Writing and Society (Skrift och Samhälle, SoS)

Kick-off workshop

14 October 2016, 09:00–16:00
Humanisten, Göteborgs universitet, H821

The workshop aims at collecting ideas for a new research network at the Department of Languages and Literatures (SPL) at the University of Gothenburg. Everybody who is interested in taking part, please register by email no later than 10 October 2016: michelle.waldispuhl@sprak.gu.se.

Program

9:00–9:30: Reception, Introduction (Michelle Waldispühl, Johan Järlehed)

9:30–10:00: Johan Järlehed (SPL): Typographic transits and social transformations. Tracing the history of Galician and Basque types

10:00–10:30: David Karlander (Stockholm): Meaning and mobility: presences, absences and shifting metro spaces.

10:30–10:45: Coffee & Snacks

10:45–11:15: Adam Jaworski (Hong Kong): Writing as spectacle

11:15–11:45: Per Holmberg (Department of Swedish): Researching text and context. Experiences from the neighbour next door.

11:45–13:15: Lunch


13:45–14:15: William Veder (Amsterdam): When the language of texts does not match the language of society

14:15–14:30: Coffee & Snacks

14:30–15:00: Antoaneta Granberg (SPL): How shall we study the text transmission of growing texts?

15:00–16:00: Discussion, concept for profile and collaboration

The workshop is organised within the research profile "Transculturality, Translation and Transmission" at the Department of Languages and Literatures.
Abstracts

Antoaneta Granberg (SPL, Göteborg): How shall we study the text transmission of growing texts?

The talk presents an ongoing project on the text transmission of Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander romance that has resulted in numerous additions and significant structural changes in the text. The question is if the transmission of such texts that are the result of textual growth demands specific analysis (cf. David M. Carr, The Formation of the Hebrew Bible, Oxford 2011)? Is there any need of defining growing texts and how do texts grow? Does this reflect all levels of the text? Is there a gap between the entology and epistemology that must be kept in mind when studying growing texts?

Per Holmberg (Swedish Department, Göteborg): Researching text and context. Experiences from the neighbour next door

At the Department of Swedish Language a platform for research on discourse and interaction was established about five years ago. The research platform, one of five at the department, is called Text and Context. In my presentation I want to share some personal reflections from the first phase of the platform work. I want to discuss some threats that we have experienced, and hopefully overcame, and point out some benefits with this organisation of research both on individual and university level. In other words, what I have experienced as helpful, and what I hope others can too. The webpage of Text and Context is here (unfortunately still in Swedish only): http://svenska.gu.se/forskning/text-och-kontext

Johan Järlehed (SPL): Typographic transits and social transformations. Tracing the history of Galician and Basque types

This presentation deals with the so called Basque and Galician typography. Through modern history, these stylistically more or less coherent sets of letterforms have been used as localizing resources, coming to stand for, or index Basqueness and Galicianness. In this sense, they serve as homologues to particular language codes (i.e. Basque and Galician) and associated orthography. The perceived localness of these three layers of vernacular writing (type, code, orthography) is normally understood as restricting their mobility. However, tracing the history of the types we can see how they move, or are recontextualized from one inscriptive medium to another, from one communicative genre to another, from one social space to another, and from one language to another. Each one of these typographic transits entails a shift in and layering of social indexicality, adding to the historical and cultural complexity of these two instances of vernacular typography.

Adam Jaworski (Hong Kong): Writing as spectacle

In this workshop presentation I will discuss some preliminary ideas on text-based works of art that can, or should, be treated as spectacles – large scale, extravagant, and immersive sculptures and installations. We will examine some examples of works by such artists as Fiona Banner (1966–), Alighiero Boëtti (1940–1994), Robert
Indiana (1928–), Tsang Kin-Wah (1976–) and Roman Opála (1931–2011). We will ask such questions as: What makes writing spectacular? What are the uses and functions of spectacular writing, and how can we respond to it? Are there limits to what can be treated as ‘writing’ or written? We will consider how ideas about spectacle from several disciplines (performance, film, cultural studies, etc.) may illuminate our understanding of writing in general, and whether it may be useful or necessary to develop a distinctly sociolinguistic perspective on the spectacles of writing.

David Karlander (Stockholm): Meaning and mobility: presences, absences and shifting metro spaces

This paper deals with train graffiti. It focuses on the interplay of mobility and immobility, permanence and transience, presence and absence that constitutes the social life of this semiotic practice. Mobility feeds into the production and semiotic efficacy of train graffiti. At the same time, this mobility is closely linked to institutional efforts aimed at controlling graffiti in public spaces. Thus, train graffiti moves, but is also removed. An understanding of this dialectic contributes to a more refined understanding of the semiotisation of space and spatialisation of semiosis.

William Veder (Amsterdam): When the language of texts does not match the language of society

The apostles of the Ethiopians (St Frumentius †383) and the Slavs (Sts Cyril † 869 and Methodius † 885) chose to embody sacral texts in virtually extinct languages (Ge’ez, resp. Slavonic). To a society not accustomed to writing, these texts became authoritative (entailing atrophy of written communication in the living language). Lacking learning aids, the only way to access their language and meaning, was copying them (entailing disdain of printing). Emancipation of the living language to writing took 8 (Slavic) to 13 (Ethiopian) centuries. Ethiopian and Slavic philology is still in the process of coming to terms with this situation.

Michelle Waldispühl (SPL, Göteborg): Historical writing in the light of a “mediated social action”-approach

Historical texts we investigate today occur very rarely in contexts where they are still in use. Rather, they are decontextualized from the situations, time and in some cases also the place in which they were produced, seen and read on a more regular basis. In this presentation, I will brainstorm on thinking historical written documents as media of (assumed) social action in the past. Theoretical principles applied in this approach originate from modern media theory and sociology. What might be the epistemic profit in applying these principles to historical writing? Which are the downsides of such an approach? I will illustrate my considerations mainly with examples from my previous research on continental runic inscriptions and my current project on personal names in Libri vitae.