



Digitization

at the National Library of Sweden



National Library
of Sweden

In December 2009, the National Library of Sweden (“KB”) was among a group of central cultural heritage institutions commissioned by the Swedish Government to respond to an inquiry regarding a national strategy for digitization, electronic access and digital preservation. Several EU member states already have such strategies in place or are working towards that goal. The main objective is to provide citizenry increased access to cultural heritage and primary-source research materials. This pamphlet summarizes briefly KB’s response to the inquiry. Read more about KB at kb.se/english.

KB’s response in short

To an increasing degree, we access information in digital form. KB understands the importance of legal deposit legislation, directives on copyright, and privacy protection in today’s world. Parallel with this work, KB must channel resources into building a technical platform capable of handling an unprecedented volume of digital data: collecting, displaying and preserving it.

Only a small portion of KB’s printed and other paper-based special collections have been digitized to date. However, a large volume of audiovisual materials have been transferred to digital format. In addition, an extensive amount of “born-digital” content has been acquired that does not exist in any other format.

However, the digitization alone does not satisfy our needs. Metadata is required to make resources searchable, and a powerful technical platform is necessary for infrastructure. Our audiovisual materials currently have such a platform, with a display feature available for researchers on-site at the Karlavägen branch of KB. These materials, however, cannot be made available via the Internet due to copyright law restrictions.

The production of metadata for the national bibliography, one of KB’s more traditional duties, is a resource-intensive manual task which must be streamlined. One possible solution may perhaps be the reuse of existing metadata records, and that “born-digital” materials are indexed automatically.

KB must collaborate more efficiently with its partners, first and foremost with the National Archives of Sweden, but also together with other archives, libraries, museums and custodians of our cultural heritage. We will also explore opportunities for public-private partnerships and the adoption of new business models.



KB's ambition is to provide electronic access to its collections. However, certain areas of our mission remain undefined at present, and we lack the economic means. We seek to devise and implement a plan, to continually reassess our priorities, and creatively locate alternative sources of funding.



Legal challenges

Prevalent copyright issues mainly involve electronic access to KB's collections. This point of access can only be reinforced with additional financing. KB is open to collaboration with the private sector and testing creative business models.

KB has a longstanding dialog with the Ministry of Education and Research on issues relating to personal privacy in connection with access to information. KB is exploring the compatibility of its commitment to open access with the prescriptions of the Swedish Personal Data Act.

Providing digital access to copyright-protected works requires clear guidelines. KB advocates general license agreements supplemented by specific provisions, as has also been proposed in a current report for a copyright inquiry in progress at the Ministry of Justice.

Technical and financial challenges

Certain areas of KB's collections are subject to ongoing physical deterioration. Digitizing this material, making it accessible and preserving it for future generations, is one objective that cannot be achieved within present allocation constraints.

Long-term digital preservation is a large and complex problem. Research is in progress, but there are no apparent, definitive solutions. Collaboration between state institutions with respect to large-scale, cost-effective archive solutions is necessary. International research and development is also underway in this field.



Administrative and organizational challenges

The digitization process engages several different occupational categories and a wide range of skills within KB, engaging librarians, employees in the field of preservation and IT. Financial and legal expertise is also required. Coordinating this chain of responsibility and defining the roles and responsibilities of each link require special administrative and organizational solutions, particularly during a transition phase.

Many countries have legislation regulating the collection of digital content. Sweden currently has a draft for a *Legal deposit act for electronic documents*. If the proposal is approved, KB will receive original digital content that is not collected currently. A powerful technical platform will have to be built to handle the range of processes involved, from collection to digital preservation. An administrative tool will also be required to manage this inflow and facilitate communication with submitting bodies, in handling complaints and overseeing non-compliance issues.

Positive effects on the national economy

Access to large volumes of digitized content will facilitate research and studies while allowing for development of new working methods. Commercial entities and libraries may implement new business models beneficial to both parties. Creative entrepreneurs and other participants are welcome to develop new products and services.

Service design is a market-oriented concept that has become more prevalent in the library sector. The question remains whether commercial players or libraries are best suited to provide the market with such services.

User-driven development

Up until now, the catalog work for the Swedish national bibliography has been a task for professional librarians. Today, however, there is an option of “recycling” existing metadata, via international catalog data exchanges or through imports from companies specializing in the field. In the audiovisual sector, considerable data is already imported from commercial sources.

There is yet another source, which has yet to be tapped - researchers and collectors. In the future it shall be necessary to take advantage of this external expertise by providing users with the opportunity to enrich and supplement important metadata. Users will, in general, play an increasingly significant role as we move forward. User behavior, expectations and requirements will all impact the way libraries work and the services they provide in the future. New and emerging technologies also provide the opportunity for developing

innovative solutions for users with special needs. KB intends to expand collaboration with partners able to assist us in this endeavor.

Focus on content

Cultural heritage agencies face many new questions in light of new developments and technologies. How will the roles that institutions play change? It is likely that KB shall continue to be a “project agent,” but to an ever increasing degree assume the role of “procurer of services” from specialists in large-scale digital production and preservation. This should free up resources and allow the focus to shift from production to accessibility.

Collaboration with public-sector partners

KB has well-established contacts and partnerships within the library sector, channeled through national reference and other expert groups. The Open Access-movement reaches deep into the Research community.

KB collaborates with archives and museums, most frequently under the auspices of ABM-centrum. Important partners include the Swedish National Archives and the National Heritage Board. The Swedish Film Institute and Sveriges Television are key partners from the audiovisual sector.

Digitization is carried out most cost-effectively on a large scale. KB collaborates with the foundation Stiftelsen Föremålsvård i Kiruna and with the Media Conversion Center at the Swedish National Archives.

Research and development collaboration

Since 2009, KB has housed a research department focused on matters such as media and accessibility. KB works together with other research institutions regarding digital access. Strong ties to the research community are strategically important to us.

Our cooperation agreement with the Swedish Law and Informatics Research Institute at Stockholm University focuses on the relationship between the law and information technology. Collaboration mainly involves copyright, the Personal Data Act and questions on legal deposits of digital materials.

Open Access

The Open Access-movement is integral for free access to academic publishing. Extended access to digital research data is also an area of great interest. Issues involving digital research data are discussed in various European projects and KB eagerly monitors these developments.

LIBRIS (the joint catalogue of the Swedish academic and research libraries) must be developed and adapted to meet user demand for greater access to digital materials. Providing access to electronic resources is a major issue for LIBRIS-affiliated libraries, and collaboration on this issue is a top priority.

Public-private partnerships

KB is currently testing possibilities for public-private partnerships. By establishing viable business models and agreements, we can launch new partnerships with commercial entities. We have well-established partnerships with companies and agreements with publishers formalizing the submission of materials in pdf-format. KB has initiated a dialog with SVT (Swedish Television) and the Swedish Film Institute, and hopes to engage TV4 in the near future.

The question of public-private partnerships has been the subject of lively discussion within the EU of late. Libraries have often wavered on this issue or remained aloof. A number of national libraries have, however, initiated agreement-based partnerships with companies such as Google and ProQuest in the work of digitizing collections. KB supports the view of the Conference of European National Librarians in questions related to Google Books Settlement, and advocates that the following be kept in mind:

- Legal and entrepreneurial opportunities to make accessible those works that Google has scanned should be facilitated in such a way that they are adapted to the rights holders and the citizens of Europe.
- Financial support to European digitization projects should be strengthened.
- Copyright laws should be adapted to meet the needs of today's knowledge society.



KB considers it important to actively monitor international development and is open to new business models.

Expanded partnerships within certain fields

KB interacts with a number of partners locally, nationally and internationally. New projects are initiated when considered strategically important. KB strives to broaden joint efforts in digitization, electronic access and digital preservation together with:

1. the Swedish National Archives and the Swedish National Heritage Board.
2. central audiovisual stakeholders, including SFI (Swedish Film Institute) and SVT (Swedish Television).
3. agencies that are currently members of ABM-centrum.

These partners should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the library, archive, and heritage environment sectors respectively concerning digitization, electronic access and digital preservation. The National Heritage Board also provides a platform for museum information through K-samsök

An administrative body

To avoid duplicating efforts and provide access to relevant information, an administrative body is required to complement the three aforementioned sector-based agencies by providing the following services:

- organization and maintenance of a website with presentations of recommended standards, best practices and planned digitization production.
- on-going education for archives, libraries and museums professionals.

The administrative body should additionally provide guidance in acquiring relevant legal advice to be found in-house at predetermined agencies.



Four important factors

In conclusion, KB would like to underscore the importance of four key considerations in drafting all future policy in this field.

1. Long term preservation

The cost of long-term digital preservation rises exponentially over time and cannot be covered by regular annual funding. Ultimately the responsibility falls neither to the individual institution/authority nor to the Ministry of Culture or Ministry of Education and Research respectively, but to the Ministry of Finance. Coordination, large-scale solutions and sustainability are essential.

2. The need for financed digitization

Temporary labor market-driven initiatives like the Access program (2006-2009) presume that the receiving institutions/authorities have the necessary infrastructure and in a short time are able to adapt their operations to the new funding directives. Continuity and volume in the digitization process require a constant fiscal increase over and above existing annual funding. A deeper dialog is needed between governmental ministries and public authorities regarding feasibility of public-private partnerships.

3. Open solutions

Cultural heritage agencies should work for open data, free license agreements where applicable and open APIs, in addition to enforcing clear licensing models for content under protection. Free information and open interfaces make it possible for others to build services and solutions on data created within the public sector. Common standards that pave the way for common services should be a shared goal.

4. Centralized digitization

The cultural heritage sector needs efficient, possibly shared, solutions for digitization production. Large-scale operations are an appealing option as common infrastructure solutions also are necessary. SUNET (Swedish University Computer Network) should be the chosen channel of distribution for all sectors. Coordinated procurement is most cost efficient. Operations such as the Media Conversion Center in Fränsta and Stiftelsen Föremålsvård i Kiruna could be expanded in order to provide services for more institutions in the cultural heritage sector.





Production National Library of Sweden • Print Åtta45 2010 • Photographer Jens Gustafsson