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Strömquist, Helena

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Swedish paper bindings, 1787-1846. A book history

Helena Strömquist Dal

ABSTRACT

Institute for the History of the Book Department of Cultural Sciences Lund University
e-mail: Helena.Stromquist_Dal@kult.lu.se

This thesis examines in what material form books were consumed during the second half of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century. The study focuses on the production, marketing and use of paper bindings in Sweden 1787-1846. The aim is to show how the study of bindings can reveal changing attitudes towards the form of the book, patterns of consumption and reading practises. The work is based on D. F. McKenzie's definition of bibliography as the sociology of text; it is also inspired by the ideas of R. Chartier.[1]

From the middle of the 1800th century book production increased strikingly and books spread to larger parts of the population. More books were produced than anyone could read. We know that books took on a smaller format, and that typography and layout of the printed page was adjusted to the text and to the consumers in mind.[2] But in what way did the binding of the book change? It is very likely that bookbinders and booksellers adjusted the demands for quality through technical rationalisation and use of less expensive materials. In Sweden publishers began marketing their books in edition paper bindings and booksellers sold their books ready bound in half leather or paper retail bindings. At the same time consumers changed their attitudes towards the form of the book, its binding and price.

The research is based on empirical and qualitative analyses of paper bindings; the binding techniques and materials that were employed and the form of the binding is analysed. The distribution and marketing of paper bindings are investigated through newspaper advertisements, publishers and booksellers' sale catalogues. The spread and holdings of different types of bindings in private libraries at the time is examined. How the material and formal changes in the binding of books, their production and marketing around 1800 can be understood as new attitudes and practises in the consumption of books and the symbolic meaning it entails is discussed in a concluding part of the thesis.

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[1] D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the sociology of texts*. London 1986. R. Chartier, *The order of books. Readers, authors and libraries in Europe between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries*. Stanford 1994 and others.

[2] Se for example Roger Chartier's studies of the "Bibliothèques bleues" or *L'ordre des livres*, Aix en Provence, Alinéa 1992. D. F. McKenzie "Typography and the meaning: the case of William Congreve" in Giles Barber & Bernhard Fabian (ed.) *Buch und buchhandel in Europa im achtzehenten jahrhundert*. Hamburg 1982, pp. 81-126. D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the sociology of text*. London 1986. Swedish book production and the form of books is discussed by Rosvall 1975, pp. 131-133. Arne Jarrick, Stockhom 1992, pp. 87-95 and pp. 146-177. Per S. Ridderstad, *Textens ansikte i seklernas spegel*. Stockholm 1999.