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Session 3: New Ways of Engaging Audiences

From app of the day to yesterday's news? – The story of the yearbook application
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The Statistical Yearbook of Sweden has been published since 1914. The printed version contains a large amount of the statistics produced in Sweden in a concentrated form. Up until 2000 the yearbook was very much a book of tables, but over the last ten years we have included more and more photos, maps and a whole section at the end describing the average Swede and other rather unusual statistical abstracts. Otherwise the statistics are presented by subject area in tables, brief texts, graphs and maps. The 2012 yearbook had a total of 606 pages and it had then been reduced by about 120 pages from the year before. The price of the printed book has been around EUR 40 over the last couple of years. For some time now the yearbook has also been available free of charge on the Statistics Sweden website in PDF Format, both in Swedish and English (http://www.scb.se/Pages/Product___30937.aspx).

The purpose of the Statistical Yearbook of Sweden has been twofold: to strengthen the Statistics Sweden brand and to give easier access to the statistics through selection of particular statistics as well as annual data and time series. Strengthening the brand name has been a need of Statistics Sweden, but easy access to selected statistics is a need of the users.

We must admit that the yearbook had a much more important position before everyone had access to the Internet. Circulation of the book has dropped over the years and the decline has been especially dramatic over the last decade. In 2011 the edition was down to a mere 2 500, of which only about 1 000 copies were sold externally. Earlier the book was sold and distributed to schools and often used in the classroom. Due to reduced financing and the boom of computers in schools, the yearbook was not needed in a large scale anymore.

Several months after the release of the 2011 Statistical Yearbook of Sweden, again, sales were not looking positive even though the printed book got good media attention. The Communication

Department started looking at other ways of distributing the book. One possibility was to turn the book in to an application for smart phones and tablet computers. Over the last years we have seen the entrance of tablet computers into Swedish schools which makes the searching and finding of official statistics both easier and more fun!

In order to be able to release the application rapidly we decided to use the material in the form it is produced: Word documents. The alternative would have been to develop a yearbook application which was separate from the book which would be a much more costly and lengthy process. In fact, the application we had in mind would be more like an e-book for tablet computers. Since the Swedish market at the time was totally dominated by iOS tablets, we directed the application towards the iPad.

The functionality we wanted included features like text search, favorites and share functions. It also contained links to the Statistics Sweden website and a possibility to submit comments and suggestions. In July 2011 the company developing the application started working on this project and the application was available in Apple's App Store at the beginning of October. We decided on offering the application for free during the first year.

During the first week the yearbook application was downloaded from the App Store more than 5 000 times and it was rated as 4+ out of 5 (by 20 evaluators). During the second week it was chosen to be the "App of the day" by www.idg.se, a well known Swedish technology site. In connection with the media attention and blog discussions, it reached first place as the top free iPad App in the App Store. After a month it had been downloaded 14 800 times, and after six months it had been downloaded 20 300 times. Still, to what extent the application was actually *used* we did not know. There was a possibility to contact Statistics Sweden in the app but it was not used.

After the success of the 2011 yearbook application we decided to launch a new free version along with the printed 2012 version. We included some new features like maps with geotags and interactive graphs. The printed 2012 yearbook was launched on 18 January 2012 and the new application for the iPad was available in the App Store on 14 February. Whereas the first application had a sharp growth in downloads, the second one has had a steady increase. After a month it had been downloaded 4 500 times, and after three months it had been downloaded 13 700 times. People downloaded our application much during the Easter weekend, and in a few days there was about 2 500 downloads – much more than during the first days it was launched.

Compared to the 1 000 copies of the printed yearbook that were sold, the spreading of the application has been very satisfying. We have had both positive comments in the media and on blogs. It is seen as positive that the application is so comprehensive and that we offer it for free. On the other hand, some people have reacted negatively to the fact that the application is designed for the iOS platform.

Other lessons learned were that the application should bring additional value compared to the printed book, that it is hard to measure if and how it is used, as well as that the trademark Statistical Yearbook of Sweden is strong and should be properly managed in the future.

We are presently discussing the future of the Statistical Yearbook of Sweden in the Communication Department at Statistics Sweden. Do the two purposes of the yearbook still apply? If so, can they be fulfilled in another, better way? We have no plans for a new yearbook app for the iPad for next year. Instead we look forward to a 100 year anniversary edition for 2014.