

Archival appraisal in Norway - law, policy and practice



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National appraisal policy and strategy

Generally, there are four main criteria for preservation of public records in Norway:

1. **Records that document public institutions' societal functions and exercise of authority.**
2. **Records that provide information about, and are of general interest to, society.**
3. **Records that document obligations and privileges of persons and organizations.**
4. **Records that document obligations and privileges of the records creator.**

To each of the four main criteria there are additional criteria, such as *level of government, age, continuity, information value, judicial interest* etc.

The Norwegian policy targets destruction of records. **As a general rule, the goal of appraisal is to determine which records may be destroyed. All other records are to be preserved.** The strategy does not specify any percentage of records to be destroyed

Reference:

Riksarkivet (2002): Bevaringsutvalgets rapport



The National Archives Building in Oslo



Regional State Archives in Bergen



The Noark 5 model

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Appraisal in Norwegian archive legislation

State organizations are obliged to transfer their archives to a state archival repository, while municipal organizations are their own repositories, i.e. they are themselves responsible for long-term preservation of non-current records. Many municipalities do this through joint repositories (inter-municipal archival institutions.)

For business activities, all public organizations are obliged to develop their own disposal plans, specifying what should be retained and what should be destroyed. The disposition plan must be approved by the National Archives before transfer to repository/destruction.

All destruction of records from public records creators must be approved by the National Archives. The National Archives develops appraisal plans for the municipal sector and for housekeeping activities in state organizations.

Present national appraisal policy is based on the report from a commission working 2000-2002. The policy combines a macro-approach to appraisal and a Schellenbergian value theory. Micro-level appraisal is dissuaded, but the report also emphasizes information value.

References:

The Norwegian Archives Act (1992): LOV-1992-12-04-126
The Norwegian Archives Act (1998): For-1998-12-11-1193
Riksarkivet (2006): Hovedprinsipper for Riksarkivarens arbeid med bevaring og kassasjon i offentlig forvaltning

Digital archives

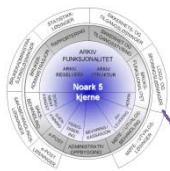
In dealing with digital archives, Norway utilizes a standard called **NOARK**, Norwegian archival system. This standard has been developed step by step by the National Archives since the early 1980's, and has now reached version 5.

Noark 5 promotes pro-activity in archives production, and must be implemented in records management systems utilized by public organizations in order for them to be approved by the National Archives.

Noark 5 integrates e-mail, records management systems and specialized information management systems and databases. Noark 5 is loosely built on the ISO 15489 and Moreq standards as well as Norwegian archival tradition. When digital records management systems are used by records creators, they are to deposit a copy to the National Archives at the end of every periodical cycle (normally every five years), as a back-up, before eventual transfer after approximately 25 years. Upon transfer, ownership of archives is transferred from their creators to the National Archives. This holds true for both paper and digital archives as well as private and public records.

Reference:

Riksarkivet (2011): NOARK 5, v 3.0



Timeline

1817: The National Archives is established and the case of archival appraisal is first raised. According to a Royal Decree of that year "qualified documents" from state archives has to be preserved.

1837: The first regulations concerning local state appraisal are issued. These give directions for records of "antiquarian, statistical or historical" interest to be sent to the National Archives for preservation.

1850: Norway's first Regional State Archives is established in Trondheim. According to new regulations local state archives is to be deposit to the Regional State Archives in the complete, leaving appraisal solely to the archivists.

1961: A new appraisal policy leads to shared responsibility between public record creators and the National Archivist.

1987: The 1961 policy is replaced. Public record creators now need approval from the National Archivist in order to dispose of their own records.

1999: The Archives Act of 1992 is set in effect. It is now mandatory to preserve all public records predating 1950.

2000: A commission for a new national appraisal policy is put to work.

Reference:

Bringslid et al. (2009): "Ti der var papir overalt" Bevaring og kassasjon av arkiver i norsk lokalforvaltning på 18- og 1900-tallet

Private archives

Chapter III in the Norwegian Archives Act concerns private archives. The National Archives is entitled to declare singular private archives particularly valuable, and impose some preservation duties on the owner.

In addition, the National Archives has developed a guideline for private archives, requiring that all organizations that keep private archives develop a preservation policy, and that private archive preservation is coordinated regionally.

References:

The Norwegian Archives Act (1992): LOV-1992-12-04-126
Riksarkivet (2002): Retningslinjer for arbeidet med privatarkiver



Norway's first national archivist, **Henrik Wergeland** (1808 – 1845), was also a celebrated poet, a prolific playwright, polemicist, historian, and linguist. He is often described as a leading pioneer in the development of a distinctly Norwegian literary heritage and of modern Norwegian culture. (Wikipedia)