

National Bank of Greece: In House Preservation of Records and Archives of Merged Banks

*Gerassimos Notaras, National Bank of Greece - Athens
Nikos Pantelakis, National Bank of Greece - Athens*

1. Introduction:

Since its foundation 161 years ago, National Bank of Greece has merged with a number of other banks.

By analysing these mergers – which will be described in brief below – we have been able to come to a number of conclusions concerning both the type and volume of records that have been preserved from the archives of the banks that have merged with NBG, and the procedures – or lack of them – that were implemented in so doing.

We should point out in introduction that the National Bank of Greece has always been aware of the importance of record preservation. By an organisation chart drawn up in only the bank's second year in operation, Georgios Stavros, the Governor of the Bank at the time, specifically assigns responsibility for the proper maintenance and safekeeping of the Bank's records.

Indeed, the Bank's concern for the safekeeping of its archives is obvious from a number of initiatives taken by the bank over the 161 years of its history: for example, in 1894 NBG published an inventory of its general archives, and the 1920s saw it build the first purpose-built archive in Greece. NBG's desire to make full use of its extensive archives for, among others, historical reasons was clear from 1938 onwards. A separate Historical Archive Unit was formed in the late 1970s, assigned with the tasks of modernising the management of the records within its jurisdiction (1841-1940) and of ensuring that the records in its possession were made fully available to interested academics. This formed part of a large-scale wide-ranging banking and economic history research project, as a result of which 36 monographs were published and fortnightly seminars were held, which were attended by a substantial number of younger academics; and although both its form and its goals are now different, the research project is still under way.

The Bank's archives have always been among its priorities. However, the importance placed in the archives during an era before the emergence of modern concepts of archive management and utilisation indicates an increased awareness reflecting the presence of an 'archive culture', at least among NBG's management.

We believe that this "archive culture" played a key role in the preservation of NBG's own archives, as well as those of the banks with which it merged and the companies which it acquired, even where no specific provisions for the archives were made in the agreed merger procedure.

2. The National Bank of Greece

The National Bank of Greece, founded in 1841, is the oldest and most powerful operating bank in Greece. It began life as a private discount and mortgage institution with the exclusive right to issue bank notes. Over the course of its 161 year history, the bank's activities gradually expanded to encompass the full range of credit and financial services. It established itself throughout Greece, and in time expanding internationally into eighteen countries in four continents. The Bank gradually developed the National Bank of Greece Group, which, besides playing a key role in the domestic economy, today constitutes a major financial force in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans.

The National Bank of Greece has merged with or acquired the following banks during its 161 year history:

1. Pronomiochos Trapeza Epirus-Thessaly, (Privileged Bank of Epirus-Thessaly), 1881-1899. The bank merged with NBG in 1899.
2. Trapeza Kritis, (Bank of Crete), 1899-1919.
The bank merged with NBG in 1919.
3. Trapeza Anatolis, (Banque de l'Orient), 1904-1932.
The bank merged with NBG in 1932.
4. Trapeza Ethnikis Oikonomias (National Economic Bank)
The bank merged with the NBG in 1930.
5. Trapeza Chiou (Chios Bank).
6. Trapeza Athinon, (Bank of Athens) 1893-1953.
The bank merged with NBG in 1953.
5. Trapeza Epaggelmatikis Pistis, (Professional Credit Bank) 1952-1965
The bank merged with NBG in 1965.
6. The Karavasilis Bank and Tobacco Company, 1924-1951.
7. Ethniki Ktimatiki Trapeza tis Ellados, (National Mortgage Bank of Greece), 1928-1998. The bank merged with NBG in 1998.

A substantial part of the above banks' archive material is now preserved by NBG.

The observations and conclusions constituting the main section of this study are the fruit of research carried out into the surviving records of the banks and companies which have merged with or been acquired by NBG and which are currently in the possession of NBG's Historical Archive. The type of records which have survived, as well as the physical locations where they were stored, is often all the information we need to come to firm conclusions as to why and how some archive material was preserved while other material, that cannot be found, probably wasn't.

3. Records and Archives Management Practices in the National Bank of Greece

From NBG's very first years in operation, its management took pains to ensure that the bank's records were rationally organised. A separate service was created within the General Secretariat, charged with "filing all incoming and outgoing documents and keeping all the Bank's records in good order". An excellent illustration of just how much importance the bank's senior executives placed on the proper management of its archives is the fact that Euthymios Kechagias, the first officer to be put in charge of the archives, later became a Deputy Governor of the Bank; while I. Valaoritis, who subsequently became Governor of the Bank, had also served in the Records Department for a time. The first inventory of the Bank's archives, an in-house document published in 1894, described the archive's contents in detail. It took 76 years from the Bank's foundation before the sheer volume of accumulated archive material began to pose a problem. The issue of purging the archives was raised for the first time in 1917, but it wasn't until five years later, in 1922, that the decision to retire and destroy records taken and the first purge of the archives was carried out. Cash vouchers, bordereaux, counterfoils and various statements of account were destroyed at this time. Construction work was begun the following year on purpose-built archives, and the Bank's General Archives were housed in the finished building until September 2000. The Bank's Historical Archives will be rehoused there once the building has been brought fully in line with current archive standards. The Retention and Disposal Schedule introduced in 1932 remained up and running until 1962; while the Schedule in use today is in essence a slightly modified version of the completely overhauled Schedule of 1962. As part of the Bank's preparations for its upcoming centenary celebrations in 1941, the decision was taken in 1938 to create a separate Historical Archives Department which would be responsible for the safe-keeping of the Bank's historical records. However, following the outbreak of the Second World War the department's work had to be suspended, and was not resumed until 1962. The work of the Historical Archives was suspended once more following the 1967 coup, but the department was brought back into service again in 1977. The Historical Archives operated independently of the General Archives, which was responsible for administering the Bank's current and semi-current records, and moved from one division to another (the Strategic Planning and Research Division, and later the independent Public Relations Division) before finding a permanent home in the Secretariat Division in 1998 as an independent department of the General Archives.

Today, the Archives Subdivision provides NBG with a complete archival system, which is comprised of two separate departments: 1. the Archives Department and 2. the Historical Archives Department.

3.1 The Archives Department

The Archives Department is responsible for the management of NBG's active and semi-active archives. It is responsible for ensuring that there is no deviation from the Retention and Disposal Schedule, which is drawn up by it in line with relevant legislation and the requirements of NBG as defined by its executive and relevant divisions (Legal, Audit etc.) The Archives Department is also responsible for ensuring that the rules concerning the purging of archival material are strictly followed by the management of NBG's units to prevent the accumulation of useless archival material. Permission is now required in writing before any NBG record can be destroyed. The permit is issued by the Historical Archives Department and contains a detailed description of the documents to be destroyed as well as their expiry date as laid down by the Retention and Disposal Schedule. The Archives Department also ensures that there is adequate space for the storage of general archives. The Archives Department is divided into the Temporary and Special Archives Office and the General Archives Office.

3.2 The Historical Archive

The Historical Archive is responsible for preserving those of NBG's own in-house records that are either of value to the bank itself through time (operational, legal, or tax records), or are of historical value due to the probative or informational value they contain. It is worth noting at this stage that the National Bank of Greece has played a central role in the Greek economy since its foundation in 1841, only 20 years after the establishment of the modern Greek state itself. Since NBG's records go back to the bank's foundation, its archives are perhaps our most extensive source of information on the economic history of the modern Greek state. Since the resumption of its activities in 1977, the Historical Archives Department has developed a specific strategy which makes explicit its priorities re the acquisition of additional archival material. Accordingly, the Historical Archive Department now gives absolute priority to the preservation of NBG's in-house records. The Historical Archives Department acquires archival material of this sort by making a proposal to the executive in charge, requesting that the specific records be turned over to the Historical Archives Department. The executive ensures that the documents are no longer of any operational value and that an adequate period of time has elapsed since their creation to safeguard the Bank's own interests, and authorises the Historical Archives Department to make the records available to researchers. To date, NBG's entire archives dating from 1841 until 1953 have been turned over to the Historical Archives Department, while an application to extend the Department's jurisdiction over NBG records through 1974 is currently being processed. Second highest priority is given to the preservation of the personal records of former senior executives of NBG such as Governors and Division Managers and the historical archival material of the banks with which NBG has merged.

The Historical Archives Department also gives priority to the preservation of the records of companies which were taken over by the Bank, usually following bankruptcy. The Historical Archives Department has also developed a specific acquisition strategy in such cases, which states that:

1. The Historical Archives Department should apply strict criteria to the selection of companies whose records it will attempt to preserve in its collections, taking into account the age of the company, its size, the uniqueness of its activities, the nature of its relationship with NBG, and its importance to the Greek economy and Greek society as a whole.
2. The records of companies which, following the application of the above criteria, are not considered suitable for preservation in the Historical Archives should be preserved on a temporary basis until the possibility of their being handed over to a state or private archive - which may wish to preserve them due to their local interest or for some other reason - has been fully looked into. It was in such a manner that the records of several companies active in the Greek provinces (e.g. The Glavanis Archives in Volos and the archives of the Droulias raisin factory in Aigion) have, in recent years, found their way into regional offices of the General State Archives.

The Historical Archives Department is also responsible for requesting copies of the most important documents concerning the activities of NBG held in private and state archives both in Greece and abroad. By thus making all the relevant material available in one place, the Historical Archives Department has made it considerably easier to research subjects connected to NBG. It also has in its possession a number of unique records of relevance to the national economy (e.g. government financial reports), which researchers do not have access to elsewhere.

This is the end of the introduction. We felt that it was necessary to acquaint our readers with the manner in which the National Bank of Greece's Archives are organised; and the importance of the archives, not only as the repository of the National Bank of Greece's own extensive records, but also of the records of other banks with which NBG has merged. We can now move on to a presentation of our main subject.

There will now follow a presentation of each of the archives that passed into the possession of NBG following its merger with other banks. The presentation will begin with the most recent mergers in which NBG has been involved, and work backwards chronologically.

We hope our presentation of the way in which these archives were incorporated into those of NBG, and the nature of their content, will allow conclusions to be drawn and proposals formulated which will permit archives from future mergers to be incorporated as efficiently as possible.

4.The National Mortgage Bank of Greece, 1927-1998

The National Mortgage Bank of Greece was founded in 1927 as part of the general restructuring of the Greek banking sector that took place during the 1920s.

The British, French, and US governments had stated that unless the banking sector were reorganised, they would neither regulate Greece's war debt nor issue a loan to Greece, with the League of Nations acting as

guarantor, to finance the resettlement of refugees and stabilisation of the Greek currency. For currency reform to go ahead, Greece was required to:

1. establish an independent central note-issuing bank (which it did in 1928), and remove the right to issue bank notes from NBG;
2. establish specialist banks - the National Mortgage Bank of Greece (founded in 1927) and the Agricultural Bank (founded in 1929), which would offer mortgage and agricultural credit and remove the right to offer either from NBG;
3. transform the National Bank of Greece into a purely commercial bank.

The decision to establish the National Mortgage Bank of Greece was approved by the Shareholders' General Meeting of the National Bank of Greece on May 18, 1927, authorising the secession of NBG's mortgage credit division and the transfer of this division's assets and liabilities in their entirety to the new bank.

NMBG's articles of association stated that the aim of the new bank was to issue loans against collateral in the form of mortgage over real property located within the Greek state, the purchase and transfer of mortgaged claims and the granting of loans against pledge of such claims, the issue and circulation of mortgage bonds; the issue of loans to municipalities, village communities, port authorities and other public entities. NMBG was also entitled to grant loans to institutions and other bodies against assignment of, or establishment of a pledge over, their income in the bank's favour. Finally, NMBG could grant loans to third parties who would provide the same guarantees as legal entities and issue special bonds guaranteed by these loans.

The National Mortgage Bank's share capital was paid up its entirety by NBG, and it must be stressed that NBG played a pivotal role in organising the new bank, as well as supporting it and helping it develop during its first, critical years of operation. NBG provided support in the form of capital, know-how, and the provision of executives and other members of staff. Indeed, it was thanks to this support that the National Mortgage Bank of Greece managed to raise funds through large bond issues from Hambros Bank Ltd & Erlangers between 1927 and 1930. A further indication of the important role played by NBG in the formative years of the National Mortgage Bank is the fact that a number of NMBG's chief executives moved to it from NBG: I. Drosopoulos, the Co-governor of NBG, became its first Governor; Georgios Iatrou, NBG Manager, became NMBG's Deputy Governor; while a number of other senior figures from NBG were present on the new bank's first board of directors, among them Alexandros Diomedes (then Governor of NBG and later Governor of the Bank of Greece), and Alexandros Korizis (then an executive of NBG, and later its Governor).

NMBG grew considerably over the next seventy years. At the time of its merger with NBG, it was a modern Athens-based bank with 77 branches and sub-branches throughout Greece; 18 currency exchange outlets and representatives' offices abroad (in Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Holland, Australia, and Canada); and a central administration comprised of 14 Divisions.

Unlike National Bank of Greece, however, National Mortgage Bank of Greece did not have an organised, central department responsible for the management of its archives. We do not have an overall picture of NMBG's

record management system, but it would appear that each of the bank's divisions and departments dealt with their own records in their own way. In fact, of all the bank's divisions and branches, it was only NMBG's Division for Loan Payment Delays that had set up a separate Loan Records service responsible for managing its records.

5. The National Bank of Greece's merger with the National Mortgage Bank of Greece

The last decade has seen a great deal of restructuring in the Greek banking sector. The globalisation of world financial markets, the revolution in communications and banking and information technology, coupled with the participation of Greece in the EU and the Euro-zone have forced Greek financial institutions to upsize in order to better meet the new, highly competitive market conditions.

It was against this economic backdrop that NBG went ahead with the merger through the absorption of its NMBG subsidiary in order to reduce costs and strengthen and improve co-operation between the companies in the National Bank of Greece Group. NMBG had previously merged with another National Bank of Greece subsidiary, the National Housing Bank.

6. The incorporation of the archives of the National Mortgage Bank of Greece into those of the National Bank of Greece

As we mentioned above, the National Bank of Greece has a complete record management system while the National Mortgage Bank of Greece did not.

No centralised, integrated decision was taken during the negotiations that preceded the merger or the merger itself concerning the procedures to be followed for the efficient incorporation of the archives of NMBG into those of NBG, or the manner in which they would be managed within the unified Bank. Given the absence of a holistic approach, a number of piecemeal efforts had to suffice which aimed to preserve the existing archives of NMBG and to incorporate them into NBG's complete record management system.

These efforts were as follows:

1. Pursuant to a proposal from the Historical Archives Department, NBG's Secretariat Division issued a service memorandum informing the National Mortgage Bank of the procedures to be followed by its various divisions and branches regarding the disposal and retention of its records in the period prior to the merger. The memorandum stressed that written permission was required from the Historical Archives Department before any records could be destroyed.
2. The National Mortgage Bank's Secretariat and Shares Division was requested to turn over any of the following archive material in its possession to the General Archive Department of NBG: articles of association; annual reports, the minutes of Board meetings and Shareholders' General Meetings; Governors' Acts; circulars; orders of the day; the minutes of various committees; shareholder registers ; correspondence with the Bank of Greece; resolutions of the Bank of Greece; correspondence protocols; the correspondence of the Secretariat; reports on the merger, and other documents (see the detailed list in

Appendix 1). A protocol was to be drafted for every record handed over in this way.

3. The National Mortgage Bank was requested to turn over its cash vouchers and reconciliation statements to NBG's General Archives Department without, however, either bank being required to draft a protocol.
4. The Legal Division of the National Mortgage Bank was requested to turn over its records to the corresponding Division of NBG.
5. The Personnel Division of the National Mortgage Bank was requested to turn over its records to the corresponding Division of NBG..
6. Records concerning NMBG mortgages were to remain in the record storage facilities of the former National Mortgage Bank of Greece until the completion of the new headquarters of the unified bank, at which time the unified mortgage archives would be transferred to the new building.
7. The branch records of NMBG were to remain in the branches of the unified bank.

We are not certain what has happened to the records of the other main divisions of NMBG, nor can we be sure about the fate of the records of the National Housing Bank with which the Bank had merged prior to its merger with NBG. We have ascertained that at least part of this archive material is currently located in the basement of the branch at Stadiou 29, while we have information to the effect that further records are being stored in another two buildings which formerly belonged to the Mortgage Bank, although we are not certain what sort of archive material these contain.

The archives of NMBG are of particular interest to NBG. Due to the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the National Mortgage Bank, which we have detailed above, the records referring to its mortgage activities are, in fact, the continuation of NBG's own records. Collating the development of these mortgage activities before and after the foundation of NMBG would thus yield interesting comparative data on the manner in which the two different banks approached this market sector. NMBG's personnel files are also of particular interest to NBG since many of its executives had previously served on the Board of NBG.

Since the Historical Archives Department of NBG received no applications to destroy archival material from NMBG during the run-up to the merger, it would seem safe to assume that whatever records were contained in NMBG's archives prior to the merger were in fact found in the corresponding departments and divisions of NBG as described above following it.

What we cannot know, however, are what criteria and methodology NMBG applied to the purging of its records prior to the merger. The protocol drafted concerning the archival material that was handed over to NBG (see Appendix 1) displays large gaps in material which should, logically, have been archived in perpetuity.

We believe that an initial conclusion can be drawn at this stage, before we move on to the problems stemming from mergers: there are urgent and pressing reasons for launching a campaign to convince the largest possible number of banks to set up organised archives departments to protect and manage their wealth of archival material in line with modern guidelines.

7.The Archives of the Bank of Athens following the merger

The Bank of Athens was founded with Greek capital in 1893 when the I. Kallergis' banking office was given a new name and converted into a joint-stock company. The majority of the founders of the Bank of Athens (A. Triantafyllidis, A. Lamprinoudis, A. Kallergis, E. Empeirikos, M. Iordanopoulos, N. Triantafyllidis) were Greeks who lived and worked abroad, chiefly in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. They modelled the Bank of Athens on the Credit Lyonnais. The Bank of Athens formed a close relationship with the Banque de l' Union Parisienne some ten years after its foundation, and the French bank was for a time one of its largest stock holders. From very early on, the Bank of Athens focused its attentions on financing every sort of industrial venture, including Greek shipping concerns overseas. The Bank also founded and directed large corporate concerns such as the Wine and Spirits Company (Etaireia Oinon kai Oinopneumaton), the Vasiliadis Greek Machine Works Company (Etairia Ellinikou Michanopoieiou Vasileiadis), and the Preferential Raison Company (Pronomiouchos Etaireia Stafidos), and with the Bank's assistance and encouragement, Greek capital ventured forth beyond the borders of the Greek state to play an active role in the markets of nations like Turkey and Egypt, which had well-established, sizeable Greek communities. The Bank of Athens set up a company to conduct research into the feasibility of certain public works (e.g. the provision of water for the city of Athens from Marathon), and set up branches in Turkey, Egypt, Cyprus, Albania, France, London, the US, and South Africa; of all of them, the Egyptian branch was the most successful. The branches operated for as long as local and international political conditions permitted.

The Bank of Athens' compulsory merger with NBG took place in 1953 by Law 2291/18.2.1953, Government Gazette issue 31, and Decree 27.2.1953 Government Gazette issue 39. Prior to the merger, the Bank of Athens had been the second largest bank in Greece and NBG the largest. The unified bank was initially called the National Bank of Greece and Athens, but the Bank was renamed the National Bank of Greece once more in 1956.

The archives of the Bank of Athens were handed over to the Historical Archives Department of NBG in 1987. Until then, the archive had been stored in the building which had been the head office of the Bank of Athens prior to the merger.

Sections of the Bank of Athens' archives were later discovered among the records of NBG's Syros and Santorini branches.

All the Bank of Athens' records that had come to light were transferred to NBG's Historical Archives Department in 1987, where they were classified in accordance with their provenance (i.e. the division of the Bank of Athens that had created them). The classification process is now complete and the archives have been made available to researchers. Furthermore, with the exception of only 1,5 linear metres of archival material, the entire archive has now been microfilmed.

When the additional records were later discovered on Syros and Santorini, they, too, were transferred to the Historical Archives Department for classification and incorporation into the rest of the Bank of Athens' archival material.

Today, the archives of the Bank of Athens occupy 99 linear metres in the Historical Archives.

The personnel files of the Bank of Athens have not been transferred to the Historical Archives Department; they remain in NBG's Personnel Division, and the General Archive Department is in charge of their safekeeping. The classification process revealed that the archive contained six broad categories of archival material which corresponded to several branches and divisions of the Bank of Athens:

1. The General Secretariat Division (the minutes of board meetings; the minutes of the General Meeting; annual reports and balance sheets; circulars; correspondence).
2. The Personnel Division (disciplinary records, correspondence, some personnel files from branches in Turkey).
3. The Legal Division.
4. The Syros branch.
5. The Santorini branch.
6. The archives of the Greek-German Economic Society, 1941-1950.

If we exclude the Legal series, which includes all the cases from the Bank's foundation until its merger, the remaining series only cover the last twenty years of the Bank's operations years prior to the merger, and only the last five years are covered anything like fully (see the table in Appendix 2). Labels on the insides of the dossiers containing correspondence indicate that they had originally contained older material which was probably destroyed during the 1930s. The dossiers were then simply turned inside out, so new labels could be written on their spines, and reused to store new documents from the latter period of the Bank's history.

Study of the archival material has led to the following conclusions:

1. During the merger procedure, the records of the Bank of Athens' General Secretariat, as well as its Personnel and Legal Divisions, were preserved separately from the archives of NBG. While the branch records were merged, it would appear that the Bank of Athens' personnel files were transferred to NBG's archives at some later stage. The one exception were the personnel files of the branches in Turkey, which were filed along with the rest of the archival material from the Bank of Athens' Personnel Division.
2. The Bank of Athens conducted a major purge of its archives during the 1930s.
3. The only records which were not purged by the Bank of Athens from its foundation in 1893 until its merger are those of the Legal Division.
4. The complete minutes of the meetings of the board of directors have not been located. We cannot be sure if they have been incorrectly filed or destroyed.

8. The Archives of the Bank of Epirus-Thessaly (9.5 linear metres)

The Privileged Bank of Epirus-Thessaly was founded in 1882, shortly after the incorporation of Thessaly and parts of Epirus into the Greek state. It was founded by a group of financiers from Constantinople (A. Syggros, S. Skouloudis, G. Koronios, A. Vlastos) as a mortgage bank. In exchange for the exclusive right to issue bank notes in Thessaly and Epirus for the following 25 years, the Group committed itself in 1881 to lending the Greek government 120 million Drachmas to cover the expenses of incorporating the new territories into the Greek state. The Bank was based in Volos, and established branches in Arta, Larisa, Trikala, Kalambaka, Almyros, and Athens.

The Bank of Epirus-Thessaly grew slowly and was unable to meet the demands for finance of the agricultural and commercial concerns in the areas where it was active. The Bank found itself in even more difficulties when Thessaly was occupied by the Ottoman army in 1897. The bank merged with NBG in 1899, following the death of its founder, and Chairman of the Board, Andreas Syngrou. The Bank's note-issuing rights in Epirus and Thessaly were transferred to NBG following the merger.

While the archive of the Bank of Epirus-Thessaly was formerly stored in NBG's General Archives, it is now located in the Historical Archive and has been fully classified and microfilmed. The archive had not been purged at any time during its history and has been preserved intact. It has proved an easy task to preserve the archive in its entirety because, due to the limited number of years the bank was in operation, the archives are small. The archives of the Bank of Epirus-Thessaly are the only Greek bank archives to have been preserved intact from the late nineteenth century. The archive consists of 129 files and 128 registers (See Appendix 3).

A great deal of research has been carried out into the archives of the Bank of Epirus-Thessaly. There have also been numerous publications, including Lia Chiotaki's The behavior of bank capital in an agricultural society. The case of the Trapeza Epeirothessalias in Arta, Athens 1994 and Vangelis Prontzas', Economy and Landlording in Thessaly, 1881-1912, Athens 1992.

9. The archives of the Bank of Crete (3.5 linear metres)

The Bank of Crete was founded in 1899 on the initiative of NBG which also provided the capital in collaboration with C.I. Hambro & Sons, the English bank, and E. Evgenidis, a financier from Constantinople. It was founded as a commercial, mortgage, and agricultural credit bank enjoying the exclusive right to issue bank notes in Crete. The Bank's headquarters were in Chania. The Bank of Crete set up branches in Sphakia, Rethymnon, Herakleion, and Agios Nikolaos. The Bank's board of directors was made up of executives of NBG. The Bank of Crete supported economic activity on the island, especially via the provision of mortgage credit during what was a difficult period in the islands' history. After 20 years in operation, the Bank of Crete merged with NBG in 1919.

The Bank of Crete's archival material, which amounts to some 3.5 linear metres, was formerly located in the General Archives of NBG but has now been moved to the Historical Archive. The archive has been fully categorised and microfilmed and has been made available to researchers.

The majority of the Bank's archival material has come down to us intact. (See the table in Appendix 4).

The archive of the Bank of Crete contains the records relevant to the merger itself, i.e. the inspection that was carried out of the bank's assets prior to the merger, as well as the protocols and tables detailing the handing over of the Bank's holdings.

10. The Archives of the Banque de l'Orient

The Banque de l'Orient was founded in 1904 by the National Bank of Greece and the Berlin-based Nationalbank fur Deutschland. NBG's Articles of Association specifically barred it from operating in the Turkish and Egyptian markets, and the new bank was a means round this. Fifty percent of the bank's capital was held by NBG and fifty percent by the Nationalbank fur Deutschland. However, the German bank judged its continued participation to be inviable and withdrew from the Banque de l'Orient within the first year of operations. The Banque de l'Orient set up branches in Constantinople, Smirni, Thessaloniki, Alexandria, Cairo, Mytilene, Serres, Zagazig, Magnesia, Pergamos, and Soma. The Banque de l'Orient came up against serious financial difficulties following the Asia Minor Catastrophe due to the losses incurred by its Smirni branch.

A large part of the Bank's stock eventually found its way into the hands of French financiers, and the Banque de l'Orient was floated on the Paris stock exchange.

The Banque de l'Orient merged with NBG in 1932. The Bank's archives were initially held in the General Archives of NBG. However, a section handed over to the Historical Archives Department has now been classified and microfilmed; another section handed over in 1999 is currently being classified; and a third section was handed over recently (November 2000) and has not yet been classified. (See the table in Appendix 5).

11. The Archives of National Economy Bank, Chios Bank and Professional Credit Bank

National Economy Bank was founded in 1918 by the Embeirikos brothers, the well-known shipping magnates and big-business men, in co-operation with the Athens Trade and Shipping Company, and Nikolaos Charalampis, Anastasios Spourgitis, N. Vogiatzidis, P. Tsitsekis, A. Kairis, D. Miaoulis, and P. Diamantopoulos.

The Bank's archive was formerly held in the General Archive of NBG, but was recently transferred to the Historical Archive (November 2000). It has not yet been classified.

Chios Bank was founded in 1919 by N. Paspatis, F. Chrysopavelonis, A. Paspatis, and P. Katsogiannis. Chios Bank was recently sold, but we could not find the Chios Bank's archives in NBG Archives. We have information to the effect that the archives were formerly stored in the basement of the Bank's head office and were sold along with the building.

NBG purchased the Professional Credit Bank in 1965. The Professional Credit Bank was founded in 1952 by the Karavasilis Bank, itself a division of the "The Karavasilis Tobacco Industries and Bank S.A.", which was founded in 1924.

It is worth noting that the archives of the Karavasilis Tobacco Company have survived. They were located by the Historical Archive in the basement of the company's tobacco plant in 1994 when the building became the legal property of NBG following the company's liquidation. The archives have been handed over to the Historical Archives Department, but have not yet been classified.

12. The dossiers containing documents relevant to the abortive negotiations concerning a merger between the National Bank of Greece and Alpha Bank.

Negotiations began in 2001 concerning the merger of NBG and Alpha Bank, the two largest commercial banks in the Greek market today.

However, no agreement could be reached and the proposed merger did not in fact take place.

The Governor of NBG instructed the ~~Director of the Secretariat~~ ^{Head of the Governor, offi-} Division to gather all the documentation relevant to these negotiations together and hand it over to NBG's Historical Archives Department. This material will be made available to the public in the usual manner.~~and time~~

13. Conclusions

The description of the archival material in the main part of this study, along with the information included in the appendices at the end (tables listing the series of archival material from the banks that have merged with or been taken over by NBG) demonstrate that in the case of the Bank of Epeirothessalias, and also to a large extent in the case of the Bank of Crete, NBG took care to preserve all the archive material that came into its possession following the mergers. In these two cases, the banks were not large enough and had not been in operation long enough to have accumulated a large quantity of archives, and consequently posed few or no storage problems to NBG. However, in almost all later mergers, NBG limited itself to preserving the following categories of records:

1. Articles of Incorporation.
2. Articles of Association. Regulations. Divisions and departments.
3. The minutes of the Shareholders' General Meetings, as well as board and committee meetings;
4. Annual reports
5. Circulars and Governor's Acts
6. Personnel records;
7. Legal records;
8. Records pertinent to the merger itself.

In addition, the correspondence of the Secretariat Division for the twenty years prior to the merger was saved in the case of both the Bank of Athens and the National Housing Bank. Furthermore, in the recent merger with the National Housing Bank, the bank's cash vouchers were also preserved since financial institutions are required to keep instruments of this type for a twenty year period which had not as yet expired.

The following is a first approach to the subject based on our empirical knowledge of the way in which the archives of the banks that merged with NBG were integrated into and preserved in NBG archives.

Our experience shows that the preservation of archives from banks with which NBG has merged depended to a great extent on how complete and well-organised their archives were prior to the merger. Put more specifically, it depended on:

- A. the extent to which the other banks had well-organised archive departments which had managed their archival material properly up until the merger;
- B. the degree to which an "archive culture" (a somewhat abstract but nevertheless important concept) was present in the other banks prior to the merger, which encouraged their executives to treat all the records in their possession with respect.

Our analysis of the mergers entered into by NBG indicates that in no case was any of the archival material present in the archives of either bank at the moment the merger took place subsequently lost.

Where the above requirements are not met, however, the said problem needs to be approached in a different way.

14. Proposals

We believe that the EU Banking History Unit should introduce a programme aimed at examining and promoting the optimal procedures for dealing with archives when banks merge.

A programme of this type could focus on:

- A. encouraging those banks which have not yet done so to set up archive departments, and providing them with the know-how they need to do so;
- B. informing the governing bodies of Europe's banks of the need to provide for their archives, as they do for the rest of their assets, during merger negotiations;
- C. putting together a handbook describing minimum and maximum preservation goals that banks should adopt re their archives, and which should also be applicable to mergers. The handbook should include practical guidance as to how these goals could be achieved, and be aimed at banks' archives departments;
- D. involving firms which specialise in facilitating mergers in the effort to save archives. Raising these specialists' awareness of archive issues and putting the issue of archive preservation firmly on the merger negotiation agenda might also bring positive results¹.
- E. Finally, we should never tire of raising people's awareness that an institution's archives, in other words its history, is an important asset.

¹ We have borrowed this proposal from a similar proposal made by Monsieur Pierre de Longuemar of Parisbas.

APPENDIX 1

Series of archive material handed over to the Archives Department and Legal and Personnel Divisions of NBG by the National Mortgage Bank

1. **Articles of association.**
2. **Board Meetings:** minutes of board meetings, 1927-1993, 34 minute books; minutes of board meetings, 1994-1998, unbound documents; minutes of board meetings, 1947-1998, unbound documents; board of directors and old Boards.
3. **General Meetings:** General Meeting minutes, 1929-1998, minute books and unbound documents; General Meeting dossiers, 1970-1998; minutes of Extraordinary General Meetings, 1961-1998.
4. **Annual reports,** 1927-1997.
5. **Governor's Acts,** 1927-1998.
6. **Governor's Circulars,** 1927-1998.
7. **The Bank's In-house Circulars,** 1988-1998
8. **Orders of the Day,** 1927-1948.
9. **Minutes from Committee Meetings:** Division Managers Committee; Depreciation Committee, 1940-1944; Expenditure Committee, 1943-1944; Property Committee, 1945-1946; Loan Approvals, 1945-1946, 1970-..., 1985-1987. Loan Assessment Committee, 1946; Bank Property Management Committee, 1952-...; Monetary and Credit Committee.
10. **Rulings:** Loans and Foreign Exchange Subcommittee, 1974-...; Credit Subcommittee. Credit Violation Control Subcommittee.
11. **Disciplinary Issues**
12. **Correspondence:** confidential correspondence register, 1939-1998; incoming registered confidential correspondence register, 1995-1998; copies of letters, 1968-1983; Secretariat Division incoming correspondence, 1983-1996; correspondence with Greek and foreign banks *re* signatures, 1987-...; specimen staff signatures.
13. **Memoranda**
14. **Chartered accountants**
15. **Bank of Greece:** circulars from the Governor of the Bank of Greece, 1989-1998; the Acts of the Governor of the Bank of Greece, 1982-1998; Numismatic Committee resolutions; replies and clarification from the Bank of Greece, 1988-1998.
16. **Ministerial decisions and announcements by the Union of Greek Banks, 1994-1998.**
17. **Personnel:** staff overtime statements, 1987-...
18. **Supplies division:** purchase and repair invoices. Ordinance requests.
19. **Chartered accountants' reports on the merger.**
20. **Cash vouchers.**
21. **Reconciliation statements.**

APPENDIX 2
The archives of the Bank of Athens which are preserved in the
Historical Archives of NBG
(99 linear metres)

1. **Articles of association. Regulations. Divisions and departments.**
2. **Governors' and Chairmen's Records:** the D. Dimaras archive.
3. **Minutes of Board Meetings:** minutes of board meetings, 1917, 1944, 1946, 1949, 1950, 1051, 1952. Excerpts from the minutes, 1949-1951.
4. **Minutes of General Meetings:** minutes of General Meetings, 1909-1949. Excerpts from the minute books, 1944-1952, 1947-1952. SGM Dossiers, 1947-1952.
5. **Annual reports,** 1893-1953.
6. **Circulars and inventories,** 1948-1953.
7. **Correspondence:** incoming correspondence, 1934-1953; outgoing correspondence, 1945-1953; incoming confidential letters, 1936-1953; outgoing confidential letters, 1926-1953.
8. **Personnel:** incoming staff correspondence, 1939-1953; outgoing staff correspondence, 1944-1953; staff contracts, 1951-1953; Personnel Department circulars; staff associations; minutes of board meetings of the Bank of Athens' Employee Pension Fund; employee identity card details, 1951; salary statements, 1940-1953; children's camps; personnel files from the Constantinople Branch, 1917-1923; personnel files from the Samos Branch, 1911-1934.
9. **Case Files,** 1907-1953.
10. **Legal Archive,** 1893-1953: central office mortgages; branch mortgage accounts; corporate cases; inheritance cases; inheritance and real property cases; repossessions; trials; trial decisions; court rulings.
11. **Accounts Department.**
12. **Branches:** Syros and Santorini.
13. **Archive of the Greek-German Economic Society,** 1940-1950

APPENDIX 3
**The archives of the Bank of Epirus-Thessaly which are preserved
in the Historical Archives of NBG**
(9.5 linear metres)

1. **Articles of Incorporation. Articles of Association.**
Regulations.
2. **Governors' and Chairmen's Records:** the A. Syngrou archive, 1883-1898.
3. **Minutes of General Meetings:** minutes of General Meetings, 1882-1899; notes on the General Meetings, 1877-1895.
4. **Annual Reports,** 1894-1898.
5. **Circulars.**
6. **Correspondence:** correspondence between the Arta, Volos, Larisa, and Trikala branches and head office, 1882-1899; correspondence between the branches, 1885-1899; incoming correspondence, 1886-1899; outgoing correspondence, 1892-1899; incoming telegraphs; outgoing telegraphs.
7. **Audits:** auditor's reports, 1884, 1890-1899.
8. **Case Files,** 1890-1899.
9. **Legal Archive,** 1883-1899: contracts; mortgages, 1882-1884.
10. **Accounts Department:** books of original entries; ledgers; cash books; deposit books; open account books; interest statement books; pledge books; mortgage books; book of loans to municipalities and port authorities; bank property books; current accounts kept by the Bank with other banks; account statements; coupon charts; receipts; loan charts; promissory note receipts; bonds; interest-bearing notes; cheques; coupon payment books; promissory note expiry books; interest coupon books.
11. **Branches:** documents from the Arta, Volos, Larisa, and Trikala branches.
12. **Bank notes:** register of coins and notes withdrawn due to wear and tear, 1890-1899.
13. **Merger:** contract, 1899; correspondence and other documents, 1899-1900.

APPENDIX 4
The archives of the Bank of Crete which are preserved in the
Historical Archives of NBG
(3.5 linear metres)

1. **Articles of Incorporation, 1899-1900. Statutes. Articles of Association. Regulations, 1899-1900.**
2. **General Meetings:** minute-books, 1900-1919.
3. **General Assemblies:** notes, 1901-1904; dossiers, 1905-1919; extraordinary General Assemblies, 1909, 1917, 1918, 1919.
4. **Annual reports,** 1900-1918.
5. **Stock-holders / Stock:** Bank of Crete shareholder registers, 1899-1900.
6. **Correspondence:** correspondence with Hambro, Brandbury Wilkinson, I. Sakelariou and others, 1898-1900; correspondence between head-office and the branches, 1901-1908.
7. **Personnel:** staff registers.
8. **Accounts Department:** accounts, promissory note expiry books; voucher books.
9. **Branches:** Chania, Herakleion, Agios Nikolaos, Rethymnon, 1917. Loans against pledges, pledges over goods, agricultural produce, loan payment delays, loans against pledges, amortisation loans against pledges, loan payment delays, state-guaranteed loans against pledges, open account loans, loans to municipalities, bills of exchange, various accounts, cheques, deposits, etc..
10. **Banknotes:** charts showing destroyed banknotes, 1908-1919
11. **Plans of buildings belonging to the Bank, 1901-1902**
12. **Merger:** Inspection of the Bank of Crete's assets prior to the merger conducted by K. Papaioannou, 1919; registers and charts detailing the handing over of the Bank of Crete's capital during the merger; research into the merger; correspondence relating to the merger, 1919; press releases, 1916-1929.

APPENDIX 5

The archives of the Banque de l'Orient which are preserved in the Historical Archives of NBG (2.5 linear metres)

1. **Articles of Incorporation. Statutes. Articles of Association.**
Regulations, 1904-1906.
2. **General Meeting**: minute-books, 1904-1932.
3. **General Assemblies**: General Assemblies, 1906-1907.
4. **Stockholders / Stock**, 1904-1910.
5. **Correspondence**: correspondence between the Banque de l'Orient and the National Bank fur Deutschland, 1904-1907; documents written by members of the board of directors, 1905; documents relating to I. Valaoritis' trip to Europe, 1905.
6. **Personnel**: letters of application, 1904-1905.
7. **Accounts Department**: accounts, promissory note expiry books; coupon books.
8. **Branches**: setting up branches, 1904-1905.
9. **The contract between the Banque de l'Orient and the National Bank fur Deutschland**, 1905-1906.
10. **Merger**: documents relating to the merger, 1928-1933.