

Overview of Business Archives in Norway *by Hans Eyvind Næss*

Introduction

Norway's modern industrial history started in the early twentieth century with the use of electrical power produced from Norwegian waterfalls as cheap power for the Norsk Hydro's production of $\text{Ca}(\text{NO}_3)_2$, for the purifying processes within various metal and metallurgic industries, and for the mining industries.

Yet from the seventeenth century various trading companies and merchant houses, ship-owners and shipyards emerged. During the nineteenth century Norway became one of the largest shipbuilding and merchant-fleet-owning countries in the world. Due to rich and at times abundant fisheries a canning industry developed. Norwegian sardines were exported to a global market and Norwegian sardine brands became well known to the consumer market worldwide.

In the city of Stavanger (with 40000 inhabitants at the time) 62 canning factories were active during the period 1910 to 1950. Some of the old ship companies are still running, such as Wilhelmsen, Klavenes and Bergesen. More recently Norwegian ship-owners have invested heavily in oil and gas carriers, bulk ships, oilrigs and platforms.

Mining and metal industries still operate close to waterfalls in several Norwegian fjord industrial communities. Norwegian industry also comprises paper mills, fishing industry, furniture makers, food industry, breweries and so on.

The exploration of oil and gas in the North Sea since the late 1960s has turned Norway into a beehive of industrial enterprise. This development has had a tremendous impact on every aspect of Norwegian society. Today many of the international oil and gas companies operate through subsidiaries in Norway, companies like BP, CoocoPhillips, TotalFinaElf-group, Shell, Eni S.p.A., ExxonMobil, Siemens and many more. Due to the need for capital, many of the larger financial groups also operate in Norway as do international accounting and auditing firms.

The operation centers for most of these companies are Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger, Stavanger being the city from whence the majority of the companies run their offshore operations. Stavanger also hosts the largest Norwegian oil company, Statoil and the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate.

Legislation Affecting Business Archives

National legislation

The Norwegian National Archives framework is one governmental body divided into nine departments, the National Archives Headquarters in Oslo ('Riksarkivet') and eight regional

governmental archives institutions and repositories ('statsarkiv'). The governmental archives institutions perform their tasks according to the Law on Archives 1999. This law also comprises articles on non-governmental archives. These are, literally translated, called 'private archives'.

Business archives are one of the categories among 'private archives'. Other categories are archives created by political parties, societies and associations, the labor movement, etc.

The law states that private archives are to be considered as an essential part of the national cultural heritage and that those archival fonds are of cardinal importance to society, especially for undertaking research into such fields as economic, industrial, social and cultural history.

The public archive repositories are obliged to work actively on the preservation of private archives according to plans and instructions laid down by the National Archivist. Even though the National Archivist has the opportunity to prohibit private archive owners from shredding their archives, this authority is of a rather weak character, so that for all practical purposes the saving of non-governmental archives within public repositories is normally the result of voluntary agreements between the firm or society on one hand and the archives institution on the other.

All governmental archives are registered in a national database, a common access tool for private archives. This is about to be placed on the world wide web, in order to make the private archives preserved within public repositories known to the whole world. The system in use for registering and accessing all these archives is called ASTA. This system is also used for governmental and municipality archives.

Regional /state legislation

In Norway all legislation is national as there is no federal political system by which regional or county authorities have the right to enact laws.

National policies for Business Archives

The National Archives runs an active policy on private archives, including business archives. As a result some 5000 private archives, including many business archives, are already held by National Archives institutions. The National Archives in Oslo has a department solely dedicated to working with non-governmental archives. Quite a few business archives are also to be found in municipal archive repositories and in museums, as for instance the City Archives in Bergen and Oslo. A new governmental body – the ABM-development agency - launches many projects in order to help preserve more private archives around Norway.

Relationships between Archives and Records Management

In governmental bodies there exists a natural and ongoing co-operation between the archivists and records managers. Often the people handling the records management also handle the archives. Within private companies there are few employees dedicated especially to dealing with archives i.e. the historic files. The consequence often has been that the company archives have not been much cared for, with some notable exceptions. The fact, that parts of the cultural heritage created by private companies and associations has been lost over the decades, has been instrumental in the enactment of an archives law in Norway that take the importance of preserving both governmental and private archives into consideration.

Business Archives Institutions

Public archives

Public archives with repositories containing business archives are the National Archives in Oslo and the regional National Archives departments in Oslo, Kongsberg, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, Tromsø and Hamar.

There are about fifteen municipal, county and city archives that hold a considerable number of business archives. These are all mentioned in a plan for the regionalizing of all public archives repositories in the future delivered from a project committee to the National Archivist in June 2005; the committee report is called 'Norwegian Archival Landscape in the Future ('Fremtidens norske arkivlandskap') and is available at the home page for the National Archives (<http://www.riksarkivet.no>).

Private / corporate archives

Some of the larger businesses have their own archives and some of these are managed by archivists, such as the archives in Norsk Hydro and Statoil. Other companies have co-operated with the National Archives institutions or with city or local municipality archives to secure their archives for the future. Most often the archives have been saved for posterity when businesses close down. A more recent way of preserving corporate archives has been explored in projects like the cooperation between the oil companies Total and ConocoPhillips whereby their archives, according to contract, are being stored and professionally handled at the expense of the companies in public repositories – in these cases – of the National Archives department in Stavanger. Most notable among such projects is the Ekofisk Cultural Heritage Project which is a joint effort between the Norwegian Oil Museum, The National Library in Norway, The National Archives (Stavanger department) and ConocoPhillips to save both in a physical and digital way remnants and processes of the establishing and operating of the largest oil field in the North Sea. In 2006 a similar project for the Total's Frigg oil field is underway.

Other repositories

A number of institutions have archives repositories such as the Norwegian Film Institute, The Norwegian Broadcasting Company, The Norwegian Mission Society and The Norwegian Sound Institute.

Business Archives Associations

National

There are several archival associations in Norway: the main one recruiting members both from public and non-governmental institutions and business enterprises is called 'Norsk Arkivråd'.

This association has close to 1500 members. There is comprehensive information available under its name on the world wide web. Many of the archivists working in public repositories are members of 'Kommunale arkivers forening' (KAF) (Association for Public Archivists) or 'Landslaget for lokal- og privatarkiv' (LLP) (The National Association for Local and Private Archives).

Regional

In Norway, not being organized in a federal way, there are no regional associations of importance. In the larger cities and in the counties there are several local history societies.

Quite a few of these societies aim at the preservation of private archives, most often in close cooperation with a public repository.

Training for Business Archivists

There is no specific training for business archivists. Records managers most often also handle the archives. In some of the larger corporations there are de facto archivists. They may be trained historians, or they may have completed courses in archives science arranged by the Norwegian Academy on Archives (Norsk Arkivakademi), courses administered by Norsk Arkivråd (see above) or Oslo University College or Oslo University.

Guides and Finding Aids to Business Archives

Printed

The most recent and comprehensive handbook on Private archives is *Privatarkiver. Bevaring og tilgjengeliggjøring* (Private Archives. Preservation and Accessibility), by Vilhelm Lange, Dag Mangset and Øyvind Ødegaard. Published Oslo 2001. ISBN 82-446-0882-1.

Digital

Digital information is found under the national database for Private archives mentioned above.

Journals and Literature Concerning Business Archives

National

There are quite a few journals and periodicals dealing with news and information on archives. Most of these are being published by the National Archives and the archives organizations mentioned above working on a national level.

Regional

Quite a few of the regional archives and the inter-municipality archives, and also the city archives, do publish periodicals that deal with archival issues. Many articles contain information on business archives. There are links to most of the institutions and their publications under the world wide web portals of <http://www.riksarkivet.no> or <http://www.kulturnett.no>.