



MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER – NOMINATION FORM

Norway- The Lepra Archives of Bergen

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Today many people think of leprosy only as a Third World disease. But the sickness has been an all too common element also of European daily life through the centuries, especially in the coastal regions. In Western Norway there were still many people suffering from this disease after it was practically wiped out from the rest of Europe.

This might be one of the reasons why Bergen in the middle of the 19th century became the scientific centre of the efforts to cure leprosy, through the work of Dr. Danielsen and Dr. Armauer Hansen, who discovered the *Mycrobacterium leprae* in 1873. Today leprosy is practically non-existent in Europe, and although there are still 10-15 million lepers in the rest of the world (where it is often called Hansen's Disease) the number of new cases is said to have reached almost a standstill.

The Leprosy Archives of Bergen document the breakthrough of the scientific understanding and description of leprosy on a world basis. The documentary heritage from this turning point of the fight against one of the world's most dreadful diseases is still internationally sought after and used, and deserves both a safeguarding and wider dissemination.

1. Identity and Location

1.1 Name of documentary heritage

The Leprosy Archives of Bergen

consisting of:

- a) St.Jørgens Hospital, (St. George's Hospital), Bergen 1411-onwards (1946)
- b) Lungegaarden Research Hospital, Bergen, 1849-1896
- c) Pleiestiftelsen for Spedalske no 1, Bergen, (Leprosarium No. 1)1857-1973
- d) Overlægen for den spedalske Sygdom (Chief Medical Officer for Leprosy), 1854-1973
- e) Lepraregisteret (The National Leprosy Registry of Norway) 1856- today
- f) Scientific Library of Medisinsk Historiske Samlinger, Bergen (The Bergen Collections on the History of Medicine)

1.2 Country

Norway

1.3 State, province or region
Norway, Bergen

1.4 Address

- a, b, c): Bergen Byarkiv (City Archives of Bergen)
Allehelgensgt. 5, N-5016 Bergen
- b, c, d) Statsarkivet i Bergen (Regional State Archives of Bergen)
Årstadveien 22, N-5009 Bergen
- e) Medisinsk fødselsregister, Armauer Hansens hus, N-5021 Bergen
- f) St. Jørgens Hospital, Kong Oscars gt. 59, N-5017 Bergen

1.5 Name of organization or institution (if appropriate)

same as 1.4

2. Legal Information

2.1 Owner (name and contact details)
Public

2.2 Custodian (name and contact details)

- a, b, c) Arne Skivenes, City Archivist
- b, c, d) Yngve Nedrebø, Regional State Archivist
- e) Lorentz M. Irgens, Director Professor, Medical Birth Registry of Norway
- f) Sigurd Sandmo, Manager of St. Jørgens Hospital

2.3 Legal status (if different from 2.1)

- (a) category of ownership (e.g. public, corporate or private)
public
- (b) details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage
common archival care
- (c) accessibility
General rule: Free public access and use in the respective reading rooms
Exception: Personal medical records less than 80 years old are accessible for scientific use only, after written application
- (d) copyright status
No copyright restrictions, under the obligation to refer to correct source

2.4 Responsible administration

details should be given of the mechanism or organization already established, or to be established, to ensure the proper management of the documentary heritage

same as 1.4

3. Identification

3.1 Description and inventory

Leprosy or Hansen's Disease has always been a problem of the poor and is still a scourge in some parts of the world. Until 1900 it also represented an important health problem in the western parts of Norway. Norwegian authorities took an interest in the problem at an early stage, and Bergen was to play a key role in international leprosy research during the 19th century. The experience from the Norwegian fight against the disease is still of great significance for the work against leprosy world-wide.

The Leprosy Archives of Bergen comprise documents re medical management and research from Bergen's three hospitals, and covers highlights like the establishment by O.G. Høegh in 1856 of the world's first national disease registry, viz. the National Leprosy Registry of Norway and the detection by G.H. Armauer Hansen in 1873 of the leprosy bacillus, the first micro-organism that causes a chronic disease to have been discovered. The Leprosy Registry was computerized in the 1970s and comprises 8231 patients. Since it represents the only source of data so far that documents, from an epidemiological point of view, the decline and disappearance of leprosy in a country, its files have been and are still used for important epidemiological research in which World Health Organization has taken great interest.

3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

Inventories of the archival material have been produced by The Regional State Archives of Bergen and City Archives of Bergen, for the archival fonds in their own custody. The computerized version of the Leprosy Registry is available at Locus of Registry Based Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Bergen. There is no proper inventory of the scientific library.

The archives contain :

- administrative records (inspections reports, journals, copies of sent letters, letters received, applications, registers, inventories of instruments, equipment and furniture, records concerning the patients' work, food, clothing, education etc, etc)
- medical records (patient's journals, patient registers, autopsy reports, primary and follow-up notification forms, central protocols for all health districts, central protocols for all leprosy hospitals, computerized files based on protocol data, etc.)
- financial records (budgets, financial statements, account books, ledgers, memorials etc)
- Medical records date back to early 19th century, administrative and financial records to early 18th century

3.3 Visual documentation, if appropriate (for example, photographs or a video of the documentary heritage)

A CD based on digital copies of some of the records is attached

A brief visual presentation can be found on the internet in "Evidence! Europe reflected in Archives" at:

http://www.euarchives.org/index.php3?sch=3&pge=topics&cty=bergen&nr=1_2_4_2

(Or: go to www.euarchives.org, choose: Science and Technology, choose: Leprosy - once a common sight)

The hub of The Leprosy Archives of Bergen is St. George's Hospital in Bergen with its 18th century buildings. For visitors are available:

- Video on Armauer Hansen's discovery of the leprosy bacillus
- Audiovisual programme on St. George's Hospital

3.4 History

The various archives have for long periods been scattered. Since the 1840's St.Jørgen Hospital has placed its old documents in the archives of the Municipality of Bergen, later named the City Archives. Other material has been given to the City Archives or the Regional State Archives from various sources. The Leprosy Registry was computerized in 1970 in connection with the X International Leprosy Congress in Bergen in 1973.

3.5 Bibliography: Please indicate up to three published sources describing the proposed documentary heritage.

Danielssen, D.C. & Boeck, C.W.: *Om Spedalskhed*. Christiania 1847. (French edition *Traité de la Spedalskhed ou Éléphantiasis des Grecs. Avec un atlas 24 planchés coloreés*. Paris 1848)

Hansen, G.H.A: *Undersøgelser angående Spedalskedens Årsager*. Christiania 1874.

Hansen, G.H.A. & Looft, C.: *Leprosy in its clinical and pathological aspects*. Bristol 1895.

Irgens, L.M.,& Bjerkedal, T., *Epidemiology of Leprosy in Norway: the History of the National Leprosy Registry of Norway from 1856 until today*. International Journal of Epidemiology, 1973; 2: 81-89.

The Regional State Archives of Bergen: *Lepra-arkiver*. Konseptkatalog august 1997.

City Archives of Bergen: Inventories of the archives from St. Jørgens Hospital, Lungegaardens Sykehus, Pleiestiftelsen No. 1, and others.

"*De Fattige Christi Lemmer ...*" *Historien til stiftelsen St. Jørgen*. Redaktør: Svein Aage Knudsen. Bergen Byarkiv/ Stiftelsen St. Jørgen 1991. ISBN 82-7355-022-2

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

Prof. Emeritus Michel Lechat
former President of the International Leprosy Association.

Catholic University of Lovain.
Bruxelles.

Prof. Ole Didrik Lærum M.D.
Ph.D.
former Rector of the University of Bergen
The Gade Institute
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Prof of Medical History Øivind Larsen M.D. Ph.D.
Institute of General Practice and Communitive Medicine
University of Oslo
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4. Management plan – see below Annex 1

The documents are at present found at several different institutions in Norway, and as these documents are of substantial value for researchers all over the world, they should be digitalized and made available through CD-s or the internet through a coordinated effort. The digitalisation of all these records would require substantial resources, but if limited to the most important documents, it could be done within a few months.

5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria

5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.

Criterion 1 – Influence

The Leprosy Archives of Bergen document the breakthrough of the scientific understanding and description of leprosy on a world basis. They also document a development with highlights and events that have made a great impact in medical research (epidemiology, microbiology, pathology, clinical research, preventive medicine and control) and caregiving far beyond leprosy. Furthermore, these archives document core aspects of social history from poverty related topics, nutrition and living conditions in general to health policy.

Criterion 4 – People

Although the archives deal with leprosy patients in Norway, the documentation is relevant for this stigmatised group of people in general. The disease has its history in most parts of the world, and the sufferers are known as social outcasts in almost every culture we know about.

Criterion 5 - Subject Theme

Medical research and caregiving.

Social and political history
Health legislation

Criterion 6 - Form and Style

Most of the documents are examples of hospital records as they have evolved over a period of 300 years, covering documentation of leprosy patients' care, leprosy research as well as the development of health policies and the roles of health authorities.

Of special interest as concerns form and style are the illustrations, from the Atlas of Leprosy and other places. The illustrations are made by well known Norwegian artists, as Johan Ludvig Løding, and are pieces of art as well as scientific documents.

Criterion 7 - Social Value

The Leprosy Archives of Bergen apply to a disease that still represents a world health problem, leprosy, with millions of sufferers; the exact number is unknown due to lack of data. Leprosy is a disease of the developing countries related to poverty and undernutrition as well as living conditions in general with bearing far beyond leprosy.

Secondary Criterion 1 – Integrity

The authenticity of the records is beyond question.

There have been some losses of archival material, the hospital records from 15th – 18th century are lost, and 18th century material is not complete. However, from the pioneer period of the 1840's onward most of the archives appear to be intact.

Secondary Criterion 2 – Rarity

see 4.4

5.2 Contextual assessment including an assessment of the importance of a series of documents, the importance of a series of documents in a particular setting, and the assessment against other documentary heritage

Importance:

- The Leprosy Archives of Bergen provide the contextual background of enterprises with unique importance to mankind by
- the discovery of a microorganism causing a chronic and most disabling disease with enormous suffering and thereby forming the basis of
- the establishment of a disease control programme having eventually contributed to the eradication of the disease in many countries, a programme that was evaluated by
- the establishment of the National Leprosy Registry of Norway

-The Leprosy Archives of Bergen provides data bases (the Leprosy Registry) that are still of great importance to epidemiological research since such data bases are lacking in the areas of the world where the disease is still prevalent.

5.3 An evaluation of the authenticity

Consisting of original documents, the authenticity of the archives is beyond question.

5.4 An assessment of rarity (if appropriate)

The Leprosy Archives of Bergen are unique even in a world perspective, documenting a variety of aspects of the history of a disease in a country throughout several hundred years with bearing not only to other diseases, but also to social problems in general, to other parts of the world and to our time.

6. Consultation

6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the:

- (a) Owner
As 1.4
- (b) Custodian
As 2.2
- (c) Relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee (if appropriate)
Norsk Komite for Verdens hukommelse, Den norske UNESCO-kommisjonen

7. Nominator

7.1 Name

Ministry of Cultural Affairs/the Norwegian Memory of the World Committee/the Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO

7.2 Relationship to documentary heritage Cf 2.2 and 2.3

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate)

Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO
City Archivist Arne Skivenes

7.4 Contact details

Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO:
P.O.Box 1507 Vika
N-0117 Oslo
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Arne Skivenes:

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