Part II: **Dictionaries for humans**

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3 SAOL: a Swedish dictionary for all times

Abstract: *Svenska Akademiens ordlista*, SAOL 'The Swedish Academy Glossary', is a Swedish monolingual contemporary dictionary. It comprises about 126,000 head-words, providing information on part of speech, orthography, and inflection for Swedish words. The first edition was published in 1874. Hence, SAOL celebrates 150 years of setting an orthographical norm for everyday written Swedish. The latest print edition was published in 2015, and the forthcoming edition is planned for early 2026 in print and e-versions. SAOL is accessible through the dictionary web portal Svenska.se together with the comprehensive definition dictionary SO 'The Contemporary Dictionary of The Swedish Academy' and the historical SAOB 'The Swedish Academy Dictionary'.

Since the 1980s, the editorial staff of SAOL is housed at the University of Gothenburg, and from 2021, the researchers and editors of SAOL are incorporated in the Språkbanken Text research unit.

This chapter gives an overview of SAOL and its history, the different editions, and focus for the future.

Keywords: contemporary dictionaries, lexicography, SAOL, Svenska.se, Swedish Academy

1 Introduction

Svenska Akademiens ordlista, 'The Swedish Academy Glossary', often abbreviated as SAOL, is one of the most renowned dictionaries in Sweden. It boasts the longest tradition of all Swedish monolingual dictionaries, whether measured by number of editions, numbers of reprints, or sales figures. It functions as an authoritative

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standard for orthography and inflection of contemporary Swedish vocabulary. This chapter provides an account of SAOL, with special reference to its history, lexicographical features, and usage. The dictionary's full name in Swedish is *Svenska Akademiens ordlista över svenska språket*, 'The Swedish Academy Glossary of the Swedish Language', but for the sake of convenience the abbreviated form SAOL is being used throughout this chapter.

As noted, SAOL serves as an informal norm for the orthography and inflection of Swedish words, in the absence of an *official* norm for Swedish. SAOL is often compared to the similar Danish dictionary *Retskrivningsordbogen* 'The orthographical dictionary', which is the official norm for spelling and inflection in Denmark. The difference between these two Nordic dictionaries lies in their different roles: in Denmark, official documents and texts written in the educational system, etc. must adhere to the norm established in *Retskrivningsordbogen* (Dansk Sprognævn 2025). In Sweden, there is no such official orthographical regulation anymore, although this was the case in the beginning of the 20th century (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2; see Buchmann 2015 for German orthography; see also Chapter 13 in this volume).

In this chapter, the focus is on the following features and main characteristics of SAOL:
– SAOL and its more than 150 years of existence;
– its 15 editions, most of them fully revised;
– SAOL's specific niche in contrast to similar dictionaries; and
– SAOL's development over time, and users' opinions.

SAOL has previously been the subject of extensive research, including works such as Sigurd (1986b), Gellerstam (2009b), Holm (1951), Ralph (2009), Malmgren (2009; 2014), Holmer (2016), and others. However, most of these studies are written in Swedish for a Swedish-speaking audience. We therefore aim to summarize the key issues focusing on the broader context, acknowledging that it is almost impossible to do justice to a dictionary with a long tradition and many editions like SAOL, as well as to the previous editors' detailed accounts of several of the editions.

The Swedish Academy has historically funded SAOL, and today they also fund two other dictionaries: the historical and comprehensive *Swedish Academy Dictionary* (SAOB 1898–2023), and the large definition dictionary of present-day Swedish, *The Contemporary Dictionary of the Swedish Academy* (SO 2021), the latter further described in Chapter 4 in this volume. SAOL and SO are today compiled at the University of Gothenburg, whereas the editors of SAOB are situated in Lund, employed directly by the Swedish Academy.

2 Swedish reference dictionaries – a historical overview

When the Swedish Academy was founded in 1786, by His Majesty King Gustav III, one of its aims was linguistically oriented: to compile a Swedish dictionary and a reference grammar (Ralph 2009: 34). Gustav III was highly inspired by the French Academy, and he selected the thirteen original members of the Swedish Academy himself (today their number is eighteen). The motto of the Academy was, and still is, *Snille och smak* 'Talent and taste'.

A pronounced purpose for the Academy is to actively promote "the purity, vigor and majesty" of the Swedish language, i.e., its clarity, expressiveness and prestige (Svenska Akademien 2025). SAOL, SO, and SAOB of today all contribute to this purpose, as do several other initiatives by the Academy. The Academy has also provided partial financial support to several other lexicographical projects, including Olof Östergren's comprehensive *Nusvensk ordbok* ('Dictionary of Contemporary Swedish', see Östergren 1919–1972), Erik Wellander's antibarbarus *Riktig svenska* ('Proper Swedish' 1939; see Wellander 1939 and Sigurd 1986a), and many others.

2.1 Early orthographical initiatives

The first edition of SAOL (SAOL 1 1874) was not the first attempt to set down authoritative guiding principles regarding Swedish spelling. In 1801, a member of the Swedish Academy, Carl Gustaf Leopold, published *Afhandling om svenska stafsättet* 'Thesis on the Swedish way of spelling' in the Academy publication series (Leopold 1801). In his thesis, Leopold suggested spellings like *absolut* and *choklad*, which are the preferred spellings in Swedish today as well. He also proposed the use of double consonants in short function words such as *att*, *till*, and *upp* 'to/that', 'to' and 'up', respectively; addressing inconsistencies in their earlier spelling.[1] Generally, for foreign words, he was an advocate of a spelling more aligned with Swedish (Leopold 1801; Santesson 2001).

In 1869, Sweden hosted a Nordic orthographical conference. The aim was to discuss, and hopefully also rein in, the orthographical chaos that reigned in Sweden. Another aim was to try to bring the spelling norms in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish closer to each other. The mottos of the conference were *samnordiskhet* 'common

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1 See for example these entries in SAOB (1898–2023) for spelling variations from 1520 to the present day.

Nordicness' and *ljudlikhet* 'phonological similarity', i.e., spelling in compliance with phonology (see Ståhle 1970).

The Swedish Academy was not present at the conference, since none of its representatives were invited. After the meeting, a progressive linguistic society was founded, arguing for a more sound-based orthography of Swedish. Its members published a journal called *Nystavaren* 'The New-speller', and managed to initiate an organized Swedish spelling reform. Although not all of their suggestions were adopted, there was a major Swedish spelling reform in 1906, disseminated to the public through a royal decree. The spelling reform and its history and later implications for SAOL are covered by Malmgren (2009) and Ralph (2009). To the present day, Swedish still uses the orthography established by that spelling reform. The most prominent changes were the following:

– *f, fv*, and *hv* $\Rightarrow$ *v* (in most cases): *golfvet – golvet* 'the floor', *hvila – vila* '(to) rest';
– *dt* $\Rightarrow$ *tt*: *godt – gott* 'good, delicious'

SAOL registered most of these changes listed above, albeit not directly.

Apart from the orthographical discussions, it had become evident that the completion of the historical dictionary SAOB would be severely delayed. When the progress of the work on SAOB turned out to be less rapid than foreseen, the Swedish Academy started to plan for a handbook of orthography which could provide a partial descriptive framework for the considerably more ambitious SAOB project. Hence, SAOL was seen as a short and light version of SAOB. The editors of that time were based in Stockholm and closely associated with the Swedish Academy.

In the second half of the 19th century, several Swedish dictionaries and orthographical reference works were available on the Swedish market. Most of them are now more or less forgotten by the public, and most likely also by lexicographers and other linguists. The most notable dictionary from that time is the Swedish dictionary compiled by A.F. Dalin who completed the first Swedish monolingual dictionary (Dalin 1850–1853; Hannesdóttir 1998; Malmgren 1988; see Chapter 12 in this volume).

2.2 The literature on SAOL

Several authors and publications investigate various aspects of SAOL and its different editions. Many publications are written by the editor in chief of a specific edition, whereas others are contributed by editors or linguistically oriented members of the Swedish Academy. The authors of this chapter form no exception in this regard – we are since April 2023 the editor in chief (Louise Holmer) and assistant editor in chief (Kristian Blensenius) of the 15th edition of SAOL. As of 2025, a total of ten lexicographers and language technologists work with SAOL 15.

The main works dedicated to SAOL are *Nytt och gammalt i Svenska Akademiens ordlista* 'New and old in The Swedish Academy Glossary' (Holm 1951), Johannisson (1974), Mattsson (1974), *Svenska Akademien och svenska språket* 'The Swedish Academy and the Swedish language' (Allén, Sigurd & Loman 1986), and *SAOL och tidens flykt* 'SAOL and the flight of time' (Gellerstam 2009b). Together with Malmgren (2014), editor in chief for SAOL 14 (2015), they all offer historical overviews of SAOL and highlight novelties and major revisions in the different editions.

The later editions of SAOL, as well as the dictionary portal Svenska.se, have all been the subject of scientific reviews in especially the *LexicoNordica* journal.[2] Other than that, there are relatively few extensive scholarly works where SAOL is the scientific object of study (Holmer 2016; 2022). The same goes for the other two dictionaries financed by the Swedish Academy, SO and SAOB, although Rosqvist (2014) and Nilsson (2023) have written doctoral theses about the latter.

The introductory text in a dictionary constitutes a specialized genre, where editors, publishers, or funders can explain the functions of the dictionary, the intended user, the linguistic orientation and the theoretical and methodological, and hence, lexicographical, decisions (Svensén 2009; Holmer 2016). However, these texts in general tend to be short and merely outline in a descriptive way what users can expect from the dictionary. As for the different editions of SAOL, each of these includes at least some kind of introduction, although they vary from a few pages to more than 30 pages in length (for an overview, see Holmer 2016: 59–60). These introductions taken together make up a kind of long-term documentation of the guiding principles behind SAOL, both in general and for every separate edition.

3 Main features of the different editions

SAOL's main features are information on orthography, inflection, and part of speech (POS). In the earlier editions, information on POS might be given only for ambiguous words, or implicitly with the addition of inflectional suffixes, whereas the latest editions from SAOL 12 (1998) and onwards provide explicit POS information for every headword. Although somewhat slimmed-down in its microstructure (the entry and its text; see Svensén 2009 for terminology), SAOL also provides information on word segmentation in morphemes or syllables (less so in the early editions and somewhat more in the later editions), usage, and register.

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2 *LexicoNordica* is the journal of lexicography in the Nordic countries published by *Nordisk förening för lexikografi* 'Nordic association for lexicography'.

Many of the editions, although quite faithful to the main objectives, possess several special features, or, in some cases, peculiarities. The subsections of the present section are devoted to description of and comments on the editions, with special regard to their similarities and differences. It is, of course, impossible to describe everything in detail. The intention is instead to give a thorough and fair illustration of the main features.

It should be noted that the linguistic terminology used in SAOL varies between editions. It stands to reason that norms for abbreviations will vary in a language over a period of 150 years, and the conventions for abbreviations in SAOL have followed suit. It should also be noted that the ways of categorizing the vocabulary and of assigning parts of speech to the words also vary, in linguistics in general, as well as in SAOL. This may not always be stated nor explained in the introduction to every new edition.

3.1 SAOL 1–6, 1874–1889: Orthographical guidance with royal blessings

The first edition of SAOL was published in 1874 and printed in 2,000 copies, which were quickly sold out (Johannisson 1974). From the first proposal in the Academy 1869, to the realization of SAOL, only five years passed. The proposal came from the quite conservative and historically oriented linguist Johan Erik Rydqvist, a member of the Swedish Academy. The editor in chief of SAOL 1, however, was F.A. Dahlgren, a lexicographer and author. The editors of the first SAOL had access to A.F. Dalin's *Ordbok öfver svenska språket* 'Dictionary of the Swedish language' (Dalin 1850–1853; see Chapter 12 in this volume) as well as Rydqvist's historical linguistic treatise *Svenska språkets lagar* 'The laws of the Swedish Language' (Rydqvist 1850).

The first edition comprises about 34,000 headwords. Its introduction repeats almost verbatim Rydqvist's earlier text on SAOL as a descriptive framework of sorts for the SAOB, and that SAOL provides information on spelling, inflection, and gender (for nouns). As Sigurd (1986b: 197) points out, the introduction refers (surprisingly) frequently to linguistics as a science, and especially to historical linguistics.

SAOL 1 includes "främmande ord" 'foreign words', but only to a limited extent, something that might be considered a shortcoming. Compared to Dalin's dictionary, published 20 years earlier, SAOL 1 lacks fairly common headwords like *amiral* 'admiral', *faktura* 'invoice', *jaguar* 'jaguar', *jalusi* 'shutter', *madrigal* 'madrigal', and many more. One explanation for this is that Rydqvist took a generally conservative stance. Another one has to do with gender information for nouns. SAOL 1 provides such information (m. for masculine nouns, f. for feminine nouns, and n. for neuter nouns). This can be seen in Figure 1, where the headword *morot* 'carrot' is labelled "s. f.",

Mogande, part. pres. (till mogen ålder kommen). Brukas stundom i lagspråket.

Mogen (*moget; mogne, -a; mognare, mognast*), adj. **-het** (utan pl.), s. f. **Moget,** adv. **Mogna** (*-ar, -ade, -at, -ad*), v. intr. **-ande,** s. n. **-ing,** s. f. **Mognad** (utan pl.), s. m.

Moja sig (*-ar, -ade, -at*), v. refl.

Morla (*-ar, -ade, -at*), v. impers. **-ande,** s. n.

Morot (pl. *-rötter*), s. f.

Morra (*-ar, -ade, -at*), v. intr. **-ande,** s. n.

Morsk (samdr. af *mordisk*), adj. **-het** (utan pl.), s. f.

Mortel (pl. *mortlar*), s. m. **-stöt** (pl. *-ar*), s. m.

Figure 1: The first edition of SAOL, 1874, some of the words in M

meaning 'noun, feminine'. The last headword in the figure, *mortel* 'mortar', is labelled "s. m.", 'noun, masculine'. To provide information on masculine and feminine for nouns was considered a bit old-fashioned at that time, since nouns often were referred to as *den* 'it' instead of *han/hon* 'he/she' or *honom/henne* 'him/her'. Even in the Dalin dictionary, the gender marker *reale* was in use for masculine and feminine nouns, but Rydqvist, being an advocate of the older (in retrospect even obsolete) three-gender system in Swedish, insisted on keeping this information about gender for nouns in SAOL 1, along with neuter, n. This led to considerably fewer loan words in the dictionary. Such words (often French and English ones) would have to have been treated according to some kind of principle – either they are assigned the same gender as in their source language, or their gender is assigned in analogy with other words in the target language, e.g., because of their phonology. The lexicographers would have had to make a major effort to assign m. or f. to all borrowed nouns, and this circumstance may have effected the number of foreign words (see Teleman 2003: 138–144; Chapter 13 in this volume; Malmgren 2009).

In Figure 1, an example of the macro- and microstructure of SAOL 1 is shown. The first headword, *mogande* 'maturing', has a POS label indicating the present participle, a short semantic description "till mogen ålder kommen" 'having come to a mature age' and a usage note, "brukas stundom i lagspråket" 'occasionally used in the language of law'. In the first edition, there are occasional notes on etymology, in contradiction to the statements made in the introduction. In some entries, digressions on correct and incorrect use are also made.

The other entries shown in the figure display less information than *mogande*. The mix of headwords with descriptions of various sort, and headwords with only POS-information and maybe inflectional suffixes, can be said to represent the majority of the entries in SAOL 1.

The editions 2–5 might best be considered reprints rather than new editions, due to very few added entries (Johannisson 1974). These editions were published between 1874 or 1875 and onwards, and few changes were made between editions.

The 6th edition (SAOL 6 1889) is the first one to show considerable differences compared to its predecessors. Rydqvist had passed away in 1878 and the energetic new-speller Esaias Tegnér Jr (1843–1928) had joined the editorial staff. Tegnér was a member of the Swedish Academy, and he was also the editor in chief of SAOB in Lund.

The 6th edition comprises about 41,000 headwords. New features include, according to its introduction, more compounds, more derivatives, and more loanwords (SAOL 6 1889: XXX; Sigurd 1986b: 201). The main development, however, is the application of new orthographical principles:

– gt => kt: *bugt – bukt* 'bay', *pligt –plikt* 'duty';
– q => variant with k: *qvinna – kvinna* 'woman';
– e/ä variants: *elg – älg* 'moose, elk', *prest – präst* 'priest'.

New (and nowadays non-controversial) spellings like *röd – rött* (the non-neuter and neuter forms of *röd* 'red') and *vid – vitt* (the non-neuter and neuter forms of *vid* 'wide') were not included in SAOL 6, as they were seen as too newfangled ("de torde i de flestes ögon vara alltför dristiga nyheter" 'they ought to, in the eyes of most people, be too drastic novelties', Sigurd 1986b: 286). The Swedish Academy's point of view was that the spelling with a 'v' for the older 'fv' would cloud the visual impression, and the Academy did not wish to disturb the established order. The 6th edition was also made the official orthographical canon for Swedish schools (Gellerstam 2009c: 57).

As for further reading, Johannisson (1974), Sigurd (1986b), Ralph (2009), Gellerstam (2009a), and Malmgren (2009; 2014) all provide interesting information about the early editions and the editorial work in relation to them.

3.2 SAOL 7, 7.5 and 8, 1900–1923: Conservativists vs. new-spellers

Among the main features of the 7th edition (SAOL 7 1900) are its increased number of headwords, in total ca. 71,000, and its complex compromises between a more conservative orthography and a modern approach to spelling and gender in nouns. One particular decision that had impact on the number of lemmas in SAOL 7 was that regularly formed (deverbal) nomina actionis ending in -*ande* were excluded as headwords. This led to about 3,000 excluded deverbal nouns, making room for neologisms and other derivatives (see SAOL 7 1900: 1 and Holmer 2022).

The 7th edition was compiled in Lund instead of Stockholm, with Otto Hoppe (1857–1919) as the editor in chief (Johannisson 1974). Like his predecessor, he was

also the main editor for SAOB at the same time. This transfer to Lund and SAOB led to benefits for SAOL, as the editors were able to make use of the SAOB material.

As noted, in 1906, a decree was issued by His Majesty the King, establishing a new way of Swedish spelling. The Swedish Academy was quite conservative at the time, and reacted by publishing a golden mean, a radically scaled down version of SAOL, called *Ordförteckning över svenska språket* 'Inventory of the Swedish language' (Ordförteckning 1916). The somewhat odd publication was proffered in an attempt to moderate the criticism against the Academy of being (too) conservative regarding the simplified spelling, and at the same time work in compliance with His Majesty's decree and its directives. In the *Ordförteckning*, all the orthographical novelties are applied, with one major exception. The Academy chose to keep the dt-spelling in neuter forms of non-participial adjectives ending in -*d* in their non-neuter form (*god – godt*, *röd – rödt*, where the official Swedish and the public would prefer (and use) *god – gott*, *röd – rött* etc.). The *Ordförteckning över svenska språket* presents an even more reduced list of words than the other editions of SAOL, and today it remains a mere curiosity, and has, for example, not been added in the historical reference work SAOLhist (see Chapter 13 in this volume).

In the following list, the macro- and microstructure of the *Ordförteckning* are shown, illustrated by lemmas beginning in *k-*. Headwords are in boldface, no semantics or POS information is provided, and there is a dagger (†) marking that the old and first listed spelling *rödt* is preferred over the new spelling *rött* (but the more modern spelling *rött* is the only valid spelling in present-day Swedish).

krank. -het. krans. -formig.
krans | a. -ning.
krapp. -färg. röd. (-*rödt* l. † *rött*)
kras. krasa.
krasch, äv. **krach.**

The lemmas above, starting with *krank* 'ill' and ending in *krach* 'crash', form a very short excerpt of the glossary. Nevertheless, these few examples are representative of the overall structure of the *Ordförteckning*.

A new edition – the 8th – appeared only in 1923 (SAOL 8 1923). It is mainly known for its Swedish equivalents accompanying foreign loanwords, especially those from French and classical languages, but not loanwords from Germanic languages (Gellerstam 2009a) and for its conservative principle of keeping the old-fashioned dt-spelling, although marked in the microstructure with the text "SvAk", to signal that the Swedish Academy was opposed to the new spelling. The lemma list in SAOL 8 was somewhat expanded into approximately 77,000 headwords. There was also a wish from the editor in chief Ebbe Tuneld to provide pronunciation and a separate

antibarbarus chapter on "language correctness" (*språkriktighet*), but these ideas were never realized (Malmgren 2009).[3]

Apart from (contrived) Swedish equivalents to loanwords, the 8th edition is also known for its attempt to introduce Swedish spellings for some loanwords, like *burgogne*, *klaun*, and *skejlejt* for *bourgogne*, *clown*, and *skylight*. However, these suggestions for Swedish spellings were not picked up by the public and they were removed by the editors in the 9th edition.

3.3 SAOL 9–11, 1950–1986: Growth spurt, everyday language and semantic austerity

The ninth edition is by far the most exhaustive one, with about 150,000 headwords (SAOL 9 1950). When it was published in 1950, 27 years had passed since the previous edition of SAOL. The editor in chief, Pelle Holm, was also the editor in chief of SAOB in Lund, and he was able to make use of the manuscripts forming the basis for SAOB. He describes the large increase of words as being due to new societal phenomena, sports and leisure, technology, etc. (Holm 1951).

The ninth edition is first and foremost known for its many compounds, often consisting of three nouns (or a combination of nouns plus words belonging to other POS), like *mansdagsverke* 'man's day's work', *råttfällsfabrik* 'rat trap factory', and *stridsvagnsformation* 'tank formation'.

An example from the 9th edition shows the structure of the etymologically based nests with the simplex first, followed by a large set of compounds. In the following example, the entry *kärlek* 'love', and about half of its compounds registered in SAOL 9, are included. The layout of the example is to a large extent in line with the original layout (but not fully). In this nest of compounds, no POS label has been provided, although *kärleksdrama* 'love drama' is a noun, whereas the following headword *kärleksdrucken* 'love struck, strongly infatuated' is an adjective.

kärlek *-en* s. **kärleks|affär. -betygelse. -brev. -bud** relig. **-dikt. -diktning. -drama. -drucken. -dryck. -full. -fullhet.** -förbindelse. -förhållande. -förklaring. -gnabb. **-griller. -gud. -gudinna. -gåva. -handel. -hat.**

In SAOL 10 (SAOL 10 1973), the editor in chief Gösta Mattsson revised the list of headwords and excluded about 20,000 words, mostly compounds. The editorial

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3 Today, there are public institutions specifically charged with dealing with matters concerning the Swedish language, providing advice about spelling, language use, etc., such as *The Institute for Language and Folklore*, and in particular its section *The Language Council*.

staff of SAOB was also involved in the work on SAOL (Mattsson 1974: 57), but the 10th edition was the last one to be completed in Lund. In comparison with the previous edition, the 10th one was a bit stricter with regard to the description of plural forms and the orthography of English loanwords. Plurals in *-s*, such as *gangster – gangsters* 'gangster – gangsters', were gone and replaced with the Swedish plural form *gangstrar*. English loans like *jet*, *pop*, and *pub* were listed with the variant forms *jett*, *popp* and *pubb*, which better represent traditional Swedish spelling conventions, especially in the definite forms *jett – jetten* 'the jet', etc. However, users did not seem to care too much about these recommended forms, perhaps since English was now more common in Sweden in general.

For the next edition (SAOL 11 1986), the editor in chief, situated in Lund and engaged in SAOB, Sven Ekbo, wanted to delete about 50,000 headwords from SAOL 10 to make room for considerably more developed semantic descriptions. This would have turned SAOL into more of a general dictionary. The Swedish Academy opposed the idea, and decided to relocate the editorial office to the University of Gothenburg (see, e.g., Allén 1986; Gellerstam 2009a).

SAOL 11 was published in 1986, and the editor in chief in Gothenburg, Martin Gellerstam, kept the original idea of SAOL mainly presenting a list of words. In the same year, an exhaustive and corpus based definition dictionary was published in Gothenburg as well, SOB (1986). The publication of these two dictionaries also marked the 200th anniversary of the Swedish Academy.

The transfer of the SAOL manuscripts from the SAOB editorial team and the facilities in Lund to the research group at the University of Gothenburg also strengthened the scientific basis and approach, drawing on computer-aided lexicography. Also, to transplant the work on a quite special product like a dictionary commissioned by the Swedish Academy, a congregation *sui generis*, into the university instead, is quite special. Swedish universities are public authorities governed by explicit formal regulations about transparency, etc., which may sometimes come into conflict with the interests of external stakeholders, for instance regarding IPR (intellectual property rights).

In SAOL 11, computational linguistic support was used for the first time. The previous edition, SAOL 10, was available on punched tape. The department of *Språkdata* at the University of Gothenburg, had, among other research areas, developed text corpora and performed exhaustive studies on Swedish word frequencies, morphology and phraseology (see Malmgren & Sköldberg 2013 and Borin & Holmer 2024 for research projects and their output; see Chapter 2 in this volume for a brief history of Språkdata and Språkbanken).

The 11th edition was one of the best selling of all the SAOL editions, with about half a million copies sold. It held a larger vocabulary from the domain of colloquial speech, being the first edition to contain the iconic expletive *jävlar* lit. 'devils', among

other words in the more casual register. SAOL 11 was also the first of the editions to appear in a publicly available electronic version (on floppy disk).

3.4 SAOL 12–14, 1998–2015, from strict alphabetical order to *hen*

In SAOL 12 (1998), a strict alphabetical order in the macrostructure was introduced. The classical etymologically sorted nests were abandoned, and instead every headword was set in boldface at the beginning of a new line. Earlier editions that were practicing the nesting principle still implicitly provided semantic and etymological information, since related words were listed and described close to one another.

The most prominent advantage of the new order was that the user had less difficulties finding the searched-for word. The disadvantage was that some of the implicit information on semantics was lost at times, when closely related words might appear many lines apart.

The following example shows the word *handled* 'wrist' in SAOL 12 and the four other headwords following alphabetically. In this example, the first headword – *handled* 'wrist' – and the last one – *handledsväska* 'wrist bag, wristlet' – belong together, but are interrupted by headwords 2–4, which also belong together, but whose senses have nothing to do with wrists.

> **hand|led** s. *-en -er*
> **hand|leda** v., till *¹leda*
> **hand|led₁are** s. *-n*; pl. =, best. pl. *handledarna*
> **hand|led₁ning** s. *-en -ar*
> **hand₁leds|väska** s.

For the 12th edition, the editors also systematized the morphosyntactic tags for all inflectional forms, creating a morphological database, SMDB (Swedish Morphological Database). SMDB contained the headwords of SAOL 12 and all their inflectional forms. It formed the basis of the extended inflectional information in the different e-versions of SAOL, such as the CD-ROM version SAOL Plus (2007), smart phone apps (2011 and 2017) and the web version on Svenska.se (2017). Thanks to the structure of the database and its combination with the larger corpora of Språkbanken, more scientifically based decisions were made on what headwords to include and exclude. It was also evident which inflectional forms that were in use in text (Berg & Cederholm 2001; Berg 2009; Borin & Holmer 2024).

A new formal model was introduced, the *lemma–lexeme model* (see Allén 1981 for an introduction, and Svensén 2009 for comparison). With the new macrostructure, a

new headword is always given on a new line, instead of being treated in the same nest as its etymologically related word family.

Another principle in relation to this macrostructural change is the idea that even semantically distinct but formally identical headwords that share the same inflectional pattern should form a single entry (one lemma). Also, if two identical word forms have *different* inflectional patterns, they belong to different lemmas. For example, earlier editions listed the noun *ljus* 'light, candle' and the adjective *ljus* 'fair, bright' under the same entry *ljus*, but in accordance with the lemma–lexeme model, they belong to separate entries and are treated as different lexemes.

Other significant qualities of the 12th edition are the dedicated lemma stock with selected Finland-Swedish headwords (Gellerstam 2009a: 76–77), the increased use of corpus-based methods for extraction of candidates for inclusion and exclusion, and the typographically emphasized indications of word segmentation. The word *handledare* 'supervisor' (see above) has a vertical line (|) marking the division between *hand* 'hand' and *ledare* 'leader', whereas the second part *ledare* has a short vertical line (ı) marking the derivational suffix *-are* '-er'.

SAOL 13 (2006) shares many similarities with SAOL 12 (1998). Both editions had Martin Gellerstam as editor in chief and Sture Berg as assistant editor in chief. The microstructure of SAOL 13 is the same as that of SAOL 12. The novelties in connection with SAOL 13 are above all related to its appearance in digital versions:

– the development of a CD version of SAOL 13 with full inflectional paradigms for each headword and generous search possibilities (SAOL Plus 2007);
– the publication of the book *SAOL och tidens flykt* 2009 'SAOL and the flight of time';
– SAOL 13 in a free facsimile version online;
– app versions of SAOL 13 for iOS and Android; and
– an electronic service with all headwords from almost all previous editions freely accessible (SAOLhist 2013), see Chapter 13 in this volume.

The printed book sold in considerably fewer copies than the previous edition. Hopes were probably high for the CD version to sell better, but the users had already turned to freely accessible dictionaries online, SAOL unfortunately not being one of these. Instead, the publishing company Norstedts, which has so far published all editions of SAOL and also SO 2009, developed app versions in a joint effort with app developers (first at Isolve AB, later Wang.se). The search functions in SAOL Plus 2007 were provided by Oribi, a company developing technical aids for people with dyslexia. Especially the fuzzy search in SAOL Plus, but also the other search facilities, maintained quite a high standard and had few counterparts in its field (Berg, Holmer & Hult 2008; Berg 2009).

The app versions built upon the work with the CD version, and the apps display inflectional forms together with grammatical information about the forms for all

lexical items that carry inflection. In the print version, inflectional information such as suffixes etc. are mostly given in abbreviated or else condensed forms. The apps were also the object of the first major user study of SAOL (Holmer, Hult & Sköldberg 2015).

From a lexicographic point of view, the introduction of the letter W as an independent letter in the macrostructure was one of the more prominent new features. In earlier editions, words with the initial letter W were sorted under V. The W section of SAOL is however one of the shortest sections in the dictionary; 2 pages in SAOL 14, compared to the section with S as the initial letter, which covers about 230 pages out of a total of 1,596 pages.

The 14th edition was published in 2015, with Sven-Göran Malmgren as editor in chief (SAOL 14 2015). This edition is so far the latest. It comprises about 126,000 headwords. Compared to SAOL 13, about 13,000 new entries were added and 9,000 excluded. Among the new headwords are a considerable number of compounds, semi-automatically extracted from mainly newspaper texts. Also, a POS previously not present was introduced in SAOL when about 400 names were added as entries, mainly geographical names and personal names.

A major change was also the introduction of sense disambiguation with lexeme numbers and more semantic descriptions as a consequence (SAOL 14 2015: XXX–XXXVI, see also Malmgren 2014). All compounds were provided with inflectional information, which was also a novelty. In previous editions, the user was referred to the simplex word for information on inflection. The following example shows the macro- and microstructure of SAOL 14, starting with *kärleksbetygelse* 'love declaration':

> **kär**ı**leks|be**ı**tyg**ı**else** s. *~n ~r*
> **kär**ı**leks|be**ı**vis** s. *~et*; pl. ~
> **kär**ı**leks|brev** s. *~et*; pl. ~
> **kär**ı**leks|bud** s. *~et*; pl. ~ <relig.> till *bud 3*

All compounds have information about POS ("s." for *substantiv* 'noun'), inflectional suffixes, and long and short vertical lines for marking of word segmentation. The forthcoming edition, SAOL 15, will adhere to the same structure.

When it became publicly known that SAOL 14 had included the new, gender-neutral pronoun *hen* (Milles 2013; Haugen & Borin 2018), the headlines even made it into the international press. The inclusion of *hen* also led to reactions from the public, both positive and negative. The discussion of *hen* is actually too large a topic to be fully covered in this chapter, but from a lexicographical point of view, it can be noted that the headword *hen* and its short entry text has received far more attention than most other newly added headwords.

In 2017, the dictionary portal Svenska.se was released. It is probably safe to say that in 2025, more users access SAOL 14 through Svenska.se and the app versions than through the printed book, although the book also has a small but dedicated user group. Apart from Svenska.se, the most popular dictionary site for Swedish is Synonymer.se, a dynamic site that presents a synonym dictionary, a monolingual Swedish dictionary from 2010 from the publishing company Bonniers, example sentences from the internet, inflection tables, synonyms and antonyms suggested by the users, and much more (Holmer & Sköldberg 2016). Other than Synonymer.se, at present there are only two major Swedish online dictionaries, Lexin and Swedish Wiktionary.

3.5 SAOL 15

The focus areas of the ongoing work on SAOL 15 mainly include semi-automated detection of new lemma candidates, exclusion of obsolete headwords, revision of dated entry texts, and targeted search for particularly neologisms in selected semantic fields.

One major task has been to transfer the data from the older and in-house developed systems to Språkbanken Text and creating a functional dictionary writing system interface in alignment with the lexical infrastructure of Karp (see Chapter 11 in this volume). Major efforts have been made to incorporate the databases and the data structure for SAOL and SO into Karp and to continuously validate the dataset. The work is developed in close collaboration between the lexicographers and the language technologists.

Since the beginning of computational lexicography at the University of Gothenburg, the corpora made accessible by Språkbanken Text have grown considerably. The text material available via Korp amounts to several billion words. The methods for extracting candidates for inclusion include comparisons between selected years of newspaper text, such as 2021 with 2020, 2020 with 2019, etc. To discover lemma lacunas in both SO and SAOL, vector analyses with fastText have been performed (Forsberg & Holmer 2024; Forsberg & Sköldberg forthcoming; see Chapter 4 in this volume).

To get a picture of candidates for exclusion, frequency analysis has been performed with an in-house tool comparing all inflectional forms of the SAOL 14 lemmas to selected corpora of 3 billion words (Holmer et al. 2024). This has resulted in a list of 3,000 lemmas with zero occurrences in the modern material, which makes them good candidates for exclusion, although some manual lexicographic curation is needed in addition.

It was an outspoken wish from the Swedish Academy to publish a new edition of SAOL in print, planned for early 2026, along with an update of Svenska.se. There has also been a public demand for a print book, although it is not realistic to expect large sales numbers anymore.

3.6 Overview of editions, lemma counts and editors in chief

To sum up, there are considerable differences in the lemma count and features of the different editions of SAOL. First, it should be noted that the reported headword counts differ somewhat between texts about SAOL, for example the introductions to different editions of SAOL, research articles on SAOL, and statistics from the SAOLhist-project (see Chapter 13 in this volume). The headword counts in Table 1 are taken from an overview by Gellerstam (2009a: 56). It is safe to say that the information on lemma count is more approximate than precise. In Chapter 13 of this volume, the numbers of the different editions are somewhat different, partly because they are based on the lemma count in the database of SAOLhist. However, there is no doubt that the first editions are the smallest and thinnest, whereas the 9th edition holds the largest number of headwords, and that the later editions add up to at least about 120,000 lemmas.

One explanation for the fluctuations in lemma number might be related to the editors and their preferences: in the early editions, foreign words were deliberately neglected, which kept the headword count somewhat low. In the 9th edition, modern society and its many new fields influenced the lemma list, as did linguistic discussions on topics such as word formation and compounding (Mattsson 1974: 81). No later edition has been as generous in including transparent compounds, and the aim has instead been to exclude such non-opaque words, making space for more relevant ones.

In Table 1, every edition's year of publication is shown together with the name of its editor in chief and number of headwords.

4 Relations to other dictionaries and to users

Since the publication of its first edition, numerous official opinions about SAOL have been expressed, for example in press reviews, newspaper articles, comments from various word puzzle players, and many more. Although SAOL was rather quickly recognized and appreciated as an official orthographical aid within the Swedish school system, it has also always faced criticism for its headword selection, principles

Table 1: First year of publication of the SAOL editions, their editors in chief, and approximate number of headwords, from Gellerstam (2009a) and the SAOLhist project (in parentheses)

Year	Edition	Editor in chief		Headwords
1874	SAOL 1	Fredrik August Dahlgren	35,000	(34,000)
1889	SAOL 6	Fredrik August Dahlgren	40,000	(42,000)
1900	SAOL 7	Otto Hoppe	71,000	(72,000)
1923	SAOL 8	Ebbe Tuneld	85,000	(79,000)
1950	SAOL 9	Pelle Holm	155,000	(149,000)
1973	SAOL 10	Gösta Mattsson	135,000	(140,000)
1986	SAOL 11	Martin Gellerstam	115,000	(117,000)
1998	SAOL 12	Martin Gellerstam	120,000	(119,000)
2006	SAOL 13	Martin Gellerstam	125,000	(123,000)
2015	SAOL 14	Sven-Göran Malmgren	126,000	(127,000)

for spelling variants, comments on usage and register, and so on. When the gender-neutral pronoun *hen* was included in SAOL 14, some users stated that they would never buy or use SAOL again. Others were very pleased, since the inclusion of a word in SAOL tends to provide it with some kind of official status.

In the early years, SAOL gained public attention mainly from its function as an orthographical aid in the educational system. In the late 1800s, newspapers reported from many teachers' conferences that SAOL was adopted as the accepted norm for spelling and inflection, primarily due to the lack of serious competitors.

When describing SAOL, it is important to distinguish it from SO, the contemporary definition dictionary of the Swedish Academy (see Chapter 4 in this volume). It is also of great value for the lexicographers to investigate users' opinions of SAOL. In this section, an overview of the major differences to SO is made, and users' opinions are exemplified.

4.1 SAOL and SO: similarities and differences

SAOL and SO have for a long time been supported by two different computational lexicographical databases. As described above, SAOL has a long history and was relocated to Gothenburg from Lund in the early 1980s. The SO database, however, was originally developed at the University of Gothenburg (see Chapters 2 and 4 in this volume). The two dictionaries have their own niches, respectively, and as mentioned, the main niche for SAOL is orthography and inflection and a more normative approach, whereas SO's main area of expertise is semantics and phraseology, and many other lexical properties of the Swedish lexicon. SO also adopts a more descriptive approach.

However, since the launch of Svenska.se in 2017, SAOL and SO, and also the historical SAOB, are accessible side by side, and results for search queries are displayed in parallel for the three dictionaries. This is generally appreciated by users but can also be confusing, when SAOL and SO at times describe the same word in different ways. The lack of harmony between SAOL and SO arises for example when the same headword is assigned different parts of speech (one example is *rykande*, 'smoking', characterized as an adjective in SAOL and an adverb in SO), when the order of subsenses is inconsistent between the dictionaries (for example in chronological order in SO according to etymology, but in frequency order based on modern usage in SAOL), when the number of senses vary, etc. (Bäckerud, Nilsson & Sköldberg 2020; Blensenius, Holmer & Sköldberg 2021; Sköldberg 2023).

One reason is due to their different purposes, another is that the development of the two dictionaries has so far not been synchronized or coordinated (at least not until 2024), and a third one is that their underlying databases have been developed separately, resulting in different structures.

4.2 User studies and user input

Thus, SAOL has been a resource for orthography and inflection for more than 150 years, but how is it actually used? In order to gain better understanding of users' behavior and lexicographical needs, the editors have conducted two user studies, the first one after the e-versions of SAOL were published (Holmer, Hult & Sköldberg 2015) and in 2024, another one about SAOL in general (Holmer in preparation).

The first study, (Holmer, Hult & Sköldberg 2015), focused on the app version of SAOL 13. SAOL 13 was published in a print version in 2006, was transformed into a CD version in 2007, and was further developed and released as apps. The apps offered somewhat fewer features compared to the CD, but they were available free of charge for the users. The aim of this study was mainly to collect opinions on the app, so as to see what users' opinions were of the first release, and what users wished for future versions. Users in general appreciated SAOL as a whole, valued the price (i.e., no cost at all) and were positive to the fact that the Swedish Academy actually was interested in making SAOL more available. Suggestions for the future included, among other things, to expand abbreviations.

The second study was aimed at linguists and language experts and dealt with SAOL's approach to language policy and language counseling. The majority of respondents' opinions stated, in brief, that SAOL is an important tool for everyone involved in linguistically oriented tasks, and that it is expected that SAOL should be somewhat conservative in current languages debates.

Apart from these two studies, which focus solely on SAOL, Bäckerud, Nilsson & Sköldberg (2020) investigate the use of Svenska.se, where SAOL of course forms a relevant part.

However, the editors of SAOL and SO receive emails and comments from users on a regular basis. Through the dictionary portal Svenska.se, users also post questions, comments, and suggestions. These different ways of collecting user input complement each other, and the editors of today have a fairly good overview of different views on SAOL from both the public and linguistically oriented users.

5 SAOL in the near and distant future

Few lexicographers and other linguists can predict what the future holds for lexicography and dictionaries for humans. As active lexicographers, we naturally hope for our products to reach many users, not only in the present, but also for many years to come. At the time of writing, there are concrete plans for one more print edition of SAOL, planned for early 2026. Alongside the book release, the content on Svenska.se will also undergo partial updates, and a slightly updated version of SO will be published. The 15th edition of SAOL will be incorporated into Svenska.se, replacing the 14th edition. Additionally, the app versions of SAOL and SO will be updated.

In this section, we outline the current workflow and focus areas of SAOL 15, and take a daring look into the crystal ball, to try to speculate on what SAOL 25 will look like in 2125.

5.1 The SAOL workflow

The current influx of new words to SAOL and also SO, both neologisms and older words that might fill lacunas, come from different sources. To guarantee the scientific basis of SAOL 15, the editors rely on language technology and computer aided solutions developed at Språkbanken Text at the University of Gothenburg (see Chapters 2, 4, 9, 10, and 11 in this volume; Forsberg & Holmer 2024).

The suggestions for candidates for inclusion in SAOL are mainly collected from the following sources:
– selected corpora containing contemporary Swedish, available through Korp (see Chapter 10 in this volume);
– recently added headwords, derivatives and compounds in SO (see Chapter 4 in this volume);

– manually extracted examples; and
– suggestions from users and linguistically oriented colleagues.

In order to keep the list of headwords relevant and up to date, and to guarantee that SAOL continues to be a contemporary dictionary, the editors also exclude obsolete headwords, subsenses, and quotations (Berg, Holmer & Sköldberg 2010; Diamond 2015; Holmer et al. 2024). Ever since the 11th edition in 1986, the lexicographical work with SAOL has been corpus based, and it is almost unthinkable to imagine anything else as far as methodology is concerned. The corpus based work is crucial in many stages of the process: extracting neologisms and inflectional patterns from selected texts, excluding obsolete words, investigating constructional patterns and valency, the hunt for first occurrences, etc. (see examples in Chapter 10 in this volume).

The inclusion of the research group of lexicographers in Språkbanken Text (see Chapter 2 in this volume) facilitates and secures the long-term technical stability. In addition to this, hopes are that in the longer term, both SAOL and SO may in some way be integrated in the computational lexical infrastructure of Språkbanken.

5.2 Three key characteristics

In order to summarize the specific traits of SAOL and its relevance as of today, we would like to focus on especially three of its main characteristics. The first one is that SAOL registers the *general* language, not specialized language. The second, that it comprises a *selection* of words, not every valid Swedish word. The third is that SAOL is *one of several options* for a user in search for different kinds of lexical information.

The idea that SAOL deals with the general language is quite old. This means that words that clearly belong mostly to certain regions in Sweden very rarely are registered in SAOL. Instead, there are several dedicated dialect dictionaries and web resources available for this subject, for example published by The Institute for Language and Folklore (Isof.se 2025). Words from domain specific language are included if they can also be considered a part of the general language. See, e.g., Landqvist, Sköldberg & Holmer (2024) for lexicographical considerations regarding words from the medical domain.

SAOL comprises a selection of words. There is an old belief that SAOL registers the valid Swedish vocabulary, and that if a word is not included in SAOL, it is not part of the approved Swedish. This is a misconception (see Gellerstam 2009c; Holmer 2022). It is, for example, simply not possible to include all compounds for every simplex. One example is the word *vatten* 'water', which is represented with about 230 compounds in SAOL 14, like *vattendjur* 'water animal', *vattenfärg* 'water color' and *vattenlöslig* 'water soluble'. In the selected corpora, the initial compound member *vatten-* occurs

in around 2,000 compounds, of which most are *not* part of the SAOL list of headwords. Good candidates from the corpora, which might very well be included in SAOL 15, are for example *vattenransonering* 'water rationing', *vattenskydd* 'water protection' and *vattenpark* 'water park'.

SAOL is one of several dictionary resources. SAOL focuses on spelling and inflection, and some users expect to find more semantics, synonyms and etymology. Luckily, there are more comprehensive dictionaries, like SO and SAOB for semantics, examples of usages, constructions, etymology, and so on, and on Synonymer.se the user can find a lot of synonyms, antonyms, user generated content, etc. Obsolete words that have been excluded from SAOL can be accessed via SAOLhist (SAOLhist 2013), and learners of Swedish looking for a Swedish dictionary can consult Lexin.[4] All these resources are nowadays available free of charge online. A user who does not find the sought-for word in SAOL, can easily access any of the other dictionaries (and there are also several others, not mentioned here).

5.3 SAOL in the year 2125

The exact extent of the future for SAOL 100 years from now is somewhat unclear, and to make speculations about print dictionaries in the far future will perhaps lead to very little. As with most projects, issues of time and money are key. For a start, the Swedish Academy and the University of Gothenburg have an agreement about mutual cooperation with financing of the dictionaries SAOL and SO by the Academy until the end of 2028. During this period, a print version of SAOL will be published, and the dictionary portal Svenska.se (2025) will be revised and updated in alignment with the new SAOL edition, the revision of SO 2021, and the now completed SAOB.

The publication of SAOL 15 in print was considered a bit old fashioned by some users, while others cherish the book features and are convinced that there will still be books and print dictionaries in 2125. However, the plans for SAOL 16 are still in their infancy. SAOL 15 post print will most likely be revised with regard to correction of obvious errors – always present – and perhaps a reprint will be published. However, sales figures might affect the outcome of future plans for print. The Danish *Retskrivningsordbogen*, published in late 2024 in print, will be updated digitally from now on, and the latest e-version will be the authorized one (Dansk Sprognævn 2025). It is not impossible that a similar suggestion will be made for forthcoming versions of SAOL, although it is also likely that there will be a print SAOL 16.

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4 https://www.isof.se/flersprakighet/publikationer/lexin-ordbocker (last accessed: April 4, 2025)

5.4 Closing remarks

When the first edition of SAOL was published more than 150 years ago, the lexicographers probably had little knowledge about what the glossary users might do with the final product. And, as mentioned, when is a dictionary considered a "final product" anyway? SAOL has over the years increased its lemma count from 34,000 to about 128,000 (SAOL 15). The page count has increased from about 300 to 1,600 pages, and the pieces of information accompanying most of the headwords are also more generous nowadays, from close to zero in the editions of the 20th century to at least POS information and inflectional suffixes plus often hints of semantics in SAOL 14 and 15.

SAOL is now mainly accessed through Svenska.se together with its close relatives SO and SAOB. The idea of a print dictionary as a standalone product is perhaps seriously challenged by the change of times and the preference for e-solutions. Nevertheless, there is actually no contradiction in producing a print dictionary and an e-version based on the same dataset.

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