Participants:

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Wednesday 14/06

Arrival at Stockholm
Natur och Kultur invited the participants on a sailing trip through the archipelagos of Stockholm including a welcome dinner on the island of Waxholm

Thursday 15/06

Morning: The Science and Math Network Program

Anders Berndtsson (Natur och Kultur) welcomed everybody at the premises of Natur och Kultur, and Preben Späth (EEPG) organised the presentation of all participants.

Topic: New materials in mathematics and science teaching/learning. How to be competitive in the schoolbook market in these subjects. Success stories in physics and math publishing.

Karin Herlitz (Natur och Kultur) presented the project ‘Easy Readers in Science’, characterised by easier materials in science, and she answered the following questions: Why such materials? There is a demand for easier materials (due to foreign mother tongue, dyslexia etc.). The series is called PULS, and it consists of ordinary textbooks, teacher’s guide, extra materials, photocopy ready materials, and sound recordings of the texts (in the textbooks) for dyslexic children. “PULS FOKUS” are easy to read versions (in a more simple language), with focus on the most important stuff. They are meant for parallel use with the ordinary textbook. The target groups include 1: immigrants and 2: pupils with reading problems. Layout differences include more spacing, bigger font size, line numbers on each page, uneven margin to the right, (so that the space between letters and words are always identical). There are almost no word divisions, each double spread (page) should contain only one
‘story’, head lines reveal a lot of the substance/topic, pictures tight closely to the text. In addition there are context clues (connectors), and special attention is given to the ‘voice’ in the text (a personal touch showing the author through the text). These books are going to be published now – they believe there is a big market coming. Summary: it is a big investment, it is important in competition, may attract new customers (click here to see the presentation).

Mare Herlevi (Otava Publishing Company) gave a presentation of the project “PI”, a New Maths Series for lower secondary school. The book has not been published yet. Eventually the series will include 4 books (10 courses), teacher’s guides, and special workbooks. Target groups include grades 7-9. Pre-marketing activities: Presentations; promotion gifts; an Internet game (for pupils) The basic ideas behind: it should develop thinking skills, enable ability grouping (exercises: easy – intermediate – challenging), be easy to use. There are also plans for workbooks for pupils with learning problems. Pre-version: the materials have by now been tested with 300 pupils and 15 teachers. Autumn 2006 there will be another testing period, so the material will be published in 2007. New aspects include serious concern about illustrations, e.g. historical aspects, music, sports etc. to illustrate Math concepts (click here to see the presentation).

Ingrida Kreicberga (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers) told us about the book “Algebra for each lesson” – a new textbook for grades 7-9. The set includes a textbook, activity book and teacher’s book. All the books have been tested in schools already. Each lesson consists of theory, samples, classroom exercises, and home exercises. Integration with ICT is planned soon. Discussion about whether to present theory first and then see samples of it in real life – or start with life experience and the try to understand the theory (click here to see the presentation).

Maruta Kusina (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers) talked about a natural sciences project for grade 5 called ‘Find out the world’. The subject natural science is a totally new subject in Latvian schools now. Topics are for example: flying – the solar system – heat and fuel – chemical reactions – plants – animals – human – earth – landscapes. In each chapter there is theory combined with and practical experiments (click here to see the presentation).

Thor-Atle Refsdal (Gyldendal Undervisning) mentioned a new curriculum is being implemented in all Norwegian schools these years. The basic skills targeted in the curriculum define that each pupil should: a) be able to express oneself orally, b) be able to read, c) be able to express oneself in writing, d)be able to do arithmetic, e) be able to use information and communication technology. Gyldendal has decided to make a brand new math series to comply with the new curriculum. The steps in this project were/are the following: the publisher talked to teachers asking what they would like to have in the books. Some chapters were written and tested by 20 teachers and 300 pupils, and the ‘books’ were changed accordingly. Furthermore it was mentioned that national tests in Math are to be organised every year after 4th, 7th and 10th grade – they will be changed next year due to many protests in the first years. This year’s publications from Gyldendal are for grades 1 to 5 and for grade 8. The series has for each grade: one pupil’s book, one workbook, one teacher’s book, also there is a special web site for each book series – the books are all called ‘Multi’ (i.e. different teaching methods may be used with the same material). The whole series will cover Math for the grades 1 to 7. In the teacher’s book every double spread has a small copy of the two relevant pages from the pupil’s book and around his picture are guides on what to do etc – so the teacher does not need the pupil’s book himself. The innovation in the series is that activities are integrated into the learning. Finally Thor-Atle Refsdal showed the open, free web site especially made for this book series ‘Multi’ (click here to see the presentation).

Bernhard Keller (Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich) presented a new schoolbook in Math for children of age 4 to 8 years. New legislation in Switzerland has introduced real learning also in the kindergartens. The point is now to make a bridge between kindergarten and 1st grade (Grundstufe). The projects are running until 2009, only then will it be decided finally if the project should be permanent. It is a big challenge to allow for individualisation since some children are only two years in the “Grundstufe”
(kindergarten and 1st grade); others are three years there and even some for four years. But normally they are learning Math in the ‘class’ together, so individualisation is a high priority. In addition passing to the next level in a flexible manner is necessary. There are always two persons performing team teaching simultaneously in the class. There are six topics e.g. counting – numbers and figures – forms and movement – plus and minus – measuring and comparing – patterns and rules.
The products will include: One teacher’s book with ideas on how to discover math (5 topic related booklets); a folder for the teacher on how to understand Math (learning in groups), 6 topic related booklets; 4 exercise booklets for children (individual learning); a picture book, posters or calendar; one additional booklet on using the books in the basic school (project). The material is to be published summer 2007.

Regimantas Baltrušaitis (Alma Littera/Šviesa) first described the new conditions for textbook publishing after the change of 1990 in Lithuania. In 1992 they started to publish a new textbook series for physics in grades 7 to 10. It has been very successful – no competition in this area/subject. After another change of curriculum in 2003 they started publishing a revised and renewed version of the physics book for grade 7. The whole set was published in one year: Textbook, workbook, teacher’s guide, tests, and laboratory book. In 2003 more than 40,000 copies of the textbook were ordered, meaning that ALL pupils in Lithuania were and are using this book for physics. Other relevant reasons for the success are listed in the presentation (follow the link below). On the other hand they have lost market share in Math – physics is their strong subject within the sciences. And yet hey have regained some of the market for Math – again (click here to see the presentation).

Liz Marchant (Harcourt Education) first gave a short presentation of the company since this network meeting is the first to be attended by a representative of our new member in the UK. The main issue for educational publishers is to really understand what the customer actually wants. Liz Merchant presented a project running over the last three to four years, based around Science. Customers (i.e. the teachers!) needs are: Inspiration to have pupils enjoy science; Support; and Success (of the teaching and learning process). They launched the first course last year – on Biology: it is a student’s textbook but ALSO an on-line course. The on-line course offers topic resources, skills support, assessment, teacher and technician guidance, and communication services (students’ forum, teachers’ forum, newsletter, real science stories etc.). Question: Why has it been successful? Answer: Students feel supported – there is a good mix of class room and individual activities – students can understand their progress. Secondly Liz Marchant gave a guided tour of the on-line Biology course (if you want to see it yourself, please visit www.snabonline.com) (click here to see the presentation).

**Topic: ICT and e-learning projects. Any ideas to earn money with e-something-learning-teaching-thing?**

Teuvo Sankila (Otava Publishing Company) presented four different projects: A: TutkiNet (‘search-net’), an application with so-called learning objects for secondary school. At present Otava has learning objects for 9 school subjects (Geography, History, Chemistry, Finnish etc.) The presentation explained their goals with such learning objects. Most of them are made with the Flash platform, so they are platform independent (please see the presentation for some excellent definitions of what good learning objects are and what they should be able to accomplish). The subjects are divided into 50 different themes, important aspects are differentiation, usability, variability, generability – you do not have to use Otava’s books in order to benefit from the learning objects. In Finland you cannot buy one learning object, but the whole school or even the municipality should buy some for their area. For example the city of Helsinki is interested in buying learning objects for all their schools. By end of 2006 Otava will have 750 learning objects ready.

B: Luotsi – course tutor for Math is a tool to present courses for e.g. students in grade 12 or early University students. The contents cover all required topics in higher mathematics. Lots of tasks are offered. Once the system knows you it will be your personal tutor. These course tutors will be sold individually to students from spring 2007. It now contains the whole of math needed for upper secondary school in Finland.
C: Digital wall maps are a totally new way to use maps in schools. The application (a collection of highly interactive PDF-files) covers Finland (in Swedish and Finnish); the Nordic and Baltic countries; Europe; and the World. These three areas have been published by now. All maps are in pdf-format (using the layer information aspects), zooming is possible, extra information, text search in all maps, ready made bookmarks. And of course they are to be used with a data projector in school environment. The digital map is now sold to schools as one license per school, price 400 euros with all four maps.

D: Digital birds on CD: ‘Get familiar with nature’s creatures’. This CD-ROM presents the birds of Finland – 100 birds, 4 images of each bird, 70 birds with a sample ‘song’, and short descriptions of each bird. It is to be used with a browser – first from CD, later via Internet or mobile phone. Target groups are schools from grade 5 to grade 9. The price per unit will be 95 euros, for a school 195 euros (click here to see the presentation).

Bernhard Keller (Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich) passed the catalogue of the Lehrmittelverlag around showing a CD-ROM with birds (pictures and sounds) from Switzerland, also a CD-ROM with frogs and another about cooking. Most of the CD-ROMs are meant to be teachers’ materials. About on-line learning: Some companies in Switzerland produce tests for children with learning disabilities; there are on-line tests for general education in different subjects and levels.

Per Nilson (Natur och Kultur) talked about a physics project: Computerised learning system for physics (and later also math will be available); it is coupled with ‘Heureka’, a physics book for upper secondary from Natur och Kultur. If you want a closer look please visit www.theducation.se yourself. You will find simulations, interactive presentations, e.g. radiation where you set the settings yourself. There are also typical exercises (all with hints, and whole solution to see if you want) and also diagnostics for each chapter. In the teacher specific section you can see the scores of all pupils in the class, and you may indicate which chapters should be open to the class now. This program site started in 2004. Big question: Is there any profit in this for a publisher? Answer: It is too early to say yet. It is mainly used in distance learning, which is very wide spread in Sweden. If you buy access for e.g. 100 students you will pay 15 euros per student per course.

Friday 16/06


Teuvo Sankila (Otava Publishing Company) told the story of a Math textbook published in 2003. The new idea was to make math ‘easy to read’; teachers told them it was a good idea (presenting Math in a more verbal way). For the layout they tried to be innovative with lots of colours; they had a tough timetable in order to be the first on the market. They actually were ready just in time with lots of presentations, but they only sold 1000 copies (expected 10,000). They stopped the series and never made the three other books planned. They asked the teachers who did not buy it why: they disliked the many colours, too much text in the theory boxes, they were not convinced at first glance. The lessons learnt included: The customers did not want the innovative changes, and there was too much testing. We should try not to be too modern – and listen to the customers. Give them traditional books if that is what they want. Finally when we publish a series, one book published is not enough – the teachers must be able to see the other books at the same time to be convinced. They have had a web club for primary teachers where they can get all free materials coupled with the books from Otava. There is also a newsletter with monthly issues.

Maruta Kusina (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers) had another story: 8 years ago they planned books for grade 4 for art education which simple did not sell. Reasons for failure: The book was too late. Another
book for natural science failed because at the same time the Ministry changed the curriculum, so they had to cancel the book.

Thor-Atle Refsdal (Gyldendal Undervisning) mentioned that Norway had got a new curriculum in 1997. They asked the teachers what they needed? They wanted books to be used by the students when they write their own projects (on their own hand) – with different themes. Gyldendal made nice books and published them (the teachers said ok for the books). Themes were e.g. energy, solar system, books about different countries etc. First year they published 8 books, and planned 8 each of the following years (32 in total). But after two years they had to stop the series. The reason was probably that the schools did not organise as many projects as foreseen in the curriculum. So the teachers maybe were/are more traditional than we think/hope.

Bernhard Keller (Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich) presented three books about the ‘language of Mathematics’. They are interdisciplinary books for 1-3 grade, 4-5 and 5-6 grade. They deal with how to explain things with language and with Math. The approach is called dialogue learning. The books are for the teacher – not for the pupil! The books are not sold, however, maybe because of the layout? The book does not look like a math book, and you must read the whole book in order to understand the idea behind. The whole approach may be too difficult for the teachers, and too new, too innovative.

Regimantas (Alma Littera/Šviesa) told the following story: Seven years ago they planned a new textbook for Math for gymnasium – it should be traditional (like the teachers!). The first years they tested the book with 600 students and 20 teachers. Later they corrected the book and got the approval from the Ministry. Later they published more books in the series. But the sales were a disaster – why: probably because the textbook was very difficult and made mainly for the highest level (click here to see the presentation).

Liz Marchant (Harcourt Education) presented a science project for the age group 14-16 years. It is a science project with new style of teaching science according to GCSE. Many publishers try to enter this new market. The teachers need material to update and use science from the real world in the class. They have the student’s textbook plus an on-line course, and many competitors have already published their materials in April. Harcourt started thinking in September 2005 and have been working very hard since then to be able to publish in May so the books are ready for the autumn. They published the books already in March and set up the web site with half of the content needed (technical problems with integrating the rest). The web site is called ‘Gateway Science’, and it looked fine on the surface, and the learning objects are actually good. The problem was how to deliver the online course. They took a delivery platform from somebody outside, but it became clear that the usability is a problem; the navigation is not convincing and seems rather bad. It is very difficult to change anything like text in this platform, and only four weeks after launching they were able to integrate a quick tour demo on the web site (click here to see the presentation).

Martin Nyman (Natur och Kultur) told a ‘sad story’ on Physics for secondary school. They had a well-known author from the University of Uppsala; he was interested in the history of physics – starting in the Stone Age and so forth. He got a state scholarship to write these books. In total the project contains four books, published in the year 2000. The chapter on Mechanics for example starts with the way Aristotle looked at nature etc. Teachers found it interesting and bought it so the first year they covered 20% of the market. But the students thought it was not interesting with all these historical aspects, there was too much text – they wanted physics, not history. After some years they revised the whole package, hoping for success. The text was shorter now, not so much history etc and four colours etc. but it is still not a success.

Next years topics
As topics for coming meetings of this network the following topics were suggested:

- How to help students with learning problems
- How to engage and motivate the students especially for Math and Science (e.g. getting girls interested in Science and Math)
- Successful and not successful stories of books/series for Biology and Chemistry
- Learning objects in Math, Physics, Biology etc. (will also be discussed at the EEPG meetings in Frankfurt in October 2006)

Teuvo Sankila (Otava Publishing Company) has now been the annual EEPG representative of this network for 5 years. In order to give others the chance he asked for permission to step back. Everybody highly appreciated Teuvo’s engagement and work for the network so far, and it is with pleasure to suggest Thor-Atle Refsdal (Gyldendal Undervisning) to take over from the year 2007. Fortunately Thor-Atle accepted this election which is to be confirmed at the EEPG meeting in Frankfurt.

14.00:
*Alfred Nobel, the Price and the Laureates.* A visit to the Nobel Museum (guided by professor Anders Barany).

On behalf of all participants I would like to thank Anders Berndtsson (Natur och Kultur) for his great help to organise this meeting and his contributions to make it a fruitful and (in the evenings) entertaining event for the EEPG network. Last but not least I wish to thank Natur och Kultur for hosting the meeting.

XX June 2006
Preben Spåth