

**ANAI (National Association of Italian Archivists):  
Working with Banking and Business Archives**

*by Isabella Orefice*

In recent years, ANAI ([www.anai.org](http://www.anai.org)) has dedicated itself to banking and business archives. This double name - banking and business archives - is necessary because bank and insurance archivists were the first to become involved in ANAI's activity. These companies, often holding important historical archives, have similar structures, are governed by specific regulations and linked to highly significant associations. They both have a long tradition in analysing their history. Bank archivists first shared their broad experience with ANAI, and spurred the association on to take initiatives in this field. The first event was the national meeting on bank archives held in Rome in 1989 and organized by ANAI in collaboration with ABI ([www.abi.it](http://www.abi.it)) and state archival administration (the proceedings of this meeting were published in 1992 by the Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici (Central Office for Archival Assets) ([www.archivi.beniculturali.it](http://www.archivi.beniculturali.it))).

In contrast, for industry and services, there is quite a different situation: some sectors are quite evolved – mostly large engineering companies in Northern Italy, whose company foundations are well established. However, most small and medium businesses vary widely, and are so scattered that their historical and organizational identity is slow to take shape – and few of them preserve and valorize their records. Since its constitution, ANAI has been committed to sensitizing archives holders, and has always focussed its efforts on business archives through essays, reports and reviews in its bulletin, “Il mondo degli archivi” (“Archives’ World”) – actually, in recent years, the whole sector of business archives has fully become part the association.

In recent years ANAI has focused on both banking and business archives and promoted three different kinds of actions: organizing meetings, creating working groups, and organizing seminars and training / refresher courses.

A series of national meetings was held in Trieste and Udine and organized by ANAI-Sezione del Friuli Venezia Giulia (<http://anaifvg.altavista.org>), in collaboration with local State Archives and Archival Department. The first one, called “*Le carte preziose*” (“Precious Papers”), took place in 1997 and focused on bank archives. It was an occasion to update all the topics discussed in the 1989 meeting, especially highlighting the significant organizational and technological changes in the sector. The second meeting, entitled “*Le carte sicure*” (“Secure Papers”), took place in 1999 and was the first national meeting in Italy to focus on insurance archives. It discussed the history of insurance archives in Italy, and through the presentation of some great archives, it dealt with issues

of management and enhancement .– On this occasion, a fruitful relationship with ANIA (National Association of Italian Insurance Agents) ([www.ania.it](http://www.ania.it)) began. A third meeting, “*Le carte operose*” (“Industrious Papers”), was held in January 2002 and focused on business archives with discussions about topics such as sources, research, management, and IT. At this third meeting, many archivists had the chance to compare their different experiences. A further meeting was then organized by Soprintendenza Archivistica della Campania (Campania Archival Department) ([www.archivistica-na.it](http://www.archivistica-na.it)) in collaboration with ANAI – Sezione Campania ([www.anai.org/regioni/campania/home.htm](http://www.anai.org/regioni/campania/home.htm)) and ANAI-Sezione Friuli, and held in October 2002 in Naples and Salerno. It discussed bank and other banking or financial archives, focusing especially on their regulations – regarding both research activity and the acquisition and management of records within the companies. A proposal for standard regulation in this field was made at this time.

Among ANAI’s initiatives for business archives, I would like to mention the international meeting “*La memoria del cinema: archivisti, bibliotecari e conservatori a confronto*” (“Memories of the Cinema: Archivists, Librarians, Custodians Compare their Experience”), organized in Turin in collaboration with the Piedmont region and the sector’s Archival Administration. The principal aim of this conference was to deepen the connection among skilled people working at all levels in film archives in Italy and abroad. The meeting also focused on so-called “non-film” material; that is, on records of movie production and circulation, i.e. on cinema as a business – a significant business in industrial countries like Italy, especially considering the growing number of television channels. Special attention was given to digital movies, since many of their features (identity, integrity, authenticity, and copyright of the single parts of a digital product) influence the industry of movie production and distribution.

Recent years have seen an acceleration in the merging of small business into larger groups. For example, state banks become private, foundations separate from saving banks. Therefore, archives have had to face, among other problems, reorganization, moving and integration into other archives. Moreover, technological advancements have led to the outsourcing of paper archives, wide use of digitalisation and computerized management. An archives’ life cycle can be rather unstable and even risky. Greater attention is needed to guarantee their preservation and appropriate management. For this reason, in Bari, in June 2004, ANAI and the Archival Department of the Apulian region ([www.sabapuglia.it](http://www.sabapuglia.it)), in collaboration with Cassa di Risparmio della Puglia, organized an international meeting called *Riforme in corsa: Archivi pubblici e archivi d’impresa fra trasformazioni, privatizzazioni e fusioni* (“Reforms in Progress: State Archives and Business Archives between Change, Privatisation and Merger”). During the meeting, whose proceedings are currently in press, several speeches and a round table took place, and some business archives in Puglia were presented to public as a leading example for many situations that still need improvement, especially in Southern Italy.

ANAI’s activity is also supported by the national work group on banking and business archives, whose members are archivists working in banks, insurances, businesses, and research centres – most of them are also ANAI members. They first met in Milan in November 2000 and created the Gruppo Italiano per gli Archivi d’Impresa (GIAI) (Italian Group for Business Archivists) ([www.anai.org/attivita/N\\_giai/giai\\_lista.htm](http://www.anai.org/attivita/N_giai/giai_lista.htm)). The group

was officially acknowledged in December 2000 as a national ANAI working group with its own national board, open to anyone working in the field. Its aim was to promote studies, considerations, and comparisons about the job of the business archivist, and to create a discussion list linked to the ANAI website. In order to establish a systematic study on the role of the business archivist and to exchange job experiences and skills, the group chose to focus on the following issues: archives regulations (for both historical and current archives), job description, bibliographic reports and accounts of new sources and business archives, best practices (procedures, solutions, achieved targets), reports of books and activities of foreign business archives groups that were put in the list.

The group members met several times in Milan. In 2001 they focused on handbooks for the management of business archives; in March 2002 they set their targets – a survey of business archives and the training of business archivists through operating systems. These subject were also discussed in Genoa in May 2002, when archival regulations were established as the main subject of the following meeting in Naples and Salerno in October 2002. At the Naples meeting, the group member began work on the project of a form for the survey, which would be carried out with help of the General Direction for Archives ([www.archivi.beniculturali.it](http://www.archivi.beniculturali.it)), and of a survey of the existing surveys. As for regulations, they decided to focus on historical archives. As for business archivists training, the first step was a research on university and non-university programs for business archivists, in order to outline the perfect educational program, with reference also to the job of the ANAI Group for Certification.

When the group met in May and October 2003, they split into 2 subgroups. The first focused on surveys to be carried out starting from the lists of businesses held by the Chambers of Commerce. The second focused on regulations and management handbooks, collecting several regulations concerning historical archives. The work on this subject went on in April 2005, when it was also decided to spread the training course on account books that was held in Turin (see further on) to other regions as well, and the project of a seminar on “The Archives from the Publishing World: Problems and Future” (*“Archivi del mondo Editoriale, problemi e futuro”*) was drawn up – and it was later organized by **Fondazione Mondadori** ([www.fondazionemondadori.it](http://www.fondazionemondadori.it)) in collaboration with ANAI in December 2005.

In the field of training, in recent years ANAI has made significant efforts to offer to professionals updated tools, several of which concerning business archives, of practical utility in their everyday work – the sort of tools that official training courses (e.g. State archives schools and university programs in Cultural Goods Preservation) usually don't offer.

As the result of an agreement between ANAI and Istituto per la Cultura e la Storia d'Impresa "Franco Momigliano" (ICSIM) (Institute for Business Culture and History “Franco Momigliano”) in Terni) ([www.icsim.it](http://www.icsim.it)), two seminars to train business archives were held in Villalago di Piediluco . The first was held in April 1999 and called “*La memoria d'impresa. Storia, archivi, organizzazione, marketing*” (“The Memory of Business: History, Archives, Organization, Marketing”). It focused on business history and business archives, not just as general sources, but also as resources for business identity and culture, and it presented the organization of some bank and company archives, their aids and their technique of description. The second was held in October 2000 and called

*“Gestire l’archivio corrente di un’impresa”* (“Managing the Current Archives of a Business”). It presented methodological tools, processing and managing techniques (from digital protocol to management handbooks), and strategies to make of the archives an efficient tool for the entrepreneur’s work. Moreover, in Genoa in May 2002, ANAI, Genoa State Archives ([archivi.beniculturali.it/ASGE/asge.htm](http://archivi.beniculturali.it/ASGE/asge.htm)) and Ansaldo Foundation ([www.fondazioneansaldo.it](http://www.fondazioneansaldo.it)), organized the seminar *“La gestione dell’archivio corrente. Teoria, criteri, esperienze”* (“Current Archive Management: Theory, Criteria, Experiences”), aimed at providing the tools to create and manage a paper or digital current archive through the analysis of methodological matters and of national and international case studies.

More recently in Turin, in February 2005, ANAI - Sezione Piemonte e Valle d’Aosta ([www.anai.org/regioni/piemonte/home.htm](http://www.anai.org/regioni/piemonte/home.htm)) and Compagnia di San Paolo ([www.compagnia.torino.it](http://www.compagnia.torino.it)) organized a theoretical and practical training course called *“Rivedere i conti. La descrizione archivistica delle scritture, dei registri contabili e dei bilanci di banche e aziende in età moderna e contemporanea”* (fino agli inizi del Novecento) (“Revising Accounts: Archival Description of Account Books and Balance Sheets of Banks and Companies in Modern and Contemporary Times – until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century”). Actually, business archives usually contain large quantities of such records , which have proven to be a significant but neglected historical source. They are little regarded by handbooks because specific knowledge of out-of-date accounting practices is needed in order to understand them. The course had such great success that a second edition was held in January 2006, and a third one focussing on 20<sup>th</sup> century will be held next autumn.

Business records comprise a lively sector of the diverse world of archives. ANAI’s actions demonstrate how much credit should be given to the archivists, who are bringing their archives from a glorious past into a complex future, fascinating and full of potential.