

Swedish schools and public libraries in collaboration with cultural heritage institutions and with authors.

Maud Hell

Member of The Swedish Library Ass. (IFLA network), IASL and the e-mail list serve of the European network ENSIL

Writer, ex school and public librarian, Lund, Sweden

E-mail address: maudh04@gmail.com



Copyright © 2013 by **Maud Hell**. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

Abstract:

This article deals with different ways of working with cultural heritage in schools and libraries. School and public libraries can play a vital role for children by focusing more on cultural heritage. The concept of heritage in our time is an open one, reflecting living culture as much as that of the past.

Museums and archives have invested considerable resources in making photos and many other media available on the web - excellent for use in teaching. This paper looks at some of the sources, mostly in Swedish, valuable for this purpose. Regional initiatives have been important for the development of digitalisation.

Collaboration with authors and institutions can also bring cultural heritage into schools and libraries. Some examples of such work is given.

Keywords:

cultural heritage
libraries
museums
education
authors

"The development of information technologies, and in particular the Internet, has created a completely new environment in which the role of traditional information services must be thoroughly revised. The potential of networking, cooperation and digitisation modify substantially the functions of acquiring, storing and disseminating information and knowledge."

From www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-

knowledge/libraries/

The concept of cultural heritage

Children's rights are human rights. UNESCO states that at least 250 million children cannot read and count - even after four years of school. School and public libraries can play a vital role for children also by focus more on cultural heritage. The concept of heritage in our time is an open one, reflecting living culture as much as that of the past.

Teaching cultural heritage is also an academic discipline in Sweden. To give teachers and museum educators the opportunity to improve their knowledge of teaching cultural heritage there is a course at Malmö University. The concept of cultural heritage is also mentioned as important e.g. in school curriculum.

How to use our cultural heritage in education? The History subject deserves to be highlighted. If we know our history, we can better understand our present and maybe also influence our future. This article deals with some efforts to make cultural heritage in a broader sense – both from historical times and from the recent past – more accessible for today's children.

For several decades, attempts have been made to make sources of information on the Internet more useful for learning and information retrieval. Some museums and archives have invested considerable resources in making photos and many other media available on the web in such good quality that they function excellent for use in teaching.

Regional examples of how libraries and museums reach out through digitization

Regional initiatives in Sweden has meant a lot to the development of digitalisation. Barnens bibliotek (The Children's Library) for children up to about 14 is a Swedish national website promoting reading launched in 1996. The website is financed by the Swedish national Council for Cultural Affairs and administrated by Kultur i Väst - The Västra Götaland region cultural administration in western Sweden. Children are in several ways contributing to the site - as writers of book reviews and novels, as reporters, voices and critics. Some of the content consists of articles and news on children's books, authors and events. The website has a synthetic voice that reads the information and some book-reviews are read by children or transformed to sign language. In one part of the site, Barnbibblan, (www.barnbibblan.se) you find rhymes, animated stories (even translated to Spanish, Finnish and Arabic), songs and a explore-the-language-part including sign language, bliss and pictogram. Barnbibblan is from approximately three years old.

The Children's Library site was a start for working also with cultural heritage for children.

Vestro Gothia

The Western Götaland Regional Council has a special department called Västarvet (Western heritage) – the administration for the nature and cultural heritage of Västra Götaland. The project Vestro Gothia, a portal aimed directly at children with school material tailored for teaching and learning, started around 2003. Bohuslän Museum, The Regional State Archive, Innovatum Science Center, Göteborg Museum of Natural History and the regional management of culture, Culture in the West are some of the actors who provide useful resources. The goal of Vestro Gothia is that schools in the region should be able to find interesting facts there, which are otherwise difficult to access. You can directly find the photo archives, artifacts and a library of fragile books. Although the material is chiefly from Västra Götaland it is eminently useful for students and teachers from across the country.

The digital image archive contains well over one hundred thousand scanned photographs and there are many opportunities to provide students with interesting data from the rich imagery. There is information about the photos, when they were taken and in which museum or archive the originals are kept.

Some of the activities offered are to:

- Ask questions to experts (archaeologists, scientists, craftsmen, etc.)
- Play or contribute to the game Tidsjakt (Time Hunt) - Municipality travel in time and space
- Search for photos in archives
- Look for objects in depositories
- Browse the old fragile books (some with amazing animal illustrations)
- Explore themes such as Middle Ages, children's fashion in the 20th century or whales near us

An example of theme to use in the social studies are: child labour. If students search for the words "children" and "work", they receive many photos and can choose some that clearly illustrates children working.

Proposal for questions to consider based on the photos:

- What kind of work is performed by children? Do the children look happy or serious?
- How was the children's lives and experiences of their childhood affected by that they had to work?
- Would you be willing to work to help and support your family? Why / why not?

Under the site section For educators, teachers can get more information.

Other museums

In several parts of Sweden cultural institutions like museums are working to make their large and valuable materials available to children and youth.

Kulturen i Lund in southern Sweden is the second oldest open-air museum in the world. The museum was founded in 1892. More than 30 buildings reflect life in the past. There are exhibitions ranging from the Middle Ages to the present. The museum collaborates with schools and libraries and provides training for staff. Teachers can get the "license" to

Kulturen. Their website contains reading and teachers' guides that the museum educators made to some of the exhibitions. One of the themes is Metropolis - Lund in the Middle Ages – the history of the city of Lund from 990 to the early 17th century.

Stockholmskällan – The Stockholm City Museum cooperating with teachers and libraries

The Stockholm City Museum makes collections available for schools to research about their local history. The Stockholm Source (The Stockholm Source) is coordinated by Medioteket, resource centre for schools and school libraries. The content is collected from many different sources, Stockholm City Library, The Royal Library and several museums.

A responsible librarian at The Royal Library (KB) thinks that the cooperation between the participating institutions is good. It's a great opportunity to collect materials of different categories relating to a city, for example. Stockholm. She wishes that others could follow, both nationally and internationally. KB earlier had no external platform to display digitized material, Stockholmskällan was long the only platform to display ephemera. Now there is also an ephemera blog - see <http://vardagstryck.blogg.kb.se/2013/04/25/digital-ephemera-collections/>. But in Stockholmskällan there are different types of materials on the same phenomenon, which means that students can have a width in their work. Stockholmskällan will also help to teach students to seek information and to see how much information is available from the various memory institutions, the librarian believes.

All material in the Stockholm Source is free to use in school teaching. Here, students can search and find primary sources that are directly accessible on the web. There is also a Lesson Bank. The Lesson Bank contains teaching materials for secondary education in subjects like history, Swedish, art, music and geography and many others. The material is free to use and download. Stockholm Source educators can come to visit schools.

Stockholmskällan focused early on study visits and training. In 2005, the project Stockholmskällan visited school librarians in the association Skolbibliotek Öst (School Libraries East) in order to reach out to users in the school. They discussed how the tools could best be used in the school's teaching. One could make use of archaeological finds and objects, images, photos and documented art exhibitions, maps, manuscripts, drawings, statistics, fact books and fiction etc. Joyful surprises, good teaching and the opportunity go deeper in the subjects were keywords that could determine whether the project would be the success everyone was hoping for.

Cultural heritage is considered important for

- Young people's construction of identity
- The sense of democracy
- Respect for others
- The sense of the public space

One task may be to ask students to compare a hundred years old photo of a place in

Stockholm with a photo they have taken in the same place in the present. Another task is to use old photographs to illustrate a historical picture story about being young now and in the past. A teacher with students at hotel and restaurant program in high school gives them the task to find information about a special place in Stockholm. They are supposed to give their advice and recommendations of what to see there to a couple of 55 years and to a young family with children. They should use Stockholmskällan and two other sources of information. The teacher says that the students often can be inspired and curious about photos they find in Stockholmskällan.

The primary target group of Stockholmskällan is grades 6 through high school, but because there is such a rich artwork, it can work well even at younger ages. Everyone can reflect and associate about images. Once third graders in Beckomberga skolan tested this and looked at pictures from different centuries. The children shared their knowledge and associations, and talked about some things that the teacher had selected for each century (links to all images can be found in an accessible lesson planning). Then they read a paragraph from a book by the author Barbro Lindgren relating to Bromma and Beckomberga during the 1900s. – For a full hour the 9-10 year olds concentrated without much difficulty - Stockholmskällan worked very well even for year three!

Now there is also the opportunity to use your smart-phone to download the application Historic Stockholm Pictures. There you can:

- Download pictures from Stockholmskällan based on your geographical position
- Set how far from you your mobile phone should search for images
- Take your own photos from the site and upload to Stockholmskällan

The app is available for iPhone and Android and is free to download.

Collaboration with authors

Collaboration with authors and institutions can bring cultural heritage into schools and libraries. An author's visit or working with authors from the past can motivate students to read. Mediateket, resource centre for schools in the Stockholm area have involved authors e.g. writing detective stories in connection to local history.

Another project of Mediateket is August-2012, when teachers, students and school librarians find information and share their work about one of the most known Swedish writers August Strindberg. A wiki - produced as part of the Year of Strindberg, 2012 - a platform for communication and interaction within one school or between schools. The wiki has teacher guides to inspire work with Strindberg in many subjects. Several institutions contributed to August-2012, supported by the Swedish Arts Council.

The work with August Strindberg - innovator in drama and prose, a poet, a painter, a photographer - could go on in an inspiring way during the celebration year 2012 and after. Mediateket had produced a programme for students, an interactive website, where you could

read and listen to the English version of the novel as well as see a short film about the life of Strindberg with English subtitles. The short story "Half a Sheet of Foolscap" was translated into and recorded at nearly 40 languages - from Icelandic and Mandarin to the Swedish minority language Romany.

School cooperation with authors can sometimes last for half a year or more. Primary classes used both fiction and non-fiction books about popular culture history of the Swedish author Dan Höjer in all subjects – no text books during half a year. They were emphasizing reading not only in the subject Swedish, but in all subjects. Dan Höjer's ghost stories inspired children to collect and write stories from their own vicinity. The teachers found many threads to pull out of the books:

Geography: books about "Circus detectives", travelling around Sweden in the various books.

Sports: testing strange and old-fashioned sports from his book about funny sports.

Biology: his book about the body, in the lower classes "Can I order a brother" how babies are made.

Life skills, Religion, Social science: Books about superstition and fear served as starters. What did people believe in long ago - and today?

Some examples of cooperative projects between public libraries, authors and school libraries.

A well-known Swedish author and illustrator worked with a public librarian in the town Borgholm and with teachers and schools, blogging about student writing and illustrations. He also visited the municipality several times – the subjects were Swedish and Art. One of the teachers wrote a university thesis about the successful project. The librarian at the public library thinks that she has had a fantastic chance of getting to know the school and students better by working with them and administering their blog with comments from students and author. She recommends that the teachers from different subjects work together in this kind of project to get the most learning out of it.

In Malmö, a multicultural city in the south of Sweden school librarians, groups of students from socially different areas meet and get to know new parts of their city. They learn to talk about books and to present them to students in other schools. Authors and other professionals are invited to teach literature, presentation and book talk. Students write in the school blog, Youtube films record their work. In this way they reach out and can show how they are developing as students and human beings, understanding more about their own city and meeting friends from other parts of the city.

In Visby, Gotland, a teacher worked with ten year old students and the books of the author Anna Jansson. She has written a series of books for children about the city of Visby. The students learned by reading, blogging and asking for facts, connected both to their own time and to the medieval city of Visby with its city wall and also to a special Middle Age festival. The children walked in the city, guided by the books. They blogged about their work. They got comments both from the author, the illustrator and others. They wrote an article in Swedish Wikipedia about the boy detective in the books by Anna Jansson. The teacher finds the blogging very inspiring for the students as well as for herself. They get contacts that they

had never been able to get in any other way and learn how they can get help in their work from sources outside the school.

Cultural heritage is something that is constantly changing and reformulated. Every period of time forms its own opinions about what cultural heritage means. The words are not only used for objects, buildings and ancient sites, but also stories, traditions and other immaterial values - what previous, and contemporary, generations have created, and how we now perceive, interpret and pass them on.

Libraries, museums and archives, schools and many other institutions as well as students and teachers benefit from collaborating around the issue of cultural heritage!

Sources and links

UNESCO <http://www.unesco.org/>

Course (Swedish) about teaching cultural heritage <http://edu.mah.se/sv/Course/IS145F>

Barnens bibliotek (The Children's Library)

<http://www.barnensbibliotek.se/Hem/OmBarnensbibliotek/English/tabid/439/Default.aspx>

Vestro Gothia <http://www.vestrogothia.se/>, Tidsjakten <http://www.tidsjakt.se/>

Mediateket/Stockholmskällan – Strindberg Project:

<http://etthalvtarkpapper.se/category/titta/animerad-film-engelsk-text/>

<http://etthalvtarkpapper.se/category/lasa/engelska-lasa/>

<http://etthalvtarkpapper.se/category/lyssna/engelska-johan-rabaeus/>

Kulturen, Lund <http://www.kulturen.com/besöksinformation/welcome/>

Stockholmskällan (The Stockholm Source) <http://www.stockholmskallan.se/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Stockholmskallan>

Hell, Maud Författarbesök i skolan. BTJ 2012. Links from the book to Swedish resources about author collaboration with schools: <http://corp.btj.se/?id=9824>