



National Library of Sweden

Foreign acquisitions in a national library - challenges and choices

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Disposition

- The mission of the National Library of Sweden
- Foreign acquisitions at the NLS
- The mandate and its interpretation
- Characteristics
- Some changes since 1990
- Strengths and weaknesses
- 2010 - At a crossroad

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The mission of the National Library of Sweden

- National library (1661-)
- National archive of recorded sound and moving images (2009-)
- Research library, mainly within the humanities
- Coordinating authority for all research libraries in Sweden
- Coordinating authority for the public library sector (coming soon...)
- Electronic legal deposits (coming soon...)

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Mandate in the field of foreign literature

The National Library shall...

- collect, store, describe, and provide access to overseas publications with a Swedish connection
- collect, store, describe, and provide access to a representative collection of foreign literature

(extract from the National Library's government mandate (SFS 2008:1421); my translation)

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A comparison...

"The acquisition of new literature - books, journals and electronic resources - are aimed to support and promote the research and teaching carried out at Stockholm University."

(extract from the acquisitions policy at Stockholm University Library; my translation)

To understand the current situation...

"The mission of the library is to, like a Swedish national library, collect, store, and provide access to partly the Swedish literature of the greatest possible completeness, partly the major productions of foreign countries' scientific and literary activities"

(extract from the National Library's government mandate (SFS 1910:154); my translation)

Interpretation of the mandate

Foreign scholarly literature, primarily in the humanities and with emphasis on Europe, intended to promote and support scholarly studies in the Swedish collection and in other core collections in the National Library.

Subject areas

- History in the broad sense
- History of literature
- History of art
- Biography
- Classical archeology
- Philosophy
- (Linguistics)
- Media Research (2009-)

Some changes since 1990...

- The explosive development of electronic media
- Heavily reduced exchange programs
- A lot of new university college libraries

Some characteristics in comparison with university libraries

- Still a large number of complete monograph series
- Continued acquisition of literature in several languages
- Continued dominance of printed materials

Some strengths...

- More stable than university libraries – "the long lines"
- National library AND research library
- Higher education and research = the main target group
- Advisory board of scholars (2007-)
- Research Department (2009-)

Some weaknesses

- Who are our users?
- Which national role?
- Which regional role?
- Reduced language comprehension
- What is today a (representative) collection?

Some reflexions in the last couple of years...

- Continuity in a comprehensive manner, not at a publication level
- Increased consideration to the use of the literature
- Separate line - or consider other libraries' profiles?
- What about electronic media...?
- Narrower but sharper?
- Can we manage with just English?...

2010 – at a crossroad

- Competition for budget resources
- What is the main task of foreign acquisitions at a national library?
- Buying what the users are asking for?
- A national complement to other libraries?
- What is today a representative collection?