present in Otlet's *Traité*. Similarly to Otlet, Bradford also emphasised the role of classification, even going as far as to state that classification was the fundamental basis of the documentation process. Likely for this reason, Shera and Egan<sup>11</sup> claimed that Bradford heavily based his view of Documentation on the characteristics of the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC), a classification system conceived by Otlet.

Another similarity between Bradford and Otlet lies in the emphasis they place on the results that the work of documentalists should produce, namely secondary and tertiary documents concerning primary documents. This notion is also clear in Suzanne Briet's work.

Regarding the distinction between Library Science and Documentation, Bradford<sup>2</sup> stated that Documentation had a broader and more specialised nature than Library Science. In his view, it required specialised study because, while Library Science focused more on the treatment of books, Documentation dealt with information from journal articles, pamphlets, reports, patents, and so on. Due to the varying levels of specificity of documents that needed to be addressed, according to Bradford, Library Science would not achieve the technical precision required by specialised researchers in various fields of knowledge.

Similarly to Otlet, who in the realm of knowledge organisation preferred to refer to 'smaller units of information' (concepts, facts, and evidence found within texts)<sup>12,13</sup> rather than to works, Bradford

believed that the work of a documentalist should delve into specific aspects of original information and make them accessible to a specialised audience. Regarding the specialised audience that Documentation should serve, Bradford<sup>14</sup> directly referenced researchers in the scientific and industrial fields. This focus differs from that of Otlet, who, being universal in scope, envisioned making accessible any and all records of knowledge produced by humanity to any and all interested persons. Bradford's focus was indeed on the records of new observations and discoveries originating from the scientific and industrial spheres. For this reason, he gave prominence to scientific and specialised journals. Most likely, Bradford followed the trend of knowledge specialisation, which, during the early decades of the 20th century, was already emerging as a central aspect of indexing in England<sup>15</sup>.

Although Bradford emphasised that the work of documentalists required specificities that Library Science did not address, it is worth noting that, when he describes the work of Documentation, there is an evident emphasis on processes typically associated with librarianship, such as classification, indexing, preparation of summaries, and information services. The difference seems to be solely in the level of specificity or comprehensiveness of these functions, since, in his treatise, Bradford highlights actions such as analytical summary services, the creation of subject indexes for journals, specialised information services in science and technology, and planning for scientific documentation. Thus, it does not seem unreasonable to claim that Bradford's Documentation bears a striking resemblance to a potential specialised Library Science. However, it is in Otlet's vision of an autonomous Documentation that Bradford finds support to advocate for the emergence of a new field and to help strengthen the discourse of Documentation in 20th-century Europe.

The fact that both Otlet and Bradford recognized that the primary value of documentation work was directed towards the original content (facts, concepts, evidence, entities, and so on) conveyed by documents, regardless of the type of media, did not prevent them from showing a certain preference for two specific types of documents: books in the case of Otlet and journals in the case of Bradford. It is important to highlight that the book was the archetypal image of the document for Otlet, since he did refer to the idealised form of document as "book". However, it

must be remembered that one of the relatively innovative features of the RBU and other "repertories" in the Mundaneum was that they included bibliographic information about articles and "smaller" works as well. Thus, the preference was at the level of discourse, though it did not carry over into practice.

Unlike either of them, Suzanne Briet seems to have expanded the notion of document, going beyond the evidential aspect that the Latin tradition attributed to documents (documents for consultation and proof). Briet<sup>16</sup> stated that a star in space is not a document, but its photograph placed and described in a museum of Astronomy, for example, is indeed a document. Similarly, an animal in nature is not a document, but when placed and described in a zoo, for instance, it becomes a document. Here, we observe a fundamental characteristic in Briet's idea of a document: intentionality. In her view, intentionally setting a given entity as an exemplar of a phenomenon within a formal context of knowledge was the key element in transforming it from an object of interest into a document.

In the famous passage from her treatise, regarding a newly discovered antelope on the African continent, Briet<sup>17</sup> effectively illustrates her evolving understanding of Bibliography and Documentation. Indeed, Bibliography is a significant theme in Otlet's treatise as well, for whom its theoretical and practical evolution would give rise to the science of Documentation. Returning to Briet's passage, the antelope removed from nature and sent to a zoo could be reported by the media; it could become the subject of scientific study, for description and classification; it would be considered in Zoology classes; it might become a character in a movie; the sound of its voice could be recorded; when deceased, it would be stuffed and preserved in a museum; monographs would be written and published about it; information about it would be included in encyclopaedias, and so on. All of this could be catalogued in a library or listed in the catalogues of a bookstore or publisher, thereby becoming part of the bibliography of a country or a field of knowledge. All documents reproduced in drawings, paintings, statues, photographs, films, microfilms, etc., would be selected, summarised, described, and translated, giving rise to the 'documentary products'. In short, "The catalogued antelope is a primary document and the others are secondary or derived documents"<sup>18</sup>.

Briet<sup>3</sup> believed that the scientific method for researching and classifying books and manuscripts was the technique or the Science of Bibliography, which, in turn, would generate repertories known as bibliographies. With the increasing specialisation in the world of scientific knowledge, techniques and methods for dealing with the creation of specialised bibliographic repertories and increasingly specific documents had to become more refined. This paved the way for documentation centres and services, giving rise to a new profession – the documentalist<sup>19</sup>. We observe that, like Otlet and Bradford, Briet also understood that documentation service emerged as an advancement of bibliographic work due to the specialisation of knowledge and, consequently, the specialisation of the demands of researchers, professionals, scholars, and so forth. In summary, Briet<sup>193</sup>, when thinking about scientific, industrial, commercial, and administrative activities, among others, considered that the function of documentation services was to produce secondary documents (derived from primary documents) such as translations, abstracts, bulletins, files, catalogues, bibliographies, photographs, microfilms, literature reviews, encyclopaedias, and more.

However, beyond a new documentary practice driven by increasingly specific demands that the library profession at the time couldn't accommodate, as it was not the focus of Library Science, both Briet and Bradford contributed to the seminal effort of Otlet to institutionalise and solidify a new discourse that, according to them, had a theoretical and methodological foundation capable of shaping a new scientific discipline – Documentation. Briet and Bradford ended up voluntarily triangulating with Otlet, whom they considered the leading theoretician of Documentation, and so they helped create the framework that we are here referring to as European Documentation.

### **Ranganathan's view of Documentation: Documentation as a part of Library Science**

While, on one hand, Documentation was solidifying and institutionalising itself as a new scientific discipline within a European tradition, propelled by Otlet's seminal discourse and supported by the treatises of Bradford and Briet, Ranganathan<sup>4</sup> developed a distinct perspective that approached Documentation not necessarily as a discipline but rather as a library practice. Although rarely associated with epistemological discussions

related to Documentation, Ranganathan also contributed his understanding of this matter.

It's important to emphasise that Ranganathan's critique of the emancipatory discourse of Documentation was not without recognizing its necessity, especially within the fields of business and industry: "documentation is necessary today. For what reason? It is necessary in order to ensure adequate productivity in industry. Without documentation, productivity cannot be what it should be. You know what productivity is: output divided by input. It must be as great as possible"<sup>20</sup>.

Similarly, before challenging the European discourse that presented Documentation as a new scientific discipline, Ranganathan did not refrain from criticising the lag in Library Science regarding specialised environments; in his words:

"The library profession entered the field of Documentation rather too late. Therefore, they had to face a fight with the scientists already engaged in Documentation. To some extent I was a witness to that fight"<sup>21</sup>; moreover, he wrote: "For, till about two decades ago, a library scientist was satisfied merely with doing public library work – such as handing over whole books and whole periodicals and helping a reader in selecting this fiction or that fiction. They neglected the research workers and did not do anything of Documentation at all. Therefore the scientists thought, "we know how to help ourselves". The tradition in the university libraries, used by them, confirmed this attitude. For, the professors were dominating over the librarians and did not allow them to develop or to do anything other than the traditional library work"<sup>22</sup>.

However, even while recognizing the slowness with which Library Science had responded to the specific demands of the Documentation field, Ranganathan resisted joining or being swayed by the discourse that was already strongly underway in the European context. For him, Documentation was a generic term adopted to denote two, and only two, specialised activities: a) *documentation work* and b) *documentation service*. According to the Indian librarian, documentation work was directly related to the well-known task of cataloguing. However, while cataloguing was concerned with the creation of *bibliographical lists*, or more precisely, catalogues that described bibliographic information about books, documentation work would deal with the creation of *documentation lists*, which are lists that described

bibliographic information about micro-documents or parts of documents, such as book chapters, journal articles, and so on, and this might involve the preparation of summaries or not. Documentation lists would be aimed at specialist readers<sup>4</sup>.

Documentation service, in turn, would be directly linked to the well-known reference service, with the emphasis on micro-documents, just like in documentation work, to meet specialised information demands<sup>4</sup>. In this sense, Ranganathan was emphatic in stating that, just as documentation work was cataloguing work carried out with greater intensity (specialisation), documentation service was also reference service carried out with more specialised concerns. In other words, it is safe to say that, for Ranganathan, Documentation was a set of specialised activities already carried out by library professionals but, due to the growing specialised demand from users, it required greater specificity.

In this context, we have a notion of Documentation as a mere specialised activity carried out by librarians serving specialist readers who, in turn, demand specialised documents. Thus, Ranganathan<sup>4</sup> associated activities already performed in Library Science (cataloguing and reference services) and added new demands for specialisation relating to both the documents (micro-documents) and the users (specialists from various fields of knowledge and professional activities). In other words, Documentation activities are inseparable from library activities. In various passages of his book, Ranganathan<sup>4</sup> states that Documentation is an essential function of librarians.

Ranganathan imputed scientificity to bibliographic work and operability to documentary work within the expanded boundaries of Library Science itself. For the Indian librarian, library professionals, aware of their social role and function in the democratic process, not only as distributors of abstract knowledge conveyed in books but also agents embedded within an educational democracy, were professionals capable of performing the activities required by the emerging documentary universe. On this view, Library Science was the foundation that underpinned the knowledge and practices related to bibliographic and documentary work.

According to Amorim and Sales<sup>8</sup>, to consolidate his project, Otlet (and other adherents of European Documentation) needed to establish a new space for political and scientific discourse, in which different

countries were invited to collaborate on documentary actions. His scientific concern focused on Documentation, which was considered to be an evolutionary outgrowth of Bibliography. Ranganathan, on the other hand, took a more pragmatic approach to Documentation, stating that it was a set of activities analogous to library activities of cataloguing and reference services. This allows us to infer that on the basis of differing political and epistemological perspectives, the European tradition was dedicated to the discursive and institutional consolidation of Documentation, while Ranganathan was focused on questioning its autonomy from Library Science, and, especially, its status as a new scientific discipline. On the European side, especially with Otlet, there was a political and discursive strategy for the establishment of a theoretical-practical discipline that would occupy a new epistemological space, focused on social progress based on the provision of documentary records. Ranganathan's strategy, on the other hand, was to consolidate the epistemological space of Library Science, considering that the democratic and social process related to documentary work could and should be carried out by librarians who were aware of their role in society.

Ranganathan's primary objection to the assumptions of the European tradition of Documentation appears to be that its advocates based their arguments primarily on creating more specialised forms of library-related activities — a perspective that, by itself, could not provide a sufficiently robust theoretical basis for the establishment of a new discipline.

### **In search of the identities of Documentation: a contrastive reading/interpretation of European and Ranganathan's views**

Epistemological considerations are important because they provide a foundation for formulating the identities of disciplines or scientific fields. Rendón-Rojas<sup>24</sup> proposed that it is possible to find a common view of a discipline while respecting different worldviews (Gestalt). The author considers that the existence of different viewpoints regarding a particular discipline results from the structuring of the same reality but with different interpretive frameworks, something very similar to what *Gestalt* psychology<sup>25</sup> holds, which is that interpretation, perception and vision vary according to different traditions. In other words, identifying the 'common

image' within a discipline is a way of defining its own identity.

Rendón-Rojas<sup>24</sup> has recently argued that the common image of Information Science is formed by subjects, objects (materials), and processes coming from within the field itself. Recognizing the boundless scope of any epistemological discussion and following the lead provided by Rendón-Rojas, we here seek to identify the common image in the practice of Documentation. To this end, we have focused on the discursive tension between European Documentation and Ranganathan's Documentation, considering the subjects, objects, and processes they defined.

In this methodological context, we have examined the subjects, objects and processes defined in the discourses of European Documentation and Ranganathan's Documentation to draw some preliminary yet relevant inferences about what might constitute the identity of Documentation within the European tradition and in Ranganathan's perspective. To do this, we conducted a contrastive reading, which means an interpretative reading focusing on the broader aspects (subjects, objects, and processes), in order to compare, on one hand, the treatises of Otlet, Bradford, and Briet, and on the other hand, Ranganathan's 1973 book. In this way, we have been able to delineate their different views of Documentation.

First, it is important to highlight that, for Ranganathan, the discipline within which documentary work is done is Library Science, not Documentation. The hermeneutic horizon of the Indian librarian, unlike the horizon of the European documentalist theorists mentioned here, did not lead him to consider Documentation as a new field or discipline. On the contrary, in his work, Ranganathan often critiqued the coining of names of new professionals (documentalists) and a new field (Documentation), stating that the European tradition was merely inventing new names for things that already existed. About this point he wrote: The documentalists claim that they are doing a piece of work totally different from that of librarians. They do not at all want to call themselves as librarians. They do not want to include their subject in the term 'Library Science'. They even invent new names for their 'New Subject' such as 'Information Science' and 'Informatics'. They call themselves 'Information Scientists' in preference to 'Library Scientists'. This

creates a self-deception in them. They imagine that changing the label on a bottle necessarily means change in its contents<sup>26</sup>.

Here we do not seek to underscore the tension between the different perspectives of Documentation based on the understanding of different traditions (which would require an in-depth study of the particularities of European and Indian thought and culture); rather, we are endeavouring to understand the respective images of the documentary field projected by European Documentation and Ranganathan's Documentation, taking into account the variables that make up these images: subjects, objects, and processes.

Regarding the subjects of Documentation, we observe in Ranganathan's discourse a fundamental focus on librarians (the individuals executing the work and service of documentation) as well as on researchers/specialist users, especially in the context of industrial research: "without documentation, productivity cannot be what it should be"<sup>20</sup>; "Documentation is an essential function of the Library Scientist [...] To emphasise this new function and to fix it in the minds of librarians the term 'Documentalist' is used to describe the librarian at the moment when he is doing Documentation Work or Documentation Service"<sup>27</sup>.

In European Documentation, while there are occasional references to document producers, the documentalist (responsible for the techno-scientific work of documentation) and the researcher/specialist user are the most prominent subjects involved in the discipline. Among the European theorists of documentation, Otlet was the most generalist regarding the researcher/user, as his desire for documentary universalism imbued his thinking with a strong encyclopaedic appeal. This is evident, for example, in the development of the Universal Decimal Classification, through which Otlet aimed to create a universal repertory for the world of documents<sup>28</sup>. Bradford and Briet, on the other hand, directed their attention more towards specialists from scientific, industrial, commercial and administrative activities (in the case of Briet) and scientists (in the case of Bradford).

Regarding the objects (materials), Ranganathan, in his book *Social Bibliography or Physical Bibliography for Librarians*, provided a beautiful definition of what he understood as a book: "Men in the normal levels of mental existence communicate

with the aid of gestures, symbols, sounds, words, and written and printed books. The first four media of communication limit the range of time and space that can be covered. In time it is momentary and in space it is limited by visibility or audibility. The last two media make communication transcend the limitations of time and space. These media may be said to transform the thought to be communicated into physical entities called Books, and make it fit for transport across space and through time"<sup>29</sup>. On this view, the book is a kind of physical entity of communication that transcends the limits of time and space, unlike other means of communication such as gestures, symbols, sounds and images, which are constrained by the immediacy of time and space.

On one hand, Ranganathan<sup>4</sup> took books as the objects par excellence to be dealt with, though it is important to note that he also identified journals as objects requiring documentalist treatment. On the other hand, he held that, as a result of the documentation work, there were documentation lists (lists that described bibliographic information about micro-documents or parts of documents, such as book chapters, journal articles, etc.) and summaries<sup>23</sup>.

As for the objects involved in European Documentation, Otlet, even though many things could be documents for him, placed a significant emphasis on books, for books served as the archetypal image of documents for him. In Bradford's case, he gave scientific journals notable prominence, especially due to his concern for scientific discoveries and the specialisation of fields of knowledge. Briet, on the other hand, significantly broadened the concept of document by emphasising the intentionality of turning something into a document, focusing on the kinds of activity that transform an object into a document. Thus, in Briet's view, a document was anything that could be selected, summarised, described, and translated, such as a photograph of a star in a collection of astronomical images or a stone taken from a river and placed in a geology centre.

The objects resulting from European Documentation, for Otlet as well as for Bradford and Briet, were the documentary products characterised as secondary documents (derived from primary documents) such as translations, summaries, bulletins, files, catalogues, bibliographies, reports, microfilms, literature reviews, encyclopaedias, bibliographic repertories, and so on.

As regards processes, Ranganathan directly refers to the work and service of documentation, which are

Table 1 — Convergences and Divergences between the European and Ranganathan's Views of Documentation

|                                       | Similarities  |  | Differences |                |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|-------------|----------------|
|                                       | Ranganathan   | Europe   | Ranganathan | Europe         |
| Nature                                |   |  | Activity    | Discipline     |
| Subjects<br>(users and professionals) | Specialised Researchers   | Specialised Researchers  | Librarians  | Documentalists |
| Objects                               | Documents (books and journals)<br>Documentation lists                             | Documents (books, journals and objects of various kinds)<br>Documentary products   |             |                |
| Processes                             | Documentation work (cataloguing)<br>Documentation service<br>(reference service). | Description, translation, cataloguing,<br>revision, reporting, microfilming and<br>classification. Access to information |             |                |

Source: The Authors

analogous, respectively, to cataloguing and reference services in libraries. The European discourse, in a similar but broader manner, refers to processes such as description, translation, cataloguing, review, reporting, microfilming and classification, which result in documentary products (secondary and tertiary documents). These processes are also aimed at information retrieval, similar to the service described by Ranganathan.

We can draw up a Table 1 of parallels between European Documentation and Ranganathan's Documentation, showing their similarities and differences in order to create a common and comparative image.

This table highlights significant similarities between Ranganathan's Documentation and European Documentation, in terms of objects and processes, as well as the target audience. Both discourses consider that the activities (processes) of Documentation deal with documents to generate products (documentation lists and documentary products) that serve information access (and reference service) aimed at specialised researchers (predominantly). Therefore, there are no significant disagreements on these two issues.

The most definitive divergence between the two discourses, in which epistemological tensions clearly emerge, lies in their respective views of the nature of Documentation and the subjects who carry out Documentation. Ranganathan is emphatic in stating that Documentation is a task/activity that should be carried out by librarians. The European Documentalists, on the other hand, insist that Documentation is an autonomous discipline that gives rise to a new professional, the documentalist.

The criticism that Ranganathan made (and it can be said that he still does, through the latter-day expositors of his thought) of the discursive establishment and institutionalisation of European Documentation (which indeed occurred) was the

result of a combative intellectualism and theoretical and political commitment to Library Science. The thinker who helped shape the field of Library Science and projected its modern scientific image internationally was not willing to succumb easily to trends that could somehow overshadow this epistemological space.

### Final considerations

Documentation forms part of Library Science and the work of the documentalist is done by the librarian. These are Ranganathan's statements in his book published in 1973. This theoretical position was not merely about protecting the job market to prevent librarians from losing opportunities to documentalists. Nor was it an unfounded rivalry due to clashes of different disciplinary traditions. It was, in our view, a consistent and courageous defence of the epistemological space of Library Science.

By challenging the European discourse of Documentation, Ranganathan provided us with a tool, as he did in dozens of publications throughout his career, to understand the complexity of the work of library and information science, to expand, rather than reduce, our perspective on this field. Not embracing new names or academic fads without first engaging in epistemological questioning of scientific disciplines is something that is implicit in Ranganathan's legacy. It is not about academic conservatism; it is about scientific understanding.

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