



## Sweden

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## Policy scenario

In 2003 the Government called a commission of inquiry to look into the tasks and activities of the Royal Library (also National Library of Sweden), among them digitisation. The Commission proposed in a report a number of actions on national level aiming at the large scale digitisation of holdings in archives, libraries, museums and institutions responsible for the cultural heritage management. The overall purpose should be, according to the Commission, to enhance knowledge about our past and facilitate research in the development of the Swedish society. In practice, Sweden's printed and handwritten cultural heritage, as well as photographs, drawings and other holdings, need to both more accessible and better preserved for the future. The Commission proposed some basic criteria for selecting source material for digitisation: the choice of objects to digitise should be user-oriented, with educational and science-oriented needs given special priority, and accessibility to digitised material should apply for all levels in the national education system. To stimulate young people to take interest in the Swedish cultural heritage, the Commission also proposed a special digitisation project targeting material to be used by school teachers in the primary and elementary school systems.

There is an urgent need for a national strategy in digitisation, the Commission concluded, and recommended the Government to initiate a national digitisation plan for the period 2004 to 2016. The Commission's report was distributed for comments during 2004, and is expected to be the basis of decisions by the Parliament and the Government during 2005. In 2003 the Government appointed a special strategy group for IT policies. A sub-group on IT and culture was formed in late autumn 2004, and one of the main tasks

for this sub-group is to analyse the conditions for digitisation and long-term preservation of the cultural heritage in digital form.

The Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images (SLBA) is one of the largest audiovisual institutions in Europe. It has since 1979 gathered and archived nearly 5 million hours of audiovisual material. In 2004 a state inquiry recommended the migration of SLBA's audiovisual content from analogue to digital form. The Government is expected to reach a decision in this matter during 2005.

## Co-operation

In 1992 the Swedish Royal Library took the initiative to start up an informal working group for cooperation between archives, libraries and museums (ALM-collaboration). The aim of this group was to focus on projects of common value for cultural institutions involved in cooperative efforts. Over the years, working together across institutional boundaries – or net working as it is called today – became a natural form of professional intercourse between different parts of the cultural heritage sector. In the end of the 1990s the issue of ALM-collaboration became a part of the political agenda and was discussed in the Swedish Parliament in the year 2000. The Parliament declared that the cumulative progress in this area required evaluation which would thereafter serve as a base for further decisions. The task was given to a group of leading Swedish cultural institutions, and in 2002 the results were reported back to the Government. But, instead of waiting for political response, the cultural institutions took action themselves. In April 2004 a coordinating office for archives, libraries and museums in Sweden



An illuminated initial of the Swedish saint Birgitta found in a copy of her Revelations from around 1430  
Photo: Kurt Eriksson  
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was established as a joint initiative of the Royal Library, the National Museum of Fine Arts, the National Heritage Board, the Swedish National Archives and the Swedish Council for Cultural Affairs. This secretariat, called “ABM-centrum” (ALM-centre in English), is for the moment organised in project form and housed at the Royal Library. The objectives of ABM-centrum are:

- to promote understanding and collaborations between archives, libraries and museums
- to stimulate and develop collaboration in digitisation between cultural institutions in Sweden
- to promote the use of new technology in providing greater access to collections
- to contribute to and promote skills development activities across institutional boundaries

A main task for the near future is to stimulate the development of harmonised digitised strategies and methodologies. An important support tool and information resource in this work will be the website of ABM-centrum.  
<http://abm.centrum.se>.

In 2003 the National Archives and the Luleå University of Technology (LTU) started a joint project in long-term preservation of digital information. The aim was that the project should emerge as a national centre of competence in digital preservation. LTU has during 2004 decided to establish such a centre as a part of the university. Emphasis is now placed on coordinating the development of a centre of competence with research activities in computer science and archival science at other universities in Sweden and abroad. The work of the NRG and the MINERVA project has been of great importance for the Swedish collaboration

activities in digitisation. Information about coordination efforts and ambitions in other member states, gathered by the NRG, has influenced the national process and the institutions that take part in it. Practical results of the MINERVA project, such as the handbook on quality aspects in web publication and the handbook about good practices in digitisation, has been presented at various seminars and work shops. Often, these presentations have been the starting point for discussions about the needs for national guidelines, and plans are now underway for the translation of MINERVA project's *Good Practices Handbook* into Swedish. Both the NRG activities and the work of the MINERVA project on national level will in the future be more closely linked to the ABM-centrum.

### Main digitisation initiatives

At the Royal Library digitisation efforts today are mainly focused on pilot-projects aiming to provide enhanced access to fragile and/or valuable volumes and to newspapers. The project *Svecia Antiqua et hodierna* is one such pilot-project featuring an early Swedish “brag book” consisting of series of copperplate etchings and texts describing the expansive era of the 1660s.  
[www.kb.se/suecia](http://www.kb.se/suecia)

Additionally, the oldest newspaper in Sweden (Post- och Inrikes Tidningar) is now available in digitised form featuring issues published between 1645 and 1721.

The National Archives digitisation activities are mainly directed towards basic archival sources such as parish records, land survey files and court records. This is material used both by academics and by the public



Drawings made in the 1680s by a young Swedish prince, later king of Sweden under the name of Carolus the XII  
Photo: Kurt Eriksson  
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A stamp with the signature of the Swedish king Adolf Fredrik.  
It was used by the Swedish Council in the 1750s,  
when the king refused to sign their decisions  
Photo: Kurt Eriksson  
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in researching family roots. There are also some smaller projects using specific parts of the holdings, for example the Oxenstierna project (publishing letters sent by and to the Swedish chancellor Axel Oxenstierna in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a project creating a national digital edition of large scale maps from the period of 1633 to 1655.

[www.ra.se/ra/oxenstierna/oxenstierna1.html](http://www.ra.se/ra/oxenstierna/oxenstierna1.html)  
<http://www.ra.se/ra/geometrisk/index.html>

Two projects about distribution, on commercial terms, of digital copies of archival material and complementary databases over the Internet were completed in 2004.

The Museum of National Antiquities in Sweden has a website containing images of more than 4000 medieval works of arts from parish collections all over the country. The user interface of this site is made especially to suite different kind of user groups such as school pupils, people interested in local history, etc.  
[www.historiska.se/medeltidsbild](http://www.historiska.se/medeltidsbild)

The National Museum of Fine Arts is currently developing their database containing both information about its holdings together with and digital images of the works of art registered in the database. The National Heritage Board has a database on the Web with about 120 000 images of church buildings, including interior of churches and church inventories. The Board also keeps about 300 000 filed pages with documentation on churches which is now being digitised for publication on the web.  
<http://raa.se/kmb>

Some universities have started digitisation projects mainly targeting printed and handwritten material that is fragile, invaluable, frequently used and/or which

is at certain risk of being lost through damage or thefts. Examples are:

- St. Laurentius Digital Manuscript Library with 67 volumes of medieval handwritten manuscripts at the University of Lund  
<http://laurentius.lub.lu.se>
- the manuscript collection of Erik Waller with about 30 000 items at the University of Uppsala  
<http://publications.uu.se/waller>
- the archive of the Swedish East India Company at the University of Gothenburg  
[www.ub.gu.se/samlingar/handskrift/ostindie/projektet.xml](http://www.ub.gu.se/samlingar/handskrift/ostindie/projektet.xml)

An example of a private initiative is project Runeberg, a database with digital editions of older Nordic literature. In this project, which started in 1992, all the work is done on voluntarily basis by interested members of a student society. Books not covered by IPR are digitised and made accessible on the Internet. For the moment about 400 titles have been made freely accessible in the database.  
<http://runeberg.org>

Another interesting initiative is the "Bank of Literature", a two years pilot project initiated by the Swedish Academy in 2004 with the purpose to building up an organisation to maintain the electronic storage of important works of literature. The aim is that the "Bank of Literature" shall publish digital versions of Swedish literature, mainly fiction but also including publications in the humanities. The objectives of "the Bank" are to be a cultural and literary resource both for research and educational purposes.



Swedish Constitution of 1809  
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