

Assistant Professor specializing in The Role of Reading and Book Culture in a Sustainable Society

The Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences at Lund University is a uniquely interdisciplinary environment spanning diverse areas of the humanities. The position will be placed within the joint division of ALM, Digital Cultures, and Publishing Studies, where research addresses, among other things, new reading cultures, digital reading practices, and reading technologies. The division hosts several research groups and networks in these areas, as well as an active multidisciplinary seminar series.

The theme aligns with several ongoing and previous projects addressing digital and post-digital reading and book cultures; reading in relation to audiobooks and talking books; literacies (academic, information, and media) in Swedish schools and higher education; the publisher as reading promotor; reader activities and genre-making on social media platforms; and generative AI and the changing conditions for seeking and assessing information. It also relates to projects on reading as information practice, examining how individuals with different abilities navigate information, how actors in the Nordics counter disinformation, and how communication shapes sustainability transformations.

Researchers at the division participate in several interdisciplinary networks and research groups focused on reading and related issues. A recent networking project, Post-digital Reading Cultures: Mapping the Material, Institutional, Social, and Meaning-Making Dimensions of Contemporary Reading (PIs: Gitte Balling and Sara Kärrholm), has received funding from both Riksbankens jubileumsfond and the Independent Research Fund Denmark. It brings together researchers from Lund and several Danish universities (University of Copenhagen; Aarhus University), and has hosted guests from Australia, England, the USA, and Germany, with plans to expand further within Scandinavia and beyond. The assistant professor will be a valuable addition to this network, which in turn provides a strong context for developing research on the theme of this position.

The division participates in the national research school ReSource, which, among other themes, focuses on the historical development of informational reading practices and source criticism. It is also currently hosting guest professor Shelly Bouillane through the Lund University Programme for Global Excellence. Bouillane's research on the global dynamics of digital media use for civic and political engagement is relevant to the social sustainability aspects of this position, and her visit may open opportunities for future collaboration.

The thematic focus of the position, The Role of Reading and Book Culture in a Sustainable Society, aims to attract applicants interested in how reading practices, contexts, materialities, and technologies contribute to, or come into conflict with, imaginaries of a democratic and sustainable society. Reading habits and skills, particularly among young people, are widely framed as problematic in both national and global debates. In these discussions, reading is positioned as central to a sustainable society grounded in equality and democratic values, yet also as a practice in ongoing, and possibly escalating crisis. As a result, reading promotion has become a key concern for individuals, institutions, and governments. Reading is associated not

only with the language skills needed for participation in society and politics, but also with education, bildung, and psychological development – implying its role in fostering ethically and morally conscious citizens.

Book culture refers to the contexts and materials through which reading takes place. It encompasses not only printed books but also the social, societal, and institutional conditions surrounding books and other formats, including digital literature. It may, for instance, involve fan fiction, social media reading communities, and literary platforms of various kinds, and is closely linked to issues of literacy, reading promotion, and sustainability.

The area of investigation may, for example, concern different institutional approaches to reading and literacy in educational contexts; the democratic significance of reading and literacy; reading politics and policies; the (historical and/or contemporary) social and cultural contexts of reading; and reading practices and modes across formats and media. It may also address environmental sustainability, for instance through the environmental implications of readership and book culture.

This position will strengthen key areas within the division of ALM, Digital Cultures and Publishing Studies, focusing on digital cultures, technologies, cultural institutions, reading, literacy, publishing, and book culture. At the core of this interdisciplinary research is an interest in democratic development and sustainable societies. The theme is designed to bridge fields such as library and information science, publishing studies, book history, and digital culture studies, and to foster interdisciplinary synergies. It also addresses a field of global concern in a timely way, contributing to the development of an environment oriented toward international excellence.