

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT'S ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY, OSLO, NORWAY

OLE MARTIN RØNNING

Director of The Labour Movement's Archives and Library, PhD

The Labour Movement's Archives and Library (Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek) has been in operation since 1909. It was originally founded by the Confederation of Trade Unions (Arbeidernes faglige landsorganisasjon / LO) and the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) and given the task of collecting material related to the labour movement. Subsequently, the institution has developed into a modern centre of documentation.

In 2020, there are 18 employees in the Labour Movement's Archives and Library. The institution is primarily funded by the Norwegian labour movement, which provided 58 % of its income in 2019. In the same year, public financing consisted 35 % of its income, while the remaining 7 % came from sale of services and other income related to publicly funded projects.

The offices and reading room of the institution are located in downtown Oslo, in the People's House. The institution's historical collection represents not only the labour movement, but also the feminist movement, peace and disarmament movement and organisations of international solidarity. The library's collection holds about 130 000 volumes, while the depository contains around 8000 meters of records and more than 4 million photographic prints and negatives.

The institution is obligated to preserve the cultural heritage of the Norwegian labour movement. This heritage includes records, publications, photographs, posters, banners and audio-visual and digital-born material.

It is also worth noting that the institution is equally committed to both archive contemporary, digital-born information and preserve the institution's historical collection.

The digital development proceeds along two different tracks. The first track is to make parts of the collection accessible through the internet. Several series of protocols, reports and photographs have already been digitized and published at national portals and the Labour Movement's Archives and Library's own homepage, arbark.no. The institution is also planning to digitize selected records that will be published in the new national internet portal for digitized material, digitalarkivet.no. The second track is to determine new and innovative methods to harvest and preserve digital-born records of the labour movement. To gain extensive knowledge in this area, The Labour Movement's Archives and Library has participated in development projects, which have been financially supported by the LO and the National Archives. These have been executed in close co-operation with the National Archives and municipal archival institutions. The projects gain a better understanding on how to handle unstructured data such as text files stored in Windows folders, or semi-structured data such as e-mails. In addition, the institution has focused on collecting and preserving professional record management systems and retrieving structured metadata.

The institutions advancements in the field of digital records have led to additional grants from the Ministry of Culture in 2019



Archivist Trine Søreide Jansen in the storeroom of the The Labour Movement's Archives and Library. Photo: Stein Marienborg.

and 2020. Most recently, the institution has started a new project about digital-born documentation of the political parties at central, regional and local level. The project includes cooperation with two regional museums that work with non-public records.

By taking into account the digitizing of the historical collection and the development

of new methods of collecting contemporary digital-born material, the Labour Movement's Archives and Library aims to meet the expectations that are forwarded by its owners and public authorities. This is of utmost importance, shall the institution continue to thrive and be able to uphold its performance and function in the years to come.