Knowledge in our times

KB—the reliable source
The National Library (KB) is responsible for collecting everything that is printed in Sweden. This encompasses a wide assortment of items: collections of poetry and scholarly essays, as well as advertisements and bus schedules. It also includes collections from TV, radio, film, music and computer games. All of it must be preserved for future generations and made available for both research purposes and the interests of the general public. That is what comprises the nation’s collective memory.

For more than 300 years, KB has been an important source of knowledge about Sweden. The royal book collections date as far back as the 1500s, but it wasn’t until the 1600s that KB was actually created. In 1661, the predecessor of the current legal deposit legislation came about, stipulating that one copy of everything printed in Sweden had to be submitted to KB. At that time, this was motivated primarily by the desire to make sure that material did not contain any criticism of the royal power or state.

During the 1800s, there were developments in printing technology and an increasing number of books were published. KB’s role became more that of a national library, responsible for collecting and preserving various types of material. During the 1900s, KB became a central place for researchers and students, primarily within the humanities and social sciences. But, plenty of journalists and authors have also spent time in the reading rooms of KB.

**Memory of the nation**

**The Importance of Availability**

But, KB is responsible for more than just collections. Of at least equal importance is making this enormous amount of material available to others. At present, KB is one of the foremost national libraries in Europe, with collections from all types of media. If you are looking for information on a specific topic that is somehow related to a Swedish person or event,
there is a very high likelihood that the material can be found at KB.

Databases and search functions are designed such that researchers can search different types of media simultaneously. For example, the search words “general strike” (“storstrejken” in Swedish) will result in hits from books, newspapers, films, TV and radio programmes.

KB is currently a place where printed material and digital media is made available in accordance with agreed-upon standards. KB is prepared to meet the challenges of the digital world and create an infrastructure for Swedish research, as well as being a resource to meet the interests of the general public.
Already in 1996, it was evident at KB that much of the Swedish cultural heritage is only published on the Internet. How does this affect KB’s responsibility to collect and preserve material in a new age? One year later, KB started to collect information from Swedish websites and it was the first national library in the world to take such an initiative.

- The primary focus is on collecting websites from .se domains. There are two archives: one for the broad category and one for daily newspapers. The collection consists of slightly more than 306 million files, which corresponds to approximately 10 terabytes.
- As a result of these efforts more than ten years of Swedish website history has been collected. This is an important resource for anyone interested in studying Swedish society, as well as the growth and maturity of IT technology in the country.
At KB, you can find such things as postcards, annual reports, maps, notes, school calendars, posters, mail order catalogues, menus and printed advertising material. Music and films by well-known or lesser-know artists, classic “forgotten” pioneers and the latest “rising stars” can all be found at KB. In addition, the library has radio and TV broadcasts, including introductory announcements, jingles and commercials.

At the Manuscripts, Maps and Pictures Division of the Collections Department, there are books from before the age of printing, such as many of Sweden's provincial laws, as well as a large quantity of letters and diaries. There is also a large collection of portraits of well-known and lesser-known individuals. The collection primarily consists of graphic art, photos and drawings and it includes approximately 500,000 portraits from the 1500s to the present day.

Since KB has such an extensive amount of material, it attracts many visitors. Primarily, visitors are researchers and students from universities and colleges. But, visitors also include genealogists, people interested in folklore, collectors, members of various associations and others with interests in a particular area. At KB, you can find (just about) everything.
AUGUST STRINDBERG
Between the years 1874 and 1882, August Strindberg was employed at KB. One can only imagine what he would have thought about the fact that his literary remains are now kept at his former workplace. However, at the time of his death, KB had no interest in keeping the papers. Instead, portions of such material ended up at Nordiska Museet. However, in the early 1920s, the collection was transferred to KB where little by little it grew in size through new acquisitions and donations.

DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD
In this large collection there is approximately 35 hours of film covering the period when Dag Hammarskjöld served as Secretary-General of the United Nations (1953–1961). The material includes films of the Gaza incident, China visit (the first ever by a UN Secretary-General), the crisis in Cuba and struggles in the Congo.

The United Nations gave the collection to the Swedish Film Institute, because it felt that it did not have enough room in its archives for the material. Once the films had been restored, they were then sent to KB’s Audiovisual Media Department. They were converted to digital video and they are now available for research on Dag Hammarskjöld and his time.

ASTRID LINDGREN
During her lifetime, Astrid Lindgren received about 75,000 letters from people around the world. These letters are now kept at KB, along with 650 shorthand pads, manuscripts and approximately 100,000 newspaper clippings. The collection also consists of her own works, which have been translated into 90 different languages, as well as posters, photographs and audio/video cassettes.

The archive is open to researchers, except for the letters and shorthand pads, which will not be available to the general public until 25 years after the author’s death. In 2005, the Astrid Lindgren archive was one of the first Swedish collections to be placed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List.
POSTER ADVERTISING ALLOWED
Paul Lipschutz spent more than fifty years on his life’s greatest passion – collecting posters. He collected all sorts of subject matter. His only requirement was that the posters needed to have high graphic and artistic quality. The collection consists of approximately 60,000 posters dating from the 1800s and later. The works of many famous European artists are included.

EARLY MANUSCRIPTS
Early Swedish legislation from Västergötland is one example of the many types of manuscripts in KB’s collections. It dates back to the 1200s, but the content is much older. Probably, it was passed along verbally from generation to generation. One of the most well known lines says that the people are entitled to both chose and dethrone the king. There has been a great deal of lively debate over this paragraph among researchers.
The Rogge Library is located in a three-story building from the 1400s in the city of Strängnäs. This library got its name from Konrad Rogge, who served as bishop in Strängnäs during the period 1479–1501. This library has old collections from the diocese and State secondary grammar schools. Through the years, the building has been used for Royal gatherings, as an upper secondary school and for military purposes. Since 1968, the library is a division of KB. The division also has a bookbinder’s workshop and much of KB’s new bookbinding is done here.

Statens biblioteksdepå (SBD) in Bålsta, just outside Stockholm, stores portions of KB’s collections. Among other things, this is where daily newspapers dating from 1851 and later are kept. Other material stored at the library in Bålsta includes schoolbooks from 1956 and later.
What is there for me?

The Reading Room

KB’s main building at Humlegården in Stockholm was completed in 1878. Despite a great deal of reconstruction, most of the furnishings in the Main Reading Room have remained intact. The atmosphere here is really quite special. It feels as though the more than one hundred years of studies and reading that have gone on here have somehow been captured and kept alive.

The Research Reading Room is for those who spend a considerable amount of time doing research at KB and thus require a book locker. The Special Reading Room is where it is possible to study very old material and items that must be handled with special care for other reasons. In addition, there is the Periodicals Reading Room and the Microfilm Reading Room, where it is possible to read many of the Swedish daily newspapers on microfilm.

The Audiovisual Media Department at KB is located at Karlavägen 98 in Stockholm. This is where researchers can obtain direct access to more than 2.5 million hours of digitized media material.

KB is not like other libraries. Although you can obtain a library card, most material may only be studied on the premises. It is only possible to take home certain books on loan. Almost all material is kept in a warehouse and thus it must be reserved in advance. It takes approximately four hours to make reserved material available. But, if you have a library card, you can reserve material in advance via the Internet.

Digital Search Services

KB has many different search services. For example, Libris has nearly 6 million titles from approximately 170 libraries. KB also has its own catalogues, Regina and the Swedish Media Database, which contain information on TV and radio programmes, biographical films, videos and DVDs, records and multimedia. There is open access to these search services via the Internet. However, there are many more: glossaries, reference books, library catalogues and a large quantity of electronic academic journals. However, it is only possible to search in these databases on the library premises. For this reason, there are computers available for visitors to use.

Ask the Library is a service where you can obtain help with your search from a librarian by asking questions via chat or e-mail – this can really be a great help! Not all material has been catalogued and not all catalogues have been computerized. Employees of KB are still key when it comes to finding information related to such things as manuscripts, notes, portraits, video films, old 78 rpm records, annual reports and much more.
Radio, tv, music, film and the Internet play a very important role in everyday life. Media influences the development of society and our daily activities. It is also an important aspect of our collective memory.

The National Library’s Audiovisual Media Department of Karlavägen 98 in Stockholm has more than seven million hours of recorded material. This makes it one of the world’s largest media archives. Here you can find nearly everything that has been published, broadcast and shown in Sweden during the latest decades, as well as nearly all of the Swedish recordings from 1899 until the present day. Every day, radio and tv programmes are sent to KB in the form of digital files. That means that it is possible to quickly and easily access archived material in order to show it on screen. Simultaneous to this automated work, 2,800 hours of older material that has been stored in various ways is digitized each day.

**THE HISTORY OF COMPUTER GAMES**

The Audiovisual Media Department also has multimedia collections, such as computer games.

*Tennis for Two*, the first computer game, was developed in 1958. In 1971, Atari launched its classic tennis game, *Pong*, which was followed by a long succession of electro-
nic arcade games. The development of personal computers and game pads has created an enormous market. Today, games for mobile phones are a growing area.

Although these types of games have existed since the 1950s, there are large gaps in the research that has been done in this area. But, now there are many international conferences being held and the Audiovisual Media Department follows the developments in this area in such ways as through its cooperation with DreamHack – the world’s largest computer and gaming festival.
**Work done at KB**

KB is responsible for preserving the nation’s collective memory. Much can be said about the archives, databases and digitization. But still, most important of all are the people. KB has approximately 400 employees. Visitors to the library only come into contact with very few, primarily those working in reception or at issuing counters.

The Library’s collections are continually growing as a result of the Legal Deposits Act. But, it is not simply a matter of receiving and storing such material. Everything must be catalogued and entered into databases so that it is possible to search for information. This is work that has no end: it is the very foundation of KB’s activities.

KB employs many librarians who are often specialists in one or more areas. There are employees working with preservation and protection of the library’s numerous valuable objects. In addition, there are photographers making reproductions of unique, fragile material so that it can be made available to others.

At the libraries in Stockholm, Strängnäs and Bålsta, there are employees who are privileged to be working in areas of greatest interest to them.

“Each source is a challenge and even those that are ugly have value”

**DIGITIZATION**

Much of the material in KB’s collections can be easily damaged. There are manuscripts that are more than a thousand years old. Of course, it is necessary to handle such rare items with extreme care. This does not, however, only apply to older works. Modern paper made of wood pulp is more brittle than the old rag paper. With too much handling, the material becomes damaged.

Nevertheless, KB has the task of making its collections available. This is a significant problem. But there is an answer: digitization. With digitization, books and images are photographed in high resolution using digital cameras.
Afterwards, it is possible to make the images available in databases or on the Internet. The quality is high enough for the user to be able to enlarge sections of an image and view small details.

Given the enormous amount of material in KB’s collections, it is easy to understand why digitization demands such a significant amount of both human and economic resources. The devotion to these efforts is impressive, but this work takes time. Nevertheless, it is one of the most important roads to arrive at a National Library of the future, where information is available to all the people of the world.

**SOME KB RECORDS**

- The oldest film recorded in Sweden is from the year 1896.
- The oldest printed material in KB’s collections is a fragment from the 42-line Gutenberg Bible of 1454.
- KB has one of the earliest items broadcast on Swedish radio: the radio theatre Natten by Eyvind Johnson from 1931.
- Fajans was one of the first TV programmes. It was a 1954 test broadcast of a visit to the Gustavsberg porcelain factory.
- The first Swedish record is from 1899: Till Österland vill jag fara featuring the Oscar Bergström trio.
- The oldest manuscript is Papyrus Graecus Holmiensis from around 300 AD (a deposit from the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities).
- The oldest Swedish voice recording is of the shoemaker, Peter Wickblom, born in 1810. The recording is from 1904 about Wickblom’s journey to America.
- KB’s largest manuscript is the Devil’s Bible, Codex Gigas. It is 90x50 cm and weighs 75 kg.
- The oldest Swedish newspaper is from 1645: Ordinari Post Tijdender.
Chronology

Ca 750 Codex Aureus, one of the library’s oldest and most distinguished manuscripts is created.

1483 The first book is printed in Sweden, a religious tract in Latin. KB has two copies.

1500s The book collections belonging to the House of Vasa are kept in the castle, Tre Kronor. These become the foundation for KB.

1568 The first index of books belonging to the royal family is prepared. It is believed that the list was compiled by Erik XIV.

1649 The Devil’s Bible (Codex Gigas or Giant Book) comes into the possession of KB. Swedes had taken the book as booty during the Thirty Years’ War.

1661 Legal deposit legislation is created requiring book-printers to submit at least one copy of every printed item to KB prior to distribution.

1697 Tre Kronor castle, belonging to King Gustav Vasa, is almost completely destroyed in a fire. Three-fourths of KB’s collections are destroyed in the fire.

1768 KB moves to the newly constructed Stockholm Palace.

1865–1890 KB is headed by its most well known director of all time: Gustaf Edvard Klemming.
August Strindberg is employed as an assistant librarian at KB.

KB becomes an independent government agency.

KB at Humlegården opens to the public. The building’s architect is Gustaf Dahl.

The eastern and western wings of the building are completed. The architect is Axel Anderberg.

Extensive renovations and extensions are made in stages to the library’s interior and exterior. The first underground archive is added.

1874–1882

1877

1878

1928

1956–1976

1972

1979

1979

1979

1979

1979

1979

1979

1979

1988


1997

1999

2005

2007

2009

1972 LIBRIS, KB cataloguing system is put into operation.

1979 The Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images (later renamed the of Audiovisual Media Department) is established.

1979 Continual microfilming of all Swedish daily newspapers begins.

1979 A new law is created to encompass recorded sound and moving pictures in the Legal Deposits Act.

1988 Birgit Antonsson is the first woman to hold the position of National Librarian.

1992–1997 New renovations and extensions are made to KB, including two new underground archives, each of which is 9,000 square metres.

1997 KB begins to collect Swedish website information.

1999 Regina, KB’s online catalogue is put into operation.

2005 Mass digitization of audiovisual material begins.

2007 KB’s new organisation is implemented and its digital activities are expanded.

2009 KB merges with the Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images to become one governmental authority.
Welcome to the National Library of Sweden!

At kb.se, you can find information about KB’s services, such as the LIBRIS and Swedish media databases. The website also has information about the library’s collections, exhibits, open hours, conferences, trainings and other events.

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