

# Norwegian Law Libraries<sup>1</sup>

## Law and Libraries

Law libraries in Norway are relatively young. When the *University Library*, as part of the *University of Oslo*<sup>2</sup>, was established in 1813, the main part of the books was duplicated from the Royal Library in Copenhagen. Bibliophiles in Denmark and Norway also donated quite a few book collections. The collections consisted mainly of theological and legal literature from the art of printing's first years and onwards. The oldest book in the law collections is from 1512.

Through the years, Norwegian literature was added to the collections as part of The National Library functions, and selected foreign literature was bought to the University Library.<sup>3</sup>

In 1956, a branch of the University Library was established under the name of the Faculty of Law's library service; later (1980) renamed *The Faculty of Law Library*. When law faculties were established also at the universities in Bergen and Tromsø, we today have three academic law libraries in Norway, all of them departments of their respective university libraries. Each three of them are an important part of their faculties, both professionally and because of their nearby positions. The three libraries are in a separate class from other related libraries, as to what they can offer: their size, their competence and frequency of use. There are no other public law libraries in Norway.

Major lawyers firms, courts of law, ministries and other public institutions have through the years built up large collections of law literature, today administered by law librarians.

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<sup>1</sup> The article is a slightly revised translation of Chapter 7 "Bibliotek" - In: *Praktisk rettskildelære: juridisk informasjonssøking* by Pål A Bertnes and Halvor Kongshavn. - Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2005. The translation is by Liv Thrap-Meyer.

<sup>2</sup> Or "The Royal Frederik's University" which was the name from the establishing in 1811 until 1939.

<sup>3</sup> The University Library in Oslo used to be the National Library of Norway. The separation was not formal until 1999 when a new university library building, Georg Sverdrup's House, was added to the university buildings at the campus of Blindern, Oslo. The National Library is now situated partly in Mo i Rana in northern Norway and partly in the former University Library building in Oslo, recently enlarged, renovated and reopened as "The National Library".

## Faculty of Law Libraries in general

The Faculty of Law Libraries are essential for all law students and law researchers in Norway. They also offer a variety of services to law interested individuals outside the universities, lawyers, researchers, court employees and the source-retrieving employees of administrative authorities – and laypersons. The libraries are parts of international networks, which open for interesting exchanges of service and information.

The services given by these three law libraries are mainly the same. There has always been a very close cooperation between them. Joint efforts have been made in certain areas such as retrieving sources and developing tools to retrieve qualified legal information. The web gateway *Juridisk nettviser* is an example of such cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

The need of space for the increasing amount of books has been developing through the years until the present digital time. Some international periodical law subscriptions are cancelled; but on the other hand, we now have access to a constantly increasing amount of electronic legal periodicals, besides law dissertations and monographs on Internet. The space problems are also diminished when the libraries now may send their older periodical volumes to our national custodian library in Mo in Rana with opportunities for borrowing back, if necessary.

Library users can borrow most of the literature, copy whatever they want, sit in the library to work with material not for lending (especially reference books and legislative history) or find their own PC workplace. Terminals with Internet access to all the Internet databases are installed.

When going from the libraries' home pages to look at the electronic legal information systems, one finds clickable specifications of national and international systems. Some have free access, but others are only accessible through PCs situated at a particular university or university library. Some systems are only accessible from one specific PC in the library.

The libraries have worked hard to ensure that the users may find the information they want, including instructions and courses. Every term the students are offered courses in how to find literature, different types of sources of law, both on paper and electronic, on many different levels in their study. Many courses are coordinated with those of the faculty. The faculty libraries have these latest years of new technology endeavored to supply Internet with relevant legal information and to provide logical paths to the legal sources on Internet. All the time the aim is to increase the users' possibilities to retrieve relevant legal information. *Juridisk nettviser* is such a path. Another example of the universities' common web portal is the programs *MetaLib* and *SFX*, installed the summer 2005. You may gain access to the local version of the portal through the faculty libraries' home pages.<sup>5</sup>

Students and researchers are recommended to start at their own university library's home pages to obtain local information and, because the PCs are

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<sup>4</sup> "www.juridisk.net".

<sup>5</sup> Named *X-port* in Oslo, *Bibliotekportalen* in Bergen and *Ofelaš* in Tromsø.

connected to the automatic library system *Bibsys*<sup>6</sup>, they gain access to the complete version of *Lovdata* (the Norwegian legal information system<sup>7</sup>).

All the three libraries are public libraries, open to anyone.

Even if the three faculty of law libraries in Norway have many similarities in the way they function, they also have characteristics of their own.

### **The Faculty of Law Library in Oslo (UJUR)**

The Oslo Faculty of Law Library – UJUR – is organized with the main library in the building *Domus Bibliotheca*, a learning centre in the building *Domus Nova* and seven department libraries in the respective law departments. Together the library units contain nearly all the existing Norwegian and Scandinavian law documents. The collections of reports and legislation are nearly complete as well. Among the international literature German and Anglo-American legal literature dominates.

UJUR is a large library by international standards, one of the largest in Europe. In total UJUR has about 300 000 volumes, and since the mid 90s about 1500 series of current periodicals in addition to access to about 1500 electronic full text periodicals – through *Bibsys* or through *X-port*.

Besides the primary users, lawyers, judges, researchers and students from other universities (and other countries) are frequent users. The library's central location in Oslo and the national resource the collections represent, also contribute to the library's popularity.

The main library in *Domus Bibliotheca* is particularly intended for students and external users. The department libraries are mainly research libraries with the exception of the libraries for *Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law* and *Norwegian Centre for Human Rights*, which are both common libraries for the departments' students and employees. Some of the reading rooms are equipped with collections of court decisions. In 2004, the students' learning centre was built in *Domus Nova*, with the combination of reading desks, PC desks, access to give computer-guided instruction, colloquium rooms and seminar rooms and shelves with the most used legal sources and literature.

The Faculty of Law established in 1990 the Centre of European Law, now named European Documentation Centre (EDC) situated in *Domus Media*, east wing. In a short time the library at EDC has built up a substantial special collection of monographs and series, the most essential acquired retrospectively. In 1992 the Centre got status as European Documentation Centre, Special Library, which means that the official EU documents are sent them automatically. The Centre aims especially to meet the legal researchers' needs in the field of EU/EEA. To meet the requirements of the students and external legal users, the main library is establishing a relatively extensive EEC/EU/EEA collection in collaboration with the Centre.

For further information, see [www.ub.uio.no/ujur/](http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/)

<sup>6</sup> See "[ask.bibsys.no/ask/action/resources?lang=en](http://ask.bibsys.no/ask/action/resources?lang=en)".

<sup>7</sup> See "[www.lovdata.no/info/lawdata.html](http://www.lovdata.no/info/lawdata.html)".

### **The Faculty of Law Library in Bergen (Ubbjur)**

In 1969, the Departments of Private Law and of Public and International Law, were established in Bergen. In 1980, the two departments became the *Faculty of Law* in 1980. The *Faculty of Law Library* – Ubbjur – was established in 1974 and is one out of six faculty libraries at the *University Library in Bergen (UBB)*.

The library is situated in the centre of the Law Faculty building at the *Dragefjellet* site. It offers a collection of more than 100 000 volumes and it subscribes to more than 2000 different periodicals, collections of court reports, law books, stencils and yearbooks – in print and/or in electronic version. The printed collections are easily available on one floor in the library. The electronic collections are available through the web pages, through *Bibsys* or through *Bibliotekportalen*.

The library obtains nearly all Norwegian legal literature, most of the other Scandinavian countries' and the standard books of current topics – or topics of interest for the researchers – from many other countries, especially Great Britain, USA, Germany and EU. Besides law books, there are also titles from similar topics as political science, philosophy, history, criminology and other social studies.

A so-called learning resource centre opened in 2003, as a follow-up of the national study reform. The library has since then been more visited than ever.

In 2004 the *European Documentation Centre*, EDC, was moved from the *High Technology Centre* to join the library on *Dragefjellet*. EDC was established in 1996 with Ubbjur responsible for the daily running.

The service offered is about the same as in Oslo. For more information, see “[www.ub.uib.no/avdeling/jur/](http://www.ub.uib.no/avdeling/jur/)”.

### **PJ Library at the University Library in Tromsø (UBTØ)**

About 1970 the *University in Tromsø* chose to establish a library for researchers and students, as the custom has been at all the universities in Norway. It was a condition, though, that the library should serve not only the researchers and students at the university, but also be of service to the public in general in that part of the country.

*The Faculty of Law* (earlier called Department of Jurisprudence) is the most recent faculty at the University of Tromsø, established in 1987. The faculty moved in with the *Library for Psychology and Law* (the *PJ library*) in 2004 in the newly erected building for theoretic subjects. The main purpose of the library is to be of service to the students and the employees at the *Department of Psychology* and the *Faculty of Law*.

On the second floor, one finds the main collection of easily accessible books of law, systematically arranged, together with a collection of law encyclopedia and dictionaries, current collections of legislation, preliminary works of law besides ordinary dictionaries. Reading rooms, colloquium rooms, copy rooms, multi media rooms besides a relief room are all on the floor below. This level is mainly for working. On the ground floor, there is storage for law literature and

literature about psychology. Most of the periodicals pertaining to these two subjects stay on this level. The storage rooms are open to the users. The PJ Library has about 350 law periodicals and series on its shelves. It also offers a large number of electronic periodicals – through *Bibsys* or through *Ofelaš*.

Further information about the library is found on their temporary web site [www.ub.uit.no/fag/jus/midl/](http://www.ub.uit.no/fag/jus/midl/). The University Library in Tromsø has new web pages on its' way, including law – pay attention to the main home page [www.ub.uit.no](http://www.ub.uit.no)

## Other Law Libraries

The courts of law have libraries for their employees, varying in size and quality. The most elegant and comprehensive library is the one at the *Supreme Court*. The *Law Courts in Oslo* have a large and active library. Both have very skilled librarians. *The Ministry of Justice* and *The Attorney General* also have good libraries.

Some other public institutions with more or less law activities have small libraries containing their collections of court decisions, preparatory works and law reference books.

Public libraries of some size situated in the larger cities often have quite large law collections; especially in the cities where they also have law schools, e.g. *Bergen Public Library*, *Deichmann's Library* – the largest public library in Norway, *Stavanger Library* and *Trondheim Public Library* also have a separate Europe Library. In Trondheim the *Gunnerus Library* at the university has the largest law collection.

The book collections in the various lawyers' offices are very different as to size, although many use the electronic system *BibJure* to organize their collection. Lately we have noticed a development of bigger libraries with employed librarians at the largest law firms – with accessible information to their employees, both in paper version and electronic, in a professional way.

Some special libraries have some law literature in their collections, mainly literature of interest to multidisciplinary lawyers. The most interesting are (all in Oslo, except the *Norwegian Business School* in Bergen):

- *The Storting Library* (Library of the Norwegian Parliament) is used by the Faculty of Law Libraries and their users especially in connection with foreign parliament negotiations
- *The Nobel Institute Library* especially contains the subjects of international law, human wrights and UN and EU publications
- *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Library* used to have publications on international law, some legal material from various countries – besides publications from international organizations, but it is now closed
- *Norwegian Centre for Human Rights* has built a special library within its area. The department has become part of the Law Faculty of Oslo, but the library consists as an independent department library with close relations to the Faculty of Law Library

- *The Government Administration and Documentation Services* contain some legal materials and public Norwegian and foreign publications in addition to a substantial EU collection
- *The Business School BI's library* covers some law subjects and EU in addition to administration, management and economy
- *The Norwegian Business School's library* contains the same subjects