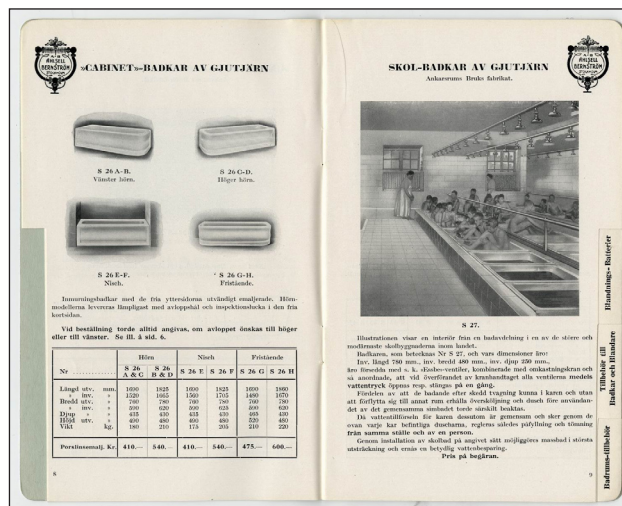


Product catalogues from the 1940s



Many historical product catalogues are stored in Ahlsell's archives. They give detailed descriptions in words and pictures. For wholesalers, they replaced the direct customer contact offered by over-the-counter sales.

Ahlsell & Bernström's catalogues had the reputation of being widely used by lesser competitors. It was expensive for small companies to produce their own catalogues. That's why some 30 Swedish pipe wholesalers got together to form a publishing house specifically for this purpose, namely Förlagsaktiebolaget Rörbranschens Standardkatalog (RSK). That was in 1945, and since then RSK has published catalogues as well as allocated standardised codes and descriptions to products and components. The spread on the photo comes from a special price list from Ahlsell & Bernström's "The Bathroom and its Accessories" (1929). Before bathrooms became a standard feature in homes, it was more usual to have collective bathing facilities in schools.



The photograph below was taken in 1948 at Ahlsell & Bernström's product exhibition held at Mäster Samuelsgatan 32 in Stockholm. Private bathrooms began to be widely introduced during this period. Stockholm may be taken as an example of the rapid rise in living standards at that time. In 1930 just 34% of the capital's homes had baths and showers, while 60% had central heating. Fifteen years later the corresponding figures were 61% and 75%. All baths were imported until 1943, and only then did they begin to be manufactured in Sweden, obviously due to the war.



Ahlsell & Bernström took its first exploratory step towards a future computer-based data system in 1938 with the acquisition of a punch-card machine that simplified its bookkeeping procedures. The company bought its first mainframe computer about 30 years later. Ahlsell & Ågren produced its first standardised price list in 1974, and computer-based on-line systems were introduced in its shops in 1978. Ahlsell already had an Internet shop in 1998 and also began to develop an inter-group inventory system with Internet access.

The book on the history of Ahlsell is currently in preparation and is expected to be ready this autumn. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact: Camilla Weiner, CIO at Ahlsell, 08-685 70 62, camilla.weiner@ahlsell.se.