

Enel's Historical Archives *By Elena Accorinti*

Historical Overview

When Italy began to use electric energy in the last two decades of the 19th century, it was considered a crucial step, both for the liberation of our nation – lacking in coal and other fuels – from a century of inferiority, and for our economic future. In the years that followed, although electric power didn't cover more than 20% of the national requirements, the use of this new resource boosted overall industrial expansion. This was largely due to the development of the electric companies which, within thirty years, became the most important companies in the Italian economy; first, because of their own productive capacity and second, because electrification allowed greater flexibility in setting up and organizing other plants, thus increasing productivity (in general).

Enel (National Company of Electric Energy) was created with the formidable task of producing, importing and exporting, transporting, transforming, distributing and selling electric energy. In the first years of its existence (on 6th December 1962, the nationalization of electric energy became law and more than 1270 electric companies merged to become part of the single national company) Enel stood out for its “social” approach in the management of the business, deriving from its original nature as a Public Company whose principal aim was to provide energy for the development of the Italian nation.

Since its privatization (1992), Enel has also addressed itself to the issue of corporate responsibility, competing with the best experiences of large international companies.

The preservation of its cultural patrimony is one of the objectives of a responsible company, within the perspective of sustainable cultural and social development, and as a commitment to benefit future generations.

Enel's presence on the territory includes a widespread network and, at the same time, longstanding roots in specific sites with its own power stations; this ensures that the company's history is strongly linked to that of the country. Enel is also the guardian, not only of a large records patrimony, but also of important landmarks (i.e. the dams built at the beginning of the 20th century, the pieces of industrial archaeology and 20th century architecture).

The Power of History

Being aware of the value and the interest of Enel's historical records (before and after nationalization) within the national and international scientific communities, Enel initiated a project called “Enel Historical Archives” in 2006, which planned the collection of all the historical material

into a single headquarters, thereby creating an “organic” archives on the history of the Italian electric industry. This action allowed Enel to optimize the management of its archival patrimony and at the same time, extend the possibility of consultation by third parties.

On 24th September 2008, in the presence of Piero Gnudi, Enel’s Chairman, and Claudio Scajola, Minister for Economic Development, the Archives was inaugurated in its new headquarters in Naples, via Ponte dei Granili 24. The archives preserves a substantial volume of letters and other finds about the history of the Italian electric industry from its origins – with 1.270 private companies – until its official transfer to the public sphere, its nationalization and the creation of Enel, as well as other fonds regarding the period after 1962.

Enel’s records patrimony has been declared “of high historical interest” and is one of the most sizeable fonds existing today in the business field. It is comprised of more than 13.000 linear meters of records; thus it is now possible carry out in-depth study of the original matrixes and the subsequent paths in the development of Italian capitalism.

The records series are made up of administrative files, letters, manuscripts and projects. The photographic material is particularly important; photography, being outside of the professional environment, objectively documents the workers’ daily reality and the moments of socialization. Another part of the archives worthy of mention is the large collection of books from the specialized libraries of the former eight territorial and departmental archives. The record and book collection allows for multipurpose research with technical, historical and economical aims.

The filing of a large part of the records before 1963 was carried out under the supervision of Valerio Castronovo, chairman of the Study Center for historical and economic business records.

On-line Consultation and Management

Enel accomplished the re-planning and the realization of a database of its own archival patrimony along with the project of the archives for a reorganization, filing and computerization of the entire archival patrimony.

The following actions were carried out:

- An on-line IT system for the electronic management of historical archives named XDAMS, using databases in line with the European standards. The adoption of the model Ead (Encoded Archival Description) compatible with Isad regulations (International Standard Archival Description) and Isaar (for the processing of the connected Authority files) demonstrates Enel’s readiness to conform to the standards of archival description shared within the international field.

- The enlarging of the corporate portal with the website www.enelikon.it dedicated to the communication of the historical records material and of the photographic and film archives. The structure has three levels (data model, data representation and queries management) and it guarantees complete expandability, both vertical and horizontal. For historical archives, the description follows a hierarchical model, starting from the highest level (fond) going down to more analytic descriptive levels (series, sub-series, files and so on). Moreover the system gives users the possibility of accessing the digital images of the filed records together with their descriptive schedule.

Users Access

Accessing the Enel Historical Archives records for consultation is possible only by reservation following authorization from the Management and of the Archival Office of Campania

and it is restricted to university students, scholars and qualified researchers. The users have to fill in an access form in which they have to indicate, in addition to the personal data, the title and the topic of the research. Examination of any requests is subject to the evaluation by the Management. The students have to bring with them a letter of presentation of the professor, indicating the topic of research for the dissertation and the chronological details. Consultation is free and it can begin after the acceptance of the request. The authorization lasts for one year and is strictly personal. Consultation is guaranteed according to the following timetable: Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 am to 1 pm. If the archives must remain closed for a special reason, notice is given well in advance.

The Objectives of Archival Valorization

Enel's Historical Archives aims at promoting social and cultural development: through the research and the study of the records patrimony; scientists, engineers and other well-known figures join Enel to give Italian citizens a vision of energy oriented towards the future.

The company's plan for archival preservation, valorization and communication provides a broad base for research on Italy's electric industry and on the role it plays in the Italian economy and society. Enel's plan is intended to support a range of initiatives: cooperation, events, conferences, exhibitions and publications.

Exhibitions and conferences dedicated to the history of the electric system will be organized with the aim of attracting the general public and in particular, the schools, supplying iconographic, photographic and filmed materials that can be used also as classroom teaching aids. Enel cooperates with universities and research centers to publish dissertations and specific projects dedicated to the themes of the electric industry; in addition, the Archives will offer its collaboration and its involvement in meetings and conferences of national and international importance dedicated to the scientific themes of archives and the valorization of cultural assets.

Contacts

Enel Historical Archives
via Ponte dei Granili, 24 - 80146 Naples
paolo.deluce@enel.it
telephone 081. 3674213
elena.accorinti@enel.it
telephone 06. 83052195