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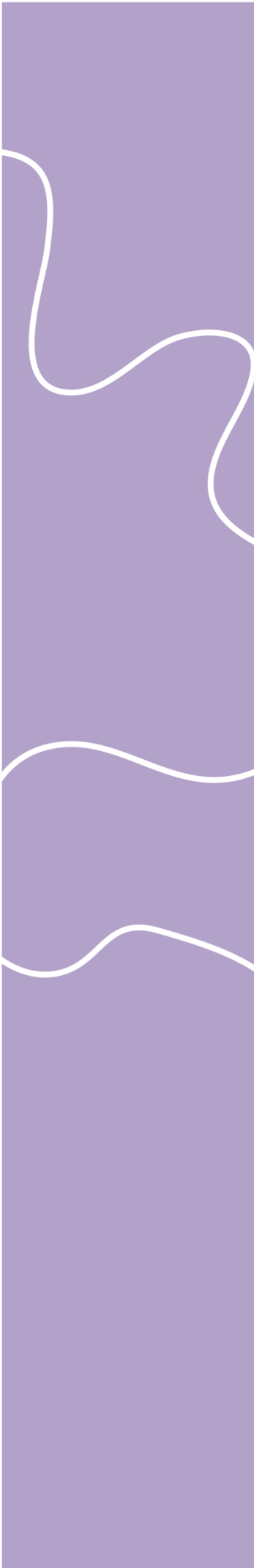
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Victoria Lagerkvist

LANGUAGE, POWER AND SUSTAINABLE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

– a report about multilingual library services in the county of
Sörmland, Sweden





Sörmland County Library has a mission to encourage collaboration, promote library development and quality of the public libraries in Sörmland.

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Foreword

*"later that night
I held an atlas in my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?*

*it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere."*

Those words of the poet Warsan Shire were also mine throughout the autumn 2015. As I write this, the social context in which public libraries operate has been affected in many ways. It was felt in conversations. Children and adults losing their lives in wars and at sea while fleeing. A civil society mobilising to help people who leave their homes and arrive in new places. Borders being closed. The never-ending streams of racist abuse and violence. There were glimmers of hope, but the autumn showed that we have a tendency to forget the lessons of history. The autumn showed that the way we choose to describe phenomena and people matter. Our choice of words means something. Language creates context, creates distance, creates opportunities, shatters dreams, maintains structures. We all have a responsibility for the change, the view of humanity and the world we allow to emerge through our use of language and our actions. Language is important and people with power have the greatest responsibility. Social functions such as libraries have a great deal of responsibility. I keep coming back to whose narratives are to be given space and on whose terms.

Victoria Lagerkvist
January 2016

Summary

Everyone in Sörmland shall have access to appropriate library services, regardless of where in the county, regardless of format and regardless of language. The report entitled Language, Power and Sustainable Library Development, which is based largely on interviews with library workers in Sörmland, reflects the capacity and significance of public library services in a society characterised by multilingualism. Libraries provide important support in language development, reading and creativity of children, young people and adults. Libraries also offer a place to both simply spend time and to meet people with different backgrounds and experiences. Libraries play a major role for people who are seeking asylum or who are in the process of learning Swedish. Storytelling sessions, language cafes and help with homework are just some examples of important activities where collaboration with civil society also plays a key role. Multilingual library services are provided most systematically for children, and in collaboration with preschools and mother tongue teachers. The focus for adults is primarily on easy-to-read material and practising Swedish. The most recurring theme is that the lack of language skills among library workers is limiting multilingual library services. There is also a need for greater diversity and sufficient cultural competence at libraries. It is also relevant to investigate competence requirements in relation to the educational function of libraries in a multilingual context.

Libraries base their activities to a large extent on the languages that are expressly requested. There is a high demand for media to learn Swedish, books with parallel text and functional literature in languages other than Swedish. Virtually all libraries are relatively active in their work with children's literature in the biggest languages in their municipality. Media supplies are rendered difficult by a shortage of literature published and insufficient competence in literature at libraries. To maintain a diverse range of literature in languages other than Swedish over time, there is a need to explore and extend collaboration between libraries in Sörmland. Sörmland County Library needs to both stimulate a shared resource-based approach and encourage each library to have a basic, relevant multilingual offering. There also needs to be a stronger dialogue with national library resources.

Other areas that need to be strengthened are the responsibility of libraries for national minority languages, knowledge of accessible media, reading impairments and multilingualism, as well as the role of libraries to stimulate writing and reading in several languages. The issue of language transfer to children and young people is particularly important. Sörmland County Library should give priority to the stimulation of writing and storytelling in several languages, and to create at least some of the conditions for encounters between texts in different languages. This will enable multilingual literature production to be stimulated and more voices to be heard. By contributing to inspiring and increasing knowledge of languages, countries, religions and literature from all over the world, libraries are given tools for work to promote reading and to develop intercultural competence. Library workers with intercultural competence, who are bold enough to see themselves and their values, are fully in line with the desire of the public libraries in Sörmland to create activities that consist of intercultural activities and encounters across language borders.

Swedish society is characterised by linguistic diversity, although the Swedish single language norm remains strong in many ways. There are examples both historically and now of how the language and culture of minorities have been suppressed. Sörmland County Library wishes to play an active role in enhancing public libraries – based on each library's circumstances – as arenas for multilingualism and democracy. To be able to do this, priority must be given to initiatives that enable the establishment of contemporary, intercultural library services in which there is room for diversities of language, encounters and narratives. In practice, this means that Sörmland must be able to apply intercultural perspectives as tools in library development, and be aware of which norms are reproduced by different choices, as well as choosing to make use of inclusive use of language and communication that

challenges norms. Sörmland County Library also needs to develop the ability to mobilise when shared societal situations arise.

The report concludes with a summary reflection and areas for development formulated in eleven points for regional library services in Sörmland for 2016-2018.

Reading instructions

Introduction: This is where you read about the purpose, demarcations and approach, and find out how important concepts are defined.

Starting points: This is where you read about the demographics of Sörmland, statistics, laws and other relevant regulations, regional library activities and national library resources, as well as language and migration from a regional perspective.

Current status: This is where you read a thematically divided presentation of the current status of multilingual library services in Sörmland. Each section has a descriptive part based on interview material and a reflective part dealing with the possible consequences of what is described for regional library services:

Language composition – on why it is important to have an inventory of language composition.

The library as a place for meeting and learning – on why multilingualism as the norm can be used to enhance the library as a venue for meetings.

Linguistic and cultural competence in a library perspective – on why language resources, increased knowledge of the world and norm-critical competence are needed in libraries.

Media collaboration in Sörmland – on why libraries together must think about selections, purchases and stocks in languages other than Swedish.

Sign language and accessible media in languages other than Swedish – on why libraries need more knowledge of reading impairments and multilingualism.

National minority languages in libraries – on why libraries need to assume greater responsibility for national minority languages.

Promoting reading and writing in many languages – on why libraries must stimulate reading and writing in several languages.

Concluding part: This is where you read the concluding reflections and suggested areas for development that should be prioritised by regional library services over the next three years.

Bibliography: This is where you find the texts, websites and reports that have been used.

Introduction

There are more than 60 million displaced people in the world. Half of these are children under the age of 18. A devastating war is being waged in Syria, and the serious conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Ukraine paint a grim picture of a violent world. In Europe, fundamental human rights and democratic principles are at stake as polarisation increases. In Sweden, people are discriminated against, threatened and hated because of the colour of their skin, assumed religious beliefs or ethnic origin. Viewed in a global perspective, Sweden is a society with plenty of resources, but within the country there are not only major differences in living conditions and health, there is also increasing ethnic and economic segregation.¹ Within Sörmland, major differences can also be seen between and within municipalities.² To combat racism, discrimination and inequalities in society, there is a need for a new approach, greater knowledge and honest processes of change. How well do we understand the way that situations and events around us affect the local and regional context? How do libraries link the present with the past and the future?

Just over one in every five Swedes was either born abroad or has two parents who were born abroad.³ At least 150 different languages are spoken in Sweden.⁴ Language and identity are also closely intertwined, and the way that society handles and treats multilingualism and linguistic minorities has consequences for both language use and self-image. Languages can, on the one hand, bring together worlds and people, on the other hand they can form barriers. A person who does not master a given language in a given context may be prevented from exercising their right to take part in society and influence their lives. In this context, libraries can be an important force when it comes to providing children, young people and adults space to use all of their linguistic tools in their learning and living. The need for social functions in which there is a focus on language, reading and creativity for all is crucial for the achievement of a sustainable, equal social reality.

Understanding and change can be created by language, narratives and encounters. Public libraries work with language, narratives and encounters, and they therefore have tremendous potential in a society characterised by multilingualism and diversity. This does not happen of its own accord, but requires resources, initiatives and awareness. Whose narratives will be given space in libraries, and on what premises? And what does representation look like?

About this report

Sörmland County Library wishes, in a dialogue with public libraries and other relevant bodies, to play an active role in enhancing public libraries as arenas for multilingualism and democracy. This is one way of making it possible to put the Swedish Library Act into practice and provide accessible library services for everyone in Sörmland. What support and stimulus should regional library services contribute in order to promote collaboration, operational development and quality when it comes to library services in a multilingual society?

This report intends to describe the current status in order to visualise the needs of libraries, and also to provide a strategic basis for enhancing library services in Sörmland. The purpose is to highlight conditions and contexts, obstacles and opportunities based on the relationship between the regional mandate and the needs of public libraries. The report has been prepared based on an intercultural

¹ Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare: Social report 2010

² Sörmland County Council: Hälsan i Södermanland – en kommunbeskrivning [*Health in Södermanland – a description of the municipality*]. Version 1512

³ Statistics Sweden: Swedish population, municipal comparative figures, 31 December 2014

⁴ The Swedish Institute for Language and Folklore website: <http://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/sprak/sprakradgivning/fragor-och-svar-om-sprak.html#hurmanasprak>

perspective⁵ that emphasises diversity as a starting point, a goal and a resource. The approach has been characterised by a search for a way of understanding how attitudes, strategies, use of language and priorities can produce different actions and results. External trials and internal reflection have been correlated through dialogues and comparisons of literature. The report is not intended to be exhaustive, but to serve as a starting point for the ongoing development of the public libraries in the county of Sörmland, and to be used by Sörmland County Library as guidance for choosing methods and competence development, and for structuring initiatives, guides and communication.

The background data is based on interviews with library managers or their equivalent and library workers in the nine municipalities in Sörmland. Conversations were also conducted with my co-workers at Sörmland County Library and different national library resources. The result is based largely on these observations, but has been supplemented by research, literature, reports, lectures, external analyses and statistics, and to some extent textual analyses of websites, library plans and other strategy documents considered relevant.

Terms

Multilingualism refers to languages other than Swedish. *Multilingual library services* include services based on not only languages other than Swedish, but also on visitors with a mother tongue other than Swedish. Another dimension is the way the majority language, Swedish, relates to other languages.

Diversity refers to a variety of people's individual differences, characteristics and perspectives. These might include age, ethnic origin, religion and gender. *Intercultural development* refers to services that promote diversity, such as the way diversity is reflected in cultural life.⁶

An *intercultural perspective* is based on interactions and mutuality between people with different backgrounds and reference frameworks. The starting point is the equal value of all people, and adopting an open approach to the diversity created together by people, i.e. individuals from different backgrounds meeting and sharing experiences and perspectives. Multilingualism is viewed as an asset, and diversity as a starting point and a resource is emphasised. This creates the conditions for inclusive encounters, participation, influence and equality in society.⁷ For public sector activities, the purpose can be described as "to find solutions to deal with cultural differences within the framework of fundamental democratic values and based on international conventions on human rights".⁸

The intercultural perspective also requires a *norm-critical approach*, which involves focusing on power and visualising norms, such as gender, language, religion, skin colour and nationality, by questioning them. Norms affect people's actions, while at the same time people affect norms. Interculturality means a cross-boundary approach in which different cultural barriers are addressed. Intercultural encounters include, for example, negotiations about or the reconstruction of identities and different social affiliations.⁹

⁵ Sörmland County Council's Culture Plan 2015-2017, pages 7-8, states that in order to be able to structure and implement cultural activities that are relevant for Sörmland "we would like Sörmland's regional culture: [...] to work with intercultural perspectives". The Culture Plan is produced in collaboration with the county's municipalities and in consultation with the county's cultural bodies and civil society.

⁶ See the Swedish Arts Council's definitions of diversity and intercultural development: <http://www.kulturradet.se/Documents/Bidrag/bidragsinformation/2014/Tv%C3%A4rperspektiv.pdf>

⁷ Lahdenperä 2004, Lahdenperä 2011 and Rosales 2015

⁸ Strategy for an intercultural Botkyrka 2010, p. 4

⁹ Lahdenperä 2004

Starting points

Sörmland has around 280,000 inhabitants. The county's biggest municipality is Eskilstuna with over 100,000 inhabitants, while Vingåker is the smallest with almost 9,000 inhabitants.¹⁰ The other municipalities are Flen, Gnesta, Katrineholm, Nyköping, Oxelösund, Strängnäs and Trosa. There are major differences between and within the municipalities with regard to living conditions and health.¹¹ The conditions for development, for example in terms of employment, also differ between different parts of the county. This is partly because of the geographical location of the municipalities and the links to Stockholm. The relatively limited labour market means that Sörmland depends on commuting to work in neighbouring counties, and bigger municipalities in terms of the number of inhabitants and those with the best commuting facilities are pulling away.¹² There are relatively large variations in unemployment in the county, but it is generally higher in Sörmland than in Sweden as a whole. In 2014, Eskilstuna and Flen had the highest unemployment rates among municipalities in the county, while Trosa and Gnesta had the lowest.¹³ The difference compared to the national average is particularly high among those who are born abroad, people with no more than a compulsory school education and young people.¹⁴ Sörmland has one of the lowest education levels in the country.¹⁵

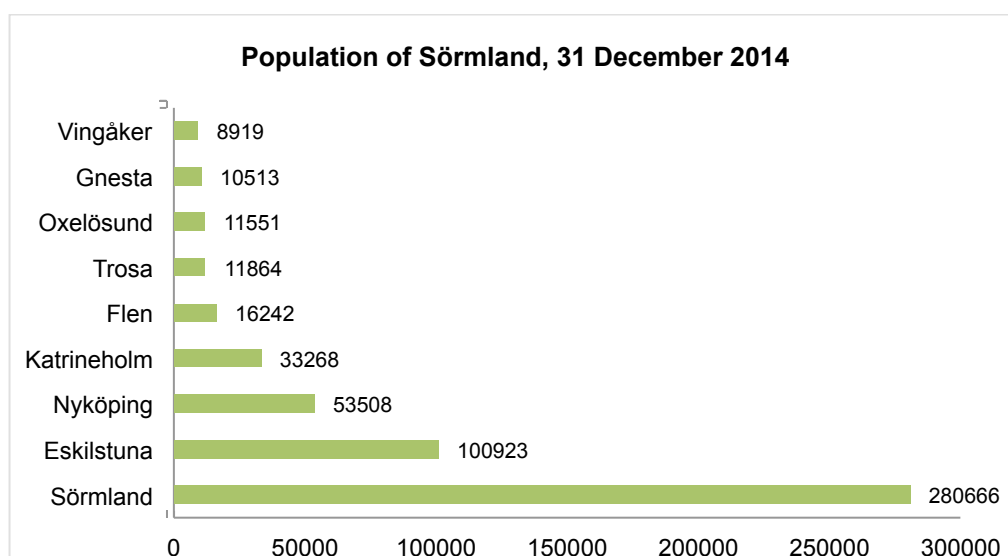


Figure 1. The total population of Södermanland County, broken down by municipality. Figures from 31 December 2014.

Language and migration

"But they're just different. All languages are equally rich. All important emotions can be expressed in all languages," says exiled author Hassan Blasim in an interview in the literary magazine *Karavan*.¹⁶ Over the last 50 years Sweden has come to be characterised by linguistic diversity. Arabic, Bosnian,

¹⁰ Statistics Sweden: Swedish population, municipal comparative figures, 31 December 2014

¹¹ Sörmland County Council: Hälsan i Södermanland – en kommunbeskrivning [*Health in Södermanland – a description of the municipality*]. Version 1512

¹² Regional Association of Sörmland: Hållbart resande i Sörmland 2015 [*Sustainable travel in Sörmland 2015*]

¹³ Sörmland County Council: Hälsan i Södermanland – en kommunbeskrivning [*Health in Södermanland – a description of the municipality*]. Version 1512

¹⁴ Regional Association of Sörmland: Regional facts <http://www.regionfakta.com/Sodermanlands-lan/Befolkning-och-hushall/Medborgarskap-hos-lanets-in--och-utvandrare/>

¹⁵ Sörmland County Council: Hälsan i Södermanland – en kommunbeskrivning [*Health in Södermanland – a description of the municipality*]. Version 1512

¹⁶ Interview in the magazine *Karavan* 2015:4

Kurdish, Persian and Somali are some of the languages that have become established.¹⁷ There are no official statistics on which languages are spoken in Sweden, but according to the Swedish Language Council there are at least 150 languages in addition to the seven that are counted as domestic languages, i.e. Swedish and sign language, as well as the five officially recognised minority languages of Finnish, Sami, Meänkieli (Tornedalian Finnish), Yiddish and Romani. All of the nationality minority languages have long been spoken in Sweden. Finnish and Sami, for example, have been spoken as long as Swedish.¹⁸ Sörmland too is characterised by linguistic diversity, and it is very probable that more than 70 languages are spoken in the county.¹⁹

Despite this linguistic diversity, the Swedish single-language norm remains strong in many ways. Multilingualism has also had a negative tone, as it was often associated with repressed minorities being forced to learn Swedish.²⁰ For a long time pupils were not allowed to speak their mother tongue at school, and people were not only deprived of their language but made to feel ashamed of their mother tongue. In Sweden today, people carry their own memories or those inherited from previous generations. There are also many examples, both historically and now, of how the language and culture of minorities have been suppressed in Sweden. There have been attacks in the form of enforced sterilisation, research into race biology and illegal registrations.²¹

A linguistic perspective on migration also gives rise to questions about how society manages and treats multilingualism and linguistic minorities. For individuals, for example, the question is how they are allowed to develop their multilingualism. Language is an important part of people's identity, but it is also an identity marker and an instrument of power. Multilingual children and adults need their mother tongue(s). Furthermore, a language is not considered to be an obstacle to learning other languages, but rather has proven to have positive effects when languages develop in parallel.²² The Swedish Language Act from 2009 also emphasises a general right to the mother tongue and also a special responsibility for both protecting and promoting not only the national minority languages, but also the Swedish sign language.²³

Södermanland County Council and the municipalities of Eskilstuna, Oxelösund and Trosa are Finnish administrative areas. This means that Finnish-speaking inhabitants have certain statutory linguistic rights, including that it must be possible to use their language in contact with authorities.

Swedish Language Act (2009:600)

Section 14 All residents of Sweden are to be given the opportunity to learn, develop and use Swedish. In addition

1. persons belonging to a national minority are to be given the opportunity to learn, develop and use the minority language, and
2. persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, and persons who, for other reasons, require sign language, are to be given the opportunity to learn, develop and use Swedish sign language.

Persons whose mother tongue is not one of the languages specified in the first paragraph are to be given the opportunity to develop and use their mother tongue.

¹⁷ Otterup 2012

¹⁸ The Swedish Institute for Language and Folklore website: <http://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/sprak/sprakradgivning/fragor-och-svar-om-sprak.html#hurmangasprak>

¹⁹ The Eskilstuna Municipality website: <http://www.eskilstuna.se/sv/Utbildning-och-barnomsorg/Modersmal-hemsprak/Modersmalsundervisning/>

²⁰ Otterup 2012

²¹ County Administrative Board of Stockholm County: *Nationella minoritetens rättigheter: en handbok för kommuner, landsting och regioner 2011* [*The rights of national minorities: a handbook for municipalities, county councils and regions, 2011*]

²² Gustafsson Chen 2011

²³ SFS 2009:600. Sections 8 and 9 of the Swedish Language Act

Section 15 The public sector is responsible for ensuring that the individual is given access to language in accordance with Section 14.

In most cases it is important to be able to speak and understand the Swedish language in order to survive in the labour market and in society at large in Sweden. Adults with a mother tongue other than Swedish who are in the national population register in Sweden have the right to education in Swedish for Immigrants (SFI). The municipalities are responsible, and it must be possible to combine SFI with, for example, work or practical placement.²⁴ Multilingual children in preschool and preschool class must be given the opportunity to develop both the Swedish language and their mother tongue. Pupils at compulsory and upper secondary school also have the right to mother tongue tuition if certain conditions are met. Children and young people who belong to one of the national minorities have an extended right to tuition in their mother tongue.²⁵ Reading skills also constitute an important precondition in Swedish society. It is estimated that about six per cent of the population has some form of reading impairment to the effect that the person finds it difficult to read printed text. The most common causes of reading impairment are impaired vision and dyslexia. A person who is dyslexic has different levels of difficulty with different languages. It may also be difficult to determine whether the difficulty is due to an actual reading impairment or whether the person has not learned enough of the new language. Schools often fail to identify dyslexia and other reading impairments in people with a mother tongue other than Swedish.²⁶

According to Statistics Sweden (SCB), in 2014 just over 22 per cent of the population of Sörmland was either born abroad or born in Sweden to two parents who were born abroad. Almost eight per cent were foreign citizens. The most common emigrant countries for those born in Sörmland were Finland, Iraq and Somalia.²⁷ Of those who immigrated to Södermanland County in 2014, 30 per cent were Syrian, 10 per cent Somali and 13 per cent Swedes returning home.²⁸ The official statistics present a useful, but limited picture of the linguistic situation in Sörmland. Not everyone appears in the statistics, and knowing which country a person comes from is not always the same as knowing that person's language. The numbers of asylum-seekers, those without papers and EU migrants are also not included in official statistics.

The demographic situation differs between the municipalities in Sörmland. More than 11 per cent of the population in Flen comprised foreign citizens in 2014. At 30.6%, Eskilstuna has the highest proportion of the population that was either born abroad or born in Sweden to two parents who were born abroad. This can be compared with Gnesta and Vingåker, where the figure is 13.5 and 13.0 per cent respectively.²⁹

	Population	% with a foreign background*	% born abroad	% foreign citizens
Södermanland County	280,666	22.4	17	7.9
Eskilstuna	100,923	30.6	22.6	9.8
Flen	16,242	23.7	18.8	11.4
Gnesta	10,513	13.5	10.7	5.2
Katrineholm	33,268	21.1	16	7.9
Nyköping	53,508	16.2	12.5	5.9

²⁴ The Swedish National Agency for Education website: <http://skolverket.se/skolformer/vuxenutbildning/utbildning-i-svenska-for-invandrade/ratt-till-sfi-1.236681>

²⁵ The Swedish National Agency for Education website:
<http://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/larande/sprak/amnen/modersmal>

²⁶ Gustafsson Chen 2012

²⁷ Statistics Sweden: Swedish population, municipal comparative figures, 31 December 2014

²⁸ Regional Association of Sörmland website, regional facts: <http://www.regionfakta.com/Sodermanlands-lan/Befolkning-och-hushall/Medborgarskap-hos-lanets-in--och-utvandrare/>

²⁹ Statistics Sweden: Swedish population, municipal comparative figures, 31 December 2014

Oxelösund	11,551	22.3	18.3	8.4
Strängnäs	33,878	16.1	12.4	5.7
Trosa	11,864	15.5	11.8	5.3
Vingåker	8,919	13.9	12.3	8.4

Figure 2. Proportion of people in Sörmland with a foreign background. Figures from 31 January 2014.

*Authorities' definition of foreign background = people who were born abroad or born in Sweden to two parents who were born abroad.

There are different reasons why people move between and across national borders in the world. Some people are forced to flee because of persecution, serious abuse or war, while others move to start a family, work, study or find better living conditions. In 2014, family links was the most common reason why people applied for permission to move to Sweden.³⁰ The three most common countries from where labour moved to Sweden in 2015 were India, Thailand and China.³¹ In 2015, most asylum-seekers in Sweden came from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq. In the same period in the previous year, most asylum-seekers came from Syria and Eritrea. Asylum-seekers in both years included many people who were stateless.³² Of those who were given residence permits as a refugee or relative, the majority in 2015 came from Syria, Eritrea or Somalia.³³

The Swedish Migration Agency has a reception unit and custody unit in Flen. In recent years Sörmland has received a large number of refugees, which has resulted in and will in future result in the immigration of relatives. Here too there are major differences between the municipalities. The number of new arrivals in Sörmland in 2015 was 2,052 people, of which 127 were unaccompanied children. In the year before there were 2,353 people, of which 100 were unaccompanied children.³⁴ In numerical terms, Eskilstuna received the largest amount of refugees, but in relation to the population it was the small municipalities that received the most. Vingåker and Oxelösund were two of the municipalities in 2014 that received the greatest number of refugees in relation to their population. In 2014, 2,206 people, 88 of them unaccompanied children, were granted residence permits in Sörmland.³⁵ Södermanland County received 1,958 people who had been granted residence permits in 2015. 118 of these were unaccompanied children. Eskilstuna received the most, while Gnesta and Trosa received 24 and 22 people respectively. Oxelösund, Flen and Vingåker received the most in relation to their population. In Sörmland, 6,685 persons are registered as residents in the Swedish Migration Agency's reception system. Almost half of these live in Eskilstuna or Flen. The number in Trosa is just 63 people.³⁶ There are 11 accommodation units for asylum-seekers and three for evacuees in Sörmland. The number of asylum-seekers registered in Sörmland at the beginning of December 2015 was 6,216 people, compared with 3,127 people the year before. The number of unaccompanied children in Sörmland has increased from 147 in 2014 to 630 at the beginning of December 2015.³⁷

Regional library services and national library resources

Regional library services in Sörmland are regulated primarily through the Swedish Library Act, Sörmland County Council's strategic goals, the regional Culture Plan and Sörmland County Council's

³⁰ Swedish Migration Agency. "Mitt i världen 2015" [*In the centre of the world 2015*]: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Fakta-om-migration/Migrationsverket---mitt-i-varlden-2015.html>

³¹ Swedish Migration Agency. "Mitt i världen 2015" [*In the centre of the world 2015*]: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Fakta-om-migration/Migrationsverket---mitt-i-varlden-2015/Anhoriga-och-arbetskraft.html>

³² Swedish Migration Agency. "Mitt i världen 2015" [*In the centre of the world 2015*]: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Fakta-om-migration/Migrationsverket---mitt-i-varlden-2015/Flyktingmottagandet-i-kommunerna.html>

³³ Swedish Migration Agency: Received by municipalities in accordance with the compensation regulation 2015 <http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.39a9cd9514a3460772133ee/1451894611797/Kommunmottagna+enligt+ersattning+sf%C3%B6rordningen+2015.pdf>

³⁴ New arrivals = number received + those moved to municipalities - those moved from municipalities. The Swedish Migration Agency: Received by municipalities in accordance with the compensation regulation 2015

³⁵ The Swedish Migration Agency: Received by municipalities in accordance with the compensation regulation 2015

³⁶ The Swedish Migration Agency: Received by municipalities in accordance with the compensation regulation 2015

³⁷ Sörmland County Council: Needs analysis. Asylum-seekers, new arrivals and those without papers, 2015

library plan. Other important references include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the IFLA/UNESCO's Multicultural Library Manifesto and the Public Library Manifesto. Sörmland County Council's vision is the open county council, which means, among other things, that work on democracy "is carried out on the terms of those living in Sörmland and is aimed in particular at those who do not otherwise have a voice".³⁸ Sörmland County Council strives to achieve equal living conditions and shall contribute to a good quality of life, equal health and a vibrant, living region.³⁹ Sörmland County Library shall adopt a strategic approach to expand views, generate engagement, make a difference in people's lives, contribute to greater participation and diversity in society, and work to create an accessible library service.⁴⁰

The new Swedish Library Act, which came into force on 1 January 2014, is linked to the culture policy goals and UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto. Regional library services shall be provided for the purpose of promoting cooperation, operational development and quality with regard to the public libraries that operate in the county. Prioritised groups for the public library service are people with functional impairments, national minorities and people with a mother tongue other than Swedish, and also for public libraries to devote special attention to children and young people in order to promote their language development and to stimulate reading.⁴¹ In addition to those groups that are prioritised in accordance with the law, another group prioritised by Sörmland County Council is the target group of elderly people. Since 2015, within the framework of the collaborative culture model, literature is also included as an art form in Sörmland County Library's mandate.

The Swedish Library Act aims in particular to encourage coordination and collaboration so that all residents shall be able to "receive good library services regardless of where they live in the country".⁴² The Swedish Library Association has broken down the official library statistics to the regional and municipal level, which shows that more staff and media resources are needed if libraries are to be able to fulfil the Swedish Library Act. The increased use of libraries is based on high staffing levels, an up-to-date media offering, a large proportion of new acquisitions, good access to computers and a wide range of periodicals.⁴³

All municipalities and county councils must have a library plan. The National Library of Sweden (KB) has been mandated by the government to work together with regional library services and municipalities to follow up on adopted library plans.⁴⁴ KB shall coordinate library services, promote national collaboration and development, collect the official library statistics and manage and develop the national library catalogue Libris, as well as producing a national library strategy, which shall be completed in 2017. Since 2013, KB's development and collaboration assignment has involved the National Repository Library and Inter-library Lending Centre in Umeå, the International Library (IB), Malmö City Library and Stockholm Regional Library as partners inasmuch as they are national resources with specialist competence that cannot be maintained at local or regional library level.⁴⁵ There are also a number of special libraries such as the Finnish Institute's library, the Kurdish Library in Stockholm, the Sami Library in Jokkmokk, the Jewish Library in Stockholm and the Nordic Africa Institute's library.

Since 2015, the Easy Reading Centre has been part of the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media (MTM). MTM's mandate is to be a national knowledge centre for accessible media and to strive to

³⁸ Sörmland County Council: The open county council. Sörmland County Council's vision

³⁹ Sörmland County Council: Goals and budget. Planning period 2015-2017

⁴⁰ Sörmland County Council: Culture Plan 2015-2017

⁴¹ SFS 2013:801. Sections 11, 4, 5, 8 of the Swedish Library Act

⁴² SFS 2013:801. Section 14 of the Swedish Library Act

⁴³ Swedish Library Association: <http://www.biblioteksforeningen.org/folkbiblioteken-2014/5/>

⁴⁴ SFS 2013:801. Swedish Library Act

⁴⁵ National Library of Sweden: <http://bibliotekssamverkan.blogg.kb.se/2012/12/07/forandringar-i-bibliotekslandskapet/#.VkERVJ0V9jo>

ensure that everyone has access to literature and social information regardless of reading ability or functional impairment. MTM is a lending centre for audio books, Braille books and sign language literature. MTM also produces audio books, Braille books and easy-to-read literature, and also makes easy-to-read news information available. As MTM has well-established collaborations with its Nordic equivalent bodies, borrowers of audio books can borrow directly from, for example, the Finnish library of audio books, Celia.

The International Library (IB) is a centre for loans and a national competence centre for public and school libraries with regard to multilingual media. IB works to develop methods, offer advice and develop competence, and also to enrich the LIBRIS catalogue with items for multilingual media and the further development of online resources relating to multilingualism. The International Library's Lending Centre (IBLC) provides support for regional library services "to promote collaboration between libraries within regions in order to develop media supplies of multilingual media".⁴⁶ IBLC collaborates with equivalent lending centres in Denmark, Finland and Norway. Libraries can order inter-library loans, individual loans or stock loans from IBLC. IBLC supplements media in easily accessible languages, i.e. Arabic, Bosnian, Croat, Persian, Polish, Russian, Serb, Somali, Spanish, Thai and Turkish, primarily with individual titles and topic-related orders. Media in languages in which there is a shortage⁴⁷, i.e. languages in which publication and distribution channels are very limited, while demand is high, are supplemented with individual titles.⁴⁸

The Swedish Library Act no longer states that regional library services are responsible for supplementary media supplies, although there is nothing to prevent them from assuming such responsibility. The mandate can be interpreted as having more of a strategic emphasis than before.⁴⁹ According to Sörmland's media supply plan from 2012, municipal libraries are responsible for maintaining suitable basic stocks for the bigger language groups, primarily with regard to children's literature. Sörmland County Library is responsible for compensating the host library, i.e. Eskilstuna Library, for purchases of literature in the languages for which Sörmland was responsible according to the media supply plan for multilingual literature that was valid then. The languages were Arabic, Bosnian, Finnish, Chinese, Croat, Kurmanji, Persian, Polish, Russian, Serb, Sorani, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese, as well as certain other languages as requested by libraries. Sörmland County Library is also responsible for reaching an agreement with the host library to set up and maintain purchasing procedures, and also to support the municipalities with information relating to the minority languages. Mandates and roles have now been changed in certain respects and language responsibility abolished. There is also no follow-up on how Sörmland County Council and the municipal libraries have maintained their respective responsibilities.

⁴⁶ International Library: Central media supply plan for multilingual media, 2014

⁴⁷ Updated on the International Library website with current information: <http://www.interbib.se/default.aspx?id=67560>

⁴⁸ International Library: Central media supply plan for multilingual media, 2014

⁴⁹ Swedish Library Association: För det demokratiska samhällets utveckling 2015 [*For the development of the democratic society, 2015*], p. 25

The current status

Public libraries in Sörmland want Sörmland County Library to inspire, to support the libraries' monitoring of the outside world, to create conditions for the libraries' collaboration with each other and with other actors, and to promote the development of knowledge and the sharing of experience. The libraries also believe that Sörmland County Library can play a role in developing models and methods, as well as providing guidelines and quick guides.



Figure 3 What do public libraries in Sörmland want Sörmland County Library to contribute?

According to both public libraries and Sörmland County Library, the multilingual perspective needs to pervade and be visible in all activities, yet in practice this is not what is happening. Shortages of time, knowledge and resources are cited as reasons. Most people believe that if it were possible (e.g. sufficient staff resources), it would be a good thing for someone to be responsible for multilingual matters, although that must not in itself be interpreted as meaning that it is not everyone's responsibility. At present the perception is that there is no collaboration in the county when it comes to multilingual library services. There is, however, scope and a need for greater collaboration and demand for identifying what kind of competence development is needed. Others do not feel that Sörmland County Library has been particularly visible in the multilingual library area, and it also states itself that this has not been prioritised. Sörmland County Council's multilingual work has so far consisted of supplementary media supplies, transport costs between libraries in the county and occasional activities within competence projects and collaborations. In 2015, most of the activities carried out within the three-county "Share & Learn" partnership were on the theme of integration..⁵⁰

Language composition

"The world is disappearing, doesn't know what's happening and is in its own bubble here."⁵¹

Several libraries feel that it is difficult to find time to identify their local community in a systematic way. Rapid changes and changes in the longer term with regard to language composition in a municipality can be difficult to keep up with. It is also felt to be rather difficult to keep up to date about language in

⁵⁰ "Share & Learn" is a collaboration between Sörmland, Västmanland and Örebro County, and during 2015 there were study days, a study trip and a residential course for managers, all with a focus on the multilingual library and diversity. The competence project "KompoBib" (completed in March 2013) offered a few study days on the subject of integration. The project "Tell, play, read" highlighted how preschools could make use of the multilingual competence of children, and information material about the project was available for parents in many languages. The "Book formula" project in 2015 had a study day at which one of the lectures focused on multilingualism. Together with other county and regional libraries, as well as the International Library, a brochure was produced in 2015 about language and libraries for small children.

⁵¹ From the interview material.

relation to age, education and other aspects, as well as what the actual needs are. Some libraries have a good idea of which languages are spoken in the municipality, while others primarily keep track of which languages are borrowed. One common feature of the planning of services is that all libraries base it largely on the languages that are in demand in the library. Apart from library visitors, important channels are preschools and schools, SFI, mother tongue teachers, associations, language cafes or similar activities, the public employment service and specific functions in the municipality. It appears important that there should be more collaboration with associations and other actors, and that services should be developed together with target groups.

“There can be sporadic demand for any language at all.”⁵²

Language composition varies somewhat between the municipalities. Apart from Swedish and English, the relatively major languages at libraries in all municipalities are Arabic, Finnish, Tigrinya and Somali. Many of the libraries mention Persian, Polish, Romani, Russian and Thai. Languages mentioned as being common by individual municipalities are Kurdish, Amharic, Lithuanian, Estonian and Albanian. Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese are languages where some libraries believe that demand has fallen significantly.

Reflections

By mapping out the local community, actors are defined and it is possible to gain an overview of demographics and living conditions in a municipality or part of a municipality. Each library knows its local community and the people there best, and by producing an inventory of them the library can create the most relevant services for that particular local community.⁵³ Sörmland County Library can support this by conducting detailed analyses of the language composition in the county and assuming responsibility for predicting trends, which is also important for being able to define strategically important priorities at a regional level.

Local development work is affected by factors such as geographical location, associations, politics and the economy, as well as visions and competence in the organisation. Regional library services should investigate how to stimulate the library as a multilingual area based on the libraries' different conditions. Demographic changes can change both expectations and needs, but a systematic inventory exercise can contribute to making it easier to manage changes that occur, for example as a consequence of migration. Regular background data based on the prioritised target groups and detailed summaries ought to be one way of quality-assuring the development of libraries, as well as providing a tool for following up on how library plans are structured and used.

The languages being borrowed from the library represent an important starting point for libraries' operational development, but it is also important that the linguistic composition as a whole is represented in every way possible in the library. Language is centrally important for an intercultural perspective and requires an approach that both includes and appreciates the diversity of language.⁵⁴ It is not enough to know which languages there are and which languages are being borrowed, the library needs to use multilingualism actively and consciously, and to find out how the services relate to multilingualism and contribute to emphasising the benefit of being multilingual.⁵⁵ This can also be linked to questions of recruitment and budget, as well as promoting reading, media supplies and activities. The same is naturally also true for regional library services.

⁵² From the interview material.

⁵³ Bengtsson 2012

⁵⁴ Rosales 2015

⁵⁵ Summary of DN's series of articles “Ett land, flera språk” [“One country, many languages”] at the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language website.

The library as a place for encounters and learning

“The most important aspect of work on multilingualism is to make use of the fact that the library is a natural meeting place.”⁵⁶

The library is seen as an important meeting place, and there is high demand for space in the library. People of all ages need places to spend time, to meet in and to study in. Some libraries are limited by their small, inaccessible or poorly utilised premises. How media in other languages are positioned varies depending on the conditions, but also as a result of active choices. Many libraries have or want to place books in languages other than Swedish in the centre of the library area. Some libraries feel it is important that books in languages other than Swedish for children and young people are close to the same kind of books for children and young people in Swedish. Some libraries have noticed positive differences in connection with changes in the library space, for example by having a teach-yourself-Swedish shelf or by having a more central location for literature in languages other than Swedish. Greater clarity in the library area is felt to have made things easier for both visitors and staff.

Libraries also emphasise the importance of having clear signs and information in the library area, ideally multilingual when it is considered relevant. Some have used or have thought of using the folders, templates and blocks in other languages that are available on the International Library's website. IB is a resource that libraries would be happy to make more visible in libraries. One library would like to have a multilingual computer with relevant databases and translation programs in connection with media in languages other than Swedish. There is a need to develop multilingual libraries, both physically and digitally.

“Storytelling in other languages in parallel with Swedish. More in line with what we want, so that it's not a separate session.”⁵⁷

The libraries emphasise encounters. Language cafes, study support sessions and similar activities are valuable. Many new arrivals and people with a mother tongue other than Swedish come to language cafes and study support sessions, which at many libraries are volunteer-based activities. There is also interest in initiatives that link together different areas and/or people across language borders, such as the Internet and language practice. At Katrineholm Library there is computer guidance in Arabic that is run on a non-profit basis by an association, and in Gnesta the library organises book club meetings.

Many libraries are already working with non-profit organisations, associations and study associations. In this work, libraries are seeing that it can be difficult to engage volunteers, but also to strike a balance in how libraries can work inclusively and achieve quality-assurance in such a context. At the same time, it is important for libraries to invite both collaboration and offer space, so that it becomes natural for associations and groups to use the library.

It is emphasised that libraries are important for people who are seeking asylum and awaiting a decision. In recent years there has been an increase in many areas in the number of library visitors who are people who have applied for asylum. Access to computers and the Internet, support for learning Swedish and a place to spend time are important. Libraries are extremely interested in how other libraries in the county are working with newly-arrived adults, children and young people, as well as how the needs that arise are satisfied.

Libraries also offer important support to people studying Swedish at SFI or as a second language. Collaboration with SFI works differently in the municipalities, and many libraries think that collaboration can be difficult. In some places it is well established. In Trosa, for example, the library has worked together with SFI to set up both a reading circle in easy-to-read Swedish and a language cafe.

⁵⁶ From the interview material.

⁵⁷ From the interview material.

Libraries often offer guided tours, but there is rarely any more extended collaboration. The conditions affecting collaboration with SFI may depend on whether the actor is municipal or private sector, and the proximity to each other's organisations. One library also emphasises that it is important to look at how libraries can work with people on language development when they are not part of an educational context.

Reflections

A study was conducted in 2015 on behalf of Stockholm Regional Library into awareness and use of libraries by people seeking asylum. The report confirms that people seeking asylum are very likely to visit libraries regularly. The picture that emerges with regard to the use of computers and the Internet, language development, encounters with other visitors and staff, as well as assistance in understanding information, corresponds with what libraries in Sörmland described in the interviews. The study produced ideas about how libraries can develop their services in relation to needs, including more societal information in more languages, greater opportunities for language development and conversations with other visitors and staff, and opportunities to express themselves about their own living conditions. Language development, activities involving cultural encounters, welcoming signals in the library environment, multilingual activities such as language cafes and an allocation of resources and inventory of initiatives, projects and services are relevant development areas for libraries.

Libraries provide important support in language development for both children and adults. But there is potential to enhance the role of libraries as a place for language development, regardless of language. This is also linked to educational competence, i.e. making learning possible and actively adopting work methods to develop language and knowledge. It is also about creating spatial opportunities for such activities. Initiatives relating to library space should take as their starting point making sure that those target groups that are a priority in law are also made visible in the space.

The term *translanguaging* is increasingly being used in the world of school education. This is about using multilingualism in a conscious way and allowing everyone to use all their languages as a resource in their learning. It means that learning a new language starts with it being integrated into an existing linguistic repertoire. Multilingualism becomes a norm, as the starting point is that all of an individual's languages are parts of the same whole.⁵⁸ In just the same way that concepts of translanguaging can add a lot to conversations about teaching for multilingual pupils, it would also be useful with regard to public libraries in spatial perspectives, activities and library development. This is also a way for libraries to enhance all of a person's languages. There is a strong focus on learning Swedish, and there is at the same time a strong single-language norm that needs to be broken. Libraries already see that parallel-language books are important and that there is a desire to offer services and activities across languages. Knowledge of learning and multilingualism in a public library context needs to be investigated and the educational competence for this needs to be strengthened.

Linguistic and cultural competence in a library perspective

"It is important in general to see yourself and other people's reactions – to be bold enough to reveal your own explanations and truths – to be able to really meet people."⁵⁹

Libraries believe that there is a need for language skills, greater diversity and sufficient cultural competence. According to the libraries, this means that there is a need for, among other things, more detailed knowledge of cultures, religion, languages and countries, as well as perspectives on what shapes each individual's values and how we deal with differences. This can be partly summarised as a

⁵⁸ About translanguaging at the National Centre for Swedish as a Second Language website

⁵⁹ From the interview material.

question of who the visitor is and what library workers know and assume about the languages and experiences that find expression at the library. In this respect it is considered that Sörmland County Library can support the development of knowledge with regard to, for example, language and culture, as well as making a contribution to reinforcing and visualising the state of the general level of multilingual competence in the county.

A major difference is discernible in services at libraries with multilingual library workers, the effects of which can include strengthening relations. Library workers also need to have cultural competence that is sufficient to be able to treat each individual on the basis of their situation and needs. All libraries work on an ongoing basis with the way they treat people. One library believes that conversations about treating customers often take place with very little input from outside. Katrineholm Library once tried out a drama workshop about culture clashes in practice, and everyone had to share their migration story.

“We don’t have sufficient knowledge about how we should work and how to treat people who are newly-arrived. The same is also true of contexts involving illiteracy in adult groups or in contexts where Swedish is the first language learned. At the moment we progress by trial and error. How do we work with newly-arrived children and young people in the library?”⁶⁰

One thing that is requested is further education about reaching and being able to capture the preferences of people who are new to Sweden or who speak languages other than Swedish and English. Many libraries solve practical communication problems that can arise with the aid of body language, digital translation services or other library visitors. It is also common to use English or for the visitor to be accompanied by another person who can translate. One difficulty can be explaining lending rules, and libraries would like to offer lending rules in as many languages as possible and relevant. Some libraries have lending rules in languages including Arabic, Somali and Finnish. Libraries also perceive a difficulty when it comes to quality-assuring information material in other languages. Another aspect that is highlighted is that the good treatment of visitors also requires facts about the media stock and any digital services.

Some libraries feel that culture clashes need to be reduced and that there is a need for greater understanding of others. One library states that racism and prejudices are common at the library and need to be handled by library workers. Sörmland County Library does not look further into issues of racism, but does give some consideration to the discrimination aspect.

Reflections

The shortage of language competences is essentially a matter of recruitment and of what is valued. Libraries need to hire people with language skills, knowledge of language and intercultural issues. There is also a need for continuous competence development and inspiration sessions for all library workers, to contribute to increased knowledge of languages, countries, religions and literature from all over the world. These should be of an intercultural nature, and also aim to ensure that those who participate express themselves and their experiences. This means that each individual develops an ability to be able to reflect and adopt a critical approach to their own cultural expressions and how these affect the way they do their job, for example when encountering other people.

In just the same way as other public sector services, libraries can reproduce racism, prejudices and problematical assumptions. To use different strategies to actively challenge structures in society that form the basis of discrimination is a major undertaking that is incumbent on all public life in Sweden,

⁶⁰ From the interview material.

from employees within the public sector”⁶¹ This is taken from Expo’s knowledge overview, which is based on minority Swedes who are particularly subjected to discrimination and hate crime. It is in particular people who are visually identified as breaking a norm in society, for example the whiteness norm, who are subjected to stereotypical assumptions. It is also evident that it is difficult to belong to a religious minority in Sweden. The Swedish Act on the Prohibition of Discrimination forbids discrimination in connection with gender, cross-gender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other faith, functional impairment, sexual orientation or age.⁶² It is a human right to decide for oneself to be defined as belonging to, for example, a certain linguistic, ethnic, religious or cultural group, but it is also a right not to be assigned such an identity.⁶³

In addition to investigating and challenging how the organisation, work methods and priorities contribute to maintaining discriminatory, unequal and racist structures, public libraries must also deal with different discourses in treatment of visitors. Local and regional library services need to enhance their intercultural competence in order to be able to manage differences and combat discrimination. Sörmland County Library needs to adopt intercultural perspectives as a tool and integrate this into practical work. One aspect of this is to visualise the discourse on multilingualism, cultures and people within which the organisation works. For Sörmland County Library, this is also about imagery, design and the dissemination of information being done in an inclusive way. Language reproduces norms, and each individual must therefore ask themselves and each other which norms the organisation wishes to reproduce orally and in text, and to question which norms are being conveyed.

Sörmland County Library is expected to contribute monitoring of the outside world and has a mandate to work together with the National Library of Sweden and the municipalities to follow up on the structure and use of library plans. This should make use of critical analyses of oral and written communication based on plain language recommendations and norm criticism. This requires that such knowledge exists and is developed in Sörmland County Library’s organisation. A critical text analysis highlights the balance of power in society. The plain language perspective makes texts understandable, but the use of language should also display an understanding of democracy, i.e. an understanding of how racism, for example, can find expression in the use of language and the consequences of the image of reality we choose to reproduce. Adopting a norm-critical approach to make it possible for people who are not part of the majority community also to be seen, and taking care not to write discriminatory texts.⁶⁴ By not reproducing majority norms in library plans, and following up on this in a norm-critical way is one way of enacting the Swedish Library Act.

A less discriminatory society must be the discourse that guides regional library services. The notion of a less discriminatory society should then also be applied to the competence development measures and other initiatives carried out by Sörmland County Library. One way is to develop templates for more inclusive communication or in connection with events.

Another avenue that can be identified as being in need of greater educational competence relates to language development and multilingualism in a public library context. Here too there is reason to highlight how digital resources can be used as support for communication and language. There may be reason to go into greater detail in mapping out partnerships with SFI and other adult education providers, intercultural teaching in public libraries or the educational function of libraries in relation to, for example, new arrivals and people seeking asylum. One way for regional library services to deal with this is to investigate forms of collaboration with, for example, Mälardalen University, which in Sörmland has its main campus in Eskilstuna and a smaller campus in Nyköping. This can link together

⁶¹ Expo Foundation: Stängda dörrar [*Closed doors*], p. 7.

⁶² SFS 2008:567. Swedish Act on the Prohibition of Discrimination

⁶³ This is set out in the strategic goals for Sörmland County Council’s integration strategy.

⁶⁴ Ehrenberg-Sundin, & Sundin 2015, pp 258-259, 268

research and practical library activities at a regional level. Research circles are an example of a method in which researchers and participants from the workplace meet in a mutual exchange concerning a problem of interest to the participants. Mälardalen University has organised research circles in areas such as human rights in public administration, treatment and reception of refugees..⁶⁵

Media collaboration in Sörmland

“We all have limited resources, what happens when everyone has read the books in their language at their local library? Can the books circulate between libraries, and it is possible to arrange for purchasing to be shared between the municipalities?”⁶⁶

At present, Sörmland County Library coordinates a shared e-book portal (Eskilstuna is not part of this), a joint search function, stocks of books in languages other than Swedish and a transport solution in the county. The media stock, which is co-funded by Sörmland County Library through an agreement with Eskilstuna Library,⁶⁷ is used in greatly varying degrees by libraries in the county. Apart from Eskilstuna, no library can easily report what part of the media budget is spent on purchases in languages other than Swedish. At one library, the librarians in charge of children’s books had allocated a percentage of the media budget at their own initiative. Many libraries have carried out one-off initiatives using money that was left over from other projects or using extra funds they had applied for. For some libraries, the possibility of purchases using subsidies from the Swedish Arts Council has been a great help in enabling them to buy children’s and young people’s literature in languages other than Swedish.

Demand for media to practise and learn Swedish such as easy-to-read, language courses, grammar books and dictionaries, as well as books with parallel texts and functional literature such as driving licence books in languages other than Swedish, are in high demand and libraries have their own media stocks. For other literature in languages other than Swedish and English, some libraries build up their own media stocks in one or more languages, while other libraries have focused on all the languages that are perceived as being significant in the municipality. Almost all libraries work actively on the stock of children’s books in the biggest languages. There are also existing media stocks that are outdated in languages for which libraries believe that demand has fallen significantly.

	Children 2014	Children 2015	Adult 2014	Adult 2015
<i>Vingåker</i>	83	121	295	333
<i>Oxelösund</i>	-	12	105	243
<i>Trosa</i>	107	36	11	16
<i>Strängnäs</i>	32	31	-	-
<i>Nyköping</i>	45	-	-	-
Sörmland total	296	200	563	601

Figure 4. Number of books ordered as stock from Sörmland County Library broken down by municipality.

A certain increase has been seen in lending between libraries in Sörmland. Sörmland County Library has no statistics on individual loans or remote loans of books in other languages within the county.

⁶⁵ About research circles at the Mälardalen University website

⁶⁶ From the interview material

⁶⁷ Eskilstuna Library purchases books in languages other than Swedish under an agreement with Sörmland County Library. In 2015, Eskilstuna Library was given SEK 42,000 for the purchase of books in languages other than Swedish. In addition to this, Sörmland County Library pays one per cent of the media budget for the purchase of literature (in 2015 this was SEK 39,000 kronor), for a number of hours for a caretaker per week and SEK 25,000 for cataloguing, purchasing and organising books.

There were, however, four municipalities in the county who ordered stocks from Sörmland County Library in 2015. Vingåker Library is the one that orders the most stocks. Most stocks ordered last year were in Arabic, Russian and Thai for adults, while for children the languages were Russian and Persian. Several languages were only ordered on the odd occasion. Orders for stock issued from Sörmland County Library can sometimes be difficult to manage in a qualitative way because they are so unspecific.

In the case of languages that are less widely spoken or for which it is difficult to purchase media, IB is used to be able to meet these needs as well. The most significant languages in terms of orders for stock from IB in 2015 to Sörmland County were Hebrew and Dutch for children and books in Persian, Thai, Tigrinya and Urdu for adults. Some stocks were also ordered for children in Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Hungarian and Tigrinya. With regard to individual loans, the top languages for children were Arabic, Persian and Macedonian, and for adults Arabic, Persian and Polish. Books were ordered in several languages in which books had not been ordered from IB during the last two years, including Bulgarian and Albanian for children.⁶⁸ Some libraries have very few items in stock and supplement this mostly with individual loans and inter-library loans from IB. Some libraries have essentially no stocks from IB or Sörmland County Library. Some libraries have relied almost entirely on the facility to order stocks from IB and sometimes Sörmland County Library. One library felt that it was difficult to know how they should prioritise their own purchases when the conditions surrounding who should supplement what are perceived to be vague.

“Visitors are happy when there is an opportunity to read newspapers in their own language.”⁶⁹

Many libraries are interested in a joint focus on and see a need for a database of newspapers in many languages. Libraries with positive experiences of such a database believe that its location in the library space and active marketing are very significant for its use. Many libraries have a relatively limited range of newspapers and magazines in languages other than Swedish. Selection and quality are perceived to be challenges with regard to newspapers and magazines in languages other than Swedish.

Media supplies in languages other than Swedish are made difficult by the inadequate publishing of literature, the fact that it is time-consuming and that there are insufficient financial resources, as well as insufficient knowledge of literature in different languages. It will be difficult to select and buy books if knowledge of the specific language does not exist at the library. All libraries also see similar difficulties such as finding good purchasing channels, keeping track of the publication of literature and maintaining an updated, relevant stock over time. One major challenge is having both good and sufficient material. On the children's side, for example, demand for Somali exceeds what is available. There is perceived to be not very much literature for young people in many languages.

Libraries believe that they need more help from each other when it comes to media in languages other than Swedish. This can be done, for example, by sharing the knowledge of language or literature that exists within the county. Many libraries state that the supplementary media supply is one good way to utilise shared resources. Some libraries express a very clear interest in the greater sharing of media in languages other than Swedish and English by such means as sharing purchases, circulation or language responsibility. It is assumed that this will make it possible to make better use of resources in the county, which will be particularly valuable for languages spoken by only a few in a specific municipality.

⁶⁸ Statistics from the International Library: Loans per language per county, 2013-2015.

⁶⁹ From the interview material.

There is a recurring feeling that if Sörmland County Library does not provide support in enhancing the range of media in languages other than Swedish, this will have a negative impact on residents in Sörmland. Sörmland County Library believes that there is a need among public libraries for regional library services to be part of the solution for media supplies in languages other than Swedish, and there is also a regional desire to work together with libraries to update the model with regard to media in languages other than Swedish. The County Library views its role as that of coordinator, and this requires a shared mindset. There should be a focus on collaboration, everyone's access to media and support with those difficulties that exist within the area. One approach is to gain an insight into what kinds of central initiatives might be part of the solution with regard to acquisitions and maintaining an updated media stock over time.

Eskilstuna states that they are self-sufficient with regard to media in languages other than Swedish and the library has good access to literature in languages other than Swedish, but believes that the smaller municipalities may need supplementary media supplies. Sörmland County Library has limited insight into the other libraries' multilingual stocks, and expresses a need to stop guessing and assuming, in order to clarify their view of the specific work and challenges of libraries in Sörmland. There is at present no coordination of or shared approach to multilingual stocks.

“The International Library has held good study days about literature and traditions, written languages and backgrounds of importance.”⁷⁰

Some libraries believe that IB can offer support with knowledge of literature and help with purchasing, but this has not been used to any great extent. Many libraries would also like to make better use of IB and are positive about the IB website, but find that ultimately there is not the time. Information meetings with actors such as IB and further education in information searches with a focus on IB's catalogue are requested. Libraries have picked up tips on places to purchase and literature at study days organised by IB. Apart from IB, there were often mentions of BTJ's international editorial service and other libraries, for example Eskilstuna and Stockholm. Some libraries stated that they turn for help to school libraries and/or mother tongue teachers, SFI or other adult education providers.

Libraries express a desire that Sörmland County Library should offer support with regard to sources of and information about language publications and purchasing channels, literature monitoring and in quality-assuring media in languages other than Swedish. Another recurring theme is a desire for help with joint knowledge of media stocks, developing the area of knowledge, which includes both assessments of media and how libraries should maintain updated stocks over time. The latter not least in less-used languages or languages that are temporary or less common in a municipality. This is a matter of how libraries should plan to build up a multilingual stock, develop strategies to be time-efficient and use limited financial resources in the best way, and also to secure quality. One library describes help being needed with purchasing channels, as this is time-consuming, changing and difficult.

Reflections

Only some of the libraries use the collection at Eskilstuna Library, which has been co-financed by regional funds, to supplement their services. Based on how both Sörmland County Library and the International Library are used, it is evident that in the county there is to some degree also a lack of consensus on how supplementary media supplies are meant to work. Libraries also express the same kinds of difficulties with regard to media planning of media in languages other than Swedish. There is a need to coordinate media and/or resources in languages other than Swedish. The structure of the supplementary media supplies therefore needs to be renegotiated, responsibility at all levels needs to

⁷⁰ From the interview material.

be clarified and the existing media supply plan needs to be revised. In the partnerships that exist in other counties and regions, the county's stock of multilingual media is viewed as a shared resource for all libraries included. This is a desirable goal from a regional library perspective. It is also important that regardless of what kinds of partnerships the libraries in Sörmland agree on with regard to media, it must be clearly formulated what is expected at the municipal, regional and national level, and that there is systematic follow-up on these obligations.

Sörmland County Library is responsible for visualising the benefits of collaboration, but collaboration in order that everyone shall be given access to the whole country's library resources is also emphasised in the Swedish Library Act. IB's report on multilingual work in upper secondary school libraries states specifically that "different forms of collaboration and coordination of resources are undoubtedly an effective way of overcoming the different kinds of obstacles mentioned in order to create a multilingual stock".⁷¹ In the first instance, Sörmland County Library therefore needs to make it possible for a dialogue to be conducted between the libraries about possible solutions. There is a need for joint, in-depth studies and analyses of consequences of possible models with regard to collaboration on media in general and media in other languages in particular. Working together, the county's libraries can adopt a new approach to purchasing, selection and stocks. Media collaboration makes it possible for all residents of Sörmland to have easy access to media in their own languages and it can be envisaged that overall knowledge of, for example, selection and purchasing will increase.

Competence development plans and different kinds of development issues should also be included within the framework of media collaboration. From a regional perspective, media collaboration must be based on the premise that it simultaneously stimulates the development of libraries' services. According to IB, the Swedish Library Act, demographic changes and the disappearance of the facility for stock loans at a regional level has resulted in libraries themselves buying more literature in other languages.⁷² Sörmland County Library's initiatives should therefore be based on also stimulating the opportunities for libraries to keep their own stocks. The starting point is equal access to literature in languages other than Swedish, greater collaboration between libraries in the county and encouraging all public libraries to have a reasonable, relevant basic offering of media in languages other than Swedish. It is reasonable to assume that libraries can create their own basic stocks in the biggest, most widely available languages, such as Arabic.

Financial investments in media made by regional library services should always be based on the prioritised target groups and be followed up. The transport solution between the libraries should also continue to be paid for by the regional library service. To be able to plan media collaboration in more detail, there is also reason to take a closer look at flows of inter-library loans and stock loans in the county, and to analyse conditions such as finances and time requirements.

It is also evident in another inventory performed by IB for regional library services that a sustainable infrastructure to enable the more effective use of the shared media stocks of public libraries is needed in Sörmland. The aim of supplementary media supplies is to offer the county equal access to media and information. Almost half of the existing 20 counties/regions in the country have shared web portals. The purpose of a shared stock is that all of a region's inhabitants should have the same access. According to the inventory exercise performed by the Swedish Library Association of strategic media work, it is also clear that the more collaboration is developed, the more questions are received about, for example, the content of the stock and titles. Another consequence is that library workers may need to challenge their own values and work methods. This is expected to benefit residents.⁷³ It

⁷¹ Goobar 2015, p. 7.

⁷² Söderman 2015

⁷³ Söderlind & Elf 2014

may, however, be conceivable that there are different solutions for the extent to which the media stock shall be shared.

Some of the trends that can be seen for media strategy work in libraries are fluid stocks, user-based purchases and the need for new media strategies relating to regional media collaborations. Libraries' purchases and selections are controlled to a large extent by users, in the first instance on the basis of preference, need and demand. The way that user control is understood and finds expression varies. To be able to make the media stock accessible, there is a need for good educational competence and knowledge of the offering.⁷⁴ It is evident from other studies conducted into media collaboration and media in languages other than Swedish that purchases in other languages are usually demand-based without any link to the population structure. Libraries sometimes state that media in some languages are not provided on an ongoing basis because of a lack of demand, even though these languages are spoken in the municipality. The question is what is cause and effect: "To acquire, make accessible and market books in different languages can stimulate curiosity, demand and borrowing."⁷⁵

Sörmland County Library is responsible for ensuring that all libraries have sufficient knowledge of what is required at present, and to ensure in collaboration with IB and other actors that there is continuous competence development in the area of media strategy work that includes a multilingual perspective. IB is underused by the libraries in Sörmland, and Sörmland County Library is an important channel for IB to reach out to the libraries. Sörmland County Library therefore needs to work at strengthening the dialogue between public libraries and IB, and to better highlight the opportunities that exist.

It is evident from IB's national inventory exercises that there is also a clear need for help and guidance with regard to literature and purchases. IB has multilingual library workers who can offer more detailed advice on literature in their languages, and work is under way to develop catalogue records so that they contain more detail in the form of keywords and descriptions of contents. IB's study of the support needs of public libraries also stated that it is important to prioritise digital resources and electronic media. Sörmland County Library should also research and coordinate digital avenues to boost multilingual resources.

Sign language and accessible media in languages other than Swedish

"There's no demand for talking books in languages other than Swedish."⁷⁶

Apart from services based on easy-to-read literature, not a great deal is being done at libraries in Sörmland at the intersection between accessible media and multilingualism. Nor is sign language an area where libraries are working directly. When it comes to accessible media in languages other than Swedish, libraries respond to the best of their ability whenever a need arises. No library undertakes specific initiatives or works actively with people who speak languages other than Swedish and also have a reading impairment. There is some demand for talking books in English, primarily among young people. Knowledge of the range of talking books in languages other than Swedish varies between the libraries, but above all between individuals. One of the reasons is that there has not been any demand, and libraries have therefore not obtained any information. Two libraries do at least have knowledge of and use Celia.

Some believe that both needs and demand will change in due course as the older population becomes more multilingual. Some libraries also believe that it is difficult to work actively with talking books in other languages as it is difficult to decide whether a person with a different mother tongue needs it because of a reading impairment and not because of the language. This is true regardless of whether

⁷⁴ Söderlind & Elf 2014

⁷⁵ Goobar 2014, p. 6

⁷⁶ From the interview material.

a person needs talking books in a language other than Swedish or a person is in the process of learning Swedish. There has also been the issue of time and priorities in libraries. There is at the same time a distinct perception that if the demand exists, the library will respond to the best of its ability for that person.

One library feels that demand has perhaps not been very high because the target group is not aware of the opportunities. At one library there was knowledge from an earlier competence development initiative that the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media is now working with multilingual media. This also made the library worker in question aware that reading problems among people with a mother tongue other than Swedish is not at all unusual.

There is variation in the amount of sign language literature in libraries and how they work with this. If libraries do have a range, it consists primarily of sign language media for children. Libraries also state that they primarily have "TAKK"⁷⁷ books, which consist of images and characters that support each other in order to tell fairytales. In this context too it is stated that there is not very much demand for sign language. Some libraries have or think they have a sign language dictionary. Printed books transferred to sign language are in the form of films.

Reflections

One Swede in five was either born abroad or born to two parents who were born abroad, and six per cent of the population are believed to have a reading impairment. In its multilingual strategy, MTM states that the proportion of people who need talking books in languages other than Swedish will increase, and furthermore that there is a significant, ageing population that will need accessible media in their mother tongue.⁷⁸ Public libraries need in some way to work actively with multilingualism and reading impairments in order to implement the Swedish Library Act and to be able to provide accessible library services. There are knowledge gaps and there is also a need to develop educational strategies describing how libraries can work with accessible media in languages other than Swedish. One difficulty, for example, is to be able to decide whether a reading difficulty is due to an actual reading impairment or whether the person has not learned enough of the new language.⁷⁹

The stock of talking books in other languages is also limited. At present there are talking books in about 60 languages, the biggest being English and Finnish. It is important to monitor and enhance libraries' awareness of the range and opportunities available. It is reasonable for Sörmland County Library to develop its collaboration with MTM to boost competence development in this area. There is also scope to disseminate information about multilingualism and reading impairments to a greater extent, both in the libraries' own communication channels and in networks and meetings where Sörmland County Library is active at a regional level. To promote a dialogue about multilingualism and reading impairments at libraries, Sörmland County Library can also strive to ensure that there is a multilingual perspective in all contexts that mention accessibility in general and accessible media in particular.

With regard to sign language literature in a public library context, there needs to be further analysis of what the needs are, what kind of responsibility libraries have and the possible role of libraries for sign language. Libraries also need greater knowledge of sign language and multilingualism.

⁷⁷ TAKK is a Swedish acronym for "characters as an alternative and supplementary communication". Swedish sign language is a visual language that also exists in tactile form. See, for example, Cramér-Wolrath 2015, SPSM: Bra att veta om teckenspråk 2014 [*Worth knowing about sign language 2014*]

⁷⁸ Swedish Agency for Accessible Media: Multilingual strategy 2015-2017

⁷⁹ Gustafsson Chen 2012

National minority languages and libraries

“I usually go up to Finnish-speaking borrowers and ask directly. That creates an impact.”⁸⁰

All libraries express the view that national minority languages are a neglected service. The reasons are stated to be that there is low demand, few or no people from the national minority group in the local community and that it is not a financial priority. Finnish is one of the biggest languages in Sörmland. In principle, all libraries have their own media stock in Finnish, and there is above all a relatively high level of borrowing of adult literature in Finnish in the county. All libraries provide media in the national minority languages on request. Some libraries try to keep a certain stock of literature in the other minority languages. Two libraries stated that they buy what is published so that they can offer books if anyone were to ask. Sometimes it can be difficult to satisfy needs because the publishing of literature is not satisfactory, for example there are no books published in the variant of Romani that is spoken in one of the county's municipalities. Programmes and other activities in the national minority languages or associated with them are small and sporadic. In Strängnäs, for example, the library has had storytelling sessions in Swedish with Sami and Roma fairytales. In some place the libraries have collaborated with organisations such as Finnish associations. On the part of Sörmland County Library, work is under way to enable the distribution of a first book for children in Finnish.⁸¹ and there is a sharing of experiences with the South Coast School of Literary Art in Finland.

In the municipalities of Eskilstuna, Trosa and Oxelösund, which are Finnish administrative areas, there is a Finnish-speaking staff resource in the municipality. The library in Oxelösund has been assisted by the Finnish staff resource in tasks such as the translation of information material about the library. In both Eskilstuna and Oxelösund, parts of one library position have been allocated to Finnish-language library services. Libraries have been helped by the Finnish Institute's library when selecting books in Finnish. One difficulty in the libraries' Finnish language services is that there are no Finnish-speaking library workers and that it is perceived to be difficult to recruit Finnish-speaking library staff.

The libraries in Eskilstuna, Oxelösund and Trosa believe that work with national minority languages and Finnish in particular are areas for development, for example when it comes to programme activities. It is primarily in these three municipalities that it appears that the libraries themselves need to take proactive measures in this area. At present there are storytelling sessions available in Finnish in Eskilstuna, and Trosa has had children's performances in Finnish. It has sometimes been a problem that not many Finnish-speaking children attended. It is often the older generation that is engaged, while the current generation of parents do not know the language.

Sörmland County Library believes that more knowledge is needed when it comes to national minorities and minority languages, and that regional library services must also be able to explain why public libraries are also responsible for the Sami language, even though there are few Sami-speaking people living in that particular location. It is important for Sörmland County Library to continue attending the county council's consultation body on national minorities in order to be able to conduct a dialogue with representatives of the target groups. Two avenues described are that Finnish can be the language that is actively prioritised in a first step, and that it should be possible to extend a Finnish-Swedish perspective in connection with the ongoing collaboration with the South Coast School of Literary Art in Finland.

Reflections

⁸⁰ From the interview material.

⁸¹ *The Toddler's Book* supplemented *The Children's Book* as a book gift in 2013 – both to increase the inclination to borrow the book and to offer perhaps a more useful book with more diversity in pictures and representation and multilingual features. The Children's Book is distributed to new-born babies.

The local context, such as the population base, affects how well a library can justify its purchases of media in languages spoken by few people in the municipality. In a way, the engagement is clearer in those municipalities that are Finnish administrative areas. This can be related to the fact that the framework for initiatives is clearer, the target group more visible and possibly that it is accompanied by a financial contribution. Based on the regional mandate, it is important to support libraries in creating relevant substance for their own local context. This is true not least of all because the minority languages and their survival are of central importance for all of the five national minorities. The starting point for such a prioritisation at the regional level is also that all libraries have a responsibility for being involved in revitalising the minority languages. Sörmland County Library should be able to assume an initial overall responsibility for this.

The past has left us with a situation in which national minority languages are under threat. Libraries should strive to reinforce people's cultural identity in society and contribute to making sure that history does not repeat itself, i.e. the fact that national minorities are still being discriminated against and marginalised today indicates that the majority community and societal institutions have a responsibility to combat this. It is therefore not a matter of the odd sign, an inter-library book loan or a programme – even though this is valuable for the individual and for the local context – but of making all these elements part of a bigger plan that deals with implementing legislation, cultural heritage and the library as an arena for democracy and multilingualism. There is every reason to reflect in different constellations on the role of libraries for the national minorities and minority languages on the basis of ambitions, approaches and the tangible development of methods.

Regional library services need to focus on expanding their own and the public libraries' knowledge of and responsibility for the national minorities. This will then enable them to work consciously and actively in a long-term perspective to enhance the national minorities' languages, cultures and position in society. In a study conducted by Stockholm Regional Library into national minorities and libraries, it is confirmed that it is precisely knowledge and understanding of the national minorities and minority languages that are needed. This is so that libraries can engage in consultation with those who identify themselves as national minorities to offer relevant library services, and to be able to contribute to increasing understanding and knowledge of the national minorities in the majority community. The study confirms that libraries should contribute to the revitalisation of the languages and cultures, especially for children and young people. It is important at all libraries to highlight and raise awareness of the national minorities.

Libraries have important roles to play when it comes to revitalising languages and contributing to the distribution of information to the effect that multilingualism is an asset. Libraries thus need to conduct a dialogue about library development with regard to the national minorities, but first of all libraries must understand their responsibility for the national minority languages. More innovative methods are needed to enhance reading and writing skills in minority languages and for language transfer between generations. The government committee on literature reported that the national minority languages are poorly represented. This, combined with the fact that demand is perceived to be low (with the exception of Finnish), also indicates the importance of revitalisation.

Promoting reading and writing in many languages

“It's difficult to have book-talks in Arabic when there is no language competence.”⁸²

Promoting reading based on multilingual literature takes place on a limited scale at libraries. This takes place most systematically in collaboration with preschool and mother tongue teachers. Teachers themselves often ask for books in many languages, and they are encouraged by the library. One

⁸² From the interview material.

example is the “Bästis och bundis med Bu och Bä” project in Katrineholm, in which children’s librarians and mother tongue teachers have worked together on narratives in several languages. Many libraries provide multilingual book selection bags for either preschools or the general public to borrow.

Storytelling sessions in languages other than Swedish have been organised at several libraries. Eskilstuna Library has held storytelling sessions in languages such as Arabic and Somali. The library in Nyköping has regular family gatherings in different languages, and in the late autumn they organised bilingual storytelling sessions at a hostel for asylum-seekers in the municipality. Libraries that do not have storytelling sessions in languages other than Swedish state that they would like to be able to offer this. Two libraries suggested mobile storytelling sessions or sharing them in different languages, either between neighbouring municipalities or in the county as a whole. Many libraries would also like to be able to offer bilingual storytelling sessions or similar activities in order to create encounters across language barriers.

There is a sense that people who are newly arrived in Sweden focus to a large extent on learning Swedish, and that interest in reading in their mother tongue emerges once the person has become more established in the community. There is at the same time a demand for the opportunity to be able to read in both Swedish and another language. Many libraries also organise a relatively large amount of activities to promote reading for adults who are in the process of learning Swedish. It is stated that, among other things, easy-to-read book circles and language cafes work well.

“The library must be the natural place for writing, including writing from other cultures.”⁸³

Several libraries work in parallel on reading and writing, in particular to stimulate children and young people. Sörmland County Library has also been the driving force in such initiatives, for example Bookworms and the sharing of experiences with the South Coast School of Literary Art in Finland. There are also some programme activities at libraries to highlight oral narratives and the opportunity to share one’s personal experiences. Eskilstuna Municipality will be receiving a writer-in-exile in spring 2016.

The publication of literature in languages other than Swedish does not always match demand in terms of volume or in relation to factors such as age and genre. This is true of fiction for adults, books for young people and factual literature such as driving licence books in certain languages as well as parallel language books and literature for learning Swedish. Both older children and adults in the process of learning Swedish are referred to material for younger children or to easy-to-read books that can be perceived as too childish by the target group. Two libraries state that they would be happy to receive more of the Swedish Arts Council’s funded literature books in languages other than Swedish, but ideally a broader selection as at present these risk becoming shelf-warmers. Some of the libraries would like Sörmland County Library to apply pressure when it comes to the publication of literature and translations that promote access to, for example, parallel-language books. Library workers would also like more knowledge of literature in different languages, and the conditions for literature, language and reading habits, as well as inspiration for literature from all over the world. Sörmland County Library also states that the multilingual perspective needs to pervade development work in the promotion of reading and literature. Sörmland County Library will be producing an inventory of literature in 2015-2016 from a regional perspective.

Reflections

The promotion of reading in other languages requires linguistic competence, which requires multilingual staff and collaboration. If there is a lack of diversity among library workers, if certain

⁸³ From the interview material.

narratives risk not being told and if languages are underrepresented in the publication of literature today, and if the library is at the same time a place for many languages, narratives and people. Then it can be imagined that there are strong possibilities that the authors, translators and library workers of today and tomorrow may also be found among library visitors.

When it comes to promoting reading and literature in languages other than Swedish, the focus is on the range of literature. Conversations about reading experiences and the promotion of reading are less present. What is being done is often based on a children's or a "learning Swedish" perspective. According to the Swedish Arts Council, the promotion of reading means, among other things, "improving accessibility to a diversity of literature in different languages and in different formats for readers of all ages".⁸⁴ In future, the Swedish Arts Council may also have to prioritise applications for government subsidies that relate to the promotion of reading for adults or in several languages. Sörmland County Library should prioritise initiatives that aim to investigate ways and develop methods of promoting reading in several languages, as well as providing literature that offers diversity and perspectives. Multilingual literature programmes and narrative traditions should be promoted in literary initiatives that are coordinated at a regional level.

The study conducted for Stockholm Regional Library in autumn 2015 into how people seeking asylum use libraries reported that it is important for this target group to be able to express the situation in their own lives. Some of the suggestions and ideas that it may be considered relevant for continued work are narratives and enjoyment of reading as a way into the Swedish language, visits by authors featuring multilingual authors and the opportunity to share accounts of people's lives.⁸⁵

"Europe is changing, the signs are there to see at the borders of Sweden and Denmark, and people are unsettled and feeling ill at ease. I also see that there are many stories to tell about this and about life for the many immigrants who are caught between worlds. These narratives are important, and hopefully writers from both sides will write about them. I know – because I will be one of them."⁸⁶ The words of writer-in-exile Jude Dibia about conditions faced while writing in exile. In view of the fact that extra resources are available in 2016 for initiatives in the area of literature as an art form, Sörmland County Library can work to set up a regional zone for writers-in-exile or work with writers-in-exile within the framework of possible initiatives for literary events. It can work at a regional level to ensure that more municipalities than Eskilstuna offer sanctuary, develop partnerships, coordinate contacts, document, inform and support outward-looking services.⁸⁷

There is therefore every reason to look more closely at the area of literature as an art form based on a multilingual perspective. In *Den osynliga litteraturskatten* [*The invisible literary treasure*], Ola Larsmo writes: "Most people on this planet belong to more than one language, actually have more than one background. It would be a betrayal if literature did not understand how to deal with this fact."⁸⁸ It is strategically important that Sörmland County Library focuses on measures that in both the long term and the short term stimulate writing in several languages and encounters between texts in different languages. Not least in relation to the needs for literature that exist. Libraries are both able and willing to play a role in stimulating multilingual literature production.

The future range of literature can be influenced by stimulating the writing of children and young people, but also by making use of adults' writing and reading in several languages. Sörmland County Library can support networks or initiate other measures that make it possible for authors and writers

⁸⁴ Swedish Arts Council: Action plan for promoting reading 2014

⁸⁵ Miklo 2015

⁸⁶ Dibia 2016

⁸⁷ About being a Swedish sanctuary, on the Swedish Arts Council website

⁸⁸ Larsmo 2010, p. 14

who were born abroad to take their place on the Swedish cultural stage. In this context it is important to be aware of relevant operational partners and to make use of experiences from projects that have worked with diversity in the culture sector, for example the Sörmland project *Konsten att delta* [*The art of taking part*]. By creating shared spaces and exchanges where authors and other people who write can collaborate across language barriers, more voices can be heard, more narratives can be told and more parallel-language books can be produced.

Concluding part

There are both needs and opportunities to expand multilingual library services in Sörmland. The challenges that the libraries have identified are, on the one hand, personnel, linguistic and financial resources and, on the other hand, those also relating to values, attitudes and knowledge levels. Shared opportunities, difficulties and solutions need to be understood in relation to the size and geographical location of the municipalities, as well as how the libraries' work methods and priorities affect the conditions and engagement. Compositions of working groups, the design of the library space and partnerships within the municipality are other factors that have an effect. Sörmland County Library can build bridges between different local library contexts, but in the measures taken it also needs to analyse which municipalities and which Sörmland residents will benefit, and what this means. An active Sörmland County Library strives to ensure that the conditions exist to enable differences in quality between public libraries to be evened out.

Many local, regional and national actors are working on themes similar to the libraries. There are benefits to be had if Sörmland County Library sharpens its sights and latches on to existing effective concepts. New ideas and approaches can emerge in environments where more people meet and new constellations are encountered.

Apart from Finnish, not very much is being done with regard to national minority languages in Sweden, and there is a relatively narrow interpretation of what responsibilities the libraries actually have. There is an absence of more considered reflections based on the fact that people with a mother tongue other than Swedish may need accessible media in their mother tongue. Young people are perhaps the group that is least visible in multilingual public library services. There is also a tendency to assume that people with mother tongues other than Swedish are a homogeneous group. This is problematized by individual library workers rather than reflected upon in the organisation as a whole.

It is important that prioritised groups are not set against one another. It is very likely that there are other services that are not based on the target groups prioritised in law, in which case priorities can instead be changed. It is also important that the target groups prioritised in law are clearly prioritised in the planning and implementation of library services, as well as being highlighted in budgets and library plans.

Libraries want to be inspired and to collaborate more with each other when it comes to multilingual library services. It is important that they work together to explore how media collaboration can take place in order to meet the needs of those who live and work in Sörmland, wherever they are in the county. Sörmland County Library needs to structure competence development that both inspires and enhances libraries in the long term in their work with literature in different languages, books from all over the world and media in different formats.

Sörmland County Library needs to initiate a process of change that is value-driven and visionary. Both short-term and long-term initiatives are needed in order to work on the basis of sustainability and also to ensure that words are put into action. Provisional solutions may be needed in certain areas, for example with regard to media collaboration. Sörmland County Library also needs to be better at mobilising in connection with shared social situations. One such situation is the reception of asylum-seekers in the autumn, in connection with which regional library services in Sörmland need to have an insight into what responsibility and what kind of initiatives the organisation could have provided by way of support. How Sörmland County Library can support the work of public libraries in order to respond to the children, young people and adults who are asylum-seekers should also be an important and relevant priority henceforth.

As an actor that influences society, regional libraries can strive to achieve social change. It can be claimed that such responsibility has the support of the Swedish Library Act, international library manifestos and regional visions. For an actor with the power to make a difference, there is an obligation to reinforce democracy. Implementation requires that everyone in the organisation has an understanding of how different interests affect the conditions of libraries and people, as well as how change can actually be promoted. This means that regional library services need to have a shared understanding of guiding values, norm-critical approaches and intercultural perspectives as tools. In practice, Sörmland County Library needs to stimulate and encourage multilingualism, and to link such library development to the implementation of the Swedish Library Act.

Development areas 2016-2018

The development areas are based on that the Sörmland County Library prioritise initiatives that enable public libraries to create a contemporary, intercultural library service in which diversities of language, encounters and narratives can take place. Libraries have the power to visualise many narratives and create contexts for encounters between people, epochs and cultures.

- Follow up on library plans on the basis of a multilingual and norm-critical perspective, and use library plans as tools for an intercultural library development.
- Initiate a media collaboration process that have the intercultural approach, and that contains strategies that promote a multilingual media stock that is interesting and relevant for Sörmland.
Draw up a collaboration agreement with clear allocation of responsibility and follow-up.
- Explore the library as a space for learning and strive to achieve educational competence development in public libraries based on a perspective of multilingualism.
- Promote the development of knowledge that increases awareness of multilingualism and accessibility in a library perspective.
- Promote the development of knowledge that creates awareness of the libraries' responsibilities for national minority languages.
- Investigate and stimulate the way public libraries can work with writers-in-exile and Sörmland-based multilingual authors, and stimulate multilingual writing and encounters between texts in different languages.
- Prioritise initiatives that can in due course stimulate the creation of multilingual literature.
- Enhance the promotion of reading that includes multilingualism and a diversity of narratives.
- Map out, enhance the dialogue and increase collaboration with national library resources and other relevant actors at a regional and national level.
- Explore what kinds of methods can be used to develop and quality-assure library services based on a multilingual perspective.
- Critically analyse the use of language in oral and written communication, highlight the norms that are reproduced within the organisation and strive to recognise use of language and communication that can contribute to suppression and exclusion.
- Highlight public libraries as a strategic factor on social development and for a vibrant region in which multilingualism is a strength.

Afterword

I still carry the words of Warsan Shire with me, and the emotions are the same. There are the closed borders, the despair of people and the fragile glimmers of hope.

Two years ago, this report was created. It was intended to serve as a tool for Sörmland County Library, and the starting point was to find a way of reflecting on and with the local library contexts based on a regional perspective. The report was above all an attempt to find a sustainable way, to visualise our own position and to contribute base data to stimulate collaboration, library development and quality. This is how we at Sörmland County Library have been using it since then. As a way to keep going in the right direction. To understand. To explain. To address. To develop.

When I wrote this report, I had just moved into the world of the regional library after having worked for several years in public libraries in the municipalities of Katrineholm and Botkyrka in Sweden. For me, this was a shift in perspective that probably had a significant impact on my work process. Yet at the same time, I would imagine that the core would have been the same, even if I had created the report this autumn. It involved the notion of finding descriptions that result in addressing problems and enhancing the library as a multilingual arena. Not only as a place in a multilingual society, but as an actor for a society in which multilingualism is a strength.

The initiatives, activities and ideas on which my colleagues and I have been working since then need to be viewed in tandem with this report. We are still asking ourselves whose narratives are to be given space and on whose terms. We know that we still have a lot to do.

Victoria Lagerkvist

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Everyone shall have access to important library services, regardless of geographic domicile, regardless of format and regardless of language. Libraries also have the power to visualise many narratives and create encounters between people, epochs and cultures. In autumn 2015, Sörmland County Library investigated how regional library services in Sörmland can contribute to enhancing public libraries as multilingual arenas.

Through statistics, poetry and interviews with library workers in Sörmland, the capacity and significance of public libraries are reflected in a society characterised by multilingualism. Structural problems and challenges with regard to linguistic, educational and intercultural competence are also visualised. Whose narratives and whose languages are to be allowed to take their place in libraries, and on what terms?



Sörmland County Library

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landstingetsormland.se/lansbiblioteket