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NEWSPAPERS IN THE ROYAL LIBRARY, STOCKHOLM

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The Royal Library is the National Library of Sweden - with legal deposit since 1661. The birth year of the Swedish press is 1645, when Sweden got its first newspaper. Newspapers and legal deposit came into existence approximately at the same time and under the same political conditions. The purpose of the one and only first newspaper was to present a governmental view of things. The purpose of legal deposit was to make it possible for the government to control the printers.

The political conditions have changed many times since then, but an efficient central administration including the system of legal deposit is an heritage from those days, which means that we have no problems with the collecting of imprints. Sweden has a population of about nine million people. There are now about 200 newspapers – 194 to be exact, counted at the end of 2003. These newspapers have 17 editions with a title of its own and 100 other editions. There are also about 500 free papers financed by advertisements.

Some newspapers in Swedish published abroad can be added to these figures. We subscribe to 12 newspapers from Finland, and to four from the United States. About one hundred years ago there were many Swedish newspapers in North America, but the Swedish immigrants have been assimilated and their interest in the few and small remaining newspapers seems to be mostly nostalgic.

The staff of the Royal Library consists of about 275 people. Fourteen of them belong to the newspaper section, where we collect the newspapers, preserve them, microfilm them and describe them in catalogues and bibliographies, and digitise them – to a very small extent so far.

The newspapers received as legal deposit are placed in boxes of acid free paper (we don't bind them) and sent to a repository 50 kilometers outside Stockholm. The general idea is that they shall rest out there and never be touched. Instead, microfilm is to be used for reading. We are obliged since 1979 not only to preserve the deposit copies but also to get all the newspapers microfilmed. Furthermore we have to produce microfilm both for our own use and for the university libraries at Gothenburg, Lund, Umeå and Uppsala.

The actual microfilming is carried out by a company at Kalmar in southern Sweden. This company gets a deposit copy of its own for microfilming purposes. The copy will be discarded, when the microfilming is done. The university library at Lund gets a third deposit copy to be kept as the so-called national reserve copy.

The 200 current newspapers in Sweden mean a production of something between 1800 and 1900 rolls of microfilm pro year. (We do not microfilm the free papers, although we keep them in the newspaper collection and catalogue them as newspapers.) The microfilm version of the newspapers is complete with all editions and news-bills. The camera negatives are vacuum packed and kept in a climate chamber with a temperature of 12 degrees centigrade and an air humidity of 30%. A duplicate negative is used for producing new copies. The duplicate negative is kept in the library building, while for security reasons the camera negative is stored on other premises. In addition to the free distribution of microfilm to some university libraries, microfilm is sold to a great number of other libraries. Public libraries in various parts of the country generally want to have a complete microfilm set of their local newspaper.

For copyright reasons we are free to sell microfilm only to those libraries which already subscribe to the original paper version of the newspaper.

In 1983 we started microfilming old newspapers retrospectively. This retrospective filming is carried out much in the same way as the continuous filming. We use copies from Uppsala University Library, which has ceased to function as an archive library and is getting rid of its newspaper collection. The copies will be discarded after having been microfilmed. Thanks to this arrangement we can handle the copies in a way that is best for the microfilming process regardless of preservation aspects.

Quite a lot of newspaper microfilming was done also before 1979. A private company microfilmed the most important newspapers and sold microfilm copies to libraries and other customers. This company does not exist anymore, but its stock of negatives has been bought by the state and is now managed by the Royal Library.

All our newspapers can be found in the national union catalogue LIBRIS:
<http://websok.libris.kb.se/websearch/form?type=simple>

Every microfilm is provided with a bibliographic target, where editors, printing plant, circulation etc. are recorded. There is also a special bibliography of twentieth and twenty-first century newspapers on the web: <http://www.kb.se/nl/nlnav.htm> . It continues a printed bibliography of Swedish periodicals covering the years 1645-1899.

We still lack governmental funding for regular digitisation, but we are a part in the Nordic Tiden project (<http://tiden.kb.se>), where the national libraries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have digitised newspapers for the web. So far we have digitised about 25 000 pages of old newspapers from the 17th and up to the beginning of the 19th century.

Legal deposit of websites does not exist but has now been suggested in a report to the government in January this year. In anticipation of such a legislation, however, the Royal Library has been harvesting the web for Swedish websites since 1997. A description of this activity can be found at <http://www.kb.se/kw3/ENG/> . The harvesting has been done four times a year, which means that we have quite a lot of stored websites, but still only samples, and especially not all issues of the daily newspapers. Last year, however, we started harvesting newspapers daily.

Nowadays also traditional newspapers on paper have a digital original. One can imagine a future when we will get a deposit copy of this digital original instead of a paper copy. The above-mentioned government report expects the Royal Library to consider this possibility.

In addition to our obligations as a national library we also keep a collection of foreign newspapers. Most remarkable is our unique collection of about 270 seventeenth and eighteenth century foreign newspapers, which were originally sent to the Swedish government by diplomats, who had to report events abroad.