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News from the Swenson Center

The 2018 Dagmar and Nils William Olsson Visiting Scholar Awards

Nevra Biltekin, Ph.D., University Lecturer at the University of Örebro, Sweden

Ms. Biltekin writes, “My main research interests involve transnational relations and gender history. The project focuses on two organizations founded in the United States: the *American Daughters of Sweden* (ADS), created in Chicago in 1926, and the *Swedish Women’s Educational Association* (SWEA), established in Los Angeles in 1979. The collection of SWEA is archived at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center. I will be able to study this material, which is of central importance to my project.”

“The ADS and SWEA are organizations that are operating through entirely unofficial channels with seemingly no affiliation to diplomacy. Yet, it seems that their activities indeed had cultural diplomatic qualities. Why did these women engage in public activities that promoted Swedish culture? In what ways have they fostered an interest in Swedish traditions? How can we understand their promotion and preservation of Swedish culture and tradition as an informal work of cultural diplomacy?

“What role has perceptions of Swedish culture and tradition played for the women of these organizations?

“The substantial SWEA collection at the Swenson Center consists of minutes, correspondence, newsletters, magazines, and various other documents relating to the activities that the members arranged locally and internationally. The collection is organized in three series: SWEA chapters around the world, SWEA International, and the Agneta Nilsson Papers. All of the series are relevant to my project. The materials of the SWEA chapters show what kind of activities SWEA has arranged locally and in different parts of the world.”

Ulf Zander, Ph.D. Professor at Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Dr. Zander writes, “my main focus will be to study the Allan Kastrup collection, the Nils William Olsson library, and material from the Swedish-American publications at the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center.

“My aim is to collect and analyze material about the *Swedish-American News Exchange*. Both Allan Kastrup and also Nils William Olsson were important for the development of Swedish public diplomacy in the United States and the day-to-day work that took part in the Swedish-American News Exchange, not least in connection to the Swedish official visits to North America in the postwar years.

“From 1926 to 1946, the Swedish-American News Exchange was under the leadership of Naboth Hedin. Under his leadership, the visibility of Sweden in the American press increased. Also, he wrote a large number of articles on Sweden. As a part of this work, he wrote numerous articles on Alfred Nobel and the Nobel Prize in literature. He also co-edited the set piece *Swedes in America: 1638–1938* with Adolph H. Benson.

“In 1946, the Swedish-American News Exchange got a new director, Allan Kastrup. In his work, Kastrup was both active, writing about Sweden, arranging visits from Sweden to the U.S., not least when it came to arranging meetings, speeches and other arrangements during the Swedish-American commemoration in 1948 which Adam Hjorthén has analyzed in his dissertation *Border-Crossing Commemorations. Entangled Histories of Swedish Settling in America* (2015). In 1964, Kastrup retired. At the same time, the *Swedish-American News Exchange* ceased to exist and its responsibilities were assumed by the Swedish Information Service.”

The 2018 Faculty Research Stipend awardee

Kimberly La Palm, Ph.D. Teaching Fellow in Scandinavian Studies, Augustana College

Kimberly La Palm is planning several courses for the students at Augustana for the next year.

She writes “In the week covered by this stipend, I intend to focus on *Fairy Tales and Folklore*, as this course will be offered the coming fall in a ten-week version.

“Fairy Tales and Folklore will introduce the theory and history behind the study and collection of folk traditions in Scandinavia and Germany beginning in the early 1800s. In the first weeks of the class, students will use the existing Scandinavian collections to learn about the field of folklore studies and Scandinavian traditions in particular. As the course progresses, we will begin to connect those traditions - along with the accompanying philosophies of National Romanticism and identity - to the Nordic influenced traditions of western Illinois and eastern Iowa from the nineteenth century until today. All of this will lead to a final group project in which students identify and analyze the Nordic-inspired aspects of local folk culture. The final projects will be presentational with the goal being to display the final products publically - either at the Swenson Center or in another area of campus.

“Students will need to work with the source materials in the Swenson Center in the initial stages of their research.”



Kimberly La Palm, Ph.D.

Elisabeth Thorsell