

No. 3, 2007 (October)

## Commentary

### The e-book – a matter of user-friendliness

**What is a book? In the age of digital convergence things are not as simple as they were in the age of the printed book, a 500-year-old concept, a product that can be taken everywhere.**

Today a text may – extremely easily – be published by a writer via the Internet. The lone Internet author may call it a book. An editor based in a publishing house, committed to a traditional view of the processes meant to secure quality at all levels, may feel it difficult to accept this characterization. When a digital text is published, the Internet author may want to invite readers to write new chapters and submit comments, thereby establishing a continuous process of publishing. This is the way the Wikipedia encyclopaedia is being developed today. Digitization has opened up for the possibility to publish whatever you like, whenever you like. Some will take this as a token of a reaction to the commercialization of the book trade.

The concept "book" is no longer unambiguous. The conditions as regards content (digitization allows for interactivity), institutional conditions (the role of the publisher) and technical conditions (publishing platforms) may vary almost indefinitely. The aim of the authors, though, is still the same: Books should be read, used, listened to.

A host of publishers probably sensed the coming of commercial success in the fall of 2000. Some were of the opinion that it was only a question of time before publishers of the traditional printed book had to read the writing on the wall: The e-book is the future. "E-book" is defined here as a downloadable text that may be read on a monitor of some kind. There are parallels to the newspaper trade – printed newspapers would vanish in the course of a few years' time, proclaimed the e-prophets in the late 1990s and the early years of the 2000s.

Why did the Nordic publishers' interest in e-books suddenly disappear after the hot e-book fall of 2000? The answer is simple. Almost no readers wanted e-books. It is very likely that they did not want to read books on a monitor. The e-books were not user-friendly enough. It has been a matter of will, and not economic ability; still more printed books have been sold in the Nordic countries during the past ten years.

### No new media have completely replaced the old ones

In a message from the Frankfurt book fair in the fall of 2000, the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet* wrote (in Norwegian): "Free e-books to the people – the Norwegian Book Clubs

plan to distribute free e-book readers to their members. In return, the reader must make a commitment to buy a certain number of e-texts.”

These plans were never carried through, however. On the other hand, the Norwegian Book Clubs have had a certain success with audio books lately – in the form of downloadable mp3 files.

A Norwegian project implemented in 2001-2002 – eBokNorge – was dedicated to the analysis of a potential e-book market. It was supported by the Arts Council Norway, among others. A great deal of information on technology, market conditions and rights was collected by the project, and is still available on its website.

E-books are not entirely forgotten in the Nordic publishing houses. Even if “e-books” does not constitute an individual item on the daily agenda, there are enthusiasts among the employees, keeping the notion of the e-book warm. It is – at any rate – of strategic importance for the publishing houses to be up-to-date with the development – without regard to the directions it is taking.

One of the e-book enthusiasts is Bjarne Buset, Head of Information at Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS, one of the largest publishing houses in Norway. In a recent article (in Norwegian) in Dagbladet, he listed causes he feels may inspire us all – soon – to read books on the displays of our mobile phones. Buset also reflects over the e-book interest that dominated the last part of 2000.

It is hardly in Buset’s thoughts that Gyldendal should stop printing books. E-books are a supplement for – not a replacement of – the printed book. No new form of media has ever completely replaced the old ones.

The Swedish e-book publisher eLib was started in 2000, and is owned by the publishing houses Natur och Kultur and Piratförlaget and the Internet bookseller AdLibris. eLib has made progress with its activities in the e-book sector, but has been especially successful with audio books in mp3 format. Through cooperation with libraries e-books and audio books are distributed to borrowers, who may keep the files for a certain amount of time. During 2006 eLib distributed 150,000 text and audio books to Internet booksellers and libraries, constituting an increase of 43% in comparison to 2005. eLib distributes e-books in many formats as they are also intended for handheld units, like advanced mobile telephones.

### **Will the mobile phone or the e-paper reader become the e-book platform?**

Quite a few people in the book trade point to the mobile phone as the future all-in-one machine. It is possible to read a book on a mobile telephone with a good display. If the storage capacity of the phone is high enough, a host of audio books in mp3 format may also be available. In addition, the mobile telephone may be utilized for mobile TV purposes. A long flight, for instance, may feel more comfortable if one carries a small mobile phone full of e-books and audio books, some of the enthusiasts claim.

At the moment there is a drive – also in the Nordic countries – to develop “e-paper readers” for the newspaper market. The progress is slow; the quality of pictures and text must be good enough to satisfy advertisers. It is possible that such e-paper readers may function as e-book readers as well. I, for one, believe that today’s generations of middle aged and elderly people

(40+) will never be eager readers of e-books. However, there is a chance that younger generations will become avid users of e-books, read from some kind of electronic display.

### **The participants' different points of view**

It may often seem that the technocrats describe technological development as linear and inevitable. In the third edition of *Medier i Norden/Nordic Media Policy in Scandinavian languages only* of 2000 we quoted the views of Dick Brass, Head of Microsoft's technology division, using a Norwegian newspaper as source: "In 2006 electronic kiosks will be opened, where passers-by can buy e-newspapers and e-magazines. In 2008 as much e-literature will be sold as paper-based books. In 2009 the bestselling authors will leave the traditional publishers to sell books directly to readers via the Internet."

Seen from the point of view of most authors, it hardly matters on which platform their books are published, as long as they are read or listened to. In addition, it is important to have strong assistance from the publishers in the form of editors – before the book is published – and it also is of great importance to have good agreements, securing income from the sale of the books.

Seen from the point of view of the publishers, publishing on a digital platform may be seen as an opportunity to diminish the costs of production and distribution. However, there are also many challenges – like protection against illegal copying – that are well known in the music and film industry.

Stephen King was a pioneer among writers in publishing *Riding the Bullet* in the spring of 2000. There was much ado around this event, and some found it likely that many bestselling authors would follow King's example. This was not the case; the printed book is still the preferred platform, even for authors with a great following of readers. Becoming superfluous must be the vision of horror for the publishers – as well as traditional booksellers. If their most popular writers were to convert to publishing and selling their books directly to readers via the Internet, this would mean a significant loss of income.

The role of a publisher is to find and refine the good manuscripts. Only a very small number of writers – regardless of genre – have a manuscript ready for publishing when they finish a book. The interplay between authors and the editors of publishing houses – irrespective of the medium chosen as the platform for publishing – will be very important during a process intended as the best way to ensure that the manuscript's qualities are brought to the fore, in order to give readers the best result.

Seen from the readers' – the consumers' – point of view, accessibility and usability will be important. The technocrats may plan, but on the whole it is the users who decide which way the development goes. It may take unexpected directions, as it did when Apple launched its iPod, which suddenly became synonymous with the mp3 format. Mp3 players of many brands have become common property, and not all of them are used for the consumption of the latest hits. Simplicity and user-friendliness are key words.

### **What has happened in the book trade in the Nordic countries during the past decade?**

The public still both reads and buys more printed books. Nordicom's statistics show that the time people in the Nordic countries use for reading books has remained stable during the period 1996-2006. In Norway, there has even been an increase.

During the same time period – seen as a whole – Nordicom’s statistics show that the number of new book titles from Nordic publishing companies is on the increase. The upward tendency is certainly marginal in Denmark, Finland and Iceland, but is more pronounced in Norway and Sweden. Just as interesting as the number of titles is the turnover, showing which direction the sale of books is taking. In Denmark, turnover increased by about 50% during the decade (1996-2006, nominal figures). In Finland and Norway the increase was about 40%, and in Sweden 25%.

An almost unbroken economic boom and a great deal of money among the majority of the people explain some of this expansion. Another explanation is the large number of bestsellers, for instance the Harry Potter series. However, the book market does not only consist of bestsellers, even though media coverage of this sector may influence the thinking of the average reader. The sale of fiction constitutes a smaller proportion of the total book sales turnover than does the sale of schoolbooks, general educational literature and non-fiction in general.

During the first half of 2007 in Denmark there has been a decrease in the total turnover of the sale of books – caused mainly by a decline in the sale of schoolbooks and educational literature and general fiction, the Danish newspaper Børsen writes. The book club market is also experiencing a drop in turnover. According to the Danish Publishers’ Association, Danes increase their use of digital media in order to find practical information, Børsen writes.

Indeed: While reading fiction on a display may be experienced as unpractical by most readers, it is quite another matter when it comes to facts. Even if e-books, as pictured by several publishers and readers alike six or seven years ago, did not become a success, the Internet has become a significant factor for the book trade during the same period of time. There is reason to believe that educational and non-fiction literature is suited for digital publishing and consumption in quite another way than fiction is.

### **The trade is optimistic on behalf of the printed book**

Will the printed book still exist in 50 years’ time? This was one of the questions in a survey arranged by the Frankfurt book fair this fall. The survey covered a broad selection of book trade actors. Only 11% of the 1,324 respondents from 86 countries believed that the printed book would be an obsolete medium in 2057. Twenty-three percent believed that the traditional high-street booksellers would have ceased to exist fifty years from now.

On the other hand, the challenges created by the digital development were pointed out as the most important and difficult for the world’s book trade by 53% of the respondents. In a trade in which the number of titles is on a steady increase, seen on a worldwide basis, competition from other media and sources of entertainment was seen as the greatest threat to a continuous development, quantity and quality-wise, by half the respondents. Piracy and the fact that there are more books published than the market can bear are also problematic, several of the respondents found (31% and 23%, respectively).

The major sector of future growth is e-books, 44% found. Forty-one percent believed downloadable audio books comprised the main growth area. Taking globalization into account the translating business will grow the most, 27% believed, and the same number found that the growth would be strongest for books related to the educational market.

Terje Flisen

## **Media Notebook**

### **Nordic cooperation**

#### **Nordic Statistical Yearbook [Nordic cooperation]**

With its 2007 issue, the Nordic Statistical Yearbook has now been published for the 45th time. It is a reference book containing comprehensive and easily accessible statistics on various aspects of social life in the five Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It also presents data on the self-governing regions, i.e. the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands. The aim of the yearbook is, to the greatest extent possible, present comparable data on the Nordic countries. Additional tables on CD-ROM supplement the Nordic Statistical Yearbook.

The culture and media fields are well covered in the Yearbook. For instance, it appears that almost all companies in the Nordic countries have access to the Internet. In Norway, 93% of companies have access and in Finland this figure is 99%. More than 80% of all companies in the Nordic countries have their own homepage.

Source: The Nordic Council of Ministers/the Nordic Council (12 October 2007)

#### **The Nordic Council Film Prize 2007 [Nordic cooperation]**

The Nordic Council Film Prize 2007 is awarded to the Danish film “The Art of Crying”.

The prize (DKK 350,000 or approx. 47,000 €) is shared between director Peter Schønau Fog, scriptwriter Bo hr. Hansen and producer Thomas Stenderup. The film is based on a novel by Erling Jepsen.

The film “The Art of Crying” has already won several film prizes since its premiere last year at the Toronto International Film Festival. It is also the film being suggested as the Danish contribution to the nominees for an Oscar for best foreign language film. It is also amongst the 42 films proposed by the European Film Academy as candidates for the European Film Awards 2007.

Source: The Nordic Council of Ministers/the Nordic Council (9 October 2007)

#### **TV without frontiers [Nordic cooperation]**

Better access to the TV channels of neighbouring countries has often been debated during meetings of the Nordic Council, according to a press release by the Nordic Council of Ministers/the Nordic Council. It is pointed out that the transition from analogue to digital TV transmission imposes new restrictions, while web TV opens up for new possibilities.

In August, Copydan Kabel-TV in Denmark pointed their spotlight on the content of neighbouring countries' channels via ads in newspapers and weeklies as well as free postcards.

Mainly, the ads promote TV programmes on Swedish, Norwegian and German channels. In addition, Copydan Kabel-TV has launched a website intended to offer information on channels from neighbouring countries: <http://www.verdenstv.dk> (in Danish).

The purpose of this campaign run by Copydan Kabel-TV is to influence Danish consumers to get the local suppliers of TV signals to think along lines other than MTV or CNN. A TV channel from a neighbouring country costs hardly more than one DKK per month. The channels of neighbouring countries ensure a versatile TV offering and allow consumers to view events from a new perspective.

Source: The Nordic Council of Ministers/the Nordic Council (14 August 2007)

## **Printed media**

### **Three free newspapers on top in Denmark [Printed media] [Denmark]**

The free newspaper 24timer is Denmark's largest newspaper, in terms of both reach and readership. MetroXpress comes second, followed by the Icelandic-owned Nyhedsavisen. The subscriber newspaper Jyllands-Posten comes fourth, according to Medievärlden, pointing to fresh figures from Gallup.

24timer, published by JP/Politikens Hus, had 594,000 readers in September. This is 122,000 more than the preceding month. The newspaper started publishing in August 2006 and at that time was only distributed to single households. However, last summer 24timer was also distributed in public spaces and today only half its circulation goes to households, according to Medievärlden.

The circulation figures from the first half of 2007 showed a decrease for the paid papers, in terms of both circulation and readership.

A survey carried out by the media bureau Mediacom is also quoted by Medievärlden. It shows that the large paid papers in Denmark have lost half their readers between the ages of 20 and 34 years. However, the total number of readers has increased, thanks to the free newspapers. Worst hit has been Jyllands-Posten, which has lost 60% of its readers between 20 and 34 years of age since 2000. Berlingske Tidende has lost 57%, while 45% of Politiken's young readers have gone.

This means that Jyllands-Posten today has a young readership of only 14%, and Berlingske Tidende 17%. The corresponding figure for Politiken is 18%, writes Medievärlden.

Source: Medievärlden (10 September, 5 and 9 October 2007)

## **Missing increase in press support creates disappointment** **[Printed media] [Norway]**

The State Budget presented 5 October shows no increase when it comes to press support. The only major budget change where press support is concerned is an increase in grants to Sami newspapers – by five million NOK – as a contribution to the establishment of a Sami daily newspaper.

Director of Business Policy in the Norwegian Media Businesses' Association (MBL) Bjørn Wisted says to MBL's web newspaper that he is disappointed by the fact that Minister of Culture and Church Affairs Trond Giske has not done more to fulfil the government declaration stating that "press support will be increased."

"Even if we are now at the peak of a strong economic expansion, it is wise to remember that this has a variety of effects", Wisted points out. The management of newspapers now receiving production grants find in many cases that they are in a market position where they do not – to the same extent as the leading papers do – benefit from an increase in ads, while at the same time the rise in costs hits them at full force".

Source: the Norwegian Media Businesses' Association (5 October 2007)

## **Readership of newspapers decreases –newspapers' economy is good in general** **[Printed media] [Norway]**

While the readership of the paper-based newspaper is generally on the decrease compared with last year's figures, the readership of the newspapers' net-based issues increases steadily, according to TNS Gallups Forbruker & Media.

Still, 82% read at least one paper-based newspaper every average day. If one only takes the weekdays into account, this number is 86%. On the average, Norwegians read 1.9 newspapers per day. Of the 187 titles included in the survey (titles and supplements), 41 have increased their readership and 74 have lost readers, TNS Gallup announces.

The economy of the newspapers on average is good, according to an overview on DagensMedier/mediebedriftene.no (the Norwegian Media Businesses' Association).

The total turnover of the 172 newspapers included in the survey increased in 2006 by almost one billion NOK compared to 2005, landing at more than 14.5 billion NOK. The operating result decreased by some 0.5%; more than 1.1 billion NOK in 2006 compared to almost 1.2 billion NOK in 2005. Some of the local newspapers do particularly well, with Lillesands-Posten on top with an operating result of 25.8%. A number of other smaller newspapers display similar good results.

Source: TNS Gallups Forbruker & Media/mediebedriftene.no (17 September/31 August 2007)

## **Record economic results for the newspapers in spite of loss in circulation** **[Printed media] [Sweden]**

A 50% increase in operating results in 2006 for the newspapers as a whole, compared to 2005; this is the main point in the annual overview (in Swedish, pdf format) of Swedish newspapers' economy, published by the Press Subsidies Council. According to Professor Karl Erik Gustafsson's statement to trade newspaper *Medievärlden*, the growth continues into 2007.

Professor Gustafsson, from Jönköping International Business School, is responsible for the overview, in cooperation with the Senior Administrative Officer at the Press Subsidies Council, Sara Gunnarsson.

The annual turnover in 2006 was 19.663 billion SEK, of which press subsidies amounted to 425 million SEK and the net result was 2.185 million SEK.

In total, newspaper circulation decreased by 1.8%. During the same time the newspapers raised the prices of single copies and subscription fees – and the volume of advertising increased by 1.4%. In addition, the special tax imposed on the newspaper's advertising income has been lowered, and the newspapers' business transactions have yielded good returns. These are the reasons the economic net result came out as it did. Karlstad-based NW showed the best net result: 52%.

Profits will probably be invested in a continuous effort to develop the traditional local newspapers, comments Karl Erik Gustafsson to *Medievärlden*.

Source: *Medievärlden* (29 August 2007)

## **Audiovisual media**

### **TV 2 and the regional TV 2 companies meet new public service requirements** **[Audiovisual media] [Denmark]**

The Minister of Culture and the media policy spokesmen from the political parties behind the Media Agreement have agreed to introduce new public service requirements for TV 2 and the regional TV 2 companies, according to the Ministry of Culture.

Transmitting sports programmes via the main channel and ensuring better services for handicapped viewers are among the new requirements for TV 2. Other requirements are the establishment of a "viewer's ombudsman" arrangement, like the one the public service company DR has introduced, and an increase in the commitment to the Danish film production sector. Public service tasks via the Internet for the regional TV 2 companies have been limited, and an extra regional hour has been provided for the regional programmes transmitted via the digital terrestrial TV network.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (4 October 2007)

## **Definite agreement on digital terrestrial TV network development** **[Audiovisual media] [Denmark]**

An increase in the transmission of TV programmes and increased competition between the different transmission platforms from 2009; these are the main points in the definite agreement on development of the digital terrestrial TV network in Denmark, entered into by the parties behind the Media Agreement for the period 2007-2010.

A supplemental digital terrestrial TV network platform, in addition to the digital network already run by DR and TV 2, will be established in 2009 when the analogue TV network is closed down.

The operator of the new network will run four multiplexes which have room for 25 channels. There will also be an obligation to distribute a versatile mix of TV channels including at least one channel from a neighbouring country, the Ministry of Culture writes in a press release.

The main change in the guidelines adopted in June (see notice) is that the Media Secretariat will have to use an extra “beauty criterion” when choosing an operator: It will be an advantage if the operator is able to offer mobile TV via the DVB-H standard. The decision to – in addition – utilize frequencies in the so-called L band for mobile TV is maintained.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (4 October 2007)

## **Broken promises ignite a production strike among film producers** **[Audiovisual media] [Finland]**

Minister of Culture and Sport Stefan Wallin has not kept his promise to increase film production support, according to the producers of Finnish feature films. They have declared a production strike, which concerns film projects that are still pending.

In a declaration the producers write: “When the current government was formed, the film professionals in Finland believed the agony of the latest decade to be over, because film was especially mentioned in the government programme as an area of focus. We got even more faith when the Minister of Culture promised in June to increase funding by 1.2 million € for the next year. Our joy wasn’t long lasting. Now, a couple of months later, the amount of the government support for film from the lottery funds in the 2008 budget is exactly the same as in 2007: the increase, instead of the promised 8%, is zero”.

The Finnish Chamber of Films, together with its member organizations, also supports the independent Finnish film producers’ demands to increase the state subsidies to the film industry.

In a press release, the Minister of Culture and Sport comments on the situation: “The appropriation for the promotion of film has increased greatly since 2000. This year the appropriation is 17,680,000 euros. The overall funds have increased nearly 62 percent or 6.7 million euros compared to 2000. Out of this, the increase of film funds has been 63.5 percent or 4.7 million euros for the same period.

There is very little leverage in the 2008 draft budget for the Pools and Lottery funds for art and culture. All fields of art and culture must be considered fairly. There are no cuts in the appropriations for any of the beneficiaries in the 2008 draft budget.

The Ministry of Education has not yet verified the division of the Pools and Lottery funds for 2008. After the completion of the government draft budget, I will go through the possibilities for increasing film funding in a positive spirit”.

Source: The Finnish Film Foundation (4 and 6 September 2007)

### **Film support is increased by 40 million NOK [Audiovisual media] [Norway]**

In the state budget for 2008, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs proposes to increase public support to the Norwegian film industry by 35 million NOK. In addition, the umbrella organisation FILM&KINO will increase its efforts by five million NOK. This implies that the increase in public film support has been around 100 million NOK since the new government came into power in 2005.

The new efforts of 2008 are distributed as follows: Production support is increased by 28 million, three million goes to regional film funds and film centres, three million will be used to establish a new film institute, and one million is set aside for the work involved in collecting and preserving films.

The National Library will take over the responsibility for collecting, preserving and restoring films from the Norwegian Film Institute on 1 January 2008. FILM&KINO will take over public commitments concerning film festivals in 2008, estimated at five million NOK.

Source: The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (5 October 2007)

### **The Media Authority informs on digital terrestrial TV [Audiovisual media] [Norway]**

The digital terrestrial TV network opened on 1 September 2007. In the course of the next two years, viewers in all the Norwegian counties will gain access to the network, which is being developed by Norges Televisjon AS and is owned by broadcasters NRK and TV2 and main Norwegian telecommunications operator Telenor. The operator of the network is Riks-TV, also owned by NRK, TV2 and Telenor.

This development implies that the analogue network will be gradually closed down, and by the end of 2009 analogue signals will cease in the northernmost parts of the country.

The Media Authority has opened a website for the public: [www.digitaltvinorge.no](http://www.digitaltvinorge.no). The website's aim is to present information that is matter-of-fact and impartial. The website, a special telephone number, brochures and information drives in the media are among the tools at hand – to start with.

Source: The Media Authority (16 August 2007)

## **Increased competition among pay-TV suppliers** **[Audiovisual media] [Sweden]**

All transmission permits, except those for public service companies, will now be issued by the Radio and TV Authority, according to the bill on permits for digital terrestrial TV that the government has sent to Parliament.

Before the Authority finalizes its decisions on transmission permits, the TV companies must agree on certain forms of technical cooperation and access in order to promote competition. All pay-TV channels must be accessible via one program card and the TV companies will have the right to give permission to anyone to sell subscriptions to their TV channels.

The Authority must ensure that all transmission permits contribute to a diversity of TV channels – serving a variety of tastes and interests. There must be room for national as well as local and regional TV channels, and for several independent TV companies. Permits will be issued for a duration of six years.

Transmission permits according to the new model will come into force on 1 April 2008. The government intends to prolong the existing permits to 31 March 2008.

Earlier this autumn, the Competition Authority presented a consequence analysis, ordered by the government, which at that time was putting the bill on permits for digital terrestrial TV through the preparatory parliamentary stages. In the analysis, the Competition Authority states that there is competition between the pay-TV operator in the digital terrestrial TV network and those utilizing other transmission platforms (satellite/cable/ip-TV). In order to increase competition there is a need for further investigations and measures.

Source: The Ministry of Culture and the Competition Authority (2 October and 19 September 2007)

## **Diversity and quality – public service TV 1998-2006 – an assessment** **[Audiovisual media] [Sweden]**

SVT's channels on the whole fulfil the requirements set for television at the service of the public. They transmit programmes of a kind either not found or much underrepresented on the commercial channels. However, programmes produced in Swedish – and in Sweden – have gradually lost their strong position on the SVT channels. Even TV4 fulfils the obligations set for a commercial public service channel, even if there are problems in some fields, especially as regards the lack of cultural programmes.

These are the main conclusions in an article professor Kennet Asp of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Göteborg University, has written for the newspaper Dagens Nyheter, in which he presents the survey, "Diversity and quality – public service TV 1998-2006 – an assessment", which he has conducted for the Broadcasting Commission (general information on the Commission in English).

The report constitutes one of the elements in the Broadcasting Commission's efforts to follow and report on the course of development of programmes on Swedish television channels. The

purpose of the ongoing investigations is to create lasting, systematic and long-term scientific studies of Swedish TV programmes.

This is the first analysis of the development of programmes on SVT and TV4 seen from a public-service perspective. The study was conducted with thought to the conditions and arrangements stated in the companies' transmission permits during the period 1998-2006.

The next appraising analytic report will comprise the permit period 2007-2009, according to the Broadcasting Commission.

Source: Dagens Nyheter/ the Broadcasting Commission (October 2007)

## **Information Society**

### **Digital divides to be investigated and analyzed [Information Society] [Sweden]**

The Swedish Institute for Transport and Communications Analysis (SIKA) has been commissioned by the government to investigate and report on efforts made in order to diminish the so-called digital divide. SIKA's task is to perform an analysis and compile an overview of the results, highlighting the needs for possible measures to be taken. An interim report must be available on 9 November 2007 and the commission will be terminated 31 December 2007 at the latest.

Research shows us that there is a digital divide, that people in the different strata of society do not have the same access to modern information technology or the same ability to utilize the technology. However, we are lacking a full picture of the efforts already made by different participants and the research being conducted in this field, according to a press release by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality and the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications. The government assesses that there is a need to collect knowledge in order to estimate the requirements for further efforts.

Source: The Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality/the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications (19 September 2007)

### **Marked increase in Swedes' Internet usage [Information Society] [Sweden]**

Nordicom's Internet barometer shows that the number of Internet users has been almost doubled since 2003, from 33% to 62% on an average day. This is a direct effect of increased access to broadband in Swedish households, says Ulla Carlsson, Professor and responsible for the survey at Nordicom.

The gross time of Swedes' media usage has remained relatively stable during the past few years. Now, however, an increase may be seen and daily media usage exceeds six hours (6 hours, 8 minutes); this increase may to a high degree be ascribed to Internet usage, according to a press release by Nordicom Sweden .

While 85% of Swedish youth have been on the Internet during an average day, the corresponding figure for old-age pensioners is 26% (48 minutes per day). This is an exceptionally high level, compared to Internet activity among elderly in other countries.

A special section dedicated to the description and analysis of the various platforms of media usage has been included in the survey.

Source: Nordicom Sweden (22 August 2007)

## **Freedom of speech and copyright**

### **Easier access to the digital cultural heritage [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Denmark]**

The Ministry of Culture has sent to hearing a proposal to amend the copyright legislation. This is a political request that the cultural heritage be digitalized and mediated to the public, according to a press release by the Ministry.

In the elucidation of this political request, a working group consisting of both rights holders and consumers has discussed how access to the cultural heritage may be secured, and has submitted a report with recommendations. As a background to these recommendations it is proposed that the scope of copyright legislation be extended in order to allow for broad agreements between the rights holders organizations and, among others, the institutions taking care of the cultural heritage.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (5 October 2007)

### **Ministry of Education best suited for the handling of copyright matters [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Finland]**

Minister of Culture and Sport Stefan Wallin feels that there are strong reasons to allow the Ministry of Education to continue handling questions related to copyright in the future.

In the government programme it was agreed to investigate whether these questions should be transferred to the new Ministry of Employment and Industries. The report is complete and the hearing process has been closed. Wallin draws the conclusion that there is no adequate reason to transfer the copyright questions to the new ministry, according to the Ministry of Education.

Copyright legislation is part of the management of cultural issues belonging to the Ministry of Education. In this area the Ministry enjoys an exceptionally good reputation, internationally, Wallin points out. However, he still feels that cooperation between several ministries on certain aspects of copyright legislation is needed.

Source: The Ministry of Education (10 October 2007)

## **A bill on recording and storing cultural material [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Finland]**

The government is proposing a new law on recording and storing cultural material. Statutory archiving would also be extended to cover online material as well as television and radio programmes. The purpose is to safeguard the national intellectual heritage in key media areas.

The government decided on the content of the bill in September. The legislation is scheduled to come into force 1 January 2008.

Source: The Ministry of Education (13 September 2007)

## **The Internet and copyright legislation [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Sweden]**

Cecilia Renfors has been investigating certain aspects of copyright legislation for the Ministry of Justice. Renfors' report carries the title "Musik och film på Internet - hot eller möjlighet?" (Music and film on the Internet – a threat or a promise?).

The investigator has considered measures to be taken for stimulating the development of consumer-friendly, legal alternatives for access to, above all, music and film via the Internet.

Among other things, the consumer legislation does not apply when it comes to trade involving digitalized products that are delivered electronically. In order to legitimate and create understanding for the set of rules constituting copyright legislation and its purposes, the general public's knowledge of this field of legislation should be increased, announces the Ministry of Justice.

Source: The Ministry of Justice (3 September 2007)

## **Media ownership**

### **Merger opens Nordic market for Icelandic company Saga Film [Media ownership] [Inter Nordic]**

Saga Film, the leader in Iceland when it comes to TV production and provision of production services, has merged with the pan-Nordic advertising group European Film Group A/S, according to the newsletter from the Nordic Film & TV Fund.

Both Saga and European Film Group A/S are now independently run subsidiaries of the new company European Film Group ehf (EFG) with operations in the five Nordic countries, the UK and the Czech Republic. EFG is now controlled by two major Icelandic groups, the leading media company 365 (63% of the shares) and investment group Baugur (37%). (...) As for its production services, the company that provided equipment and location services to Batman Begins and James Bond's Die Another Day has three Hollywood films scheduled for 2008, including one Paramount production, the newsletter writes.

Source: The newsletter of the Nordic Film & TV Fund (5 October 2007)

## **Svensk Filmindustri's dominance on the exhibition market is worrying [Media ownership] [Sweden]**

Astoria Cinemas' bankruptcy in July 2007 resulted in the company being taken over by Svenska Bio, controlled by SF Bio (49%), owned by Svensk Filmindustri, which in turn now controls almost 80% of the Swedish exhibition market. This is cause for great concern within the Swedish film community, the newsletter of the Nordic Film & TV Fund writes.

Cissi Elwin, Head of the Swedish Film Institute, commented to the newsletter that this situation we have in today's exhibition market in Sweden can be found nowhere else in Europe. Even in other small linguistic territories there are often several players, so such a situation is unique. She pointed out that this is serious, not only from an exhibition standpoint but also for film production and distribution in Sweden, and SFI is in serious talks with the municipalities, regions and the Ministry of Culture to see what measures can be taken."

The newsletter of Nordic Film & TV has asked representatives of Nordic exhibitors to comment on this situation in their own respective countries.

Kim Pedersen, head of Danske Biografer, feels that the competition situation among Danish exhibitors is fair for the time being. Nordisk, the country's largest cinema chain, has 44% of the market, followed by Cinemaxx with 11%, while the independent exhibitors share about 30%. However, Pedersen fears that the market situation in Denmark during the next five years or so will resemble the Swedish exhibitors' market, if Nordisk continues to grow.

See the newsletter for more comments from Nordic exhibitors.

Source: The newsletter of the Nordic Film & TV Fund (17 August 2007)

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## **Nordic Media Policy**

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NORDICOM is an institution within the Nordic Council of Ministers

Nordic Media Policy is an independent newsletter, covering the development of media policy in the Nordic countries. The publication's main sources are Nordic co-operative bodies and, at Nordic governmental levels, the authorities responsible for implementation of media policy. Other sources are organizations and institutions, both public and private, connected to media research and media development. Aspects commented on by the editor of the newsletter do not necessarily correspond with the views of the Nordic Council of Ministers/the Nordic Council or with those of the Nordic governments, parliaments or other public institutions.

The newsletter is published four times annually on [www.nordicom.gu.se](http://www.nordicom.gu.se)  
(See **Media Trends and Media Statistics in the Nordic Region**)