



National Library of Norway



Tradition and rebirth

The nature and content of an institution will manifest itself through its buildings. The National Library has many homes, and each of these has many rooms – in Oslo, Rana and in cyberspace. Together, these buildings and rooms offer exciting contrasts. In both architecture and content, the National Library represents a diversity that is found in few other organizations of culture and knowledge.

In the renovated building on Henrik Ibsens gate in Oslo, the bookshelves have literally been load-bearing. The building, first completed in 1913, was reopened in 2005 following restoration and the simultaneous establishment of a digital archive of great importance in a cultural-historical perspective. In this, the historical beginnings have caught up with the modern design and created a whole that forms a bridge between the history of knowledge and the technology of the future.

The modern National Library in its contrasting buildings is the steward of multimedia materials full of exciting contrasts. The extended definition of ‘text’ encompasses writing, sound and image, delivered as books, newspapers, periodicals, photographs, film, music, broadcasting and electronic documents. Hand-drawn maps from the Great Nordic War, showing Charles XII’s military deployments on both sides of the Swedish-Norwegian border in 1717, live side by side with modern maps, tin can labels from 1910 with beautiful illustrations e.g. of eider ducks, alternating with films advertising cigars, and songs of independence from 1905. Film and sound recordings of the Ragnarock concert from 1973 coexist digitally side by side with High North material in full text at NB digital. In this perspective it is not a cliché to say that the National Library is the caretaker of the nation’s memory.

The mission is to ensure that what is created today will last for a thousand years. But the texts are not only to be technically accessible in 1000 years, they must also be of intellectual interest then – and to us here today. To achieve this, they must be continually used and discussed, by scientists and the public. This means a focus on dissemination.

The new old building and the digital National Library will enable us to provide knowledge and experiences in the reading rooms, in the music collections, in the lecture rooms – and online.

Vigdis Moe Skarstein
National Librarian Vigdis Moe Skarstein





Using the National Library

In the National Library, Henrik Ibsens gate 110, Oslo, there are the following reading rooms:

Main reading room with 110 seats, with power for PCs. In this reading room you have access to general Norwegian material; mainly literature published in Norway or related to Norway.

The reading room has general and in-depth reference works.

There is also a separate reading room with 12 microfilm readers. The National Library has a complete set of Norwegian newspapers on microfilm. Microfilm is fetched continuously and you may save files to USB sticks.

The Special reading room at the National Library has 25 seats. It offers access to particularly valuable and rare or brittle publications that must be used with special care in a controlled environment. Examples: original manuscripts by Norwegian authors, special manuscripts, maps, letters, pictures and prints from the Middle Ages and later. This reading room also has a PC with Internet access and a reading machine that enlarges the view of hard-to-read materials.

The National Library also has a music offering. There is literature about music and an extensive collection of Norwegian and foreign sheet music, besides recorded music and listening stations.

Researcher seats

12 seats are made available for researchers that work with the National Library's material. Eight of these are located in a separate research reading room, and four have separate offices. These seats are assigned among applicants for 6 months at a time. For more information about the criteria for assignment and deadlines, please visit nb.no

Lecture rooms

The National Library's old Auditorium has room for 60 people, while the new one holds up to 170. Both rooms are used for National Library events. When available, these rooms may be hired by external users. They are equipped with modern technical facilities.

Multimedia collection

Based on the Act relating to the Legal Deposit of Generally Available Documents, the National Library is building a collection which includes these media types: newspapers, pictures, books, film and video, manuscripts, maps, broadcasting, sound recordings, music, Internet documents, posters, postcards, ephemera and periodicals.

In addition, the National Library has some thematic collections, such as the Norwegian-American collection and the theatre collection.

Guided tours, training and help

Librarians in the public areas give professional advice on the use of the library's collections, physically and electronically.

Such help is also given in response to e-mails sent to veiledningen@nb.no or phone calls to +47 23276011 during the library's opening hours.

User courses are also offered, giving an introduction to the National Library's services. For more information about times and content, please see nb.no

General guided tours of the building are given by special arrangement.

Did you know?

The National Library holds 80 000 shelf metres of material after the extension of the stacks in 2008.

Did you know?

Everything that is produced for the public is deposited with the National Library in accordance with the act on legal deposit. The Norwegian law is among the most modern in Europe, requiring all types of material to be deposited. Legally deposited material make up the core of the National Library's collection.

Using the collection

There is material available to the public on open shelves at Henrik Ibsens gate 110, and additional items will be fetched from the stacks on request. This is done at set times during the library's opening hours. Reference works can be found in the public areas.

Information about library cards at the National Library can be found at the lending desk, telephone +47 23276012.

The National Library staff will also assist you in ordering materials from our Repository Library in Mo i Rana and from other libraries. Please ask at the lending desk or send an e-mail to innlaan@nb.no for more information.

NBdigital

Parts of the National Library's collection are also available at NBdigital, the digital national library. You can visit nb.no to search the multimedia collection of NB, which lets you find out what we have by or about a certain author or a given topic, in books, newspapers, radio, television and other formats.

Parts of the National Library's digital material is already available in full text on the web, and every day more content is added to the digital national library.

nb.no

At nb.no you will find information about the services offered by the National Library of Norway. The website includes electronic publications. Also served by the National Library is the website lbsen.net, plus a few others in connection with national author anniversaries.



Exhibitions and events

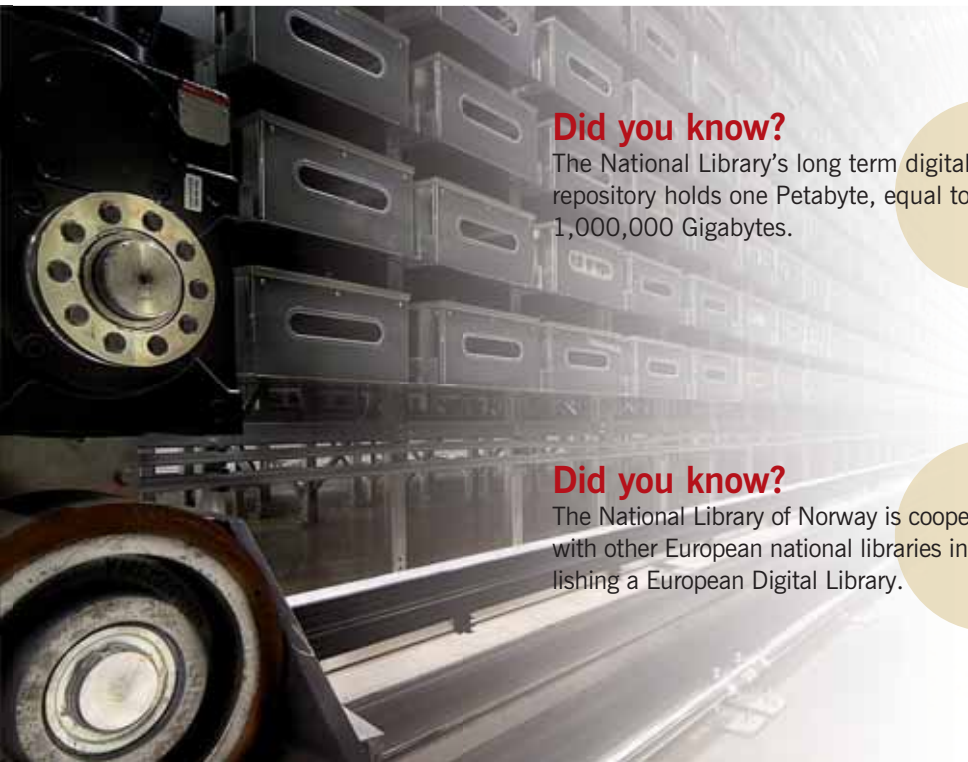
The National Library has a running programme of exhibitions and events based on content from the library's collections. Both virtual and physical exhibitions and events are part of the National Library's programme of dissemination of culture and knowledge.

Computers and networks

In the National Library's public areas there are computers that offer access to the National Library's databases, parts of the digital collection and electronic reference works. All public computers have Web access, and there is also a wireless network open for use with your own notebook computer.

Did you know?

The Norwegian National Library Rana branch was established in 1989 and the Oslo branch in 1998, after the move of the University Library to Blindern, Oslo. From 2004 the National Library has been one organization in which functions are performed for the user's benefit, without regard to geography.



Did you know?

The National Library's long term digital repository holds one Petabyte, equal to 1,000,000 Gigabytes.

Did you know?

The National Library of Norway is cooperating with other European national libraries in establishing a European Digital Library.

Behind the scenes

In order to fulfil its obligations and provide all users with a satisfactory set of services both in the library and on the Web, the National Library has established the following departments:

Scholarship and Collections make the library's extensive collection available for research and documentation; it provides a mirror of society and a source of experience for the public. The collection encompasses Norwegian and related material in all media formats, from paper-based material to film, music, broadcasting and digital documents.

User services – develops the library's public services, exhibitions and events that make the collections alive and topical.

ICT and digitization

The ICT and Digitization Department develops and maintains ICT solutions, establishes and manages digital deposit of publications, and digitizes the National Library's collection.

Acquisitions and knowledge organization provides material for the collection and indexes it in the National Library's databases, making the documents available for research, documentation and lending. The department is also in charge of the Repository Library and all the vaults of the National Library.

The National Library also provides services such as extensive remote lending from the Repository Library to other libraries and institutions.

Did you know?

Until 1989, the Norwegian National Library functions such as legal deposit and work on the national bibliography, were handled by the Norwegian department at the Oslo University Library.

Did you know?

The oldest printed book in the collection dates from 1446: "De officiis" (On Duties) by Cicero.



Did you know?

The National Library is also an archive of Norwegian film and popular music.

Did you know?

In 2007, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs gave the National Library a special responsibility for the marking of literary anniversaries.

Did you know?

The Norwegian Internet domain .no has been harvested and preserved by the National Library since 2003.

Did you know?

In 2007 the National Library and representatives of more than 6,000 Norwegian copyright holders began a pilot project publishing the full text of selected copyrighted material on the Web.

Did you know?

There are large quantities of posters, advertising flyers and other ephemera in the National Library collection. 35,000 new items of ephemera were collected through legal deposit in 2007.



Frescos in the National Library

The ceiling and wall frescos in the lower hall were made by the artist Emanuel Vigeland in 1913.

Emanuel Vigeland © Emanuel Vigeland / BONO 2007

The stairway

Through a tall arch to the right of the foyer we approach the stairway leading up to the reading room. The walls are dominated by three large frescos. On the column to the left of the stairs we see an image from Snorre Sturlason's book "*Heimskringla*" (Orb of the World), the story of the Norse kings. To the left is Magnus Law-mender's (1238-1280) *Law of the Land*, opened to the chapter on the militia, in which the duties of the King and his people are thematized. Above the books we see a woman on the left and a man on the right, both picking stylized fruits. At the top of the arch a white dove flies upwards in a brilliant aura, a traditional symbol of the Holy Spirit. By choosing *Heimskringla* and the *Law of the Land* as the symbolic girder for the entire building, Vigeland emphasizes the Library's role as the steward of the nation's wisdom and knowledge. He deliberately reaches back to the Middle Ages to underline the continuity of Norwegian history. More than 400 years under Danish rule and almost 100 years under Swedish rule have been erased. As Norway, in 1913, had had its independence for less than eight years, there was a great need to demonstrate the depth of its roots.

The fresco brothers

In 1933 it was necessary once again to expand the University Library. On this occasion the Norwegian Consul in Paris, Peter Krag, donated a substantial sum for the decoration of the stairwell. Three large frescos were to be made, and two of Norway's leading artists, Axel Revold and Per Krohg, were given the commission. They were known as the fresco brothers. Both were central during this flowering of monumental painting in Norway, often called the fresco epoch.

The subject is *Voluspå*, the prophesy of the Volva, from the ancient Poetic Edda describing the creation of the world, Ragnarok and the new world. In three narrow, gilded fields next to the pictures we find the introductory part of the Norse text. The story begins on the left with Revold's depiction of the three Norns inscribing the fate of humanity on runic tablets.

Following 30 years in France Per Krohg moved to Oslo in 1930. In *Ragnarok*, the next wall painting in the fresco decoration, he dealt with his World War I experiences, when he fought on the French side. Human machines – hybrids of men and submarines, ships, planes and tanks – run over, shoot and drown the "real humans".

The final picture in Axel Revold's fresco decoration shows the world recreated and its first two humans in a fertile landscape. They discover three tablets lying on the ground. In *Voluspå* we are told that these are the board games of the gods, from the first paradisiacal state of the world. As interpreted by Revold, however, they look more like the tablets of the Norns, signifying a new beginning with a clean slate, giving humanity a second chance.



Per Krohg: Ragnarok (excerpt)© Per Krohg / BONO 2007

Historical basis of the decorations

The 1933 frescos pick up the theme of Emanuel Vigeland's decoration by taking us back to Norse mythology. Through Vigeland's frescos, the library's role as the country's foremost institution of enlightenment is safely anchored in the nation's history, mixed with religious overtones. The topic of the frescos around the stairs, *Voluspå*, and especially *Ragnarok*, on the other hand, are to a much larger degree coined from the unstable international situation of the times, and also characterized by deep changes in society. Per Krohg's fresco was definitely viewed in the light of Hitler's rise to power. The development of the decorations of the Library indicates that the national mindset had to give way to more universal challenges.

A photograph of a person sitting in a library, reading a book. The person is in the foreground, slightly to the right, wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. They are sitting on a dark, modern-style chair. Behind them is a large, ornate wooden bookshelf filled with books. The bookshelf has several octagonal-shaped decorative panels. The floor is made of light-colored wood. The entire image has a red color overlay.

National Library of Norway

Office address: Henrik Ibsens gate 110

Address Mo i Rana: Finsetveien 2

Postal address: P.O. Box 2674 Solli, NO-0203 Oslo, Norway

Telephone: +47 810 01 300

Telefax: +47 75 12 12 22

E-mail: nb@nb.no

nb.no

The National Library is divided into four departments, with personnel in both Oslo and Mo i Rana: Scholarship and collections, Acquisitions and knowledge organization, ICT and digitization, User services / Dissemination / Outreach, Administration, finance, human resources, information and legal office belong to the National Librarian's staff.



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