

Business Archives in Scandinavia.

An introduction by Hans Eyvind Næss, chair ICA/SBL

One of the main projects undertaken by the Business Archives Section in the ICA (International Council on Archives) is to contribute to the information about the situation for Business archives world-wide. In the national overviews about the situation for Business archives published on the SBL website at present can be found overviews from Denmark, Finland and Norway. A separate overview from Sweden is planned to be written at the latest in 2008.

There are many common features for most governmental and cultural activities in Scandinavia that makes it naturally to present the situation in Scandinavia in a sequence as is being done by Cultura et Impresa.

The National Archives headquarters in Scandinavia, in Helsinki, Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm all directly or indirectly are instructed by the respective governments to take part in the comprehensive work of preserving Business archives and other archives from the private sector as archives from organizations, political parties, labor archives, archives from humanitarian organizations etc. The central and regional governmental archives repositories preserve and make accessible to researchers such archives. The various laws on archives instruct the National Archives in various ways and with various degrees of authority to focus on the importance of private archives in general. The National and regional governmental archives do also have at their disposal money and storage capacity to take undertake a policy in order to preserve business archives. Business archives can also be found in local municipal archives and in county archives. Some very few though businesses and corporations have established Business archives within the Business itself.

The ways things are being dealt with in practice differ however from country to country. In Denmark there is a separate institution in Århus dealing exclusively with business archives, being the real treasure chest for business archives preservation and research. In Finland a similar institution in Mikkeli represents the main repository for Business archives in Finland with major holdings and a major financial support from the Finnish government. In Norway there is no such institution dealing exclusively with Business archives. On the other hand all governmental repositories are instructed to give the preservation of business and other private archives priority in their planning. In the National archives headquarters in Oslo a special department deal exclusively with Private Archives preservation, the area dealt with by this group of archivists comprising business archives as well. In Sweden there is a special advisory board with representatives from the Swedish National Archives proportioning out annual budget money to institutions applying for resources in order to preserve business archives. There is also a special association dealing with business archives preservation. A private foundation in Stockholm has a considerable holding of business archives.

The general impression is, though, that a huge number of business archives is found around the Scandinavian countries in a high number of local archives institutions and collections.

In order to promote accessibility to the contents of the many business archives holdings the national archives have developed data tools consisting of publicly accessible inventories on the web, often with entries via the National archives websites holding links to other holdings nationwide.

For further information, see the national entries below.