Meet Maria Göransdotter

In her comfort zone doing research

Investing in AI
With the impacts in mind

UCL
A programme rearing 300 leaders

THEME
Making research accessible

A day at work
Secret activities on campus

UMEÅ UNIVERSITY
I had the weirdest dream

My robot vacuum had malfunctioned and was buzzing idly, instead of completing the scheduled clean. My reaction was to bend down and pat the vacuum, as to comfort it, just like I would with a child who had fallen and scraped his knee. This was just a dream, but I can’t help wondering if assigning human properties to technological aids is what lies ahead. Not just in films, but in reality.

It was comforting to listen to Virginia Dignum’s installation lecture at the Annual Celebration in October. She assured us that artificial intelligence isn’t intelligence. So far, humans have a head start. At is still an area that most of us have a hard time understanding. Our university invests hugely in AI, both from our own budget and as a part of a national multi-million investment.

Consequently, researchers are required to explain to the public what they are looking for and what conclusions they reach in their research – preferably in a non-technical, popular science language.

In this issue of Aktum, you can read about how researchers at Umeå University disperse scientific discoveries, show what their roles as researchers entail, and not least inspire children to gain an interest in research and researching.

Interest is huge and the investment is important, something we see proof of every week at the Scientific lunches and every month at Fika efter en forskare.

By the way – I don’t own a robot vacuum and never have. To be on the safe side, I won’t buy one in the future either. I wouldn’t even dream about getting one ...

“...but I can’t help wondering if assigning human properties to technological aids is what lies ahead. Not just in films, but in reality.”

INGER NILSSON
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On the intranet Aurora, you can read previous issues of Aktum in digital format.

www.aurora.umu.se/en
On the intranet Aurora, you will find the latest news for people working at Umeå University.
Five questions to **Ann Phoenix**, professor of social psychology at the University College London. In 2020, she will hold the Kerstin Hesselgren visiting professorship at Umeå University.

1. **Tell us about this professorship.**
   “The visiting professorship is funded by the Swedish Research Council. It has been granted to Umeå University to support the development of a research programme on norm critical pedagogy in education, family and work life. I’ll be working with a research group called Gender and Pedagogical Processes in Society (GePS) at the Department of Education, with, among others, Ann-Louise Silfver, and also with the Umeå Centre for Gender Studies.”

2. **What is the duration of your stay?**
   “It’s a two-period visiting professorship. I’ll arrive on 1 February and will be staying until June. Then I’ll be coming back in September until the end of November.”

3. **What kind of work will you do here?**
   “My tasks involve developing opportunities for supporting doctoral students with thought-processes in research projects. But I’ll also be contributing with intellectual stimulation and thinking through ideas with the researchers. I’ll hold an inaugural lecture on 26 February. I’ll also be teaching.”

4. **What does your research entail?**
   “I started studying motherhood in the late 1970s and the 1980s. From that, I developed an interest in life-course perspectives and social identities. A recent piece of research I’m doing with Marja Peltola at the University of Helsinki concerns masculinity in 11 to 14-year-old boys in Helsinki. But I’ve also studied issues of migration and intersectionality a lot.”

5. **Can anyone listen to your lecture on 26 February?**
   “Absolutely. It’s a public event.”

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**Lectures followed by ceremony**

According to tradition, the 2019 Annual Celebration at Umeå University was held ceremoniously in October.

18 new professors, 8 honorary doctors, 11 award and 2 medal of honour recipients were installed, conferred and celebrated. In the morning, guests of honour also held popular science lectures to many members of the public who made it to the University to listen to them.
We must learn what the impacts of AI are

Artificial intelligence (AI) is constantly entering new fields, and with that, interest is increasing for how technology affects human behaviour and everyday life.

TEXT: Mikael Hansson  PHOTO: Johan Gunséus

These are issues that a new Swedish research programme — WASP-HS — will focus on over the next ten years.

The research programme has been awarded SEK 660 million until 2028 initiated by the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation.

Umeå University will be host university and coordinator of the programme. Focus lies on ethical, financial, labour market, social, cultural and legal aspects related to AI and the ongoing technology shift.

One of the foremost reasons why Umeå was singled out as host for the programme is Professor Virginia Dignum, who leads the research group Social and Ethical Artificial Intelligence at Umeå University. She is a highly merited, international researcher and one of 52 experts appointed by the EU to provide guidelines for the choices that Europe has to make in the wake of the AI development. Virginia Dignum now becomes the scientific leader for WASP-HS.

“To ensure that AI is of value to the entire human race, we must first learn what the consequences for humans and society are, at the same time as we are exploring its mathematical and technical aspects,” says Virginia Dignum, who was installed as professor at Umeå University at the 2019 Annual Celebration in October.

HS STANDS FOR HUMANITIES and Society, which refers to the hypotheses that will be studied. WASP-HS will hence be a complement to the research programme WASP, Wallenberg AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Program, which is the biggest privately funded research programme in Sweden to date with its total funding of nearly SEK 4 billion.

In autumn 2019, WASP-HS has granted funding for 16 research projects studying how AI and autonomous systems affect our society and our behaviour.

Some examples of questions that will be processed by the projects are: What changes will occur on the labour market when robots take over jobs? What implications does the advancement of face and voice recognition technology have? How are people’s behaviour affected by the increasing number of drones? What happens to the trade market when AI controls consumer choice? Can digital assistants prevent stress-related illness? Who decides what ethical decisions AI should make?

THE PROJECTS ARE funded with a total of SEK 96 million split between nine Swedish universities and institutions. One of the projects will be conducted at Umeå University and focuses on the role of digital assistants in dealing with stress. The project is led by Professor Helena Lindgren at the Department of Computing Science.

“It’s becoming more common to meet digital assistants helping out with services such as web purchases and bank errands. These are based on AI but the limited functionality so far only works for simple tasks. Despite this, humans often interpret the AI character as a social being,” says Helena Lindgren.

“Our research is expected to result in an increased understanding of how socially intelligent digital assistants can affect the emotional well-being of humans, and the digital assistant’s potential role in handling stress in daily activities,” says Helena Lindgren, who will be leading the project together with Victor Kaptelinin, Department of Informatics, and Anna Stigsdotter-Neely, Department of Social and Psychological Studies at Karlstad University.

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THANKS TO THE project including researchers from a variety of fields, the project can take on a wider approach to societal change.

“We need to radically adapt our way of approaching AI. Our work needs to be more multidisciplinary and open-minded, Virginia Dignum said in a previous interview in conjunction with her installation as professor at Umeå University in October 2019.

“This is what I’d like to call the science of AI, a new scientific discipline that doesn’t just include aspects from computer science, but also from other domains like humanities and social sciences,” she continues.

EVEN IF Umeå University is host for the research programme, Virginia Dignum wants to emphasise that the investment covers all of Sweden. WASP-HS will be closely collaborating with universities across the nation to recruit junior researchers and visiting professors, establish a national doctoral school with up to 70 doctoral students and coordinate large international partnerships and activities.

The WASP-HS programme is planned for 2019–2028. ●

SEK 100 million investment on AI

Autonomous systems and artificial intelligence is revolutionising progress in several areas. The University Board has decided to invest SEK 100 million over ten years on AI research.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE is not a new phenomenon. Instead, it caught on already in the 1940s. But progress has meant that we can today apply AI to several fields, both in the academic community and in everyday life situations. This makes it a highly interesting research domain. The Umeå University Board has decided on a long-term investment — a total of SEK 100 million over ten years — for research in artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems.

Half the amount is awarded to the Faculty of Science and Technology with the aim to keep building a strong and resilient research environment in AI at the Department of Computing Science.

The remaining SEK 50 million should be set aside to develop research in applied AI at all faculties, with end-effects on education and collaboration.

“This institution-wide investment creates unique opportunities to combine the strong work taking place within the core subjects of AI with the strong interest in utilising and studying AI from a wider university perspective,” says Professor Erik Elmroth at the Department of Computing Science.

“Applications in AI will provide many changes of significance and the investment at Umeå University will contribute with important, new information relating to all faculties. We will make an impact in applied AI,” says Katrine Riklund, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Umeå University. ●

JOHANNA FREDRIKSSON
New ceremony celebrating teachers

Education and research, as well as outreach, form the basis for Umeå University’s activities. Researchers are celebrated at the Annual Celebration and the Spring Graduation, but now a new ceremony celebrating teachers has been added.

UMEÅ UNIVERSITY WAS first among the bigger universities to introduce a pedagogical qualification model for teachers in 2013. On 10 October 2019, qualified and distinguished teachers, who had been given their appointment from 2017 until spring 2019 were invited to a pleasant ceremony in Ljusgården in the Teacher Education Building.

Teachers received a diploma and a pin as signs of having fulfilled the criteria of the distinction. A dinner – and an increase in salary – followed the appointment. Nearly 70 teachers participated in the ceremony, out of a total of 170 who have been appointed a pedagogical qualification in the last years.

“The appointed teachers have proven their educational expertise in collaboration with others, for instance students, teachers and other parties,” says organiser Lars Larsson, Associate Professor at the Centre for Educational Development, who was also recipient of the diploma and pin.

“This ceremony is an important indicator that the University pays attention also to teachers,” says Annika Johansson, Associate Professor at the Department of Education, and appointed distinguished teacher.

Teaching staff apply for the qualification. “It takes a lot to apply for qualification and a lot of documentation is needed,” says Annika Johansson. “Applicants need to describe the thought-processes defining their work and include a motivation of why they should be appointed. The submitted information is reviewed to make sure it’s correct. If teachers aim to proceed from qualified to distinguished, they need to go through the procedure again.”

Anna Johansson receives her pin as distinguished teacher from Deputy Vice-Chancellor Heidi Hansson. Student unions and colleagues are also there to congratulate.
**A unique new recipe for success**

As of January 2020, the Department of Food and Nutrition and the Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts merge into one.

**“WE WILL BECOME** unique in Sweden, says Maria Waling, head of the Department of Food and Nutrition.

The work on the merger has developed over a few years and began as an initiative from both departments, as both had seen possibilities of creating a more sustainable and stable situation for both entities. The new name is the Department of Food, Nutrition and Culinary Science.

An advantage of the merger is that it enables a broader perspective on food and meals. The Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts has emphasised on the meal and the guest’s experience, while the Department of Food and Nutrition has had a broad expertise on the importance of food for, among other things, sickness and health. Now it is easier to bring about interdisciplinary collaborations.

“We will obtain a breadth with everything from nutrition to gastronomic craftsmanship, and it gives us greater opportunities than our counterparts have,” says Maria Waling, who will lead the new department.

“There is nothing similar in Sweden where a department has this comprehensive breadth. We will be quite unique.”

The new doctoral education subject of nutrition and meal science is included in the new department. Other benefits are purely organisational — they are both relatively small in size, and become less vulnerable together, according to Maria Waling, who mainly sees advantages with the merger.

The reorganisation means that the Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts will shut down and dissolve.

“But the operational activities will continue as usual as part of the new department,” says Maria Waling.

How do you reason about removing the brand of the Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts, which is reasonably strong, especially off campus?

“Finding a common name was hard,” says Maria Waling. “Our priority was to find a name through which both parties felt included.”

**JOHANNA FREDRIKSSON**

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**Figuratively speaking**

**Erik Domellöf**

I don’t care if you are a famous actor, it is a mistake I applied for a huge grant!

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**FACTS**

The Department of Food and Nutrition was established in 1995.

The Umeå University School of Restaurant and Culinary Arts was established in 2002 with a mandate to be responsible for courses in gastronomy and restaurant management, and for further training people in the field.

Both belong to the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The Department of Food, Nutrition and Culinary Science (Sw. Institutionen för kost- och måltidsvetenskap) will become effective on 1 January 2020.

**The department is in charge of:**

- The Gastronomy Programme.
- The Food and Nutrition Programme.
- The Degree of Bachelor in Dietetics.
- Education of teachers in home economics.
- Courses at the Bachelor’s and Master’s levels.
- New doctoral education subject in nutrition and meal science.

As previously, the research will be conducted within six different profile areas with a focus on food and meals. Collaboration with the surrounding society in various ways.
When research should be described to the public, Curiosum is the perfect way of reaching out. Director Madeleen Bodin and her team have just been given access to the new premises in the old Sliperiet. This marks the start of the move from Umevatoriet to Curiosum at Umeå Arts Campus.

Adeleen Bodin is senior lecturer and director of Curiosum at Umeå University.

“We’re so excited. But at the same time, there’s so much to do that I hardly have time to feel anything. We can finally implement the things we’ve planned for in the last year. We’re moving into such a nice building and are confident it will be great.”

Autumn term is a hectic period when everything needs to be put in place. And a lot will be squeezed into the 2,000 sqm facility: installations and exhibitions, a dome theatre, educational programmes and workshops for experiments, exploration and creativity including a chemistry workshop, technology workshop, textile workshop and digital production workshops with 3D printers and laser cutters.

At Curiosum, visitors are encouraged to learn in a creative way by exploring, watching, listening, feeling and making their own products. The objective is to encourage interest in knowledge and curiosity for science and technology.

“We’ll be using Umeå University research to create activities and we hope that many researchers will want to
Contribute. Our lecture hall, Black box, fits 100 people and we’re planning on housing outreach activities, lectures, theatre performances and shows here,” says Madelen Bodin.

IN THE NEW YEAR, Curiosum will be opening gradually and the staff will be fine-tuning their activities and offerings by inviting school classes – as the younger population is a very important target audience.

At Umevatoriet, many requests had to be turned down. The current expansion will allow for the capacity of school visits to be doubled. Curiosum will in time aim to reach out to all pupils in Umeå municipality, including surrounding towns and villages, from pre-school to upper-secondary school level. In doing so, young people’s families and friends will also get to know Curiosum and can pay a visit in their spare time.

“We’ll be an important part of reaching out with the research conducted at the University. The central location on Umeå Arts Campus makes our science centre accessible. And the closeness to Bildmuseet, which is also a public place, strengthens our opportunities of reaching new target audiences.

Umeå municipality is the collaborative partner and sponsor. The municipality bangs the big drum and sees Curiosum and Bildmuseet as a promising upcoming tourist attraction in Umeå. With that, Curiosum will offer generous opening hours both day and night as well as on school holidays and weekends. And there will be a shop and a café.

Curiosum also has an important task of contributing with skills supply in society. Outreach with the local industry and jointly finding new ways of encouraging children and adolescents to get an education, particularly in science and technology, is an important part of Curiosum’s role. The creative environment also acts as an inspiration to other actors in the building. The third floor houses eXpression Umeå, an incubator for cultural and creative industries, and Kulturverket with an objective to promote aesthetical learning processes in children.

A DONATION FROM the Knut and Alice Wallenberg through the national project Wisdome has enabled the establishment of a digital dome theatre for planetarium viewings and 360 degree films with scientific themes. The Wisdome investment on public scientific visualisations is led from the Visualisation Centre in Norrköping. Other participating parties are Universeum in Gothenburg, the Swedish National Museum of Science and Technology in Stockholm and Malmö Museer.
“It feels comforting to share experiences and collaborate with similar organisations. Using competence from the Visualisation Centre provides good conditions for Curiosum as we’re in the start-up phase.”

“The real public opening will take place when the dome theatre is finished in spring 2020,” says Madelen Bodin and reveals that the first dome production will cover digital special effects in film and computer games.

MADELEN BODIN AND her staff have practically worked from a suitcase over the last year as they have been evacuated to a temporary location in the town centre. Merging two organisations – Sliperiet and Umevatoriet – signifies a number of challenges.

“I have fantastic co-workers who make this possible. We merge plenty of experiences into this new organisation.”

“In five years, I think Curiosum will be a creative learning environment that continues to develop and arouse curiosity and interest in science and technology. Curiosum is an exciting place to visit in the region and tourists from all over the North come to visit Umeå thanks to us. I hope that all Umeå inhabitants will be familiar with Curiosum and that people come back to us since our activities and experiences encourage continuous explorations.” ○

How research can reach the public

Across Umeå University, vast amounts of research is conducted, but does it ever reach the public? The event series Fika efter en forskare and Scientific Lunches are examples of outreach activities with huge interest.

“WE’VE EVEN HAD to close the doors on people at times,” says Mari Norgren, one of the organisers.

20 slides, 20 seconds per slide, followed by questions from the audience. That is the general setup for Fika efter en forskare. The event takes an hour and is held at Väven Cultural Centre on some Saturday afternoons. Each time, three researchers get the chance to present their work.

Scientific Lunches take place during Thursday lunch breaks at Kafé Station in the Umeå town centre. The audience is then welcome to eat their lunch while enjoying a 20–25 minute lecture followed by questions. The event takes a total of 45 minutes.

These are two examples of concepts that can be used to disperse research into the community in a graspable way.

FIKA EFTER EN FORSKARE seats 200 people, but there have been times when the organisers have had to close the doors on the interested crowd. That is why the event repeats a second time the same afternoon. Scientific Lunches are located in a slightly smaller room, which at times needs to be maximised due to the large interest.

“There is a huge interest despite the other competing events arranged in town.” It means that the event breaks through,” says Mari Norgren, professor and chair of the information committee at the Faculty of Medicine, which organises Fika efter en forskare. Ingrid Söderbergh is a communications officer at the Faculty Office of Science and Technology and is member of the project team organising the Scientific Lunches. She thinks that combining a lecture with lunch is a winning concept.

“And everyone needs to eat, right?” she says emphasising that some see the event as an important social activity. “The subjects are usually interesting and the event is just long enough.”

The audience generally consists of senior citizens, and some are regulars, but the average age can also vary depending on the topic. Ingrid Söderbergh particularly remembers one event where a chemist spoke about alternative methods to animal models.

“That attracted hordes of youngsters, which was nice to see,” she says.

THE SCIENTIFIC LUNCHES can cover anything from democracy to sustainability, or even the importance of reading novels. Fika efter en forskare, however, is limited to medicine and health, which is a rather expansive field in itself.

“The interest for medicine is rather large among the general public,” says Mari Norgren. But why is outreach important?

“People pay taxes that are allocated to research. It’s important that people see what money goes to, what the research discovers.
And also to arouse interest and inspiration in research and display our prominent researchers,” says Ingrid Söderbergh who emphasises that researchers are often positive about presenting their work in this way. Mari Norgren agrees.

“Research is a long-term activity. Research is a long-term activity and it’s important to convey small progressions that have a bigger goal in sight,” she says.

EACH EVENT IS FILMED and streamed live on the University web. And viewings of the events also take place through libraries and associations in the towns of Ludvika, Skellefteå and Vilhelmina.

“That way we reach more people who can’t travel here,” says Ingrid Söderbergh.

The organising team behind the Scientific Lunches is currently considering moving the event to Curiosum opening on Umeå Arts Campus in 2020. The hope is that people will still be interested in research even if the event takes place in a more academic environment. The connection between society and research is something worth cherishing.

“We conduct our work for the public good. It’s important that people are informed of what we accomplish,” says Mari Norgren. ●

JOHANNA FREDRIKSSON

Popular science for young people and children

Research raises interest in most people. If you play it right. At Umeå University, several popular science events are aimed at young people and children.

HOW WOULD IT FEEL to be in the middle of a hurricane? Meet the elements needed to make your electronics work. Get inspired by the wondrous world of chemistry and physics in an interactive show.

The European Researchers’ Night is a scientific festival full of excitement. The event is organised once per year to build bridges between researchers and the public, particularly focusing on young people.

RESEARCH À LA CARTE is an event in which focus lies on one subject at a time. The idea is that school teachers can invite researchers and university lecturers to hold a guest lecture on a natural science subject. This is free of charge and there are 47 lectures to choose from. The target audience is primarily aimed at pupils in upper-secondary and lower-secondary education aspiring to arouse an interest in higher education and making it more natural to take the leap.

THE EVENT ‘LEVANDE FRÅGELÅDAN’ is organised annually for children in year 5 (11-year-olds). Pupils submit their questions in the natural sciences and technology domains in advance. Like ‘How much salt does salt water contain?’, ‘What are ants good for?’, ‘Could it suddenly rain sharks?’. The children are then invited to Aula Nordica where seven researchers explain how things work. The concept is inspired by the popular science production on SVT – “Fråga Lund”.

“Levande frågelådan is a show where we try to make it both amusing and interesting,” says Lennart Johansson, coordinator at the Faculty Office of Science and Technology.

“We are aware that interest for technology after year 6 (12-year-olds) drops among girls. We want to preserve the existing interest, and we find that the earlier we can encourage the interest, the more likely it is to be maintained.” ●

JOHANNA FREDRIKSSON

FIKA EFTER EN FORSKARE
When: Saturdays, 4 in spring, 3 in autumn
Time: 13:00—14:00, 14:00—15:00
Location: Kafé Fika at Väven Cultural Centre
Audience capacity: 200 people
Organised since: 2016
Organiser: The Information Committee at the Faculty of Medicine
Link: www.umu.se/forskning/popularvetenskapliga-arrangemang/fika-efter-en-forskare/

SCIENTIFIC LUNCHES
When: Thursdays, 9 sessions per semester
Time: 12:15—13:00
Location: Kafé Station
Audience capacity: Approx. 70 people
Organised since: 2006
Organiser: All faculties and the Umeå School of Education
Link: www.umu.se/forskning/popularvetenskapliga-arrangemang/vetenskapslunch/

Filmed Fika efter forskare, the Scientific Lunches and many other activities are published on the University web site. See them live or whenever you wish.
FACTS
The Leadership and Development Programme

- Umeå University’s Leadership and Development Programme is part of the professional development for managers at different levels. For many leadership roles, participation in the programme is mandatory. However, some leadership positions are not included, such as deans.
- Both academic and administrative managers participate in the programme. It is also a mix between new and seasoned leaders.
- The programme started in 2004 and has so far been implemented 19 times with a total of 318 participants. The gender distribution has been 51 per cent men and 49 per cent women.

15TH ANNIVERSARY
UCL lifts leadership to a new level

The Leadership and Development Programme (UCL) has fostered over 300 managers at the University since its start in 2004. The 15th anniversary was celebrated this autumn, and the person who has been there from the start made an acclaimed finish.

TEXT: Jonas Lidström PHOTO: Mattias Pettersson

Majbritt Lindberg, Mats Björklund and Ingrid Undén Lindehell made up the crew that organised the very first UCL course in Umeå. “We spent a whole day in the University Administration Building trying to think of a name for the programme.”
I

THE BACKGROUND TO UCL IS RATHER HARSH. IN THE EARLY 2000S, THERE WERE MAJOR SHORTCOMINGS AMONG HEADS OF DEPARTMENT’S AND MANAGER’S KNOWLEDGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES, LAWS AND REGULATIONS. WHEN THE SWEDISH WORK ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY MADE AN INSPECTION, THEY POINTED OUT THE PROBLEMS, WHICH INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE UNIVERSITY TO COME UP WITH TARGETED IMPROVEMENTS.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF UMEÅ UNIVERSITY AT THE TIME WAS INGE-BERT TÄLJEDAL.

“It was I who once decided that the university should have an organised leadership training programme,” says Inge-Bert Täljedal. “But I cannot in any way take credit for the format and the content.”

Today, Inge-Bert Täljedal is a pensioner and professor emeritus. He speaks at the UCL anniversary with the reservation that he is a ‘has-been’ when he gives his own depiction of what academic leadership really is.

The administrative aspect is important and must work. But just as important is the acculturation, which was an important reason why the programme had been completed, the Norwegian leadership researchers Petter Aasen and Bjørn Stensaker were hired to conduct an evaluation.

“The evaluation had a very positive outcome, which was an important reason why the programme and the working method were made permanent,” says Mats Björklund.

The Aasen and Stensaker evaluation included a questionnaire survey. The same questionnaire has been used in all subsequent programme groups.

A large majority of the participants have indicated that the programme has been useful for everyday life as a manager and leader. But many participants would also have liked to get more of certain things.

“More strategic leadership is needed. And conflict management is in recurring and perpetual demand,” says Mats Björklund.

“It can be interpreted as content for leading processes of change.” ●

THE SETUP OF THE UCL PROGRAMME HAS BEEN ALMOST THE SAME FOR 15 YEARS. FIRSTLY, IT COVERS ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER, FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS THAT GOVERN HIGHER EDUCATION. SECONDLY, FOCUS LARGELY ON PLC DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IS COVERED. THE PROGRAMME INCLUDES A STUDY TRIP.

THE EVALUATION HAD A VERY POSITIVE OUTCOME, WHICH WAS AN IMPORTANT REASON WHY THE PROGRAMME AND THE WORKING METHOD WERE MADE PERMANENT.”

WHEN THREE ROUNDS OF UCL HAD BEEN COMPLETED, THE NORWEGIAN LEADERSHIP RESEARCHERS PETTER AASEN AND BJØRN STENSAKER WERE HIRED TO CONDUCT AN EVALUATION.

“The evaluation had a very positive outcome, which was an important reason why the programme and the working method were made permanent,” says Mats Björklund.

The Aasen and Stensaker evaluation included a questionnaire survey. The same questionnaire has been used in all subsequent programme groups.

A large majority of the participants have indicated that the programme has been useful for everyday life as a manager and leader. But many participants would also have liked to get more of certain things.

“More strategic leadership is needed. And conflict management is in recurring and perpetual demand,” says Mats Björklund.

“It can be interpreted as content for leading processes of change.” ●
Looking back – to create the future of design education

What Maria Göransdotter doesn’t know about the Umeå Institute of Design is probably not worth knowing. She started there as early as in 1995. After shouldering several roles, not least as vice rector, she is now primarily focusing on her doctoral thesis on Scandinavian user-based design.

TEXT: Nils Fredriksson PHOTO: Erik Abel

HEN MARIA Göransdotter shows me around at the Umeå Institute of Design (UID) she does so feeling very at home. It strikes me how versatile students must be. The institute has 3D printers, walls are full of sketches, there are wood shops and car models made in clay. Everywhere I look I see prominent trademarks that UID has collaborations within all kinds of business sectors. Not surprising as UID is ranked in the top globally.

“In June each year, we have a degree event where companies from all over the world join us and can chat on neutral ground and get a feeling for where design is heading.”

Maria Göransdotter applied to UID for the opening year, in 1989, but was rejected. Instead, she took history of ideas, which she was quickly mesmerised by. She was attracted to the breadth of the studies, and it was no disadvantage that the former Department of History of Ideas at that time had inspiring lecturers such as Ronny Ambjörnsson and Kerstin Thörn. In 1995, she was admitted to the doctoral education in history of ideas to write a doctoral thesis on good taste, interior decoration and the introduction of modernities in Swedish homes. But it was never completed. Gradually, she started teaching at UID via a course on history of technology and design instead.

ALTHOUGH, HISTORY OF IDEAS has always had an important role also on UID. The theme of the current doctoral thesis revolves around how to write design history for it to have a greater impact on design work. She uses ideas of Scandinavian user-centred design as examples in her work and carries out her research by studying in detail material and methods that has affected Swedish design discourse and practise from a history of ideas perspective.
It’s excellent to be a doctoral student in the middle of one’s career. I really enjoy spending so much of my time on research.”
Also as an adult, Maria Göransdotter studied abroad. In 1989–90, she lived in Perugia, studied literature and learnt Italian. In 1995, she was back in Italy on a scholarship, this time in Bologna to study aesthetics and semiotics. One of her teachers was the world-renowned author Umberto Eco, whose novel The Name of the Rose was adapted for the screen with Sean Connery as lead actor.

“It was pleasure mixed with great challenges. He was a performer and was well aware of his stardom.”

Maria Göransdotter has worked full time at UID since 2008 and has been a part of the institute’s management team ever since. She has shouldered the role as head of department from 2013–15 and was vice rector from 2015–18. Beside her current doctoral studies, she is also lecturer in history of design. For a while, she was employed as a study administrator at the Department of History of Ideas and as director of studies at UID.

“I’ve seen the University from many roles and angles and I’d like to say that I have a 360-degree perspective now. I’ve learnt so much and, without lying, I can say that I’ve had a lot of fun along the way. As a teacher, it has been stimulating to get direct access to students. And on a managerial level, I’ve enjoyed being able to make overall and long-term changes.”

HOWEVER, THE PERSONAL research is now in focus with an aim to complete the thesis in early spring 2020. In her doctoral thesis, Maria explores how ideas and methods that are currently integrated in Scandinavian user-centred design carry norms and values from specific, historic contexts. She studies the Swedish Welfare State (called folkhemmet), which can be considered a huge social design project, and which forms the basis for much of the design that still surrounds us.

“By looking back in time we can also view the present from another angle, and learn how to design different for the future. It’s a broad approach, that among other things include our view on democracy, participation and sustainability. Is it really obvious that consumption should continue to be at the core of new design? Should we always strive to produce new items?”

WHEN MARIA GÖRANSDOTTER says that she works almost full time on research, it may sound as if she doesn’t have other things going on. But indeed she does. She teaches some courses at UID and at the doctoral school at the Faculty of Arts, she is member of the board of an international design network, she assesses work at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts — and participates in developing a whole new Bachelor’s programme at UID with funding from PUNKTUM and with a planned start for 2022.

“The new programme ties onto my and others’ research, which is why we are trying to build an education that is based on the needs we may have for design in the future. The design sector is under constant development in this ever so complex world. Design at present also includes things that we can’t see or touch, such as algorithms and big data. To incorporate this together with historical perspectives into a new education is an exciting challenge.”

“UMEÅ INSTITUTE OF DESIGN is like a melting pot of nationalities. Over the years, students have arrived from nearly forty countries. It may be safe to say that Maria Göransdotter’s upbringing contributed to her enjoying such an environment. As a five-year-old, she moved with her parents to Saudi Arabia, where her father took a job as a road and structural engineer. The same father, by the way, built the Campus Pond in the 1960s.

When the family arrived in Saudi Arabia, the country was in the midst of a huge transition, the ancient Bedouin and nomad culture co-existed alongside modern, fast-growing cities. This rapid growth attracted huge infrastructure companies from all over the world. Maria’s family moved back to Sweden in 1979, after five years overseas. The move was caused not least by the growing religious fundamentalism in the Middle East.

“It was an amazing experience to have lived there. Those years really shaped me, and I cherished learning that there are many ways of looking at the world. My school was international and my friends came from Japan, North America and Jamaica, for instance.”

“The world of design lacks history today. If we are to change the way we design and create a sustainable future, we must understand that the present always derives from a history that we must be aware of in order to question. Otherwise, we risk tunnel vision in our progress.”

Profile
Secrecy for test developers

Welcome to one of the most secret premises of the entire University.

TEXT: Jessica Larsson Svanlund PHOTO: Mattias Pettersson

When the test developers at TUV meet, some secret details may be divulged, and they cannot risk that unauthorised people see or hear. Aktum was allowed to open the blinds to the conference room slightly.
The Department of Applied Educational Science conducts research and education just like all others, but there is also something highly secretive going on here, something that no one else gets a glimpse of.

Anna Lind Pantzare and Per-Erik Lyrén in conversation with a guest in what could be the nicest publicly accessible room in the Natural Sciences Building.

The Department of Applied Educational Science (TUV) conducts research, education and doctoral education. Education is offered in several programmes aimed at teachers and single subject courses on the Bachelor’s and Master’s level. Research is primarily funded externally through research councils and is conducted within the fields of pre-schools and after-school care; ICT and learning; large-scale aptitude tests; educational policies; and the transition and evaluation of young people.

But the biggest general interest in the department’s activities is a whole other story: the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (SweSAT, högskoleprovet) and national standardised tests (nationella prov) are produced here. We visited the test developers at TUV to see what a day entails for them in their locked department with top security.

Anna Lind Pantzare and Per-Erik Lyrén are waiting for us at the door and are careful to tell us where we are allowed to photograph. Working material for upcoming tests are naturally out of the question, but they are also very secretive with where on campus the work is carried out, how the premises are laid out – and even who works with designing the tests. Security is high.

“People pay hundreds of thousands to obtain high scores on the SweSATs, so we don’t want to expose anyone to threats. This is a bit of a work environment issue in our organisation,” says Anna Lind Pantzare, project manager for the national standardised tests in mathematics and sciences for upper-secondary schools, and natural sciences for primary and lower-secondary schools assigned by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

Per-Erik Lyrén is associate professor and works with SweSAT that TUV develops, analyses and studies on behalf of the Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet). Anna and Per-Erik’s tasks revolve around development and project management, but a surprisingly large part of the test developers’ time is spent considering details that may not seem too significant at first glance, such as using a font with characters that are fully legible also as numbers in the mathematical part of the test. For the font that was used previously, there was no noticeable difference between upper-case ‘I’, lower-case ‘l’ and number ‘1’. This meant number ‘1’ had to be changed.
Per-Erik Lyrén is also active in research and doctoral education and supervises doctoral students. In the last year, however, he has spent a lot of time doing something completely different.

“I’ve had the role as expert witness in several lawsuits regarding cheating on the SweSAT. At times, lawsuits take place nearly every day, and by the time all cheaters have been processed, there might be one hundred lawsuits. Luckily, I can usually participate by phone.”

ANNA LIND PANTZARE has the overall responsibility for the national standardised tests constructed at Umeå University that involves 21 people. Many days are spent reviewing material, testing tests on pupils, leading external examinations of the tests and developing evaluations and reports for the Swedish National Agency for Education, but also to make sure that everything from printers and coffee machines work. She says that everyone working on the national standardised tests at TUV are former teachers, and it is somewhat of a prerequisite to have subject knowledge, good knowledge of policy documents and experience of test development to be eligible for the job.

“There is no university degree in test developing,” says Anna Lind Pantzare.

Per-Erik and Anna say that the inspiration for test questions often derive from current happenings, sometimes found in newspapers, but other times more information is needed. That’s when old doctoral theses come in handy.

“In the SweSAT, the diagrams, tables and maps used in the test assignments must be authentic and be picked from another source. The assignments in this part is based on those diagrams, tables and maps, and old doctoral theses form a good basis as they are often black and white,” says Per-Erik Lyrén.

MANY PEOPLE ARE very interested in the national standardised tests and the SweSAT, which can be proven by traffic statistics on the umu.se web page, where two pages on national standardised tests are ranked top ten of the most frequently visited pages for the last year. A few questions from the public pop up too. Sometimes people want to see their test results. But TUV also submits large amounts of data to researchers and the media. But one question keeps being repeated.

“A common question after every SweSAT is ‘So, what do you do for the rest of the year?’ It takes two years to construct the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test or a national standardised test. So, that’s what we do.”

Large-scale crime plot

In the aftermath of a crime plot to cheat the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (SweSAT, högskoleprovet), three accused cheaters have been prosecuted for selling test results. The cheating individuals paid tens of thousands each to obtain specialised mobile phones and miniscule ear pieces. One of the persons prosecuted worked as a test invigilator and was hence given access to the test half an hour before the start of the test, photographed the pages and submitted them to a group of people who jointly answered the questions. During the test, the answers were then passed on to the cheating test participants through the earpieces.

Behind locked doors in the Natural Sciences Building are the filing cabinets containing the test material.
Collegiality — from question mark to exclamation point

‘Trust’ is the word on everyone’s lips in the public sector. As well as within higher education. Kerstin Sahlin, researcher and former Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University, believes that the collegial form of governance has an essential role at a modern university.

Kerstin Sahlin wondered how to make collegiality work in practice — and wrote a book about it.

THE AUTONOMY reform introduced in 2011 triggered a lively, and sometimes heated debate in the higher education sector. Many saw the reform as a death blow to collegiality.

Kerstin Sahlin is professor of business administration at Uppsala University focusing on public organisations. She recalls being rather annoyed about it at the time.

“The word ‘collegiality’ came to be a weapon in the debate — but nobody spoke of what collegiality actually means,” says Kerstin Sahlin.

This irritation resulted in Kerstin Sahlin writing the textbook ‘Collegiality — A modern form of governance’ together with Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist.

The book covers what collegiality is, why it is needed, how it mixes with other types of governance, and how to make it work in practice.

“When I’m out lecturing, it’s common that people add a question mark at the end of the title,” says Kerstin Sahlin. “But I’d rather add an exclamation mark: collegiality is a modern form of governance!”

Kerstin Sahlin defines collegiality as an autonomous form of self-governance where colleagues govern each other.

HER VISIT TO UMEÅ University took place on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the University’s Leadership and Development Programme, UCL (see pp. 12—13). Vice-Chancellor Hans Adolfsson talks about the balance between governance and leadership, about trust-based governance at Umeå University, and his view of his own leadership task. “There is basically no difference between leading a university and leading a research group,” reasons Hans Adolfsson.

Kerstin Sahlin also points out: “This is a management that begins when the seminar ends. The leaders are selected directly from the operations and should have one foot left there,” she says.

She finds the concept of trust-based governance quite interesting.

“Much of this is based on how the academic community has worked for so many years,” says Kerstin Sahlin. “It has to be exported to investigators, consultants and experts before it comes back to us again.”

However, the fact that collegiality is a modern and useful form of governance does not mean that it’s simple and unproblematic to succeed in practice.

“It’s assumed that everyone knows how to conduct collegiality, that everyone knows how to be a good colleague. And that’s where things often go wrong. Because it’s not quite as easy and obvious as that,” emphasises Kerstin Sahlin.

In the book, Kerstin Sahlin and Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist also write about the negative aspects of collegiality.

The most negative aspect emerges when groupthink takes over. When collegiality goes outside of mutual control and lacks critical discussion, without any mutual back-scratching.

“MALE DOMINANCE. CLIQUES. There has been far too much of that,” says Kerstin Sahlin frankly.

“There are two ways to handle this. One way is to gain a better understanding of what the collegial processes look like. The other is that collegiality doesn’t stand on its own two feet. It’s essential to have an outstanding administration that both keeps an eye on colleagues and sets limits, but also supports with expertise.”

TEXT: Jonas Lidström PHOTO: Mattias Pettersson
The University takes responsibility for the future

THIS SPRING, the University Board approved Umeå University’s new vision valid from 2020. The vision is the product of a labour in which students and staff contributed with their thoughts of where Umeå University is today, and where we want to be in the future. Despite our width and heterogeneity, we still have a lot in common. Common basic values. Our unified campus encourages academic meetings. An exchange of ideas and interdisciplinary cooperation. The cohesive environment enables a strong sense of community and a dynamic and open culture in which we rejoice in the success of others. We call it the Umeå University spirit.

THE VISION CHARTS our way forward and describes where Umeå University aspires to be in the future. The vision is anchored in three guiding principles:
1) Responsibility for the future
2) Collaborative development of knowledge
3) Competitive edge and pride

SOCIETY IS FACED WITH great challenges. Climate changes that will drastically change the life of millions of people around the world; armed conflicts putting people to flight; a continued drainage of the planet’s resources; Brexit and soon a new Europe; and on top of that – a bunch of politicians who consistently refuse to accept scientific findings, or whose agendas conflict with democratic principles. In Sweden, supplying competent staff in several important societal areas is a huge challenge – not least in education, the police force, and healthcare.

THIS IS WHERE the University can and must take responsibility, and through research, contribute with new knowledge and with well-educated students. We have the chance on a wide front to take on societal challenges propelled by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the UN’s 2030 Agenda.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION of Umeå University provides us with unique advantages, with research that links to forestry, energy, climate and environment, Sami living conditions, community development and health in the sparsely populated hinterland. These are research areas with great importance to the Arctic and the northern region, but also to the rest of the world. It became clear that the global interest for the Arctic was great when the first EU Arctic Forum was organised in Aula Nordica. It was by far the greatest Arctic event to date with participants from over thirty countries. Visitors were none other than Crown Princess Victoria, eight foreign ministers, including the Swedish minister Ann Linde, and numerous researchers and students. They have placed us on the Arctic map. The reason for selecting Umeå and Umeå University as the location for the conference is something we can be grateful to our researchers for. It was also particularly rewarding to hear minister Ann Linde in her opening speech single out Umeå University as the Arctic University in Sweden.

ALSO, ‘THE EU AND EUROPE’ have constituted the theme of the University’s communications during 2019. This is why the University organised a one-day conference in the middle of October entitled ‘On the top of Europe’ focusing on the current situation in Europe, discussions on the progress of the EU, and on information on how to excel in research grant applications for EU funding. Regrettfully, the event attracted very little interest from students and staff. If we want to increase our competitiveness according to the vision, we must also keep updated on how best to do so. Participating in public debate and critically analysing societal progress is a distinguishing mark of a university – that is how to take responsibility for the future.

HANS ADOLFSSON
VICE-CHANCELLOR

Group of experts advises the Government

GÖRAN SANDBERG, professor and former Vice-Chancellor of Umeå University, still has the power to influence research opportunities at Swedish universities.

He is one of twelve chosen members of the Advisory Committee for Research, a group of experts chaired by the Minister for Higher Education and Research, currently Matilda Ernkrans.

THE GOVERNMENT DESCRIBES the committee: “The new Advisory Committee for Research consists of twelve experts with good knowledge of Swedish research. The primary task of the committee is to act as an advisory body to the Government in the elaboration of research policy in the upcoming years.”

Focus for the new Advisory Committee for Research will be knowledge and research to support a better future in, for instance, environment, climate and health. On the agenda are issues of skills supply in health-care, education and the business sector, as well as research and knowledge to refute fact resistance, alternative facts and populism.

“I FIND THAT OUR most important issue in the upcoming government bill on research are increased resources for scientific infrastructure,” says Göran Sandberg who has also been a member of former advisory committees for research.

Members of the new Advisory Committee for Research:
Professor Anna Forsberg, Adjunct Professor Johan Kuylenstierna, Professor Olle Lundberg, Doctor Sara Mazur, Professor Elisabet Nihlfor, Vice-Chancellor Håkan Pihl, Doctor Lisa Salomonsson, Professor Göran Sandberg, Vice-Chancellor Astrid Söderbergh Widding, Professor Tuula Teeri, Professor Mathias Uhlén and Madnelene Sandström, former CEO of the Knowledge Foundation. The Committee is appointed from August 2019 until autumn 2020.

INGER NILSSON
2019 became an intense, or maybe rather productive, year for the Language Council at Umeå University. In February, a new language policy was established and in September new titles were approved – particularly English ones.

“IN MY JOB as a translator, I often get asked about English titles and I noticed early that we were lacking a Swedish-English glossary list of the titles at the University. Also, several English translations used were dubious,” says Anna Lawrence, convener and secretary of the Language Council and translator at the Communications Office.

Industrious collaborations between the Language Council, the Human Resources Office, the Faculty Office of Medicine and national university translators resulted in a revised Swedish-English list on Aurora containing the job titles and role names that are known at Umeå University.

In January 2020, the revised English titles will be adopted in the staff directory, other systems and in the appointments procedure.

THE REVISIONS affecting the biggest number of people are biträdande universitetslektor now translated assistant professor, and universitetslektor now translated associate professor. The translation for docent is now in line with the recommendation by UHR, the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

“I’ve received questions about the new translation of docent, and I’m aware that everyone doesn’t agree. However, what we want to point out is that a docent is not an appointment, but rather an academic title. For that reason, it is unfortunate to confuse the title with associate professor. Nevertheless, it is always reasonable to adapt your title depending on the context. Communicate so that your recipients understand, in other words. But on our web pages, docent is the English title,” says Anna Lawrence.

THE OTHER RATHER extensive work achieved in the Language Council over the course of the year is a revision of the Language Policy. The Language Policy describes the University’s common language guidelines based upon aspects such as plain language, the role of Swedish, bilingualism and linguistic diversity.

The Language Policy is the all-embracing document to be used to create a common vision for language usage and promote successful communication.

“By producing a new Language Policy, we wanted to emphasise the importance of language as a quality mark in the University’s aspiration to be a leading and attractive higher education institution,” says Heidi Hansson, chairperson of the Language Council.

“It’s common belief that plain language doesn’t apply to research dominated by specialist terminology. But a ‘refined, plain and comprehensible language’ should rather be seen as a quality enhancer that makes research more widely accessible. At the same time, no one suggests abolishing terminology, but researchers must choose how to communicate depending on who they’re communicating with,” she continues.

With the Language Policy, the Language Council aims to raise awareness of the importance of language and the laws we must follow, safeguard Swedish as a scientific language, and promote internationalisation.

ANNA LAWRENCE & HEIDI HANSSON
GRADA KILOMBA / A WORLD OF ILLUSIONS

BILDMUSEET
11 OCTOBER 2019 – 08 MARCH 2020

DESIGN MATTERS

BILDMUSEET
15 NOVEMBER 2019 – 12 APRIL 2020

ANN EDDHOLM / TONGUE ON TIP

BILDMUSEET
15 NOVEMBER 2019 – 12 APRIL 2020
HE 2019 INTERNATIONAL IAA Motor Show in Frankfurt is one of the biggest events for the automotive industry and a hotspot when it comes to new trends and technologies in the field of transportation.

We took off to Frankfurt for a few days to visit the show, which is a bi-annual show focused on commercial vehicles. The event has long had a reputation as one of the biggest shows in the world. Therefore, it was quite a surprise to see that many makers opted not to show up at IAA this year.

It might be an indication that automotive makers are becoming more aware of their environmental footprint and favour other media in order to reach their target audiences.

Many of the bigger brands had important production releases, including Honda, Volkswagen, Mini, Mercedes and Porsche who all had fully electrical vehicles ranging from entry to premium level. Other important premiers included the new Land Rover Defender, which took a step into the living room, diverging from their traditional outdoor profile.

One of the biggest takeaways this year was that many makers introduced fully electric production vehicles following years of conceptual studies.

However, with new technologies come new challenges. With added complexity, it is necessary to create simplicity and visual priority in a system that must feel welcoming. Something only a few makers managed in a convincing way. The current direction for these types of systems relies to a great extent on visual information presented through touch screens, forcing the driver to take their eyes off the road.

In the next step of autonomy in vehicles and driving assistance systems, the conditions will be completely different for secure operation during drive, but we’re not there yet.

We had the opportunity to compare these vehicles side by side at the show, which gave us a direct experience of different solutions for interior vehicle interaction. Beside getting an insight into the progress of the industry towards sustainable solutions, the fair also offered us the opportunity to network with designers from various brands.

Visiting the show offered UID an opportunity to reconnect with the school's broad alumni network. Representatives of the institute were given a chance to benchmark the current direction of studies in relation to today’s challenges in transportation design as well as offering insights on potential future needs in the transportation industry.

To us, networking with designers from different brands to prepare future collaborations and to develop the education in a direction that shapes our students is a great chance to be capable of leading the future of automotive design in a sustainable direction. A current example of the school's collaborations is Honda Cars, which later this year will do a project together with year 1 of the Master’s Programme in Transportation Design.

We even had the chance to meet the Honda designers who will be involved in the project. Having professional designers coming in to tutor our programmes really helps to lift the level of the education to an international standard.

Would you like to write an Aktum column? Get in touch with the editorial board aktum@umu.se

Finally... Jonas Sandström and Lars Johansson

Jonas Sandström, Associate Professor of industrial design, and Lars Johansson, lecturer in industrial design, both at the Umeå Institute of Design, were given the chance to go to Frankfurt to the 2019 IAA Motor Show to extend their networks with international designers.

The importance of designer networking

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