

Save the Swedish Record Archive!

“I am forwarding and strongly recommending an appeal against the actual destruction of the Swedish Radio Record Library, where I once worked. The collections there were of great importance for my work on the Jussi Björling Phonography. The text is also in English, and I hope that international support for the action against the wasting of a Swedish cultural treasure might be of some importance.”

—Harald Henrysson Sign the petition at <http://www.musikskatt.se/>

Swedish Radio's Grammfonarkivet (“the Record Library”) in Stockholm has one of the largest and finest collections of music in the world and is Sweden's largest music treasure. This library is financed by the Swedish people via a television license fee. The archive has suffered cuts since 2007 but now the Swedish public service companies — Swedish Radio, Swedish Television and Educational Broadcasting — have made even more drastic cuts to free up money for other activities. This has led to major service reductions for the archive. The cuts are so drastic that you can say that the Record Library in its current form has been effectively closed down.

The Record Library is no longer maintained as an archive with a long term perspective. Now the Swedish public service companies only focus on the archive as a production unit, which they see as an advantage in their competition with other media companies. As the Swedish public service companies own the Record Library, they can do as they please with it. Unfortunately this also means they have the ability to withhold access to a cultural treasure of national (and international) interest. None of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation's websites display any public information on the Record Library. What modern archive today lacks a website?

In 1928 the first person was hired to take care of the records that were piling up

at Swedish Radio. Sweden's Record Library has since been managed as a national archive for the past 85 years.

The Record Library's collection has both Swedish and international content and many unique recordings. Many popular network services such as Spotify and iTunes do not include large parts of Sweden's Record Library collections, even some of the digital material! The collection's sound quality is outstanding, as each record is archived separately and only handled by a few employees. In an international perspective, it is unique.

The cuts are now being implemented at a rapid pace.

Decisions have partly been decided to:

- Restrict the archival of new music to only music that has been ordered. In the past the Record Library staff has been able to ensure that relevant or important recordings were included as well. This means the collection's width will be considerably narrower. Additionally much of this music will be purchased as individual audio files, without metadata or the sound quality of original CDs that is minimum for archive standard today.

- The cataloging system will become the simplest possible, which is devastating to an archive. Future generations will not have access to a broad and open search capability. Yet there is no equivalent on the internet music services.

- The Audio Technology section of the Record Library has been closed. Office staff will continue to manage the playback of analog phonograms, 78s and vinyl. Recordings will not be professionally made and saved for the future in digital layers. Transfer of analog sound recordings is a specialist skill in audio technology. Programme production by the Record Library studio has closed down. This means it will no longer be possible to record music programmes from the archive. Closing this section also means that popular live pipe applications will not have access to shellac and vinyl records.

Archives health has low priority and will not be achieved by a workforce reduced by half.

Our politicians should earmark funds for the Record Library in the new Public Service Agreement which will take effect from 2014. However, the public service proposal from June 2013 shows that politicians do not want to interfere with what the public service companies are doing and they are blindly trusting that the Public Service Group will openly and properly take care of the archives.

This petition aims to draw attention to the Record Library's status as a national cultural treasure and that it must be maintained as one. Accessibility should be extended as far as copyright law allows. After all, Sweden is the country that exports the most music in the world after the U.S. and Britain. For the good of our current and future generations, this unique national music collection must be financed and developed instead of being degraded and reduced.

This petition will periodically be sent to the board of directors of the Swedish broadcasting corporation, to politicians and to the Swedish media in order to raise awareness of the value of this precious archive and to show the value of treating it as such.

The petition and supporting initiatives will continue until the proper maintenance of the archive is secured. It's important that we are as many as possible! Help therefore to spread the petition to all of your music lovers contacts via email and on Facebook.

You may sign up on the Swedish Website at <http://www.musikskatt.se/> ■

Editor's Note: *We sent out this petition to our email list a few months ago. The situation in Stockholm is unchanged. However, as more signatures come in, the petition will be resubmitted. If you have not signed as yet, we hope you will do so soon!*

The issues involved with maintaining physical collections are increasingly occurring not only in major institutions, but also at a personal level. See the following article about the conundrum from one of our board members!