

Swedish Libraries

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1. Introduction

The Swedish library network includes 290 public library systems, about 4 000 school libraries, about 100 hospital libraries (mainly dual use medical and patient's libraries), one National Library, 38 university and university college libraries, and about 75 special and government agency libraries. 20 county/regional libraries, 3 lending centers and one repository library support the public library system. The National Agency of Accessible Medias (MTM, formerly TPB) provides material for people with reading disabilities.

In 2011 78.6 million items were borrowed from public-, university-, hospital-, and special libraries, of which 69.7 million from public libraries, 9.5 million from university- and special libraries, and 1.1 million from hospital libraries. (Figures from school libraries are inadequate and therefore not reported). In addition to loans of physical objects the university library sector reported 61 million searches and downloads, and also that 80 percent of the media expenditure related to electronic resources. From the 2011 library statistics it is evident that e-books stand for an increasing number of loans. In 2011 public libraries reported 651 000 loans, compared to 466 000 the year before.

Public and school libraries are financed by local authorities, regional libraries mainly by county councils and the research library system is financed, directly or indirectly, by the state. Hospital libraries are financed by the health care authorities, usually the counties. The Library Act, introduced in 1997 regulates the assignment and responsibilities for all publicly financed libraries.

Libraries financed by public funding are in principle open to everyone. That means that the general public are able to use the National library and the university libraries, and libraries serving the general public are open also to students.

As a consequence of the technological development, boundaries between various types of libraries have blurred. Due to new search tools library collections have become more visible and accessible. Library users are inclined to use the most convenient or the library that is closest, regardless of financial or administrative borders. So far students have found their way to the public library while the general public not to the same extent has found their way to the academic institutions.

2. The legal framework

2.1 The Act on Library Services

Until 1997 Sweden was the only Nordic country without a library law. However in 1996 the Parliament took the decision to introduce an Act on Library Services. The Act came into force from January 1st in 1997. In most cases library legislation is equivalent to public library legislation. In this respect the Swedish Library Act is an exception as it includes regulations about all libraries provided by public funds. That means: not only public libraries and school libraries, but also university libraries and special libraries and all other publicly funded library service. The basic principles of the Library Act are that:

- Every local authority must have a public library
- Libraries must lend literature free of charge
- Every citizen shall have access to a public library

The clause concerning school libraries regulates that there should be suitably distributed school libraries in order to stimulate the interest in reading and in literature, and to satisfy the needs for material in the education. The clause concerning university libraries stipulates that students at all university and university colleges shall have access to library service. Further, it is stressed that publicly funded libraries should cooperate and that libraries funded by the state shall provide literature from their own collections free of charge at the disposal of the public libraries, and otherwise co-operate with the public and school libraries, and support them in their efforts to offer the public good library service.

2.1.1 Revision of the Library Act

The Library Act has been in operation for fifteen years. During this period it has been questioned for being too permissive, especially concerning school libraries. What has also been questioned is that the act only regulates that books shall be borrowed free of charge, while the increasing amount of electronic published material leaves the field open for charging. Until recently there has been no central authority charged with the duty to superintend and to secure the proper discharge of the act. In 2009 the Government therefore initiated an evaluation of the Act, and in spring 2012 a bill on a revised Library Act was presented. The proposed Library Act is updated and is in some respects more imperative, for instance on school libraries, where it is stated that pupils in compulsory schools etc. shall have access to a school library. The new clause corresponds to a similar clause in the revised Education Act that came into force from 1st of July 2011. The free of charge clause is extended to include material regardless of how it is published. A radical change in the Act is that it includes a clause that regulates that the authority appointed by Government shall have a national overview and the responsibility for co-operation within the library field. The authority (the National Library) also shall be responsible for the following up of local library plans. The proposal for a revised Act is now (December 2012) being processed at the Ministry of Culture after a circulation for comments.

2.2 Legal deposit

In 2011 the Swedish Legal Deposit Act celebrated its 350 years anniversary. The Act, introduced in 1661, was one of the very early legal deposit acts. The original purpose, however, was to control what was printed, not to ensure that publications should be preserved as the nation's printed cultural heritage.

According to current legislation seven copies of every publication shall be delivered: one to the National Library, and one each to the university libraries in Lund, Uppsala, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Umeå, and Linköping. The National Library and the University Library in Lund are obliged to preserve all the legal deposit material for the future, while the other receivers are allowed to discard.

In 1993 provisions were extended to cover electronic documents, such as CD-ROMs. But the new act did not cover on-line electronic publishing. As a consequence, legislation has for long been obsolete as new technology has changed the conditions for publishing, and more and more material is published only in electronic form. A revision of the Legal Deposit Act has been under preparation for some years. In 2009 a Government Commission presented a report on a revised legislation, which should include electronic publishing as well as printed material. In March 2012 a Government Bill on a Legal Deposit Act including electronic published material was presented. The new Act came into force on 1st July 2012. The National Library is now preparing for the implementation of the new Act that will be in full effect from January 2014.

2.3 Public Lending Right

The public lending right is part of the national cultural policy. The system was introduced in 1954 when the State undertook to provide remuneration for public lending. According to Swedish copyright legislation the originator has the right to compensation whenever his or her book is used. There are, however, exceptions to this principle. For instance when a book is published it may be freely distributed. That means that libraries have the right to circulate it. The restriction is based on the cultural political aims to allow free use of libraries.

The system is financed by the State, and administered by the Swedish Author's Fund. Compensation is paid to authors, translators and illustrators for loans from public and school libraries. The compensation is based on the number of loans, and the use of reference collections for works written in Swedish, translated to or from Swedish or by authors permanently residing in Sweden. Compensation to the individual author is based on lending frequency of his or her works. The Swedish Author's Fund calculates and disburses the remuneration based on lending frequency. Data is collected from all computerized library systems in Sweden. About 3 100 authors and some 1 100 translators receive remuneration.

3. Infrastructure and co-operation

3.1 The public library sector

A central authority for public libraries was established in 1913. The original assignment for the library authority was to distribute the state grants to local libraries, and to control that the local authorities fulfilled the general conditions for the grants. From 1974 the Swedish Arts Council has served as the central authority for public libraries. The main task for the Council has been to distribute the state subsidies to public library infrastructure (regional libraries and lending centers) and subsidies to encourage development in different fields. (Last decades with focus on literature and reading promotion).

To support public libraries a county library system was established in the 1930s. Today there are 20 county/regional libraries. In addition there are three lending centers including one for material in foreign languages, and one repository library.

The principle behind the county library system was to set up a national infrastructure in order to make sure that all citizens should have equal access to knowledge and culture. Primarily the task for the county libraries was to support the smaller public libraries within the region with book deposits and interlibrary loans. Today the assignment for the regional libraries is to encourage co-operation and development through regional and inter regional development projects, such as ICT-development, professional training, reading promotion, development of library service for different target groups, lifelong learning etc. The regional libraries also have professional expertise in various fields.

The lending centers were established in the 1960s as a complement to the county library system. The lending centers service was based on the comprehensive collections at the big city libraries in Malmö, Stockholm and Umeå. The hosting city libraries opened their collections at the disposal for interlibrary loans from the public libraries in the three regions respectively. The service was, and is, fully compensated by the State. In the 1980s a national repository library was established in Umeå, and in the 1990s a lending center for literature in foreign languages was opened in Stockholm. (The lending center system is to be reorganized in the next coming years).

The county library and lending centers form the base for the public library infrastructure, and play an important role in the national public library network. Gradually the regional authorities have taken more responsibilities for the regional/county libraries. Government subsidies are financing a smaller part (approximately 25 percent) of the system.

3.2 The research library sector

Until the 1980s there were various solutions for co-ordination within the research library sector. In 1988 the National Library was charged with this responsibility, and a National Cooperation Department was set up, with the mission of co-ordination and development of information provision in the university library system. The National Coordination Department has played a leading role to negotiate for central license agreements on behalf of the Swedish universities. The Department has also played a leading role in the development of Open Access, and other efforts to facilitate the access to scientific and other material. The

Department also offers subsidies for national development projects for research libraries in order to improve access to information.

However co-operation between research libraries has a long tradition on a voluntary basis. A joint national catalogue was created in 1886 in which the major research libraries announced their acquisitions of foreign literature. At about the same time agreements on interlibrary loans were established.

In 1972 the joint catalogue was automated when the Library Information System (LIBRIS) was launched. From the 1980s the automated catalogue also included Swedish documents. Since 1988 the National Library hosts the system and is responsible for maintenance and development. The system has gradually been developed and improved, and is today one of the most important sources for bibliographic information. LIBRIS contains more than six million titles from more than 300 libraries. Following a Government decision, LIBRIS was made freely available online to the general public in 1997. The number of searches exceeds 12 million on an annual basis. The system also gives access to full text document and digitized material. The advanced routine for interlibrary loans with automatic ordering has worked well, and is used by about 1 300 libraries, of which one third are public libraries.

3.3 The Royal Library - National Library of Sweden

The National Library is responsible for collecting and preserving all Swedish publications. That includes books, magazines, reports, newspapers, manuscripts, maps, pictures, printed music and ephemera such as time tables, advertising material etc. In 2009 the National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images for Audiovisual Material was integrated in the National Library organization. According to Government instructions, the main tasks for the National Library are:

- To collect and preserve all Swedish publications, and make the material available to the public
- To serve as the infrastructure for the Swedish research community
- To be a research library, with a primary emphasis on the humanities and social sciences

From 1988 the National Library was charged with the responsibility to co-ordinate the research library sector. From 2011 this task was extended to cover the whole library sector. (See below 3.5).

3.4 The Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille (TPB)/ The National Agency of Accessible Medias, (MTM).

A special library, The Swedish Library of Talking Books and Braille (TPB), provides material for people with reading disabilities. From 2012 TPB is called The National Agency of Accessible Medias, (MTM).

Since 1980 TPB/MTM is a government authority under the Ministry of Culture and is entirely funded by the Government. In collaboration with local libraries TPB/MTM provides access to printed materials for people with print disability. TPB/MTM produces and lends talking

books and books in Braille. The library has a stock of about 80 000 talking books, and is a national lending center for talking books. The target group is estimated to six percent of the population, and the number of borrowers at the local libraries is estimated to 60 000. The library also gives advice and information on matters concerning talking books and Braille. TPB/MTM has a special service aimed at disabled students at university level. A new service was introduced in 2009 that allows students to download books individually. In 2010 a similar service was initiated towards borrowers in public libraries, and in 2011 90 000 digital downloads were registered. The DAISY project started in 1988, and since 2001 all talking book production is in the DAISY format. The Swedish Copyright law permits libraries and organizations, officially authorized by the Government, to produce published books and phonograms for lending to print disabled, without permission of authors and publishers.

3.5 Towards a comprehensive library system – A new assignment for the National Library

As a consequence of the Library Act implemented in 1997 in which the Government adopted a cohesive approach to libraries as a common national resource, a Government Bill in 2009 proposed that the National Library should become the central administrative authority for the entire Swedish library system. From 2011 the National Library has the responsibility for co-operation and co-ordination for libraries financed by public funds. According to the new assignment the National Library shall:

- Conduct national overview
- Promote co-operation
- Drive development forward
- In collaboration with regional libraries monitor the design and implementation of plans for library services pursuant to the Library Act
- Be responsible for the official library statistics

The new assignment was launched in 2011. To secure a dialogue with the library sector the National Library has created an influence structure with an advisory committee and 9 additional expert groups. Priorities will be given to develop a national technical infrastructure, to develop LIBRIS as a joint catalogue for all types of libraries, to improve statistics and quality management issues, to improve school libraries and to consider the issue on e-books and libraries.

4. Professional organizations

The Swedish Library Association (SAB) was founded in 1915. The overall aims and objectives were to promote Swedish library development. The association was open for institutional as well as individual members. In the first years the association focused on the publishing of the library journal, (Biblioteksbladet, BBL) and on professional publications. In 1921 an association for academic libraries, Svenska Bibliotekariesamfundet (SBS), was founded.

In 2000 time had come for the two associations to merge. The new association, Svensk Biblioteksörening, has about 3 700 members. The association has an important role as pressure group, and has taken an active part in the promotion of library legislation and to pave the way for a comprehensive library system. The association has a continuous dialogue with politicians and other decision makers in order to promote library services. In 2007 the association launched a nationwide campaign, "Library Lovers", which draw attention to the importance of well-developed library resources.

Most Swedish librarians are members in a trade union. The majority of professional librarians are members of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco) that organizes university graduates or professionals with a college degree. The special trade union for librarians was founded in the 1930s. The original union later merged with other unions within the field of culture, and created the Saco affiliate association DIK, which stands for Documentation, Information, and Culture. The primary goals for the trade union are to improve wages and general working conditions for their members. The DIK association also plays an active role in the library debate and as a pressure group to promote libraries. Beside the DIK association there are alternative trade unions for librarians and library assistants.

5. Library and Information Science

In 1972 the College for Library Education in Borås opened. The new College offered LIS and comprehensive education for all kind of library professionals. Before, there had been different schemes for public and for academic librarians. LIS education is today available at five universities (University of Lund, University of Borås, Linnæus University, University of Uppsala and University of Umeå).

6. Current issues

Swedish libraries are facing the same challenges as libraries all over the world. There is an increasing need to develop and to co-ordinate ICT solutions. There is also an increasing demand to provide access to digitized material, and to digitize library collections, hopefully with adequate funding. But digitization is not only a matter of funding; it also raises the question of copyright restrictions. One of the most challenging current issues is the one on the availability of e-books in libraries. So far the number of e-books has been rather limited. However as the number of titles grows the demand also grows. The present system where libraries pay per view (2 euro) will make it impossible for libraries to offer access to e-books, as the cost is unforeseeable. Libraries therefore have suggested a fixed price system in order to control their budgets. So far negotiations between the library sector and the publishers have been no success. The biggest publishing house has also announced that there should be a four months waiting period after publishing before an e-book can be made available for library use. It is evident that the remuneration system launched in 1954 needs to be updated in order to make it possible for libraries to fulfill their mission.

The new assignment for the National Library will form a base for closer co-operation between the different kinds of publicly funded libraries. There are a number of common fields for public as well as for academic libraries. The overall goals and objectives for a closer co-operation between libraries should be the interest of the library user. It will, no doubt, be a challenge for the National Library to orchestrate the large number of independent library institutions.

References

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