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Swedish Librarians Learn about Ohio Libraries

By Theresa Laffey, Assistant Director
Support Services, Medina County District Library



If you asked a delegation of Swedish librarians what they did on their summer vacation, they would say, "We traveled to Ohio to visit libraries. One stop during our visit was to the Medina Library where we learned about their services to 151,000 people of all ages."

On Thursday, August 25th, Medina County District Library's Medina Library was visited by nine librarians from Varmland, Sweden who were interested in learning about all aspects of the library from funding sources, technology to programming and more.

The Varmland Delegation competed with thirteen libraries applying for a grant opportunity to evaluate libraries outside of Sweden. They applied as a collaborative group representing the different types of libraries in Sweden with the intent to learn how similar libraries in the United States operate. The Varmland delegation received one of the four grants.

The findings of Hennen's American Public Library Ratings directed the Swedish delegation to Ohio. Much mapping and website searching directed them to libraries in Cuyahoga and Medina counties as well as the Upper Arlington Public Library and Columbus Metropolitan Library. The delegation spent a week visiting different types of libraries, learning about their collections, particularly the floating collections, consortium participation, technology, digital services and how the libraries were influenced by the patrons.

Medina County District Library staff enjoyed meeting the members of the delegation and answering their questions. Director Carole Kowell welcomed them with a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted MCDL branches and their signature programs and the Manager of the Medina Library, Christine Gramm, provided them with a tour of the Medina Library, which wowed them. Sylvia Williams, Collection Resources Manager, was available to answer questions about the collections and Technology Manager, Sue Demis, fielded questions about her department. Heather Coontz, Community Relations Manager,

dealt with branding issues and Assistant Director Theresa Laffey addressed the importance and benefits of community involvement.

Medina staff and the Varmland delegation enjoyed dinner together at a local restaurant, Steve's Dakota Grill, before we hugged and said our goodbyes. They invited us to Sweden to visit their libraries and one librarian said, "You are our new best friends!"

Delegation members:

Asa Hansen, Director of the Karlstad Public Library and coordinator of the delegation

Anna Christina Rutqvist, Ingalill Wallander Olsson, Camilla Kallgren are from the Varmland County Library

Katarina Kristofferson, Arvika Public Library

Ina Huss, Saffle Public Library

Ulrika Svensson, Forshaga Public Library

Lena Saltberg, Kristinehamn Public Library

Karin Andreasson, Hammaro Public Library