



The Danish Archives Act

The State Archives are administered by The Danish Ministry of Culture. The State Archives are managed by The National Archivist who is appointed by The Minister of Culture.

All public archives in Denmark subscribe to The Danish Archives Act. The act was originally publicised in 1992. The law in effect is:

The Danish Archives Act No. 1050 of 17 December 2002 with amendments consequential upon section 1 of Act no. 563 of 24 June 2005 and Act no. 532 of 6 June 2007.

The authority of the Minister of Culture, with regard to archival activities of public administration, is defined by the act. The act also offers guidelines for the appraisal of records.

The Danish Archives Act applies to public administrative authorities, the court system and The Danish National Church. The Minister of Culture determines whether the act shall apply, in whole or in part, to companies, institutions and associations not usually considered part of the public administration. The act also applies to public archives with regard to private records.

Public archives in Denmark consist of The State Archives as well as local and regional archives. The main objective of The State Archives is to collect and store historical records and makes them available to the public.

The State Archives consists of the Danish National Archives and four provincial archives. Head of The National Archives is The National Archivist, who at the same time is the senior manager of The State Archives.

The Danish National Archives is the record-holding body for the central authorities such as ministries, agencies and national organizations.

The State Archives represented by The National Archivist is authorized to make specific rules and regulations in relation to the appraisal of records generated by danish public authorities. Rules and regulations are governed by the main objectives of The State Archives namely

- To ensure that records of historical value are preserved.
- To ensure that public records of no historical value are disposed of.

The State Archives must not only secure records of historical value but also records that document matters of administrative and legal significance for citizen and authorities.

The purpose of appraisal is to identify records that contain the most comprehensive data on political and administrative decisions as well as data that document the danish society in as many aspects as possible. Appraisal also has an economic aspect.

Appraisal & Practice

All appraisal activities are based on the "principle of provenance". This means, that archival material is transferred according to the order, and with the classification, of the originating authority.

The State Archives publish guidelines as to which records can be disposed of before transfer e.g. extra copies, records concerning employees except those born on the first day of a month or employees at management level, paper records transferred to an electronic medium. All records not included in the publish guidelines should be appraised separately by The State Archives.

The state Archives policy is "[...]to dispose of records until the limit of what is reasonable considering the objective of preservation and using methods that are cost- proportionate with the amount of space gained" [2005: Redegørelse om bevaring og kassation af offentlige arkivaliers og om Statens Arkivers virke i forbindelse hermed, Statens Arkiver].

In regard to paper records this means that 90% of all public records are disposed of before transfer to the state archives. For electronic records the figure is approximately 80 %.

Data from electronic records may never be erased before The State Archives has issue an appraisal decision for the system. A system will typically be transferred every five years. In full electronic cases such as EDH- and ESDH-systems the whole systems will usually be preserved because nothing is gained by part-disposal, financially or otherwise.

By the end of the year 2006 all public authorities had appraisal provisions that were pointing forward thereby making the transfer more cost efficient.

Discarded material, 2011: Private photo

Private Records

The Danish Archives Act does not obligate private businesses and organisations neither to keep nor to submit archival material. The collections at The National Business Archives are the result of voluntary transfer based on agreements between the archive and the record creator, primarily concerning accessibility.

According to The Danish Archives Act, part 11, it is possible for public archives to collect, receive and preserve private records originating from individuals, associations and organizations. The State Archives can provide consultancy services to other cultural or research institutions that collect and preserve private records.

Anyone who owns private records of essential importance to research or culture in general must, before such records are removed from the country, give The State Archives access to copy the records. If The Danish State inherits records, they must be transferred to The State Archives.

Reference: www.sa.dk