

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER - NOMINATION FORM

The A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection

PART A - ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1. Identity and Location

1.1 *Name of documentary heritage:* The A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection

1.2 *Country:* Finland

1.3 *State, province or region:* Helsinki

1.4 *Address:* Box 15 (Unioninkatu 36), FIN-00014 HELSINKI University, Finland

1.5 *Name of organization or institution (if appropriate):* Helsinki University Library

2. Legal Information

2.1 *Owner (name and contact details):* Helsinki University Library

2.2 *Custodian (name and contact details):* Sinimarja Ojonen

2.3 Legal status

(a) *category of ownership:* Public

(b) *details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage:* Customary library care including preservation in security stock and environmental monitoring

(c) *accessibility:* Public access and use in the reading room

(d) *copyright status:* No copyright restrictions

2.4 *Responsible administration:* Helsinki University Library

3. Identification

3.1 Description and inventory

The Collection is most comprehensive concerning the oldest printed cartographic atlases, geographical works and travel literature, collected by the founder of the history of cartography, Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832-1901, born in Finland, died in Sweden), who was also the explorer of the NorthEast Passage and the Nordic Regions. The Collection is especially rich in early history of cartography, printed Ptolemaic Atlases, sea atlases and incunabulas. It contains about 5,000 volumes covering the knowledge of the expansion of the known world from the Antiquity to Modern Times. (see Annex)

3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

The A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection in the Helsinki University Library. Annotated catalogue of maps made up to 1800. 1-5:2. By Ann-Mari Mickwitz, Leena Miekkavaara, Tuula Rantanen, Cecilia af Forselles-Riska. Helsinki, 1979-1995. XXVIII + 250, 324, 253, 371, 360, 251 PP. This catalogue covers only the maps. There is no printed catalogue of the entire collection. See also (3.5 Bibliography)

3.3 *Visual documentation, if appropriate:* Slides and few digital images

3.4 History

The Collection is a result of over three decades of systematic collecting. After A.E. Nordenskiöld's death in 1901, the Collection was purchased and moved from Sweden to Finland and placed in Helsinki University Library to be preserved in its entirety.

3.5 Bibliography

Häkli, Esko, A.E. Nordenskiöld. A Scientist and his Library. Helsinki, 1980. 80 pp.

Häkli, Esko. The A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection in Helsinki: Formation and composition. In: Papers of the Nordenskiöld seminar on the history of cartography and the maintenance of cartographic archives. Espoo (Finland), September 12-15. 1979. Ed. by Kerkko Hakulinen and Arvo Peltonen. Helsinki, 1981. pp. 19-28

Kish, Geroge. Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832-1901) historian of science and bibliophile. In: *Biblis* (Stockholm), 1968. pp. 171-183.

Marshall, Douglas. The Formation of a Nineteenth-Century Map Collection: A.E. Nordenskiöld of Helsinki. In: *Map Collector* (Tring), Dec. 1982. pp. 14-19.

Mickwitz, Ann-Mari. Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld and his Library. In: *GeoJournal* (Wiesbaden), 1979, nos. 3-4. pp. 395-398.

Mickwitz, Ann-Mari. Dear Mr. Nordenskiöld, your offer is accepted! In: *Map librarian in the modern world: Essays in honour of Walter W. Ristow*. Ed. by Helen Wallis & Lothar Zögner. New York & München, 1979. pp. 221-235.

Mickwitz, Ann-Mari. Några bokhistoriska anteckningar om Nordenskiölds bibliotek. In: *Nordenskiöld-samfundets tidskrift* (Helsingfors), 1974. pp. 3-19.

The A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection in the Helsinki University Library. Annotated catalogue of maps made up to 1800. 1-5:2. By Ann-Mari Mickwitz, Leena Miekkaavaara, Tuula Rantanen, Cecilia af Forselles-Riska. Helsinki, 1979-1995. XXVIII + 250, 324, 253, 371, 360, 251 pp.

Nordenskiöld, A.E. Facsimile-Atlas to the early history of cartography with reproductions of the most important maps printed in the XV and XVI centuries. Stockholm, 1889.

Pärssinen, Leena. The A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection of cartographic and geographical literature. In: *The Northeast Passage from the Vikings to Nordenskiöld*. Ed. Nils-Erik Raurala. Helsinki, 1992. pp. 206-226.

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

Prof. Ulla Ehrensverd, Banergatan 10, S-11523 Stockholm, Sweden (Tel. 08-6621175)

4. Management plan

At this moment the management plan covers normal national library procedures for handling and controlled access of rare material and storage in security stacks. The greatest threat to the material is the heavy use and photocopying of the Collection, which grew considerably after the catalogue was published. The air quality in the stacks is not perfect. Some of the material is in need of conservation, especially the foliosize atlases of nautical charts and other maps. It is mainly the bindings that are in need of repair. The green colour of the hand-painted maps contains copper which is now eating into the paper making it brittle. Within two years the Library will receive a new supervised rare books reading room and the use of the atlases will be concentrated to this room and copying can better be controlled and limited. The most used atlases will be microfilmed on 35 mm black and white filmrolls and this will limit the use of the original atlases. The Library has together with some other institutions specialized in preserving the cultural heritage of Finland started a digitization project. The possibility to digitize also the Nordenskiöld Collection's maps will be examined. For financial reasons, it is not possible for the Library to start any larger conservation project.

5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria

5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.

Criterion 1 - Influence: The Collection made it possible for A.E. Nordenskiöld to create his Facsimile-Atlas, the History of Cartography, and to add to our knowledge of the formation of the known world.

Criterion 2 - Time: The Collection reflects the influence of the explorations of new regions in commerce, navigational technology and political power from Antiquity to Modern Times.

Criterion 3 - Place: The Collection reflects the important role of the Mediterranean in Older Times to unite the surrounding nations. The discovering of the New World in the 15th and 16th centuries is richly described in the Collection. The Nordic Regions are exhaustively covered in the geographic and cartographic literature in the Collection.

Criterion 4 - People: The Collection contains early descriptions of native peoples and their habits in new and unknown regions from the Antiquity to the 19th century.

Criterion 5 - Subject/Theme: The Collection covers exhaustively the expanding knowledge of the known world, the innovations of the history of cartography, navigation and seafaring. It also contains all the important works of early discoveries.

Criterion 6 - Form and Style: The Collection reflects the advances of the art of the printing as seen in the history of cartography. Especially Italian, Dutch, German and French printing houses are richly covered from the 15th to the 19th centuries.

Criterion 7 - Social Value: The Collection has the spiritual value of describing mankind's search of innovations and new discoveries. It is an unfailing source of research for the historians.

Secondary Criterion 1 - Integrity: The Collection was collected by a scientist in a very systematic way and it is one of the most complete of its kind in the world.

Secondary Criterion 2 - Rarity: There are numerous extremely rare works in the Collection, for instance Atlas by Antonio Lafreri, printed in 1550-1572, 49 different Atlases by Claudius Ptolemaeus printed in 15th to 19th centuries, 140 incunabulas, early Americana, etc.

5.2 Contextual assessment: See the Annex

5.3 an evaluation of the authenticity: Idem

5.4 an assessment of rarity: Idem

6. Consultation

6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the

(a) Owner: -

(b) Custodian: -

(c) relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee: -

7. Nominator

7.1 Name : Professor Esko Häkli

7.2 Relationship to doc. heritage : ex-Director of Helsinki University Library

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate) :

7.4 Contact details : -

PART B - SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8. Assessment of Risk

There is no severe risk in the preservation of the A.E. Nordenskiöld Collection, except great variation of humidity in the stock. The most urgent need is conservation of damaged bindings of large atlases. A heavy use of the Collection by researchers is becoming a risk.

9. Preservation Assessment

. Present physical state

About 40% of the volumes in the Collection need conservation or minor repair. Some parts of the Collection have suffered water damages during the evacuation in 1944-1945 because of the war. A.E. Nordenskiöld himself had many of the volumes bound during his lifetime. The care of the Collection since 1902 has consisted in cleaning, boxing and in recent times some volumes have been microfilmed. The current preservation policy covers care and preservation in security stock since 1978 including the control of the physical environment. There are only limited possibilities for conservation treatment of rare books. Helsinki University Library, which is the National Library of Finland, has a team of conservation workers with three educated conservation technicians. The use of the Collection has been restricted to the reading room only. In a couple of years the Library will have a special rare books reading room for more secure use of rarities. The readers may then use only microfilms or facsimile editions instead of the originals in certain cases .

. History of preservation: -

. Current preservation policy in relation to proposed nominated documentary heritage: -

. Person or organization responsible for preservation

Leena Pärssinen, Helsinki University Library, Box 15 (Unioninkatu 36), FIN-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland

ANNEX

The Collection of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832-1901) and its origin A.E. Nordenskiöld was born in Finland and forged an impressive career in Sweden. One of the greatest treasures of Helsinki University Library is his extensive collection of cartographic and geographical literature, bought by the University of Helsinki in 1902 after his death. The Collection is Nordenskiöld's scientific library, which he assembled by acquiring source material from various fields of study in geographical history. This library was an inexhaustible source particularly for his great cartographic works.

Nordenskiöld studied mathematics, chemistry, mineralogy and geology at the University of Helsinki, and took his doctor's degree in 1855. He accompanied his father, Nils Gustaf Nordenskiöld, Chief Superintendent of the Finnish Mining Board, on mineralogical expeditions in various parts of Russia, and himself planned a natural science expedition to extend over Russia as far as the Pacific Ocean. For political reasons, he moved to Sweden in 1857, and became Superintendent of the Mineralogical Department of the Stockholm Museum of Natural History. Between 1858 and 1883 he participated in and led a total of ten scientific expeditions in northern regions. Nordenskiöld won universal fame as the discoverer of the Northeast Passage and as a sailor in northern polar regions. He acquired for his library an extensive collection of scientific literature, travel books, ethnographic publications, atlases and maps of northern parts. Nordenskiöld was particularly interested in the early history of cartography, an interest that gradually filled his life. His aim was to make as complete a collection as possible of all the literature published on the subject before 1570, when a new era in the history of cartography began with the appearance of Abraham Ortelius' atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. Later the collection grew to include the maps of more recent times up to the year 1800.

Material concerning the origin of the Library, invoices for books of antiquarian businesses together with the bibliographies and catalogues of large antiquarian companies used by Nordenskiöld, are archived along with the Library. Nordenskiöld also recorded precise information about the works he procured - when, where and at what price a work was purchased. In addition there are notes in the books about how rare or complete they are. Helsinki University Library recently acquired the archives of Nordenskiöld's childhood home, Frugård in Mäntsälä - partly as a legacy in 1987 and also as a purchase in 1990. The archives contain documents of the Nordenskiöld family since the 17th century; they ended up in Sweden after the sale of the Frugård manor in 1912. Letters in the archives from A.E. Nordenskiöld to his family include accounts concerning the collecting of the extensive library.

Nordenskiöld's interest in literature about voyages of discovery and travel was kindled by his own expeditions, and he made especially large acquisitions at the time of his expeditions to the North in the 1870s. He collected cartographic material concerning the Ptolemaic system and the geography of classical times in the 1880s. At that time he himself became interested in publishing works concerned with the history of cartography, among other publications his facsimile printing of the manuscript of Marco Polo's travel appeared in 1882. His acquisitions of nautical atlases and navigational literature are concentrated within the period preceding his *Periplus* study, on either side of the year 1890. He began to procure a larger number of significant works on the history of geography after the mid-1890s. The Nordenskiöld Library is extremely rich concerning the early cartography and geography and it contains many rarities in this field. There is a good number of works describing voyages of exploration and early travels in the Collection.

Nordenskiöld's governing idea was to chart the growth of geographical knowledge, the discoveries of previously unknown regions, and in particular to follow the appearance and circulation of new knowledge in cartographic description. Contrary to collectors in general, Nordenskiöld did not concentrate on a limited area or a certain theme, but on creating a complete collection covering all new geographical knowledge. The works of Ptolemy have a very special position. *Geographia*, a manuscript containing instructions for a description of the globe and the making of maps by Ptolemy, Greek mathematician, astronomer and geographer who lived in Alexandria in the second century AD, was preserved and

circulated until the 15th century and was translated into Latin. Nordenskiöld managed to acquire more printed editions of the work than perhaps any other known collection. Of the 54 atlases of Ptolemy printed before 1800, Nordenskiöld's library contains 49 different editions, 53 works in all and, in addition, a manuscript of the work from the 15th century.

The discovery of the New World and literature about early America were of special interest to Nordenskiöld. He carefully studied every reference to the new continent. There are notes concerning these observations in the books. The especially abundant selection of manuals concerning astronomy, astrology and astronomical navigation in the Collection partly belongs to the field of seafaring and nautical charts. Navigation theory and the earliest aids were based, like the fixing of position in general, on astronomical studies and measurements, which were applied to the practical needs of seafaring. Other aids for seafarers were portolans - hand-written sailing directions concerning coasts and harbours. There are several of these in the Collection.

To make his collection available to other scholars, Nordenskiöld published his Facsimile-atlas till kartografiens äldsta historia in 1899; it contains all the most important maps up to 1600. An English edition appeared in the same year. The work is unique of its kind, and a considerable work of scholarship; it is still one of the basic works of cartographic history. The printing plates of the facsimile maps are today in the possession of the Helsinki University Library.

Periplus, utkast till sjökortens och sjöböckernas äldsta historia, appeared in 1897 in both Swedish and English; it contains a history of hand-engraved and printed nautical charts. The study of old, mostly hand-engraved portolans, sailing directions and charts of routes and coastlines was an extremely arduous task and it appeared the work was a unique achievement. On the basis of his great works of cartography and numerous articles, Nordenskiöld may with good reason be considered the founder of the history of cartography.