

## Foreword

One could ask why no historian of science in Sweden has yet assumed the challenge of following up Sten Lindroth's monumental work from 1967, *Kungl. Svenska vetenskapsakademiens historia 1739–1818* [*The History of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences 1739–1818*], by describing later developments. The year in which Lindroth ended his history, 1818, was the year that Jöns Jacob Berzelius assumed the post of permanent secretary. This was the start of a development from a practically focused academy to an academy with increasing emphasis on the value of science in the search for new knowledge, a development that eventually resulted in unforeseen discoveries and innovations. This development is international and is the foundation of our contemporary knowledge-based society.

Certainly, the period after 1818 has been covered by historians of science, but no one has been bold enough to describe the collected and multifaceted history of the Academy of Sciences. We can only speculate as to why: Perhaps this task has been regarded as too comprehensive for anyone who may have approached the idea? Perhaps demands for specialisation have meant prioritising more defined areas of development in the history of science ahead of works of a more general character? It is also probable, as research is increasingly measured in terms of productivity, that this also counteracts more extensive, risky projects.

The question of the Academy's history after 1818 was actualised in 2007, in association with a review of activities at the Center for History of Science that was conducted by the Academy. In brief, the proposal entailed that the centre, which is responsible for the rich archive of the Academy, should be a forum for increased cooperation with other actors in the history of science, for example in describing the later history of the Academy. The proposal was well-received and a project group was brought together to formulate a national project in the history of science, one that would not only illuminate the history of the Academy, but would also contribute to encouraging Swed-

ish research in the history of science. The task was to think big and bold. I remember the great enthusiasm that characterised the planning work, which eventually resulted in a funding application to the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation. The project was titled “Science and Modernisation in Sweden: An Institutional Approach to Historicizing the Knowledge Society”. The foundation granted funding to the project which, in addition to ordinary research, has also resulted in this book, with its two complementary sections. One section presents the Academy’s history since it was founded in 1739, focusing on the role the Academy has played in the development of science in Sweden in relation to the political forces that shaped society, and one section highlights the material and visual aspects of knowledge formation in a unique manner.

Our warm thanks to all the researchers, archivists, curators and advisors who have, in various ways, contributed to this successful completion under a farsighted management which, as work progressed, made the most of the project’s inherent potential for development based upon the ideas and expertise of the participants and upon rich archive materials. Also, many thanks to the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, which enabled the completion of the project.

History shows that the Academy of Sciences, during its almost 300-year history of work to promote the sciences, has assumed different roles in the development towards what now characterises our knowledge-based society. The desire to work by putting knowledge into movement for societal development was clarified during the revision of the Academy’s statutes in 2006. The first sentence of the mission statement now states that the Academy is “to promote the sciences and strengthen their influence in society”. This puts the double role of the Academy in writing; to work for both scientific renewal and the role of knowledge in society, on the basis of its autonomous status. With science as its foundation, the Academy works tirelessly onward to shape a future built upon knowledge, knowledge that provides hope for the future.

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