

Policy for availability, describing, disseminating and curating sensitive material in the collections of the National Library of Sweden's (NLS) collections - draft

Introduction

As a national library, NLS has the task of collecting, describing, preserving and making available all material that has been dutifully delivered or otherwise collected without evaluating the content or taking into account subjective opinions. The collections must be accessible to everyone. Thus, NLS can offer an independent and undistorted source of material produced and distributed publicly in Sweden. Through our collections and services, we contribute to research and to a democratic development of society.

The fact that NLS's administrators act objectively and impartially lays the foundation for free dissemination of knowledge and opinion formation. In our collections, however, there is material that can be perceived as offensive as well as offensive or just generally unpleasant by, for example, being racist, stereotypical, colonial, misogynistic, sexist or homophobic. Things that were considered harmless to previous generations can arouse strong feelings today, and in the same way we cannot know how future generations will perceive things that we today regard as uncontroversial.

Outdated values, subjective party submissions, images, lies and pure propaganda are thus part of our history and are reflected both in the collections and in older descriptions. Such values can, however, constitute problems in making the collections available, describing, mediating and curing them.

For example, there is a risk that subjective positions from administrators or the spirit of the times will affect accessibility or that negative reactions and pressures will arise from users or other staff. It also happens that administrators experience discomfort in contact with users and suspect that NLS's collections may be used for dubious purposes.

The purpose of this policy is to prevent subjective or arbitrary assessments by constituting long-term support in the daily work of administrators in making available, mediating and mediating and curing sensitive collections within or outside NLS.

The policy consists of three parts: making available, description and mediation and curation. The purpose of this division is to keep the question of material in NLS's collections separate from the terminology used to describe the material in e.g. catalogs and databases, but also from descriptions of material that NLS actively chooses to highlight in connection with external communication and exhibitions, etc.

Availability

Materials in NLS's collections can verify or falsify current statements and thereby create a context for information that has been edited or manipulated elsewhere. NLS's administrators provide daily source material to users in different contexts and on different

platforms. The basic attitude is that all users should be treated equally and that material from the collections should be made available as freely and openly as possible with regard to current legislation, even if the material may be perceived as offensive or inappropriate.

- Production and making available of material from NLS's collections must take place to the greatest possible extent, regardless of who the administrator or user is - and regardless of whether the content can in various ways be perceived as offensive or outdated.
- The exceptions to this principle must be as few as possible and assume that material that is not illegal to possess or make available must always be made available without NLS's administrator taking a position on the content. See action plan.
- Accessibility according to the above shall also take place as far as possible without NLS's administrator expressing personal values or opinions in connection with the accessibility.
- The same principles shall apply to all forms of accessibility and on all platforms.

Terminology

There are many examples of outdated or problematic concepts and interpretations in catalog entries / metadata that have been established and are strongly associated with certain material in NLS's collections. Inappropriate expressions and obsolete names should not be passed on or reinforced, but at the same time it is necessary to comply with such terminology in order to be able to identify the material in question and find it in the collections. This also applies to metadata that is generated automatically or uploaded by suppliers, for example in connection with e-duty deliveries.

- Descriptions in catalog entries (metadata) of material in NLS's collections must be as neutral and factual as possible, without unnecessary interpretations and values.
- Terminology used in descriptions must always follow established and updated standards and terminology lists (for example SAO), regardless of which system the material is cataloged in.
- Existing concepts and descriptions in NLS's catalogs should in principle not be changed, however, outdated or problematic concepts or descriptions that express, for example, discrimination should be commented on and put in an updated context.
- To the extent that such adjustments are made in catalogs and descriptions, this must be done with transparency and traceability.
- Older catalogs and metadata that accompany deliveries or are imported must routinely be provided with a disclaimer stating that the descriptions may contain outdated or problematic concepts.

- Due to NLS's assignment to implement an investment in the national minorities' libraries as a resource library, special attention should be paid to descriptions that concern the national minorities, including the indigenous Sami people. If necessary, NLS's ethics council with representatives of the national minorities can be consulted on terminology issues.
- In case of uncertainty about the presence of outdated or problematic concepts and interpretations in catalog entries, etc., a more general comment can be made in connection with, for example, a catalog or a search service.

Mediation and curation

NLS's collections are not covered by the principle of openness, and we can therefore choose how and to what extent we actively want to highlight or hide material from the collections. Such positions are taken, for example, in connection with screenings, exhibitions, public programs in the auditorium, publication in NLS's publication series, digital collections and publications on our website NLS.se. In these contexts, it is essential that sensitive material or problematic concepts originating in our collections or catalogs are not passed on unreflected or uncommented.

- To the extent that material that is actively highlighted by NLS's staff through mediation or curation can be perceived as offensive or contains outdated or discriminatory terminology, the selection must be justified on the basis of clear and transparent criteria.
- When material referred to above is highlighted through mediation or curation, the selection should, if possible, be commented on and placed in an updated context.
- In case of uncertainty about the sensitivity of a specific material, a more general comment can be made in connection with, for example, an exhibition or a public program.
- The same principles shall apply to all forms of mediation and curation on all platforms.