

Overview of Business Archives in Denmark

by Jørgen Fink and Christian R Jansen, *Erhvervsarkivet*
(Danish National Business Archives)

Definition

There is no definition of records in Danish legislation. In practice records are understood as information in all kind of media - paper, electronics, photo, film video, tape, etc. - and public as well as private records of historical value are dealt with by public archives. Business archives are not specifically mentioned in the Danish law on archives but are included in the more general term private archives. The policy on private archives adopted by *Statens Arkiver*, The State Archives, contains a definition of private archives as being all archives that are not public.

Legislation Affecting Business Archives

In 1992 a new law on archives was enacted. With minor revisions of 1997 and 2002 it is still in force. In 1992 the institution the State Archives of Denmark was established. It consists of *Rigsarkivet*, the National Archives, *Landsarkiverne*, the provincial archives, Danish Data Archives and *Erhvervsarkivet*, The Danish National Business Archives.

See <http://www.sa.dk/sa/omarkiverne/english/default.htm>.

The provisions regarding private (including business) archives is contained in chapter 11 of the law on archives. It states that private archives may be acquisitioned by public archival institutions. *Statens Arkiver*, The State Archives, will co-operate with private archival institutions in this matter. The Ministry of Cultural affairs has established a committee, *Privatarkivudvalget*, for that purpose.

An Archival Policy for Private Archives

In spring 2003 The State Archives formally adopted an archival policy for private archives. This policy has been accepted by *Privatarkivudvalget*. It states *inter alia* that the primary task of the State Archives with regard to private archives is to preserve private archives from persons or institutions that have had nationwide activity and national importance or who otherwise – by way of representation or some other particular quality – have left considerable traces in the history of Danish society.

The policy adopted is valid for all private (non-public) archives from private enterprises, institutions, organizations, private persons, etc. irrespective of the medium (paper, electronic, tape ,etc.). The policy consists of eight paragraphs.

1. The State Archives have together with other public institutions a major responsibility for preservation in the field of private archives.

2. The State Archives co-ordinates the activity of collecting private archives. The coordination takes place in *Privatarkivudvalget*, the committee on private archives established by The Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The State Archives is acting as consultant to the other institutions of private archives.

3. The State Archives can accept private archives of historical value. The State Archives can under certain conditions accept private archives either at the request of a donor or to rescue private archives from being lost.

4. The State Archives elaborates lists of types of private archives that ought to be acquired. The lists will regularly be updated.

5. The State Archives collects and stores private archives according to the lists mentioned above.

6. As for the collection of private archives in the State Archives these guidelines normally will be respected:

- private archives received by the State Archives become the property of the State Archives.
- the State Archives is entitled to discard private archives in its possession, either partly or totally.
- the State Archives can refer private archives to other institutions.

According to negotiations with the donator of a private archive:

- the private archive shall be delivered in proper order and accompanied by an inventory of the content of the archive.
- all costs of receiving a private archive (including costs of appraisal and inventorying if the archive is not in proper order) will be paid by donor.

It is the aim of the State Archives:

- that private archives that are not in proper order will be appraised and inventoried.
- that private archives when appraised and inventoried are made accessible to the public.

7. In particular cases the State Archives can depart from these guidelines.

8. The State Archives negotiates with the donor of a private archive on conditions for the use of it.

The State Archives try to obtain conditions like the conditions for public archives stated in the law on archives.

Institutions

As mentioned Erhvervsarkivet, The Danish National Business Archives, is a public institution and part of the State Archives of Denmark. It was established in 1948 as an independent institution. The driving force was Vagn Dybdahl, later Keeper of the Public Record (1979-92).

The Danish National Business Archives was turned into a government institution in 1963.

The Danish National Business Archives collect and preserve archival material with the purpose of clarifying the history and development of Danish trade and industry. The purpose

of the Danish National Business Archives is to ensure the preservation of records for the socially and historically most significant major enterprises. Businesses and organizations are not under any obligation to keep and submit their archival material and the collections at the National Business Archives are consequently based on agreements on voluntary submissions to the repository.

The collections at the National Business Archives comprise approximately 55 km of shelving. The oldest material dates back to around 1500. From the end of the eighteenth century, there is a steady increase in the size of the collections and the main part originates from the period from 1850 to 1950. There are around 6500 archives from businesses of every kind, particularly from trade, industry and the crafts, with important collections from other areas as well.

Examples include: shipbuilder and motor works (Burmeister & Wain; Eastasiatic Company; DFDS –The United Steamship Company); chemical plants; textile mills; breweries (among them Carlsberg); slaughter houses and bacon industries; dairies; merchants and grocers; lawyers; banks; and building societies. Moreover, archives from approximately 800 central and sectoral organizations within trade and industry as well as other professional and labor organizations have been preserved. Among them the Confederations of Danish Employers; the Confederation of Danish Industries; Danish Agricultural Council; the Copenhagen Chamber of Commerce.

Finally, 200 to 300 archives from business people, professionals and institutions with ties to trade and industry are held at this archival body. Guidelines to companies and organizations for transferring electronic records to the Danish National Business Archives were published 2005. So far few have followed the invitation to transfer records, but it is hoped that this will change over the next few years. The collection of electronic records is made in collaboration with the IT-department of the Danish National Archives and the same requirements are made to the companies and organizations as to the public authorities.

The archive's library holds approximately 100000 volumes including a large number of historical business handbooks, monographs and publications made for special occasions as well as trade journals. The archives have affiliated collections of booklets, leaflets and pamphlets, e.g. inventories and price lists, articles and regulations, company newsletters, etc. as well as extensive collections of cuttings about individuals and businesses of historical importance.

Access to the business archives is agreed with the depositors of the archival material. Most of these archives are governed by the same rules that apply to public archives according to the Danish Public Archive Act. Some of the business archives have other access dates, however, or require special permission. Part of the material may be lent to other repositories.

Contact details

Erhvervsarkivet (The Danish National Business Archives)

Vester Allé 12

DK – 8000 Aarhus C

Tel.: +45 86 12 85 33

Fax: +45 86 12 85 60

Email: mailbox@ea.sa.dk

Website: www.sa.dk/ea

The National Archives and the four provincial archives have a number of private archives in their collection, but the number of business archives is only a minor part of this. The National Archives have, however, records from the companies which traded on India, China, Guinea

and the West Indies 1662 to 1845. Records from the majority of Danish estates are to be found in the provincial archives and so are materials from guilds.

Contact details:

Rigsarkivet (The Danish National Archives)

Rigsdagsgården 9

DK – 1218 København K

Tel.: +45 33 92 33 10

Fax: +45 33 15 32 39

Email: mailbox@ra.sa.dk

Website: www.sa.dk/ra

Landsarkivet for Sjælland (The Provincial Archives of Sealand, Lolland-Falster and Bornholm)

Jagtvej 10

Postbox 661

DK – 2200 København N

Tel.: +45 35 24 82 00

Fax: +45 72 26 53 48

Email: mailbox@lak.sa.dk

Website: www.sa.dk/lak

Landsarkivet for Fyn (The Provincial Archives of Funen)

Jernbanegade 36

DK – 5000 Odense C

Tel.: +45 66 12 58 85

Fax: +45 66 14 70 71

Email: mailbox@lao.sa.dk

Website: www.sa.dk/lao

Landsarkivet for Sønderjylland (The Provincial Archives of Southern Jutland)

Haderslevvej 45

DK – 6200 Aabenraa

Tel.: +45 74 62 58 58

Fax: +45 74 62 32 88

Email: mailbox@laa.sa.dk

Website: www.sa.dk/laa

Landsarkivet for Nørrejylland (The Provincial Archives of Northern Jutland)

Ll. Sct. Hans Gade 5

DK – 8800 Viborg

Tel.: +45 86 62 17 88

Fax: +45 86 60 10 06

Email: mailbox@lav.sa.dk

Website: www.sa.dk/lav

The Danish labor movement has established an archive of its own, *Arbejderbevægelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv* (ABA), The Library and Archives of the Labor Movement. Its purpose is to acquire, make finding aids and open to the public printed and unpublished materials concerning the Danish labor movements. The archives hold records from political parties (among them The Labor Party), politicians (several former prime ministers), The Federation of Danish Trade Unions and many trade unions.

Contact details:

Arbejdermuseet & Arbejderbevægelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv
Rømersgade 22
DK – 1362 København K
Tel.: +45 33 93 25 75
Website: www.aba.dk

The Royal Library in Copenhagen has a number of private archives, mainly from the cultural sector, but only a few business archives. The Danish universities do not build up archives for research purposes. The universities have, however, during recent years shown great interest in business history and established centers for research in that field. In 1999 Copenhagen Business School established a Centre for Business History; in 2003 a Centre for Business History was formed in Aarhus as a co-operative venture between the University of Aarhus, Department of History and Area Studies and Department of Economic plus The Danish National Business Archives and in 2006 The University of Southern Denmark and The Industrial Museum established a Centre for Industrial and Business History.

Some of the larger cities have established municipal archives that include some business and other private archives. Especially in Aalborg, Vejle and Odense the archives have important records from trades and industries. Besides a number of private local archives have been established and collect quite a number of business archives. 400 of the local archives are joined together in an association, *Sammenslutningen af Lokalhistoriske Arkiver* (SLA), Union of Local Archives.

Contact details:

Sammenslutningen af Lokalarkiver (SLA)
Enghavevej 2
Postboks 235
DK – 7100 Vejle
Tel.: +45 75 84 08 98
Fax: +45 75 83 18 01
Email: sla@vejle.dk
Website: www.lokalarkiver.dk

No Danish companies or organizations have archives that are open to the public. Researchers have to apply to the firms to get access to their material or it is handed over to the National Business Archives.

Records management is dealt with by the companies themselves or private firms which deliver that service. So far The Danish National Business Archives have had very few inquiries on records management, whereas the Provincial Archives and the National Archives have had quite a number of enquiries from the public authorities.

Training for business archivists

In 1976 *Dansk Arkivselskab*, Society of Danish Archivists, was founded as an association of archivists, mainly from private companies. Once a year the society holds a conference where records management is the main issue.

Contact details:

Dansk Arkivselskab
Frederiksborgvej 62, 2. tv.

DK – 2400 København NV
Email: info@danskarkivselskab.dk
Website: www.danskarkivselskab.dk

Business Archives Guides

The most important guide to business archives is *Erhvervsarkivets Arkivoversigter*, Guide to the Danish National Business Archives, in four volumes, containing an inventory of all archives acquired before 2000. *Erhvervshistorisk Årbog*, Danish Yearbook of Business History, features lists of all archival materials submitted during the year to The Danish National Business Archives.

The National Archives and the four provincial archives have similar guides. *Rigsarkivet og hjælpemidlerne til dets benyttelse* (in ten volumes), The National Archives; *Landsarkivet for Nørrejylland og hjælpemidlerne til dets benyttelse* (in two volumes), The Provincial Archives of Northern Jutland; *Landsarkivet for Fyn og hjælpemidlerne til dets benyttelse*, The Provincial Archives of Funen; *Landsarkivet for Sjælland, Lolland-Falster og Bornholm og hjælpemidlerne til dets benyttelse*, The Provincial Archives of Sealand, Lolland-Falster and Bornholm; and *Landsarkivet for Sønderjylland. En arkivoversigt*, The Provincial Archives of Southern Jutland.

Two databases also exist. *Danpa* is a database created by the SLA. The Danish National Business Archives has been included, and the database also has entries on private archives kept at regional archives, the Royal Library and at various special collections such as the Danish Emigration Archives, The Library and Archive of the Labor Movement and the Danish Folklore Archives. *Danpa* is thus a central database of all Danish private archives except in-house archives of private companies. The web address is www.danpa.dk.

Daisy (*Dansk Arkivalieinformationssystem* - Danish Archival Information System) is a great database and will, when finished, contain a detailed registration of all provenances of the State Archives of Denmark, including the Danish National Business Archives. At the moment 25% of material in the Danish National Business Archives can be found on Daisy at www.daisy.sa.dk.

Journals and literature

The most important journal is *Erhvervshistorisk Årbog*, Danish Yearbook of Business History (with an English summary), published since 1949.