

Memory Entanglements and Collection Development in a Transnational Media Landscape

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Abstract:

Defining a national domain is the crux of the matter of every National Library's mission. The National Library of Sweden collects, preserves, registers, and guarantees access to all materials published and distributed in Sweden, printed, audio-visual and since 2012, even electronic. Furthermore the National Library of Sweden collects Suecana, foreign publications which possess historical significance to Sweden and even Swedish literature in translation.

Collection strategies have to be updated and developed to fit the times: Digitalization and media convergence presuppose a new concept and new definition of the national domain. How should the National Library work with selection and collection strategies in a way that to make sure that the Suecana-collection and the Swedish collection are truly representative and relevant?

This paper describes difficulties inherent to defining a national domain in today's media landscape and presents several examples of how the National Library of Sweden has tried to manage these challenges.

Keywords: National libraries, collection development, international collaboration, digitalization, Sweden

Introduction

In most countries, the main task of national libraries is to collect and provide access to the national publishing output¹. The nature of this task has to be overhauled from time to time. Digitalization, internationalization and a rapidly changing media landscape are three phenomena which affect collection and selection criteria.

¹ In this paper national publishing output means not only text-based material but also audio-visual publications such as radio, film, music, games etc. in digital and non-digital format.

The National Library of Sweden is obliged by law to collect digital and non-digital media published in Sweden.² Moreover, the library's mandate also prescribes collecting Swedish literature in translation and other foreign works concerning Sweden published abroad. The library harvests even domain strings which can be regarded as Swedish. Sweden has a very extensive legal deposit system which covers many media formats and publication types. Globalization and digitalization do, however, affect the National Library's collection development. The perception of national domain is under transition. In the analog world the legal deposit law not only ordained, but also guaranteed that the national publishing output as a whole and the legal deposit material corresponding to the national domain reached the collections of national institutions.³ But nowadays, there is a gap between the inflow of legal deposit material and the notion of the national domain. On the one hand, the legal deposit material does not cover the national publishing output anymore; on the other hand, the national publishing output does not cover the national domain anymore.

The digital paradox and the notion of the national domain

Changing user needs, the rise of new technologies, new ways of publishing, the growing importance of interoperability and the cross-border nature of publications, especially on the web, all attest to the need of updating collection strategies and constantly re-configuring the notion of national domain.

Digital technology has widened our window to the world and provides us with information and knowledge an easy click away. At the same time, the premises to collect and give access to digital material in this transnational media landscape are under transition and we have to reassess what and how we collect. A digital paradox has arisen - exemption is inextricably bound to restriction.⁴ Traditional definitions, as geographical national borders are no longer applicable in a digital world - publications turn to be internationally. Copyright concerns, in turn, establish new borders. Paradoxically, the inflow of analog material has not subsided as digital inflow grows. Material which is only published on a social media platform run the risk to disappear since it doesn't correspond to existing paradigms. And this happens not because of technical possibilities, but due to legal frameworks.

² Sweden has one of the oldest legal deposit laws in the world and it first came into force in 1661. Since 2012 the National Library of Sweden also collects e-material by legal deposit law. Legal Deposits, <http://www.kb.se/english/services/deposits/>; Accessed June 26, 2017.
SFS 2008:1421 https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-20081421-med-instruktion-for-kungl_sfs-2008-1421; Accessed June 26, 2017.
SFS 2008:1420 https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-20081420-om-pliktexemplar-av_sfs-2008-1420; Accessed June 26, 2017.
SFS 2012:866 https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-2012866-om-pliktexemplar-av_sfs-2012-866; Accessed June 26, 2017.
SFS 1993:1392 https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-19931392-om-pliktexemplar-av-dokument_sfs-1993-1392; Accessed June 26, 2017.
SFS 2012:492 https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-2012492-om-pliktexemplar-av-elektroniskt_sfs-2012-492. Accessed June 26, 2017.

³ Applied to Sweden: the national domain is the Swedish domain which means publications not only the Swedish production of publications but also material which affects or is connected to Sweden.

⁴ Ilshammar, Lars (2009). *Behovet av en minnespolitik – arkiven och den digitala paradoxen* i Olovsson, Eva (red.), *Service på nätet: rapport från en konferens om myndigheters webbplatser*. Stockholm: Språkrådet, s. 114-131. <http://lup.lub.lu.se/search/ws/files/3153785/3427874>. Accessed June 22, 2017.

Collection development today is ever less dependent on cultural, technical, economic factors as the import of legal premises increases.⁵ The legal deposit law and copyright law outline the contours of collection development and its policies. There is a need for evaluating the existing legal deposit legislation and its interpretation with reference to collecting Swedish material and Suecana material. The ministry of education commissioned the National Library of Sweden to undertake a study of the legal deposit legislation in the light of the rapidly changing media landscape in order to determine if it have to be updated.

Redefining Collection Strategies

The National Library of Sweden has conducted a set of studies to examine these challenges and to point to new collection strategies. Underlying these studies is the question how the library should set up its collection policy (including legal deposit) to secure that the collected material is representative regarding media type and content/subject.

The first study investigates the purpose of the Swedish National Bibliography, which is based on a selection of legal deposit material, and also focuses on the evaluation of national bibliographic data. The second study examines the mandate to collect, preserve and provide access to material published and/or broadcasted abroad about Sweden and Swedish conditions (Suecana). The third study takes a look at the current legislation of the two legal deposit laws and the possibilities of updating the traditions of collecting legal deposit material.

The results of these studies should, first, referentially inform collection strategies, secondly, serve as an aid in adapting them to today's media landscape, and thirdly, increase the collected materials' representability.⁶

Conclusion

One preliminary result of all three studies is the increased awareness of the need for ever more international cooperation. A key to dealing with one's own national domain involves expanding horizons.

The transnationality of today's publication world postulates more cross-border approaches between libraries and underscores the necessity of a world bibliography or world library in the true sense of the word. This becomes even more evident in a world where metadata to an increasing degree is replacing the demand of actual copies. Furthermore, collecting digital material cannot be implemented without long-term preservation from an international and supra-national perspective.

The definition of a national domain and the formulation of selection criteria for collecting depend not only on technical, legal and geographical issues, but also on the ideological framework. There is an urgent need to review and update the purpose of a national library in general.

⁵ Cadavid, Jhonny Antonio Pabón, Copyright of Legal Deposit and Web Archiving in the National Library of Singapore, Alexandria, Vol 25, Issue 1-2, pp.1-19, [10.7227/ALX.0017](https://doi.org/10.7227/ALX.0017). Accessed June 22, 2017.

⁶ The studies will be finished in October 2017. The next step will be to make a synthesis of the three studies and to formulate an action plan for further work.

Applied to Sweden: Should the National Library's collections mirror as closely possible the totality of the Swedish publishing output or should the collections embrace a wider discourse and provide a taste of a national heritage in all its various shapes and forms? And how should Suecana be imbued with the new meaning so that it more effectively can serve as a meaningful complement to Swedish legal deposit? Legal deposit will continue to be the central tool for collecting the national publishing output, but the relevance of Suecana and other complementary material increase in a transnational media landscape. At the same time, it is important to cut the cake right and avoid duplication of work between national libraries and national domain.

The more UK-material is collected by the British Library, the better it is for the National Library of Sweden. And the more Swedish material is collected by Sweden, the better it is for the UK.

The transnational media landscape requires well-defined national domains to avoid duplication of work and international cooperation now is a necessary prerequisite for defining a national domain. Furthermore, it is crucial to expand collaborative horizons around the material which already has been collected.

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