



National Library of Sweden



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A trustworthy source

KB – upholding Swedish heritage

Kungl. biblioteket, or “KB”, is the National Library of Sweden. In 1661 the first legal deposit legislation was passed, ensuring that the better part of all publications produced in Sweden were to be gathered centrally. Originally the law was intended as a means for the crown to assert control, as an instrument of censorship. As freedom of speech gradually expanded during the 18th and 19th centuries, legal deposit legislature became ever more a means for collecting





August Strindberg was employed as a secretarial clerk at KB from 1874 to 1882. The library building in Humlegården park was erected 1871-1878.

and preserving the country's printed history. In 1979, the legal deposit legislature was broadened to include radio and television broadcasts. From 2015 onward, electronic materials are also subject to legal deposit. The happy result is the expanse of both old and contemporary materials stored securely at KB.

Knowledge for eternity

At KB, all materials, regardless of content or form, are saved for future generations. KB functions as a research library, with vast foreign collections in humanities and social sciences.

Open to all

KB is open to the general public. Hundreds of users come to KB daily to research and study source materials. The 350 staff members work in acquisitions, cataloguing, coordination and digitization, to name just a few tasks.

Importance of access

KB is much more than its collections, its mission includes the systematic description and enhancement of the resources held. Access is provided via numerous catalogues and search tools, physical and digital, under the guidance of KB's expert librarians and research services assistants.

You are most welcome explore our holdings of Sweden's heritage!

WHAT IS KB?

KB is Sweden's national library and a government agency under of the Department of Education and Research. The collections belong to the Swedish state. KB's task is to collect, describe, safeguard and make accessible all printed materials, broadcasts and music distributed in Sweden. KB provides a national overview and platform for the library sector. For more information www.kb.se/english/about

We have almost everything...

The first legal deposit legislation ensured that KB would acquire almost every item printed and circulated in the Swedish language since the 17th century, but the collections extend far back into the Middle Ages. In addition to the entirety of Swedish book distribution, our holdings include all Swedish newspapers and journals.

Legal deposits have also paved the way for the development of other collections including postcards, posters, maps, sheet music, advertisements, menus, school yearbooks, annual reports and much more. Our collection of ephemera (transitory printed items such as leaflets, bookmarks and tickets etc) consists of over 14 million objects. All together, KB's physical collections take up over 140 km of shelving.

KB maintains vast collections of manuscripts, letters, portraits, photographs and materials otherwise acquired, purchased or donated the library. KB also maintains a number of personal archives left by prominent Swedish writers and cultural icons, for example Dag Hammarskjöld, Astrid Lindgren and August Strindberg.

KB functions also as a humanities and social sciences research library, in that KB acquires foreign works of importance for the field such as history, theology, literary criticism, art history and so on.

KB actively acquires foreign literature translated from Swedish or with other Swedish relevancy for our "Suecana" collection.



What's in it for me?

Everyone is allowed access to KB's collections!

Age of majority (>18 years) and valid identification documents are the only requirements.

Different types of materials

Most of the physical and printed collections acquired by way of legal deposit are considered to be official national copies, available for on-site viewing only, as also applies audiovisual, newspapers on microfilm and older materials. Home loans are, however, permitted for most contemporary books published outside of Sweden.



Search and place orders for loans ahead of time...

Almost all the physical materials housed at KB are stored in our closed stacks and must be requested in advance for retrieval in our local Regina database. Orders are processed for pick-up at the Information and Circulation desk. Searches and orders for audiovisual materials can be made in the Swedish Media Database, SMDB. Much of the materials are available digitally and are available for research purposes in special viewing rooms.

... or just ask for help!

Our librarians have specialist knowledge of our existing catalogs and search tools which can be a bit confusing for new users. It is also possible to book an hour-long consultation with a librarian for a tailored session in information retrieval. Copy and digital reproduction services are also provided.

Our facilities

Main Reading Room - The main, general reading room is an area for quiet study. Wireless network is provided.

Research Reading Room - This area provides a work space for resident scholars with personal book storage cupboards.

Special Reading Room - This area is reserved for the study of fragile and otherwise sensitive materials, for example manuscripts, maps, images and ephemera. For security reasons, access is provided in a supervised environment.



Microfilm Reading Room - This area houses our Swedish and foreign newspapers on microfilm available in open stacks which allows users to efficiently locate what they are looking for. Certain newspapers have been digitized and made available for study at designated screen stations.

Audiovisual Research Room - This area provides workspaces and small viewing rooms for on-site use of film, radio, television and music resources.

Periodicals Reading Room - This area houses Swedish and foreign periodicals in the humanities.

Databases

KB maintains and collaborates in the operation of some of Sweden's most important databases for academic materials:

- LIBRIS, the national joint catalog in Sweden with over 6.5 million titles found in more than 300 research and higher education libraries.
- The Swedish Media Database (SMDB) holding close to 8 million hours of Swedish film, television, radio and music.
- Regina, KB's local catalog for printed holdings.
- Swepub, a search service containing scholarly articles and dissertations from Swedish universities and higher education institutes.
- Ediffah, a national search service for manuscripts and personal archives.
- Library statistics database
- Digitized newspapers

KB provides access to a number of different digital resources and databases, in particular research article and journal databases. Access can be granted on-line, but some require a KB library card.

The Devil's Bible Codex gigas

The Devil's Bible stands out as one of the more intriguing pieces in KB's collections. Over the years the manuscript has been given a variety of names alluding to its size and to the portrait of the Devil depicted inside.

Apart from the Devil's Bible and Codex gigas, it has also been called Codex giganteus (the Giant Book), Gigas librorum (the Book Giant), Fans Bibel (the Devil's Bible), Hin Håles Bibel ('Old Nick's Bible') and Svartboken (the Black Book).

Codex gigas is the world's largest surviving medieval manuscript, measuring 89 by 49 centimeters and weighing in at 75 kilograms. The manuscript consists of 310 hand-printed parchment leaves, probably made of calfskin. The volume contains both New and Old Testaments, as well as a number of historical works and medical writings.

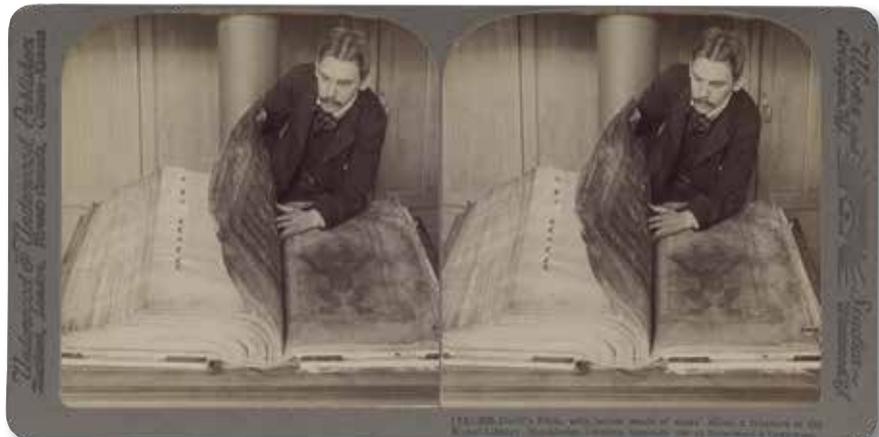
It has stirred people's imaginations and given rise to all manner of legends. According to one tale, it was transcribed all in one night by a monk eager for the atonement of his sins, for which was required he make a pact with a devil (as explains the Devil's portrait). The Codex gigas was most likely produced in a Bohemian monastery in the early 13th century, transcribed by a single scribe whose identity remains a mystery.

At the end of the 13th century, the manuscript is mentioned as collateral between two monasteries in Bohemia, today's Czech Republic.



The Devil's Bible with its unusual portrait depicted





ing the Devil himself. The manuscript as shown by the engineer Gustaf Liljegren, stereograph.



Over the next couple of centuries the manuscript changed hands several times, moving from different monasteries to libraries in the Czech Republic and eventually surfacing in Prague at the end of the 17th century.

As the Thirty Years' War came to a close in 1648, Swedish troops occupied Prague. Lacking such highly esteemed cultural treasures of its own, the emerging state of Sweden seized the Codex gigas, as well as many other works, as war booty for transport back to Stockholm.

When fire broke out at Tre Kronor (the Three Crowns castle) in Stockholm in 1697, over 17 000 books were lost to the flames. However, the Codex gigas was reportedly pushed out a window in order to be saved.

When the royal library relocated in 1877, the Codex gigas was pulled on a sled from the castle to KB's new and present facilities in Humlegården park. The transport was overseen personally by then National Librarian Gustaf Edvard Klemming.

What else do we do?

National Cooperation

KB has the responsibility of coordinating and developing information management resources for higher education and research institutions, as well as public and other publicly financed libraries in Sweden.

KB's mission includes the task of running a national consortium for electronic information resources, handling contractual negotiations with international publishers and database providers. The consortium provides cost effective subscription services for access to academic materials at Swedish universities, colleges and other research institutes.

KB's National Cooperation Department coordinates a number of national expert groups with representatives from Swedish libraries at universities and institutes of higher learning. The groups are appointed task areas such as library statistics, vocational training and digitization, to name a few examples.

KB also runs a number of projects, for example the Open Access project which lobbies for the open and free distribution of academic findings.



Digitization

KB digitizes and makes accessible selected works in the collections. One prioritized area is the daily newspapers section, an important body of research material for many users. The goal is to provide access to as much digital material as possible via the Internet.





The Building

The royal book collections were originally located at Tre Kronor (the former castle, “Three Crowns”). After the fire of 1697, the collections were housed elsewhere in Stockholm until they could be relocated in the newly built palace. In the 19th century the book collections expanded and the facilities proved to be inadequate. A design for a new library building was suggested, with inspiration taken from London and Paris. The commission for the new library was awarded the architect Gustaf Dahl, who had an interest in the new and modern cast iron constructions of the day.

The first cornerstone was laid in the summer of 1871, and seven years later the building finished to plan. The interior of the reading rooms were decorated in the Greek style and composed of Dahl himself, inspired by the Crystal Palace built for the world exposition in London in 1851. In January 1878 the doors of KB were opened to the public. Two wings were added in 1926-1927, but were just a temporary solution to the already crowded facilities. An underground storage chamber for the book stacks was built in the late 1960’s and was inaugurated in 1970, and already at that time it was apparent that a more radical development of the property would become necessary.

Early in the 1990’s more thorough changes were begun to KB’s storage and other facilities. In early summer of 1997, two large underground caverns were excavated under the Humlegården park.

The caverns hold two five-story storage buildings with the combined capacity of 160 km of shelving space. This is where the majority of KB’s physical holdings are stored today.



KB’s new storage facilities are located 40 meters under the Humlgården park and built in the early 1990’s

History

Cirka 750 A.D. Codex aureus, one of KB's oldest and most cherished manuscripts is created.

1483 The first book is printed in Sweden, Dialogus creaturarum, an edification work in latin. KB has acquired two editions.

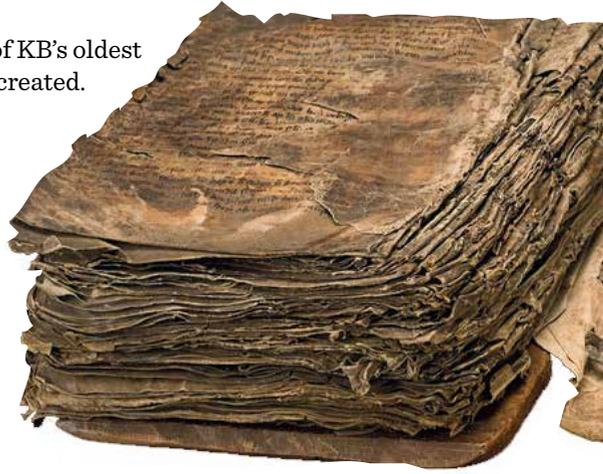
16th century The Vasa kings book collections are housed in the castle Tre Kronor (Three Crowns) in Stockholm.

1568 The first inventory of books in the royal collection is drafted, said to be penned by Eric XIV of Sweden.

1649 The Devil's Bible, Codex gigas, arrives at the castle as war booty from the Thirty Years' War.



Siebenhirter's prayer book, circa 1470.
Damaged in the castle fire of 1697.



Amicus saga ok Amilius, Icelandic manuscript, 15th century

1661 Legislation is passed on legal deposits, requiring that printers submit a copy of all works reproduced to the royal book collections.

1697 Fire havocs at the former royal castle Tre Kronor. Three quarters of the royal book collections are lost to the fire.

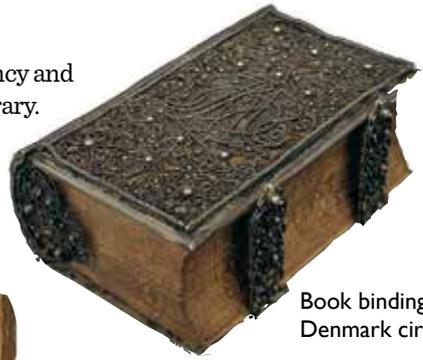
1768 The royal book collections are reinstalled in the newly built castle in Stockholm.

1865-1890 KB is under the leadership of the legendary national librarian Gustaf Edvard Klemming.

1874-1882 August Strindberg is employed at KB.

1877 KB is appointed as an independent agency and formally designated as Sweden's national library.

1878 The KB building in Humlegården is inaugurated and the general public admitted. Gustaf Dahl is the architect.



Book binding in silver, Denmark circa 1690.

1956-1976 The library undergoes renovations and additions. The first underground storage facility is in place.

1972 The national joint catalog LIBRIS is launched.

1979 The Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images (later KB's Department of Audiovisual Material) is established.

1979 Microfilming of all current Swedish daily newspaper commences.

1979 New legislature on legal deposits is passed, including sound recordings and moving images into the scope of materials required.

1992-1997 KB undergoes further extensive renovations and additions, including two underground storage facilities of 2 000 square meters.

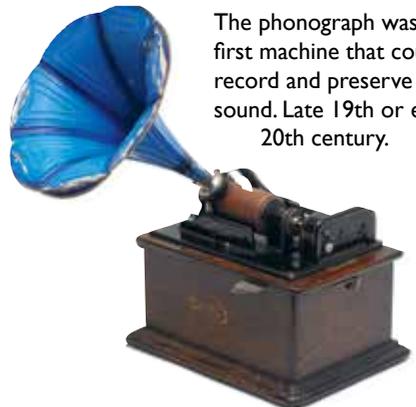
1997 KB begins to systematically archive Swedish web pages.

1999 KB launches local library catalog Regina.

2005 Mass digitization of audiovisual media commences.

2009 KB and the National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images are merged.

2012 Legislation passed for legal deposits of electronic materials.



The phonograph was the first machine that could record and preserve sound. Late 19th or early 20th century.

Welcome to KB!

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