

New Age in Europe

Sweden

In this occasional series, *New Age Retailer* explores the New Age marketplace in European countries.

by Brita Adkinson



In this new series, *New Age Retailer* will journey through Europe to learn about European New Age bookstores, publishers, and events that inspire personal and spiritual development. Our goal is to better understand what is different and what is shared between New Age communities in Europe and in North America. In this exploration, we hope to flesh out the impact North American thinkers and innovators have on Europe — and also to find out what lessons North Americans can learn from our European friends.

Our first stop is Sweden. This small country of 8.5 million people on the northern edge of Europe has a rich variety of individuals and organizations sharing messages of hope and inspiration. In this article, taste a few samplings as we visit Swedish bookstores and leading-edge publishers.

Näckrosen Bokhandel: a bookstore in Göteborg

Reaching out toward the North Sea, Göteborg is Sweden's second largest city and its outpost to the West. In the heart of Göteborg's old city center, an innovative bookstore nurtures tomorrow's ideas: Näckrosen Bokhandel.

"Näckrosen" means water lily, and "bokhandel" means bookstore. Thus the name translates as "The Water-Lily Bookstore."

The store is found on the small, unobtrusive side street Storgatan in downtown Göteborg. When you walk into the store, you descend a few steps, entering what seems like a peaceful grotto a little below street level. Here, spiritual seekers find a wide selection of books covering all aspects of metaphysical and spiritual knowledge, from the early writings of the Theosophical Society to recent titles by the Dalai Lama, Neale Donald Walsch, and Shakti Gawain.

Store Profile

Näckrosen Bokhandel

Storgatan 10
SE 411 24 Göteborg, Sweden
www.nackrosen.com

Owner: Bo Lundberg
Year opened: 1972
Square footage: 1,076
Yearly gross sales: \$414,000
Books in stock: 7,500
Employees: three full-time
Events: concerts, book signings, talks, seminars, tarot readings
Hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Bo Lundberg, owner and manager: We endeavor to be what I call a seeker station — a place where spiritual seekers can find precisely what they are looking for. We are one of Scandinavia's oldest and largest metaphysical bookstores. We have been in business continuously for 30 years.

We have moved from offering a few thousand book titles a few years ago to having 7,000 to 8,000 titles available for our customers currently. Our goal is to continue building our stock until we have 10,000 titles available in the store. Our aim is to provide breadth and depth. We are a specialty store, offering services different from those of general bookstores.

In a typical general bookstore in Sweden, sales center around 10 or so popular titles. The bulk of the store's sales may be derived from around 100 titles. By contrast, in our store

other nations in Europe. Also, Sweden sports more book publishers per capita than any other European country. With a population of only 8.5 million people, Sweden boasts more than 1,000 publishing companies.

Adkinson: Why are books so central to the Swedish identity?

Lundberg: I believe Sweden's long, dark winters always have driven people to remain indoors and read books. The habit is so ingrained that the arrival of television has not changed it. The fact that people live in remote towns and villages separated by deep forests — and on farms or in small cottages spread far apart from one another — also makes people stay home during the long, cold winter nights.

Furthermore, from the 1930s onward Swedes have developed government-subsidized evening-education programs and distance-learning programs, which now are well-established and are part of life for the average grassroot Swede — more so than in many other European countries. The night-school programs originally were created to serve people working full time in blue-collar jobs — to enable them to achieve their educational goals. By attending such adult-education classes, Swedes learn to crave for information, and they keep on wanting to know more throughout their lives.

Could it be that the annual national celebrations of the Nobel Prize in literature aids in stimulating people's interest in literature? Whatever the reason, Swedes buy more books than most other Europeans.

Adkinson: Please describe your store physically.

Lundberg: Our current floor space is 100 square meters (approximately 1,076 square feet). The store's walls are lined with shelves filled with books. Several corners have comfortable chairs where people can sit and read. If you want, you can sit here all day and read a whole book!

Besides books, we sell music. We also offer a rock buffet — a selection of around 100 varieties of semiprecious stones for sale — in one of our rooms. We are in the process of extending the store into an adjacent space, which will add an additional 100 square meters to our floor space. In the new area we will



The store also specializes in books about philosophy, religion, and psychology. Näckrosen Bokhandel has quadrupled the number of titles it offers for sale — to 7,500 — in the past four years.

Brita Adkinson: Please tell me about your store, Bo.

customers pick one or two books from anywhere across the broad spectrum of 10,000 titles currently available through our ordering service. We operate in an environment where people are avid readers and looking for that special item.

Recent statistics show that Swedes buy more books per capita than people in most

open a cafe, which also will have an outdoor seating area.

One of our unique ways of serving our customers is through a notice board that, as far as we know, is Sweden's largest!

Adkinson: How large is it?

Lundberg: The board is 2.5 meters high and 5 meters long (8.2 by 16.5 feet) and covers an entire wall. The board displays 150 letter-sized notices at any time.

Adkinson: Apart from selling merchandise, what else does your store offer, Bo?

Lundberg: We organize talks and concerts; psychic, tarot, and numerology readings; and reiki treatments. Our reiki therapist, Matthew Sword, is well-known throughout Sweden and has published the book *Reiki och Karuna (Reiki and Karuna)*, which features a unique approach to reiki. I believe his method will attract attention internationally in the course of time.

Some years ago we organized a concert featuring Deva Premal — who grew up in Germany — and Miten, and our concert contributed to their international breakthrough, which began to unfold soon after their appearance at our store.

Adkinson: Who are your best-selling authors?

Lundberg: The Dalai Lama definitely is our No. 1 seller. We sell so many books by the Dalai Lama you would think our customers had enough of them by now! Neale Donald Walsch comes in No. 2, and Deepak Chopra is No. 3. We also sell a lot of books by Brandon Bays and Byron Katie.

Adkinson: What about native Swedish authors?

Lundberg: The 1,000 Swedish publishers operate almost exclusively within the Swedish community, while books published in the English language reach almost all over the world — to more than one billion people. Naturally, Swedish publishers cannot produce books with the same reach as English-language publishers.

A Swedish book is considered a success at 5,000 copies sold. Swedish New Age book successes include Ylva Franzén's book for women *Orgasmera mera (Have More Orgasms)*, which has sold 25,000 copies so far, and Matthew Sword's *Reiki och Karuna (Reiki*

and Karuna). Another successful Swedish author is Carl Johan Calleman, who wrote *The Mayan Calendar*. This book has become a bestseller in the English language.

In the past, 70 percent of our titles have been of Swedish origin and 30 percent of English-language origin. When we reach our goal of 10,000 titles in stock, though, the reverse will be the case. We will carry 30 percent Swedish books and 70 percent books of English-language origin.

Adkinson: Which Swedish publishers do you find most interesting in today's New Age publishing scene?

Lundberg: Energica (www.energica.com) and Egmont Richters Förlag (www.egmontrichter.com). Among the older publishing houses, Natur och Kultur, a non-profit trust, releases interesting new titles in the fields of psychology and philosophy (www.nok.se). Another established giant, Albert Bonniers Förlag, recently has released some New Age titles (www.albertbonniersforlag.com).

Adkinson: Where do your customers come from, Bo? Do they mainly live in Göteborg, or do people travel here from outside Göteborg?

Lundberg: We believe 70 percent of our customers come from in and around Göteborg and 30 percent from farther away. An example of a faraway customer was a person who telephoned us from Belgium and later visited the store. We also had an American customer who was attracted to our store because of our crystal collection. He paid 15,000 Swedish crowns (approximately \$2,000) for a crystal and walked away very happy.

Adkinson: You run a mail-order service, too. How significant is this aspect of your business?

Lundberg: Our online and mail-order sales are growing steadily. We have 10,000 customers who order regularly and a total of around 50,000 who buy once in a while.

Adkinson: How many employees work in your store?

Lundberg: Three.

Adkinson: Only three people handle it all — sales, administration, mail orders, and in-store events?

Lundberg: Yes, only three, but we do the

job of five people! I am very thankful for my two companions and supporters — Martin Goés and Wiivo Mägi.

Adkinson: Bo, how do you find out about new products? Do you attend trade shows?

Lundberg: Yes. We feel lucky that the largest trade show for the Scandinavian world of books — the Göteborg Book Expo (www.bokbibliotek.se) — is held right here in Göteborg annually, and we usually attend it. Every second year we also exhibit. I also usually attend the annual London Book Fair (www.lbf-virtual.com).

Adkinson: Which distributors do you work with?

Lundberg: We buy most of our international stock through the American company New Leaf Distributing. Within Sweden, Seelig is the dominant book distributor, but to afford its service we would need to buy each item in large quantities. We aim to have a very wide selection of metaphysical titles and buy small quantities at a time. Therefore, it works best for us to buy our stock directly from the publishers. So, we deal directly with publishers in the United States, Great Britain, China, India, and other countries.

Adkinson: Tell me about the music part of your business.

Lundberg: We specialize in New Age music. As with books, the music industry in Sweden has grown enormously, even just in the past 10 years. Sweden now has the third largest music-export industry in the world, exceeded only by the United States and Great Britain.

Some of the Swedish musicians and bands producing this New Age music may be unknown in Europe and North America, but they have become bestsellers in some countries far away from Sweden, including Japan. We draw from this abundance of music production within our own borders and stock around 1,000 CD titles.

Again, I believe this proliferation of musicians is partly due to the Swedish system of government-funded community music schools. A large portion of young people learn to play guitar, keyboard, and other instruments.

Adkinson: Who are your bestsellers?

Lundberg: Deva Premal sells well. The Swedish musician Mats Götherskjöld just launched his first CD, titled *Improvisations on the Guitar* (<http://hem.passagen.se/galll>). We play the CD in the store, and it is selling really well right now.

Adkinson: Bo, did you have a background in retail business before working at Näckrosen Bokhandel?

Lundberg: None whatsoever! I have done a lot of traveling, which has given me a sense of life experience to draw on. I spent six months traveling in South America. I have lived and shared with some of the poorest people on earth and also some of the richest — billionaires. Visiting with all these people taught me a great deal about life.

Adkinson: But Bo, do you have some training or education in running a business?

Lundberg: Actually, no. The only formal training I have is a two-year course for electricians — circuits, wiring, electrical installations. I worked as a caregiver — a child minder — and I worked in cinema production for a while, but never before in a store.

When I returned from my travels, I was looking for work as an electrician. A friend said they needed a production manager in their electronics manufacturing plant and suggested I apply for the job. I said, “I can’t.” He said, “Why can’t you?” So, I applied and got the job.

Then, in 2000, I took on the management of Näckrosen. The fact that I have no previous experience in retail business is something I am not unhappy about, because it makes me free. I am free to think unlimited thoughts on how we may expand and grow!

Adkinson: What makes your efforts worthwhile, Bo?

Lundberg: I treasure those special meetings with people. One day a man entered the store. He said he came from Switzerland. After chatting with him for a while, I managed to get him to reveal his identity. He was Max Ryeg, the director of Agmüller — a major tarot-card manufacturer. Ryeg said he was intrigued that a small bookstore had more than 200 types of tarot cards in stock, and so he decided to make a personal visit to our store.

At Christmas, we usually set up a special

table with a Christmas buffet of books on sale for our customers. At these times, we notice many customers glance at the buffet of special offers, but then they slip away into the back shelves of the store. They reach into a far corner to find that particular precious gem of a book they wanted, and that’s the one they buy.

For every seeker, there is a special need and a specialty item unique to that customer. I feel joy in my heart every time we are able to meet someone’s particular need.

Wiivo Mägi, a man in his fifties, joined Näckrosen Bokhandel two years ago. “I began practicing yoga in 1975,” Mägi says. “Since then, I have read books on Eastern philosophies, meditation, Egyptian mysticism, and other esoteric literature.”

Adkinson: What is your job, Wiivo?

Wiivo Mägi: Initially I was invited to work on the layout of the store’s catalog. Then, I set up the company’s Internet sales operation. I ended up staying here.

We began selling over the Internet one year ago. Now I work full time managing Internet sales and working with sales in the store.

Adkinson: Wiivo, you say you have nourished your interest in mysticism and spirituality for more than 25 years. There appears to be a growing interest in meditation and spirituality among Swedes. Are you aware of any particular trends?

Mägi: In 1990 and 1991, Sweden’s economy went into a huge crisis that affected finances and jobs. At that time there was a dramatic increase in interest in spirituality. When our society does not seem to fulfill our expectations, we turn to something else that may do that and serve to power our lives.

In the past couple of years, with a sense of increasing instability in world politics, we are noticing a new wave of interest in books exploring the meaning of life.

Adkinson: What do you appreciate about your job, Wiivo?

Mägi: When I began working here, it dawned on me that I have built up a lot of knowledge about metaphysical books over the years. I enjoy being able to guide customers to the information they are looking for. Also, I greatly enjoy being immersed in the very

latest and newly published books. Even though I often know about the topic already, I enjoy reading a new book presenting new aspects and insights on a subject.

Energica: a publisher nestled in the wilderness

In the early 1980s Monica Katarina Frisk was managing the metaphysical bookstore Vattumannen in Stockholm. She found a profound book she wanted to share with others — and that desire led her into book publishing.

“I came across a book that gave me much inspiration: *Creative Visualization* by Shakti Gawain,” Frisk explains. “My partner, Per Frisk, and I had saved 5,000 crowns (around \$675) by publishing the magazine *Energivågen* (*The Energy Wave*). We used the money to buy the rights for Shakti Gawain’s book. That is how we began our publishing company, Energica, in 1985.”

Monica, Per, and their three children moved out of Stockholm and established their publishing business in the small, rural village Stackmora, near Orsa in the county Dalarna in central Sweden. With its large regions of pure wilderness, including roadless mountains and forests, Dalarna is a haven for skiers, hikers, and canoeists. Dalarna’s small towns are known for their traditional midsummer celebrations and large summer folk festivals, where people camp in the open and sing and dance throughout the day and night. Summer nights never get dark.

Monica and Per now own and manage five successful businesses: the publishing house Energica (the name was created by combining “energi,” which means energy, with Monica); the magazine *Hälsa* (*Health*); the magazine *Energivågen*; the book club Bokklubben Vitalis (Vitality Book Club); and the retreat facility Spa Celebration.

The magazine *Energivågen* is a resource guide. The magazine provides contacts and information for New Age distributors, retailers, and other businesses, including retreat centers, health-care practitioners, journeys to sacred places, classes in meditation, training courses in reiki healing, and other therapies. *Energivågen* also publishes reports on events and activities. A recent issue told retailers

about the Harmoni-expo (Harmony Expo), a New Age trade show to be held in Husqvarna in southern Sweden in late February and in Stockholm in late March (www.harmoniexpo.com).

Hälsa is one of Sweden's oldest, best-known magazines in the field of health. Monica and Per acquired it in 1991, and Per now serves as editor in chief. The February 2004 issue includes articles about skiing; attitudes about money; acupuncture; treatment methods for sugar addiction; relaxation programs for workplaces; the pros and cons

able to build our dream spa, Spa Celebration," Monica says. "We received inspiration for this project on our trips to Hawaii, Bali, and India."

Organizations rent the space for a day or evening, and individuals also may rent the facilities. At Spa Celebration, an indoor pool is built into an environment of bold, creative wood and glass designs and colorful ceramics. Up to 12 people may gather in the outdoor Jacuzzi heated with firewood or barbecue their dinner in a *kåta* — a Lapland teepee-style tent — with a fireplace. A sauna and a conference room complete the facility.



Clockwise from above: Set in beautiful wilderness in Stackmora, Sweden, this building is the hub of Energica's five vibrant businesses; Energica's staff, including Monica Katarina Frisk at the top of the stairs and Per Frisk third from bottom; the beautiful Spa Celebration retreat center.

of hormone-replacement treatment; conscious cooking habits; homeopathy; and Eckhart Tolle. *Hälsa* reaches 307,000 readers across Sweden.

In 2001, Monica and Per acquired Bokklubben Vitalis. "We have developed the book club successfully, and it has a very positive impact on the sales of Energica's books," Monica says. On the book club's website, the invitation to join translates as: "We offer you books that will raise your vision above the horizon. Books that give your soul wings and anchor your body. A special selection of books and music albums that will brighten up your life. These books will challenge old patterns and ways of thinking, yet give you solid support."

Completed in 2002, Spa Celebration is a retreat center suitable for private groups or small work teams. "Thanks to the excellent profits from our publishing activities, we were

able to build our dream spa, Spa Celebration," Monica says. "We received inspiration for this project on our trips to Hawaii, Bali, and India."

You can learn more about Energica, *Energivägen*, and Spa Celebration at www.energica.com. The website for *Hälsa* is www.halsa.se, and the site for Bokklubben Vitalis is www.bokklubben-vitalis.se.

Adkinson: Tell me about your business, Monica.

Monica Katarina Frisk: Our work is our passion. We now have run Energica for 19 years, publishing five or six new titles each year. This spring we are releasing four new titles: *Gåvan att vara till (Everyday Grace)* by Marianne Williamson; *Tystnaden talar (Still-*

ness Speaks) by Eckhart Tolle; *Sjärens disciplin (The Way of Yoga)* by Osho; and *Den rena källan (The Pure Source)* by Marie-Louise and Robert Hahn.

Bestsellers by Swedish authors are *Själers samband (Soul Connections)* by Marie-Louise and Robert Hahn and *Livets källa (The Source of Life)* by Gunnel Minett. Bestsellers by English-language authors are *Zen Tarot* by Osho; *Lev livet fullt ut (The Power of Now)* by Eckhart Tolle; *Du kan hela ditt liv (You Can Heal Your Life)* by Louise L. Hay; *Livets sju andliga lagar (The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success)* by Deepak Chopra; and *Lita på din intuition (Developing Intuition)* by Shakti Gawain.

Adkinson: Monica, what motivates you to do this work?

Frisk: As a teenager I developed an interest in exploring the meaning of life. After giving birth to my first child, I asked myself, "Is there nothing more to life?" When I studied the history of literature at Stockholm University, the writings of philosophers and thinkers fascinated me. But phi-

losophy felt too limiting.

Toward the end of the 1970s, I worked as an editor for the magazine *Nexus*. At that time the bookstore Vattumannen and Per entered into my life. Per and I became greater together than each one alone. We began a journey that has made it possible for us to give our gifts to the world.

Adkinson: What challenges and successes have you encountered along the way?

Frisk: We experienced our greatest difficulties when we obtained the magazine *Hälsa* in 1991. For a few years, our publishing house ended up on the back burner. We worked very hard, and it resulted in stress in our relationship.

A lot changed when both of us signed up for a two-year therapist training course, inspired by the spiritual teacher Osho, at the Osho Risk center in Denmark (www.oshorisk.dk). This was part of our leadership training. Over a period of three years, each of us spent one week out of every month — different weeks — attending this course. We learned a great deal from people who I

consider to be among the world's best trainers and therapists.

A great success was buying the rights for Eckhart Tolle's book *Lev livet fullt ut* (*The Power of Now*). Meeting him personally when we invited him to Stockholm in 2002 was a profound experience.

I also enjoyed meeting the author David Deida. We have published four of his books, which have not become bestsellers but sell well. David's teachings reach really deep. Last year David visited Sweden, and he will return in August 2004. Two people here in our local area are choosing to live in accordance with his teachings. They have initiated women's and men's study groups, which offer excellent teachings about how to live daily life.

Bookstores for seekers in Stockholm

Vattumannen, a metaphysical bookstore in central Stockholm, was created in 1972 by Per Frisk. "Vattumannen" is the Swedish word for "Aquarius." The inviting store is located on a narrow street right in the heart of Stockholm, steeped in the city's rich history.

Ane Frostad has managed the store for two years. She and Eva Danneker, who co-own the store, both are former employees of Vattumannen. The store stocks around 12,000 books and features a mail-order service offering a selection of 50,000 books. Vattumannen also has a large selection of tarot cards and music. The store's annual gross sales are about 6 million crowns, or \$812,000.

Vattumannen is considering expanding its reach. "There is a possibility we will expand by opening small branches around Stockholm, and we may open stores in other cities," Frostad says. "However, right now we are focusing our energies on renovating our store."

Scandinavian countries generally live on the leading technological edge. The Internet plays a large role in Swedish society, and Vattumannen is repositioning its store front and website to reflect that reality.

"We just completed work on a new website for our company," Frostad says. "Internet businesses have increased tremendously in Sweden in recent years, and we believe the bulk of our future sales will come from our mail-order business. Our actual store here will

need to become more specialized and offer something that our customers cannot get through the Internet. Therefore, we now are renovating our premises with the aim of making it into an attractive meeting place."

The bookstore Jupiter, also in Stockholm, has a subtitle that proclaims it "den nya tidsålderns bokhandel" — the bookstore of the New Age. Jupiter is located on Hornsgatan, a street that runs through Söder (the South) — the charming south side of Stockholm's old town. Many small, winding lanes off of Hornsgatan only are wide enough for one-lane traffic, because they were built during times when horse-drawn carriages traveled through the streets. Here and there are old one-story and two-story wood cottages, lending an irresistible charm to the area and attracting tourists from all over Scandinavia.

Jupiter bookstore offers a warm, relaxing atmosphere. Customers can sit and read a book; listen to music; or immerse themselves in Hemi-Sync deep-relaxation audios. A comprehensive selection of New Age books lines the store's shelves. Merchandise includes music; tarot cards; rocks and crystals; pendulums; and greeting cards. Customers also can look for treasures in the store's used-books section.

Postcards from Sweden

Sweden's New Age community is brimming with activity. Here are a few of the authors and personalities making a difference in their country and their world:

Anne Bornstein and The Dream of the Good

In 1995, writer and editor Anna Bornstein of Stockholm created *The Dream of the Good*, a program to teach peace to children in Swedish schools. Together with Jim Wine, the director of the Global Campaign Strategy and Peace Education, and a group of teaching experts, Bornstein developed a method of teaching that uses stillness, music, and symbolic seeing. Children learn to create peace within their own minds and then to connect that peace to the concept of peace between people, groups, and countries in the world. The educational program won funding from

the Swedish government and has been brought into the curriculum of Swedish high schools.

This program puts into action the intentions expressed by the United Nations when it declared the period 2001 to 2010 to be the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The program was inspired by the teachings of the Dalai Lama and has his support. Offering simple tools for self-awareness and explained by books and videos, the method is designed for teachers, school principals, preschool directors, and day-care staff.

In Swedish schools, the program features visits by people who have led the way to peace. Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia have visited Sweden to participate in *The Dream of The Good*. In 1996, the Dalai Lama visited Stockholm and spoke about peace to an audience of 7,000 high-school students at a sports arena.

The project arose out of Bornstein's long-term interest in the teachings of Eastern gurus, such as Ramana Maharshi. Bornstein has translated books about Maharshi's teachings by his American student Paul Brunton into Swedish. The books have been published by the pioneering New Age publisher Larson Forlag in Stockholm (www.larsonforlag.se).

Bornstein says that the goal of *The Dream of the Good* initiative is to establish teachings on peace and nonviolence in all schools on earth by the year 2010. Can it happen? If you want your customers to know about this project, contact Anna Bornstein at anna.bornstein@telia.com to obtain information and materials you can post on your store's notice board. You also can learn more about *The Dream of the Good* program online at www.snowlionpub.com/pages/N59_13.php.

Ambres' teachings

One day, Sture Johansson, a carpenter in Stockholm, had an unusual experience. Johansson says Ambres, a spiritual teacher from a nonphysical realm, contacted him. Ambres asked if Johansson would allow Ambres to speak through him. After some deliberations with his wife, Norwegian-born

Turid Johansson, Sture gave Ambres the go-ahead.

So began a teaching career: Johansson goes into trances and lets Ambres' teachings come through him. "What I give is knowledge about life," Ambres says.

As the number of Ambres' students grew, the Johansson family built a retreat center in a quiet part of the county of Värmland. Over the past few decades, thousands of people have found their way to this retreat.

The school is held in high esteem among spiritual seekers in Sweden. Students include doctors, management consultants, business executives, and artists. One of the earliest visitors was the American actress Shirley MacLaine, whose visits made Ambres' teachings better known in the United States.

Find out about Ambres' teachings by visiting <http://home.swipnet.se/~w-24689>. Click on the link "Engelska" to reach an English-language page.

A mechanical engineer changes her life and helps others

In Eksjö in southern Sweden, author and speaker Eva Dillner teaches Life Therapy (www.divinedesign.nu). Originally an engineer, Dillner spent 15 years in the corporate world doing project-management and organizational-change work in the United States and France. Burned out, she left her job in 1991 and started training in the personal-growth movement in the United States and Europe.

Dillner discovered "the path back to life." She developed a method — Life Therapy — for emotional release and spiritual growth. Dillner's newly released book, *The Naked Truth*, is available in English through 1st Books (www.1stbooks.com).

The Mayan-calendar expert

Carl Johan Calleman, Ph.D., was born in Stockholm. Calleman is a scientist who worked in Sweden and then worked for the department of environmental health at the University of Washington from 1986 to 1994. Visits to Guatemala led Calleman to study the Mayan calendar, and he now is an internationally recognized authority on the subject.

Still based in Stockholm, Calleman gives

talks on the significance of the Mayan calendar and its prophecies all across the globe. He has appeared on television in Sweden, Finland, Mexico, and the United States. Calleman was one of the main speakers at a conference in the Yucatán in 1998 about the Mayan Calendar, and he is a regular presenter at the massive, twice-yearly Experience Festival in India, which explores spiritual wisdom teachings from around the world through a plethora of workshops (www.experiencefestival.com).

The Mayan calendar is not predicting the end of the world in 2012, Calleman says, but does speak of a planetary awakening and the transformation of mankind into enlightenment. Calleman's books are available in English; you can learn more about his work at www.calleman.com.

Sökaren magazine

Sökaren (The Seeker) editor Sven Magnusson and a crew of regular freelance contributors strive for objectivity and openness as they critically examine reports in the fields of parapsychology and UFO research and stories of out-of-body experiences and spiritual emergence.

"Our purpose is not to make you believe in something," Magnusson says. "Instead, we want to provide you with information that may be of value for you in your own quest for truth."

The magazine reports on New Age events in Sweden. Book reviews and reports from conferences, seminars, and festivals keeps readers up to date with Sweden's developments within the New Age arena. The magazine's website is at www.sokaren.se.

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Brita Adkinson is assistant editor of *New Age Retailer*. Email your own stories about New Age abroad to letters@newageretailer.com.