



Sweden

Borje Justrell
ICT Department, National Archives



Digitisation policies and emerging initiatives

The Government has called a commission of inquiry to look into the tasks, activities, aim and direction of the Royal Library. The commission has among other things to illustrate and analyse the accessibility of the holdings through digitisation. The aim is that the commission shall propose a national plan for the digitisation of Swedish cultural heritage in printed and handwritten form, including the priority of objects and how the co-ordination with other cultural institutions could be organised. This action responds to proposals made by leading Swedish cultural institutions in a report to the Ministry of Culture in 2002.

Cooperation developments

During 2003, the Swedish discussion about coordination and cooperation in digitisation on international level has partly been concentrated to the Nordic countries. Digitisation was for example the subject of one of the seminars at the XX Nordic archival conference in Reykjavik on Island in August 2003 (<http://www.skjalasafn.is>).

At national level, a project called "Image databases and digitisation – a platform for ALM collaboration" finished its work in January this year with a report (available on the Web with an executive summary in English, see <http://abm.kb.se>).

Several leading cultural institutions were involved in the project: the Royal Library, the National Archives, the National Museum of Fine arts, and the National Heritage Board. The overall purpose was to start building a common platform for collaboration between archives, libraries, and museums suitable for the development of standards, norms, and policies for

digital imaging and registration. The project was for budget reason limited to objects common in collections of all the participating institutions such as graphic works, posters, drawings sketches, maps, and photographs.

To fulfil the task of the project, the participating institutions had to agree upon data element sets as well as authority file structure and policy. They also had to compile recommendations for common strategies in the selection of standards and quality specifications for the production and storage of digital image files. The director generals of the participating institutions have decided that the recommendations made by the project will form a base for standards and guidelines in digitisation. They have also decided to build up a national "ALM secretariat", financed by the ALM institutions themselves. This is planned to take place during spring 2004.

The research community and its needs for information in digital form has been discussed at several seminars and conferences during 2003. One example is a seminar organised by the Swedish Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in November about the effects of digitisation on scientific research in the fields of humanities.

Emerging issues

Besides a proposal for a national plan on digitisation and national standards and guidelines agreed by leading cultural institutions (see above), the foreseeable future in Sweden will bring focus on technical research in long-term preservation of digital information. A state inquiry on archival matters highlighted in 2002 an urgent need for actions in the field of long-term preservation of digital information. An initiative to



Royal seal of the Swedish king Gustav I from 1523.
Gustav I was in many respects the founder of Sweden
as a modern state. He also made Sweden a hereditary kingdom
and turned the country into a Lutheran state with a State church

recommend was to start joint projects involving both archival institutions and technical expertise within the scientific field. The National Archives and the Luleå University of Technology have this year started a joint research project in long-term preservation of digital material. The project has a lifetime of three years, but the aim is that it will develop into a competence centre in questions concerning digital preservation, in the first place for the public sector. The results produced by this project will have impact not only on the cultural sphere but also on the possibilities for implementing e-Government. The project is financially supported by the Swedish County of Norrbotten and the local community of Boden. At regional and local level an increasing number of small and medium size institutions have started to coordinate their activities in public outreach. One of many examples is "Culture Heritage Östergötland" (<http://www.tema.liu.se/kulturarv/>), with the aim both to be an arena for everyone engaged in cultural heritage of the region and to make this cultural heritage available to everyone. Local museums, archives, local folklore societies, cultural institutions, authorities, and projects are involved in the activities. Cultural Heritage Östergötland leads and gives guidance in the digitalisation of cultural heritage in the region. Databases are built up and can be easily accessed through a portal on the Web together with other sources of information concerning history, cultural heritage, cultural settings, and cultural tourism sites. Another example of a regional initiative with a similar focus is "Kulturportalen i Jämtlands län" (The Cultural Portal in the County of Jämtland; <http://www.kulturen.jamtland.se>).

Use of NRG/MINERVA results and impact

How to handle quality issues in Web publications is a "hot" question in Sweden. The Swedish National Audit Office published in spring 2003 a review of Web sites at Swedish state agencies. The main question was to what degree these Web sites meet requirements connected to accessibility. The result was depressing: none of the Web sites evaluated could be accepted, according to the National Audit Office. In the cultural field the University of Uppsala, in conjunction with the European projects MINERVA, Pulman and EMII, organised two seminars in April 2003 where quality aspects on Web publication was on the agenda. As a result national quality groups on cultural heritages Web sites are being formed. The first work shop concerning the work of these groups was organised by MINERVA work package 6 in the beginning of December. The groups will from their national perspective contribute to the work of the MINERVA project.



Part of the Bergshammar book of coats of arms from around 1440. It contains about 3 000 arms of sovereigns and their vassals all over Europe, from Norway to Sicily and from Portugalto Jerusalem