

Workers and Libraries – A Question of Class in Public Library Development in Sweden

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Abstract

For what purposes are public libraries established? Who do the founders intend to reach with the activities of the libraries? How does the question of goals of public library work develop over time? These are important questions to analyse but first we have to demarcate. The paper treats public libraries and their forerunners in Sweden. The focus is on class and libraries and especially workers and libraries. Three phases are studied. The first is the founding phase of the modern public libraries in Sweden. What was the opinion about the existing popular libraries at that time and how was the discussion about developing the libraries to modern public libraries related to the question of workers and libraries? The second phase is the establishing of libraries within the labour movement during mainly the first half of the 20th century. What can explain the swift development of these workers' libraries and why did they finally get absorbed into the library organisations of the municipalities? The third phase is the last quarter of the 20th century. This period started with a rapid expansion of outreach activities. One of them was books at places of work.

The intention of the service was to reach workers, who used the public library in only a limited way. What happened with that service later on? This is analysed in relation to the development in society and especially within the public library sector.

Introduction

This is a paper about workers and libraries in Sweden. Three different phases in that relation during the last century are to be studied.

The first is the period during which the ideas of the modern public library after the Anglo - American model were introduced. This was in the early 20th century when these ideas started to influence actors in the question on as well central as local level. What made the society ripe for these ideas at that point of time? How did they influence the question on who was to be served by the libraries? How was this related to the view on workers and educational and cultural work for them from the upper classes in society?

The second is the phase during which the workers' movement established their own libraries. This had its beginning in the very late 19th century and continued until the middle of the 20th. Which were the motives behind the fact that the workers wanted to have their own libraries? How is this development related to societal factors in Sweden?

Sweden got its first library decree with state grants to popular and public libraries in 1905. In 1912 this was developed with higher grants to libraries managed by the local municipality or by study-circle organisations. At the same time we got two library consultants at National Board of Education. They organised a library school from 1926. In 1930 we got a new much ameliorated library decree with considerably higher state grants to municipal and study-circle libraries. At the same time we got our first county libraries. The development of library service was gradual in Sweden but from the 1970-ies we had modern public libraries with educated staff in all our a little less than 300 municipalities. The ambition of the libraries increased with an aim to reach the whole population. It was seen as a problem that the public library was more for the middle class than for the workers. New kinds of services at places at work were established to better reach the workers with books and other medias. This is the start of the third phase which continues into the very early 21th century. The question here is why this service was established and how it developed during the 30 years that has followed up until today.

The concepts popular and public library

In the traditional society formal education was reserved for the religious and secular elite. Education of the masses could be seen as something that might threaten the stability of society. From the early modern period on the question of education for the people started to be a theme of discussion within the leading circles in the Western societies. One such means of education is libraries mainly intended for the general public.

The concept public library has had different meanings over the years. Rome is said to have had at least 28 public libraries at the end of the 4th century. Libraries founded by city authorities from the 15th century on in countries like England, France and Germany could also be called public libraries (Sessa, pp. 267-269). The word public implied that the libraries were open for those, who had the ability to use them. For long, however, only a small minority of the population could read and was learned enough to take advantage thereof.

Henceforth, the term public library is used to mean well-developed libraries for the whole population, consequently neither libraries simply for scholars and professionals or libraries solely intended for the “the lower classes, or masses in society”. Public libraries in this meaning originated in the New England States in the USA and in England in the middle of the 19th century supported by library laws. For example the Nordic countries, these kinds of libraries were formed from the early 20th century on after inspiration from the public library development in England and the USA. This later development is designated the Anglo-American public library model.

By popular libraries we mean libraries for the “lower classes, or masses in society”. In Sweden the first libraries of this kind were parish libraries organised by the Church of Sweden from the early 19th century on. They were as a rule very small and ill-equipped and were opened for only a few hours a week. From the middle of the 19th century popular libraries were founded in Sweden also by liberal philanthropists and some decades later by the revivalist, temperance and workers' movements (Torstensson, 1997, p. 221).

The rise and development of the popular libraries in Sweden

In Sweden, for a long time, most people lived on the countryside, mainly working in farming, forestry, and domestic industry. Although we had many ironworks at an early date, industrialization in the modern sense did not start here until the late 19th century. This does not mean, however, that our society did not change during the earlier parts of the 19th

century. We then experienced heavy population growth and differentiation within agriculture, which became increasingly directed towards export.

The Church of Sweden early played a vital role in popular education. In the Swedish Church Act of 1686 the clergy became responsible for the literacy of the congregation (Johansson, pp. 13-19). As the only educated person in the parish the pastor also had influence within the areas of farming and medicine. The first parish libraries were, as written above, founded around the year 1800 and more than half of our parishes had libraries in the 1860-ies (Söderberg, p.17). The libraries worked in close connection with the elementary school, often with the teacher as librarian. We got our first *folkskolestadga* (elementary-education statute) in 1842. Very little modern fiction or social and political literature was bought to the parish libraries and they were often out of date in the late 19th century.

Sweden passed through a rapid transformation during the last three decades of the 19th century. The towns grew, and social problems like drunkenness became more visible in society. In many towns commissions were appointed to present proposals on how "the habit of too much drinking could be obstructed". Arranging reading cottages for workers was often among the suggestions. In the reading cottages the workers could read newspapers and books, write letters and have some food and non-alcoholic beverages. The first reading cottages, called reading rooms, were founded in Gothenburg in 1882 and many such institutions were established around the year 1900 in other bigger towns. In Gothenburg the reading rooms were for long run by the local official liquor company and financed through the company's surplus profits. The founding of the reading cottages/rooms shows how underdeveloped the popular libraries were in Sweden in the late 19th and very early 20th century; in several bigger towns the authorities were more prepared to spend public means on simple reading cottages/rooms for the workers than on more developed libraries intended for the whole population (Torstensson, 1990, p. 19).

In the very early 20th century Sweden had the same lending figures as contemporary France, that is, one yearly loan per ten inhabitants. The figures for Great Britain at that time - 2,5 loans per inhabitant - were only obtained in Sweden in the early 1950-ies (Torstensson, 1993, p. 61). Today we have around 8 loans per inhabitant.

Early promoters of the Anglo-American public library ideas in Sweden

The first Nordic country, in which the Anglo-American public library ideas were put into practice, is Norway. In 1893 Hans Tambs Lyche founded his journal *Kringsjaa* inspired by W. T. Stead's *Review of Reviews*. Tambs Lyche had then just got back from USA. His journal contained many articles about the American public libraries. In 1893 he wrote in an article titled *Offentlige biblioteker (Public libraries)*:

The municipalities found water-works and gas-works, that is very good. But I dare say, that it would be of still greater importance for the well-being of the population, that the municipality found good libraries for free use. If it can not do all of it let us have the library and we will manage without gas and water mains. It is better that every man digs his own well as a spring for his drinking-water, than it would for every man to be dependent on his purse, for which books, which wisdom, which thoughts, which help and inspiration he can get. Just because a man can exist without reading and because of that easily neglects what is important concerning his earthly and spiritual welfare...it is the obligation and mission of det offentlige (the public sphere) to interfere with help and guidance (Tambs Lyche, 1893, p. 761).

However, it was not Tambs Lyche who was to transform the old Deichmanske Bibliothek in Kristiania to a public library after the Anglo-American model. He died in 1898. Instead Haakon Nyhuus, who was just back from library work under William Poole in Chicago, became the one that built up the library in question into the first, and for long, best public library in the Nordic countries. Hans Tambs Lyche was like Boberg too early to influence Sweden. I have not found any references to his library articles in the relevant Swedish journals and books during the years 1893-1898. This I interpret to mean that Sweden was not yet ripe for the Anglo-American public library ideas (Torstensson, 1994b, p.17).

In autumn 1898 Nyhuus started the reorganization of the Deichmanske Bibliothek after Anglo-American patterns. It was very successful and the yearly lending figures rose from 20-25.000 during the years before the refashioning to 177.000 in 1899 and to 450.000 in 1904. Many Swedes were very interested in what was happening in Kristiania during the years 1901-1904. Ten Swedish librarians and members of library boards visited the public library of the city. In 1893 there was also something interesting going on in Denmark concerning the Anglo-American public library ideas. The grammar-school teacher and librarian Andreas Schack Steenberg attracted attention to the ideas in question through the book *Entwicklung und Organisation der Volksbibliotheken* by the Austrian professor Edward Reyer. In Reyers book there is inter alia a part that treats the Boston Public Library, at that time considered to be the best public library in the world (Reyer, pp.41-57).

In 1900 Steenberg published a very well informed book about public libraries titled *Folkebogsamlinger. Deres Historie og Indretning (Popular libraries, their history and organisation)*, a book that was published in a shortened Swedish version two years later (Steenberg 1900 and 1902). The 1900 edition was widely reviewed in Sweden. Steenberg also got the possibility to talk about the public library ideas for Sweden in 1896, 1898 and 1901 (Torstensson, 1994b, pp.15-16). From what is written above about Steenberg and the Deichmanske Bibliothek we can understand that interest in public library ideas was developing in Sweden during the years around 1900. The process of maturing had begun (*ibid.*, p. 17).

The great promoter of the Anglo-American public library ideas in Sweden was Valfrid Palmgren (from 1911 Palmgren Munch-Petersen). As a young supernumerary library assistant at the Royal Library she took great notice of the backward situation of the popular libraries in Stockholm. She got state money to investigate the public libraries in the USA. She went there for some months during the autumn 1907, and she wrote 47 years later about that "I came, I saw and I was defeated". What defeated her were the Anglo-American public library ideas. She was totally captivated by the library spirit. After that she worked hard for the ideas in Sweden for four years. She published her impressions from the journey in 1909 in *Bibliotek och folkuppföstran* (Libraries and the up-bringing of the people). A book that described the public libraries in the USA in zealous fashion. She arranged three library courses and she founded a youth library in Stockholm. She was also given the task by the ministry of education in 1909 to investigate the situation of *folkbiblioteken (popular/public libraries)* and propose new relations between them and the state. This beautiful young lady's incessant, enthusiastic fight for the public library ideas without compromise and occasionally in conflict with an elderly male popular library establishment during this short period have turned her into a mythical person in the Swedish library history.

Her book from 1909 was translated into Danish, Dutch, Finnish and Icelandic. It was distributed at the expense of the ministry of education to many Swedish schools and was

reviewed in several journals by leading personalities in the world of libraries and literature. Palmgren Munch-Petersen wrote many years later "that my book awoke attention that surely was unparalleled for a book of that kind" and "I wrote that to show what a latent interest there was at that time in the library question". She ended by writing "the book was published at what might be called an opportune point of time" (Palmgren Munch-Petersen, 1954, pp. 6-7 and Palmgren, 1909). Now the time was ripe in Sweden for the Anglo-American public library model. We can understand this from the measures taken by the Minister of Education and from the response to her book in the intellectual world.

The question of popular/public libraries in the parliament and the government in the early twentieth century

For long the question of popular libraries was considered to be a private matter or something for the municipality. During the period 1828-1899 several motions were submitted in the Swedish parliament (*riksdagen*) proposing state funding, foremost for our parish libraries. They were all rejected because the question of popular libraries at that time was not considered to be a public matter. That was in accordance with the prevailing state doctrine formulated by the philosopher Christopher Boström, which differentiated sharply between state/public and private matters. According to the doctrine the municipality was included in the private sector and popular library questions were considered to be private matters (Torstensson, 1994b, pp. 13-14).

A change in the state doctrine occurred in the early 20th century. There are different explanations to that change. One is given by the German historian Jörgen Kocha, who suggested that the earlier classical capitalism at that time was replaced by the so called organized capitalism. The organized capitalism meant changed relations between private companies and between these companies and the state. It also meant that the state began to be active within new fields such as social policy and increased its activities within other fields such as education. This change in state doctrine can be explained by the increased competition on the world market, by problems caused by swift internal industrial development, and, by the increased influence of popular movements (*ibid.*, p. 12).

The change in state doctrine also brought development in the popular library question. We got our first library decree in 1905 with small yearly state grants, maximum about 8€ (75 Swedish crowns), to local popular libraries. The Swedish Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was given the task of compiling opinions from different actors within the sector on how such a decree should be formulated. In the Government bill the views concerning the aim of the popular libraries were taken directly from the society. Therein we can read that:

As complete political rights are transferred to ever increasing parts of the people, for the quiet and regular development of the society it will be more and more important, that the latter through knowledge gain political experience and maturity...strengthen their love of the country and are morally raised up and ennobled to counteract temptations for idleness and harmful distractions, among which foremost is pub-life with its typical consequences; drunkenness and immorality, these dangerous enemies to a healthy life within the family and the society at large.

Good and interesting books in folkbiblioteket are the best combatants against the miserable cheap novels that have so many readers among adults and the coming generation and which should beheld responsible when we are looking for the causes of the coarseness and uncivilized behaviour of the youth that is noticeable in so many places (Torstensson, 1996, p.16).

Even though, as we have seen, the Anglo-American public library ideas had been introduced and discussed in Sweden for some years we do not find them in this Government bill. It still dealt with libraries intended mainly for the "lower and broader" parts of the population. Some years later all this had changed. In 1909 Valfrid Palmgren was, as we have seen, given the task to carry out an investigation and present proposals concerning what should be done by *det allmännas sida* (the public sector) to promote *folkbiblioteksrörelsen* (the popular/public library movement). In the investigation Palmgren did not want to speak of *folkbiblioteksväsen* (popular/public library system), instead she spoke of *det allmänna (public) biblioteksväsendet*. In the investigation Palmgren wrote about her vision of future public libraries in Sweden and what should characterize them. She said that:

... the inhabitants of every Swedish municipality should have free access to a well-situated, well-equipped and well-arranged "allmänt offentligt bibliotek"...If ever all the members of a society could gather round an institution, independently of position in society and other kinds of interests, it should be around the library, that without doubt is the most generally applicable institution, that could be thought of (Torstensson, 1996, pp.15-16).

Palmgren's investigation was looked through by five experts of whom she was one. The result of the work of Palmgren et al. was that we got a modified library decree in 1912 with a state authority which provided inspection, library courses, a book purchasing catalogue and subsidies to the study-circle libraries of the popular movements. Now a library could get at the most about 50€ (400 Swedish crowns) in yearly state subsidy.

In 1930 Sweden got a new decree with substantial yearly state subsidies to local libraries, at a maximum about 1100€ (10.000 Swedish crowns), and the same yearly sum of money to county libraries. This decree was very important for the conversion of our popular libraries into public libraries and the first that gave subsidies that were large enough to be important for the larger towns.

The development of workers' libraries in Sweden and some questions it raises

There are, I think, two conditions of special interest to be found in an analysis of Swedish public library development. One of them is all the endeavours since the 1970-ies concerning different kinds of outreach activities (Torstensson, 1993, pp. 61-62). The other has to do with the precursors of the public libraries. They are mainly of three kinds. The first is, as we have seen, the parish libraries run by the Church of Sweden from the early 19th century with their greatest activities in the 1860-ies and an evident decline in the late 19th century. The second is libraries founded and managed by philanthropic liberals. They founded Workers' Societies from the middle of the 19th century and some decades later Workers' Institutes, which both aimed at educating the workers and the artisans. The main task of those associations was lecturing for the "working classes" but they also founded libraries. Let us hear how a philanthropist could consider educational and cultural work for the workers around the year 1900.

Our society is divided, and that mainly after fortune and income, into different groups, and due to that, the fruits of culture are more accessible for the higher compared with the lower groups. Culture is changing swiftly in our days. New guises and new ideas extend quicker than before, often forcing out what is old and passed on by heredity. If all that is new was only in the favour of the higher classes, the difference between them and the lower should increase rapidly, and not only concerning tangible assets, but also in reflecting upon life and society. The people would burst into two halves, with different cultures, who could not understand each other in any sphere. A people, which is too much

divided, especially mentally, are surely doomed. Here adult educational work has an important mission. The treasures of knowledge must become the property of the whole people and the fruits of literature must be accessible to everybody./.../ The state authorities should be interested in the extension of adult educational work as ignorance and brutality are dangerous forces within the people. It is a question of survival for our people and culture (Hildebrand, pp. 18-20).

The third, and that is what is especially interesting with our public library development, is the libraries founded and managed by our three great popular movements; the revivalist, the temperance and the (socialist) labour movement. The most interesting thing is not, I think, that the movements founded libraries with literature within the field of respective movement, but that the libraries within the temperance and labour movement developed into libraries intended for the whole population of respective local community.

Books and libraries were central issues in the educational work within the labour movement from its beginning in the 1880-ies. The popular libraries, mainly parish libraries, were then very small and insignificant. They often lacked the books the workers wanted and needed. This was one of the reasons for the organisations within the labour movement to establish their own libraries. The libraries were initially financed mainly by subscriptions and surplus from entertainment within the movement, from trade unions and social democratic clubs.

Let us see how some intellectuals within the labour movement considered these questions in the late 19th century.

Ignorance of the people means its lack of power. Knowledge is power. Well proletarians! Evidently there is no other help than self-help. What society has neglected You must Yourself try to compensate for until You become masters of society. The education and cultivation of the workers must be done by the workers' organizations (Axel Danielsson, Swedish labour leader in 1899).

Let us compare a medieval serf longing for knowledge and what such a person would say if he had got the opportunity to compare **our** time, when knowledge literally is scattered by the wind and when even the poorest can have his part of it, with **his** time, when there were very few books and when most people anyhow could not read them./.../ He would, I am sure, consider our time as a paradise. He would surely be surprised if he got to know that people with such resources still submitted themselves to 'slavery' due to ignorance... The people ought however, provide themselves with as much enlightenment as is necessary, in order to be able to judge in the circumstances of their own and their nation. Without an enlightenment of that kind, the people will never get rid of more or less self-styled guardians, and that independently of changes in the political system. /.../ We must be an enlightened people if we want to be an independent people (Gabrielsson, pp. 3-8).

Some of the workers' libraries, as those in Helsingborg, Malmö and Stockholm developed into important cultural institutions in the early 20th century. During the first decade of the 20th century, the Stockholm Workers' Library was the greatest popular library in Sweden, together with the privately paid and managed library in Gothenburg called "Göteborgs stads folkbibliotek" or informally "the Dickson library" . The Stockholm Workers' Library was the better managed of the two and had the more comprehensive book collection. In 1906 a Finnish observer wrote that:

The now prevailing development of folkbiblioteken in Sweden does not have anything particularly new to offer in regard to our own circumstances. The conception of the extended import of folkbiblioteken in promoting general and professional education has

on the whole so far not gained hold among the leading circles in Sweden. There as with us, and mostly and if I may say so more than with us, they comprehend the matter thus, that as the elementary school, in spite of high-sounding phrases, is considered to be a school only for the impecunious and not a general common beginning school for all classes of society, for folkbiblioteken there is only ascribed the task to be some kind of recreational establishment for the "people" without any sustaining cultural and educating objects...The most important and up-to-date folkbibliotek in Stockholm is the workers' library...The administration of that library is born out of experiences borrowed from Norway (Sippola, p. 57).

That a workers' library could be the best popular library in Sweden in the early 20th century is, I think, a sign of the backwardness of the Swedish bourgeoisie. Sweden developed very fast from the late 19th century from a society based upon four Estates to one where the labour movement got great influence. The bourgeoisie got strong economically but not ideologically. Contrary to the situation in England and the USA the Swedish bourgeoisie founded very few important cultural institutions meant also for the workers. Gothenburg can be regarded as an exception in this respect. The liberal-philanthropists were mostly petty bourgeoisie without resources for greater undertakings. An investigation in 1917 showed that at that time Sweden had at least 54 workers' libraries. Within the labour movement there were at the same time also 254 study-circle libraries (Hugo, 1917, p. 237).

A new method for pursuing studies began within the Good Templars in Lund in 1902 with Oscar Olsson as the enthusiastic prompter. The point of departure for the new procedure was criticism of the old methods. The previous more school-like courses had led to a lot of problems. Most of the participants had left their courses before they were finished. Olsson found that it was no good putting men and women behind school-desks after a long day of work. They needed something else - something that was important for their lives. What was needed was the joy of knowledge and not school-knowledge. For Olsson books, especially fiction, were central for the study-circles, as the new method for studying was designated. Olsson's idea was that every circle should buy as many books as there were members in it. At the end of every year, the books should be given to the lodge to form a library for all of its members. Olsson thought that the importance for the lodges of good libraries could not be estimated high enough. For him the study-circle was the best, simplest and cheapest means to establish and support up-to-date first-rate libraries all over Sweden. Many municipalities at that time had no popular library (Olsson, pp. 31-60, Torstensson, 1994, pp. 15-16).

In 1911 Olsson expressed the importance of educational and cultural work for the workers as below:

It isn't the intellectually badly off crowd of serfs with their bitter rage, but the self-educated free team of workmen with their fervent indignation that will win the final and concluding battle for the material and intellectual emancipation of the class (Olsson p. 60).

Olsson's procedure for pursuing studies spread to the labour movement after a few years and within it especially to the Social Democratic Youth League and the socialist temperance organization Verdandi. In 1912, the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen) decided that study-circle libraries could be granted state subsidy if they belonged to a national organization with at least 20 000 members within which books were bought yearly for 660€ (6000 Swedish crowns) or more. The price of a book then was around 1-2 SKR. As a result of the parliamentary decision the educational work in the labour movement was organized within ABF (Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund - the Workers' Educational Association) the same year.

By far the greater number of the then existing workers' libraries were transformed into study-circle libraries within ABF during the following decades. Some, often the largest, got considerable grants from its municipality. That is one of the reasons why they could manage without state aid and remain independent outside ABF. They were later merged into the local municipal public library system. The same also happened to the study-circle libraries within ABF. When the number of study-circle libraries was at its peak in 1939, there were about 5500 of them roughly 1500 of which belonged to ABF and most of the rest to the temperance movement (Möhlenbrock, 1993, pp. 39; Torstensson, 1990, p. 21 and 1992, p. 88). Especially between the years 1906-1912 the question of popular education and culture was very central within the labour movement. The young social democratic activists were the most active. In this short period the educational question became a leading matter within the whole movement and a major issue at congresses and in the labour press. As Rickard Sandler, one of the leading labour educationalists had pointed out, the labour movement had let the liberals have the initiative too long; it was necessary for the labour movement to organize its own educational work. It was not so much criticism of the liberal work within the field, but rather reflected the labour movement's insistence on organizational autonomy. The question was not so much "what is wrong with capitalism" but rather "what can we do today". The answer to the last question was political consciousness-raising and educational self-improvement. Young socialist workers entering politics often faced an essentially negative image of themselves, either openly, or as in the case of liberals, sympathetic but condescending. What they needed was respectability. They wanted to show that the workers better lived up to the moral ideals that the upper classes supposedly were the carriers of. The better part of the working youth did not frequent restaurants and brothels like the 'capitalistic youth' but went to public lectures and evening classes, and they were interested in art and literature. Of course they understood that drunken, illiterate and irresponsible workers were nothing to build a labour movement on. If they were to attain more influence in society, they felt that they had to be shown respect as sound participants in the political and social discourse (Berggren, pp. 474-479). The ideals of conduct for the workers presented above have been characterized as "skötsamhet". It can be translated as "conscientiousness" and denotes much more than sobriety and diligence. In the old working-class culture it also signified a consciously controlled life; the control over one's own actions required to change society in an organized way and to develop as a person. Knowledge and education were important parts of the notion of "conscientiousness". Ignorance was an enemy on a par with drunkenness; both reduced the worker to a slave of circumstances (Ambjörnsson, p.4 and p.9). As earlier the bourgeoisie had tried to overcome the nobility, not only with money, but also with cultivation, respectability, thrift and control of instincts, the Social Democratic activists now strove to increase the influence of their class in society by partly the same means.

The new cultural policy, libraries and workers in the late 20th century

The modern public library is in most of the local municipalities in Sweden a child of the decades after the middle of the 20th century. That was a period of fast economic growth that at the same time increased private consumption and the development of the welfare sector.

Important for the public libraries in this development is also the local municipality reforms of the early 1950-ies and 1970-ies that decreased the number of local authorities from around 2500 to 278 in the year 1974. Today there are 290 municipalities, half of them with less than 20 000 inhabitants. The public library went through a period of steady growth between 1950 and 1970. The stock and lending of books multiplied by four during the period, the cost of staff by six and the total costs by seven (Försök med bibliotek, p. 70). Many main libraries and branches got new premises. There was however problems in this development. One of

them was that the public libraries more and more became the library of the middle class. The libraries got professionalized with librarians educated at universities. The workers could have felt more at home at their own libraries, which now at most places had been integrated into the municipality library system. There was also a discussion of the missing three quarters. Even if more and more people used the libraries there were still many that didn't.

The ambitions of the welfare state increased. It was not enough that those who used the public libraries got service. It was a question of democracy that everyone in society could get the necessary knowledge and cultural experiences to take part in the political, social and cultural development. This was the background to a commission, appointed in 1968, which among other questions inquired into how the new cultural policy was to be modelled. One of the central elements in that work was that the cultural policy should promote increased equality in society (Frenander, p. 153). The work resulted in the wording of eight goals for the cultural policy in 1974. The cultural policy should:

- help to protect freedom of speech and to create real conditions necessary for this freedom to be used
- offer people opportunities for creative activity of their own and to promote contact between people,
- combat the negative effects of commercialism in the cultural sector,
- be designed with regard to the experiences and needs of disadvantaged groups,
- make possible an artistic and cultural renewal,
- promote a decentralisation of activities and decision-making functions in the cultural sector,
- guarantee that the cultural heritage of earlier ages is preserved and kept alive; and
- promote an exchange of experiences and ideas in the cultural sector across national borders (Torstensson, 1993, p. 62).

In 1980 a there was appointed a state commission for public libraries. It published its report in 1984. In that we can read that the public library is to

- fight for the book and the reading
- work for free and equal access to information
- develop the outreach activities and engage intermediaries
- pay special attention to children's need of books and reading (Folkbibliotek i Sverige, p. 39)

The cultural goals of 1974 and the lines for action from 1984 both led to an extension of different kinds of outreach activities. One of these, with state grant from 1975, was to build up small libraries at places of work. These state grants came to an end in 1993.

One of the matters the 1968 commission had to treat was to investigate ways in which various cultural and artistic activities could be more widely spread. A number of experiments were carried out under government auspices in the library field, and it was in this way that the modern system of books at factories and other places where people work made its breakthrough. There were many different kinds of motives behind the interest from the state in this. +One was about work environments. This was considered not only a question of healthy risks and safety but also of the negative effects of modern working life on comradeship, the feeling of belonging and enjoyment of work. Places at work should be included in cultural policy. The task of society was to invest in those people who were culturally disadvantaged (Herder, p. 151).

In 1975 22 percent of the municipalities had libraries at places of work and in 1985 this had increased to 43%. (Herder p. 151) In 1989 that had increased to services at 1000 places of work in 170 of the than 284 municipalities (Modig, p. 11). After the elimination of the state grants 1993 there were drastic reductions in the number of libraries. In 2002 there were 464 libraries of this kind in 75 municipalities (Almerud, 2003, p. 2).

The question of workplace libraries has always been a question of party politics. Especially the Social Democrats, LO (the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions) and individual unions emphasized the importance of libraries at places of work (Herder, p. 152). When the state grants were removed in 1993 Sweden had a government with conservative and liberal parties.

During the 1980-ies there were several workplace library projects going on. The results of the projects were as follows:

- The libraries mostly promotes lending and reading of books
- People, who had not earlier used a library so often, started to read again when there were books at the workplace
- Many users rather lent at the workplace library than at the “usual” library (Herder p. 133).

Parallel with the workplace libraries managed by the public libraries a new type of libraries developed from the middle of the 1980-ies with trade unions as driving force. The start was a decision in the Parliament in 1985 about grants to Cultural Activities in Working Life. The trade unions co-operated with organizations that promoted literature and reading and with their help and state grants they founded libraries where people work. From 1992 they worked together with Books for All (En bok för alla). Books for all was founded in 1976 with the aim to produce qualitatively good books, mostly fiction and children’s books, to low prices. It was a part of the cultural goals from 1974. In 2006 Sweden got a government with conservative and liberal parties again, after 12 years of Social Democratic rule. The government have just decided to discontinue grants to Books for All from next year 2008. There have been heavy protests against this decision. Ulla Lindquist, the second vice chairman in LO recently commented that as follows:

The Government manages a policy that increases gaps in society. Those who are not used to read are abandoned to the advantage of commercial undertakings. Reading is and has always been a question of class. A Book for All has persistently and resolutely worked to break these patterns. It is a work of education and cultivation with few counterparts.

In 2003 there were altogether 1100 workplace libraries, of which 400 were under local government management, 400 ran by the trade unions in partnership with Books for All and 300 independent. The independent libraries are mainly financed with means from the company which sometimes buy service from the local public library. The daily activities use to be managed by a so called Book Representative, who is one of the workers appointed with or without participation of the trade union (Almerud, 2004, p. 17).

In 2003 the Swedish Arts Council posed some questions to the Swedish Library Association concerning libraries at places of work. The association means in its answer that public libraries should in their outreach activities give priority to groups which could not reach the library due to age or handicap. It is also important with special media and “talking” computers etc for those who needed such means of assistance. The association is of the opinion that the companies should pay for services such as workplace libraries. If a public library has the

resources and possibilities necessary it is good if it can co-operate with companies and trade unions about this kind of libraries. Through them people can be reached, who have had little contacts with books and reading in advance.

The Swedish Writers' Union has a special group to handle library questions. In 2006 it elaborated a library policy. One of the points in the policy is about workplace libraries, which the union finds very important to promote readings in groups, who read less and less. The group means that the state should support these libraries through grants and that they should be a part of the municipal public library (En policy för folk- och skolbibliotek, p. 5).

Lending of books from the public libraries in Sweden was at its peak in the early 1980-ies with 9,2 loans per inhabitant. In 2006 it was 6,4. The greatest decrease has been in fiction for adults (Folkbibliotek, 2006, p. 15).

The use of libraries has after 1975 continued to be unevenly distributed between people with varying education and positions. In 1993 75% of those with university education used it but only 40% of those with only the 9 years of compulsory schooling (Tjugo års kulturpolitik, p. 285). This increased for those with little education to 45% in 2005. For those with high education the corresponding figure was 76%. Concerning reading the number of low-educated that had read a book during the last year had diminished from 81% 2001 to 70% 2003. The corresponding figures for those with high education was 98% and 96% (Höglund & Wahlström, p. 113).

The difference is however great also between the sexes. 19% of low-educated men, not studying for the moment, had visited a public library during the last 3 months in 2005 compared with 33% for women in the same group. For low-educated studying at the moment the corresponding figures were 45% and 59%. The figures concerning reading a book during the last three months were 45% and 75% for those not in studies compared with 68% and 91% for those studying (Höglund & Wahlström, p. 117).

To promote children's reading is important. It is also important to read loud for children. Children who have experienced this during their childhood have shown to understand information more easily. In 2003 the frequency of reading loud for children was investigated. It was found that during the last month 14% of the low – educated men had read loud for their children compared with 25% for the women in the same group. The figure for those with high education was 34% for men and 54% for women.

The results as above are a sign of the current development in society. People lend fewer books in libraries but at the same time more audiovisual media. Those highly educated still read a lot even if they lend fewer books at the public library. More books are sold now in Sweden than ever before. The problem is the low-educated and especially the men.

The situation sketched above have given the Swedish Arts Council reason to support different activities and projects aiming at developing reading among especially male workers. It could be as well own reading as reading loud for children. These projects are managed by trade unions or adult educational organizations. One of these type of projects is "Read for me dad?", which, as it says, has the intention to promote male reading for especially pre-school children (Andersson & Hjertström, p. 28).

A new kind of workplace libraries had their beginning in 2004. These libraries were managed by trade unions for truck-drivers and people working at restaurants along the highways in

Sweden. They get grants from the Swedish Arts Council. The libraries are placed in the restaurants and their books are meant for truck-drivers and those working at the restaurants. Many of the books are audio-books. Today there are about ten such libraries in Sweden (Andersson & Hjertröm, p. 29). In a master thesis at SSLIS the students, who had interviewed truck-drivers with experience of the libraries, presented interesting results. The drivers now discuss books with colleagues. They appreciated the simple lending routines. They now often listen to books instead of music from the radio when they are driving (Andersson & Hjertröm, p. 49-51).

Analysis

I will now analyse the three phases as defined in the ingress of the paper. The first is about workers and libraries in the process of developing the existing popular libraries into public libraries in the early 20th century.

Interest in the education of workers after the compulsory elementary school was intensified in Sweden in the late 19th century. The worker at that time was often designated a ruffian by the upper classes. The workers threatened them through the social disorder in the cities and towns that was a result of the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. They also threatened them through their trade unions and political clubs. Public libraries could be seen as one of the remedies for this as they regarded "social illness". The old popular libraries and reading cottages were not enough to integrate the workers in the society in era of the organised capitalism that developed at around the turn of the century. A more developed means was needed, a public library organised after the Anglo-American public library model. The author has identified the motives as below in that process:

- Public libraries are needed to certify a calm development in society when suffrage is extended. It was a question of getting an enlightened electorate and preventing "as was said" unscrupulous agitators.
- Public libraries were needed to counteract drinking, depravity, gambling-dens etc. This was economically profitable. What was spent on libraries was saved on diminishing social costs and costs for prisons.
- The "good and healthy" books in the public library could be used to counteract the influence from cheap novels. The opinion was that that kind of literature turned the children to young savages.
- The public library was an enlargement of the compulsory school that could be used in order to obtain a more efficient working life and through that promote the development of the economy.

This was a library in which people from all social classes could meet, something that promoted the integration of the workers and diminished the risk of radical use of the universal suffrage, that came into being in Sweden with the election to the Parliament in 1921.

Let us now look at the establishing of workers libraries in Sweden from the late 19th century on. We start with an analysis of the statements on educational and cultural work for the workers by Hildebrand and Gabriëlsson.

The situation in society of that time is for Hildebrand filled with threats and he looks for means to overcome them. He considers educational and cultural work for the workers to be one such means. His utterance, I mean, clearly shows that he is looking for a new kind of integration, one in which common people could have the possibility of getting knowledge of all the matters of the day, and not for confrontation, as one of the means which could redress

the prevailing political and social unrest. The different classes of society must learn to understand each other and meet in common interests. To understand Hildebrand, we must consider his experiences of the development in the late 19th century Swedish society. He sees a working-class organize itself. He hopes that through studies the workers will get moderate and realize that all classes in society have a common interest in developing the society out of the prevailing conditions instead of overthrowing it. His expectations for the future do not seem to be placed highly. Primarily it is a question of keeping as much as possible of the old order. When he tries to do that, he does it within the Swedish traditions of integration. He is then part of a Swedish way of thinking with long traditions (Liedman, 1984, pp. 400-401).

The experiences frightened Hildebrand but nourished a hope for the future for Gabriëlsson. From the late 1890-ies the Social Democrats began to enter Parliament and local political bodies through co-operation with the Liberals. Through these circumstances the workers got new experiences. They learned that struggle could be rewarded. They saw the changes of society and got expectations of greater influence for their organizations. The expectations mobilized for new struggle and so forth. The setbacks were not so many. There was, however, one serious setback in the lost general strike in 1909 but it was rather soon recovered. It cannot be regarded as something self-evident that so many and important libraries were founded within the labour organizations. That is the case even if we take into consideration the attitudes of leading Social Democratic activists towards knowledge and respectability. If there had been other libraries with the books they needed, they would have been less inclined to found their own libraries. They early meant that libraries should be managed by society. The council of the Social Democratic Party at the party congress in 1908 was of the opinion that "Public library activities are fundamentally a question for the state and the local authorities and the council will urge the members of the party to try to exert influence on the managing of the existing municipal and parish libraries. In that way the libraries in question could develop to meet their needs" (*Förhandlingarna vid.../*, 1908, p. 182). This, I mean, can be understood as an expression of expectations of a democratization of the society that could transform the existing state of the upper classes into a state in which the labour organizations could have a manifest influence. At the same time they had much confidence in what a democratic local community could do.

In the early 20th century the Swedish state authorities started to act in many fields that earlier were considered to be private matters or something belonging to the local communities. This can be regarded as a new kind of integration intended to face the threats and needs in a period of swift changes. Now, from 1905, the state also began to grant money to popular libraries; from 1912 also to study-circle libraries belonging to popular movements. Local authorities simultaneously began to allocate money to workers' and study-circle libraries. This, I think, must surely be seen as an act of integration. The threatened classes gave money to the organizations that threatened them! Why did they do that? They did it, I mean, because they thought that the threat would diminish because of this action! Through money from the state and the local authorities, besides their own contributions, the library activities in the labour movement increased for some decades until the libraries began to be incorporated into the municipal libraries.

Let us now look at the situation concerning public libraries in Sweden in the early 1970-ies. The Swedish economy was flourishing. The ambitions with the welfare state grow quickly. Injustices were to be removed. Public libraries were seen as important in that process. The Parliament in Sweden put up goals for the cultural policy in 1974. One of the goals was about that the activities of the cultural institutions should "be designed with regard to the

experiences and needs of disadvantaged groups". This could be to ameliorate library service to people on institutions, home-bound people, handicapped people, people who needed talking books but also people who for other reasons did not use the ordinary service of the public libraries so very much. This could be workers who used the public libraries less than employees, officials and academics. Through local initiatives and in many municipalities also with the help of state grants workplace libraries were arranged in a great majority of the Swedish municipalities. From 1990 the state and the municipalities showed less interest in this kind of library service. This happened in a period with crisis in public spending and the breakthrough of computerization in libraries. New initiatives were however taken by trade unions and Books for All. In later years the public libraries have lent less books and especially low-educated men read less. This has stimulated projects such as "Read for me dad" and libraries along the highways in Sweden.

Concluding remarks

I mean that there is always an aspect of class in development of libraries and library services. Why are libraries erected? Is it for emancipation or social control? Are there aims to integrate people from different social classes and learn them to co-operate in a common endeavour or through segregation keep them apart. Is there a need for special segments in society like women, teetotaler or workers to found and develop own libraries to fulfil their need for education and culture as a means to increase their influence? Is there a need to compensate underprivileged groups in society with special library service in order to make it possible for them develop and strengthen their position?

These are questions that are treated in the paper in a Swedish context. Around the turn of the century 1900 there was turbulence in society. Means were needed to deal with the very visible political and social problems. The old popular libraries were growing less and less adequate in the swiftly changing society. Something new was needed, a modern public library in which people from all social classes could meet and have also more advanced educational and cultural demands supplied.

Sweden got its first elementary education statute in 1842. In the late 19th century the workers needed as well more education as bread for the soul. The supply of the existing popular libraries was inadequate. They had to solve this through their own organisations. They founded their own libraries in awareness of that this was necessary, if they aimed at attaining respectability and power. What is special with the Swedish case is the considerable proportions these activities got. An explanation for that is the state grants to study-circle libraries from 1913. Sweden was then still not a democratic country. There are many evidences of that persons from the then deciding upper classes meant that there were little danger in supporting workers' libraries. This can be seen as a belief in reformist strategy from as well the workers themselves as from the bourgeois class. Later on, after the democratisation of society, it was natural that the workers' libraries were integrated into the local municipal library systems.

There have been ups and downs in public library development in Sweden as well as in other Western countries since the 1970-ies. In Sweden we built up many different kinds of outreach activities with extension services as well as branches and book mobiles during the period up to around 1990. After that came the crisis of the welfare state. It was not possible to keep all welfare activities through means from taxation. The number of branches, book mobiles and libraries at places of work managed by the municipal library decreased rather dramatically. At the same time main libraries developed through computerisation and sometimes also through

spectacular new buildings. The gaps in reading and library use between groups with high respectively low education widened as the gap between more active women and less do men concerning these questions. This has led trade unions to take initiatives in co-operation with the Swedish Arts Council and Books for All to found as well more traditional libraries at places at work as libraries situated along the highways. Unfortunately, from my point of view, this work will be obstructed when the state grant to Books for All will be withdrawn next year after an initiative from the new Swedish government.

As I have tried to show above can there exist many different kinds of relations between the work of popular and public libraries and the workers and other social classes in society. These relations change over time and also between countries at a certain point of time.

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