Sales of Swedish novels abroad have increased dramatically in recent years. Total revenue has risen from around SEK 60 million (USD 8.5 million, EUR 6.6 million) per year in the 1990s to approximately SEK 150 million per year in both 2010 and 2011. In Sweden, the list of literary agents working mostly to sell rights on foreign markets has grown considerably since the 1990s. Today, Swedish literature is translated into around 50 languages, primarily Danish, German, Norwegian, Finnish, English, Dutch and Polish. Half the books translated belong in the ‘Nordic Noir’ genre – also known as Scandinavian Crime Fiction.

But even before crime took over, Swedish novels were popular internationally. Widely translated authors such as Kerstin Ekman, Marianne Fredriksson and PO. Enquist achieved considerable success in the 1980s and 1990s. At its height, Fredriksson’s book Anna, Hanna and Johanna was the fourth most-sold book in the world.

Paving the way
The pioneers of modern Swedish crime fiction are Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö, who between 1965 and 1975 wrote ten novels featuring detective Martin Beck. Their books were the first in the genre to analyze the challenges of a developing society from the perspective of those left behind in the modernization process. Sjöwall and Wahlöö paved the way for the rich flora of Swedish crime novels written since, many of which have been made into films or TV series.

The tradition that originated with Sjöwall and Wahlöö is clearly evident in Henning Mankell’s books about Inspector Kurt Wallander. Mankell opened the door to the international market, and the social criticism in his novels was an important reason for their success. His books have sold more than 40 million copies and been translated into 40 languages. They have also been filmed, both in Swedish and in the British television series starring Kenneth Branagh.

One of the best illustrations of the Swedish crime fiction phenomenon is the Millennium trilogy (Millennium-trilogin). Stieg Larsson’s series created an instant sensation worldwide and came to top bestseller lists in many countries. Larsson, who died in 2004, shared many personal traits with his he-
DID YOU KNOW?

POPULAR LIBRARIES
Sweden has a robust library culture, with some 1,300 libraries scattered around the country. Ninety-eight per cent of all Swedes have visited a library at some point. On an average day, the average Swede spends 21 minutes reading a book, 38 minutes reading a newspaper or magazine, and 68 minutes on the internet.

SUCCESSFUL SWEDISH FANTASY
The Circle (Cirkeln) is a Swedish fantasy book from 2011, the first in a trilogy about teenage witches written by Mats Strandberg and Sara Bergmark Elfgren. It has proved highly popular among adults as well, despite having been marketed as a book for young readers. The book has been translated into English and is scheduled for translation into 20 more languages.

LITERARY TOURISM
Sweden has a wealth of sites to attract literary tourists. They can for instance join the Millennium Tour, which points out key locations and settings described in the novels by Stieg Larsson. The Wallander tours in Ystad in the south of Sweden are also popular.

EBOOKS
Sales of ebooks in Sweden doubled between 2010 and 2011 but still represent only a fraction of publishers’ annual turnover. The largest share of ebooks is bought by public libraries. Each year, the libraries lend some 20,000 ebooks and 1,400 audiobooks to borrowers, via Elib, the Scandinavian distributor that dominates the Swedish ebook market.
Working-class author Vilhelm Moberg’s novels about Swedes emigrating to the US was made into a movie in 1971.

FICTION STEEPED IN TRADITION

Swedish writers have long been good storytellers. Authors such as August Strindberg and Selma Lagerlöf have left an indelible mark.

Among the classic writers of the 20th century best known for their accounts of working-class life are Eyvind Johnson, Ivar Lo-Johansson, Vilhelm Moberg, Artur Lundkvist, Harry Martinson, Jan Fridégård, Moa Martinson and Elin Wägner. Moberg was widely acclaimed for The Emigrants (Utvandrarna), a series of novels about Swedes who migrated to the US in the mid-19th century. Wägner’s themes include women’s rights, women’s suffrage, and peace and environment issues, and paved the way for Swedish feminist fiction.

In the 1960s, political activism increased in Sweden and documentary novels became popular, with PO. Enquist and Sara Lidman the leading names. Two other prominent writers of social critique are PC. Jersild and Jan Guillou. Jersild tends to write idea-based novels, such as House of Babel (Babels hus), in which he criticizes industrial-scale hospital care. His latest book, Ypsilon, was published in 2012. Guillou, who is also a journalist, is a controversial polemicist. As an author he is best known for his books about Swedish agent Carl Hamilton, and his historical novels about the Knight Templar Arn Magnusson. Both series have been filmed.

Kerstin Ekman penned a series of novels about working-class women, of which the first part, Witches’ Rings (Häxringarna) came out in 1974. Among her other leading works are Blackwater (Händelser vid vatten) and a trilogy, The Wolfskin (Vargskinnet), about social development in northern Sweden. Ekman was elected a member of the Swedish Academy in 1978, but left in 1989 in protest at its failure to support Salman Rushdie over the Satanic Verses controversy.

Torgny Lindgren is a member of the Swedish Academy and his books have been translated into 30 languages. His breakthrough came in 1982 with The Way of a Serpent (Ormens väg på hälleberget), which describes life in Västerbotten, in northern Sweden, at the end of the 19th century. Journalist and author Majgull Axelson has written numerous documentary books about the developing world. Her first novel, Far away from Nifelheim (Längt borta från Nifelheim), came out in 1994.
**LEARN MORE**

### THE SWEDISH ACADEMY

An independent cultural institution founded in 1786 by King Gustav III. Its official task is to advance the Swedish language and Swedish literature.

### THE NOBEL PRIZE

The Nobel Prize is the legacy of Sweden’s Alfred Nobel (1833–1896). In his will, he delegated the task of selecting the Literature prizewinners to the Swedish Academy. The first Nobel Prizes were awarded in 1901. Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2011. Other Swedish writers who have won the Nobel Prize are Selma Lagerlöf, Verner von Heidens- tam, Erik Axel Karlfeldt, Pär Lagerkvist, Nelly Sachs (German-Swedish), Eyvind Johnson and Harry Martinson.

### THE AUGUST PRIZE

One of Sweden’s most celebrated and prestigious literary prizes, it is awarded each November in three categories: Best Swedish Fiction Book of the Year, Best Swedish Non-Fiction Book of the Year, and Best Swedish Children’s Book of the Year.

### THE SWEDISH CRIME WRITERS’ ACADEMY

Established in 1971 to promote the writing of crime fiction, the academy awards several prizes, including one for the Best Swedish Crime Novel.

### THE GÖTEBORG BOOK FAIR

The annual book fair in Göteborg (Gothenburg) is the biggest meeting place in the Nordic region for both the book trade and the library sector. It takes place in September and in recent years has attracted some 100,000 visitors each time.

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**Gellert Tamás** is a Swedish journalist and author of several works of non-fiction, the best-known being *The Laser Man – A Story About Sweden* (Lasermannen – En berättelse om Sverige). It tells of John Ausonius, a convicted racist murderer who shot at eleven people with immigrant backgrounds, killing one, in the early 1990s.

**Katarina Mazetti** has written books in different genres. Several of them have been filmed and many have been translated into numerous languages. Her book *Benny & Shrimp* (Grabben i graven bredvid), from 1999, is about an odd love affair between an intellectual librarian and a simple farmer. In France, the book has sold 450,000 copies and is currently being produced as a play.

**Susanna Alakoski** was born in Finland but grew up in Skåne, southern Sweden. Her debut novel, *Beyond* (Svinlängorna), was made into both a film and a play, and has sold over half a million copies. It describes life in southern Sweden in the 1960s, in a culture where alcoholism was rife.

**Carl-Johan Vallgren** has won a number of awards for his books, which have been sold to 25 countries. *Horrific Sufferings of the Mind-Reading Monster Hercule Barefoot* (Den vidunderliga kärlakens historia) is the novel that has achieved the greatest success internationa-

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**USEFUL LINKS**

- **augustpriset.se** The August Prize
- **biblioteksforeningen.se** Svenska biblioteksföreningen: The Swedish Library Association
- **bokmassan.se** Göteborgs bokmässa: The Göteborg Book Fair
- **deckarakademin.se** Svenska Deckarakademin: The Swedish Crime Writers’ Academy
- **forlagare.se** Svenska förläggarföreningen: The Swedish Publishers’ Association
- **kulturradet.se** Kulturradet: The National Council for Cultural Affairs
- **nobelprize.org** Official Website of the Nobel Prize
- **svenskaakademien.se** Svenska Akademien: The Swedish Academy

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