Decoration, Discrimination and “What Every Woman Ought to Know”: Women Film Exhibitors in Stockholm 1896-1930

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Film historians have tended to prioritise production – and especially the male-dominated role of the director – over exhibition, distribution and consumption. US and UK-based film scholars such as Hill (2016), Gledhill and Knight (2015) Gaines et al (2013) and Lant & Periz (2006) have proposed useful methods and models for the investigation of other film industrial professions and contexts that can shed new light on women’s contribution to and relationship with film history. In Sweden, women have worked as film exhibitors or cinema managers from the very earliest film screenings in the 1890s, arguably having an impact on Swedish film culture through their selection of filmic representations that audiences would encounter on the cinema screens. Preliminary research indicates that women played an active role in the formation of an early culture of cinema exhibition in Sweden, comparable to the documented work of women in American silent film exhibition (Fuller Seeley & Ward 2013), and that earlier historians of Swedish cinema history have failed to take women’s voices into account. Using several cinema exhibitors active in Stockholm as case studies, I will discuss how the work of individual cinema owners and/or managers can be traced through various kinds of records, and the implications of this for Swedish film history.

Bio
Ingrid Stigsdotter works at IMS, Stockholm University. She currently participates in an EU project “I-Media-Cities” on new technical solutions for access to moving image archives as well as coordinates “Women in Nordic Film History” research network. Her research focuses on film reception, representation and cinema history through feminist perspectives. She is currently working on a special issue of the Journal of Scandinavian Cinema on film archives and as well as on an anthology on women and film history. She is a member of the team of Cinema & Cie’s journal and of the Swedish Film Institute’s council for film circulation and exhibition. Further info: https://research.ims.su.se/se/profiles/94-ingrid-stigsdotter

References