

BOOKSELLERS, PUBLISHERS AND PRESS WORKERS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH AND EARLY IN THE 20TH CENTURY IN ESTONIA

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The article handles general developments and changes in book trade and book publishing which took place in Estonia during the second half of the 19th and in the early 20th century. The aim is to show the formation of bookshops trading with Estonian books, to analyse the activities of Estonian booksellers as publishers and their role in publishing books in the Estonian language. The paper is based on the retrospective national bibliography of Estonian books that were published from 1850 to 1917, on research literature and on the data collected by the author for her doctoral thesis.

Keywords: history, 19th century, Estonia, book trade, publishing, booksellers as publishers.

PRODUCTION AND PUBLISHING OF BOOKS IN THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE

In the second half of the 19th century, the socio-economic and cultural situation in Estonia changed dramatically. Estonian people, who had reached a new level of self-awareness, were faced with a need to establish the foundations of an open national culture. The education provided by schools and the general world outlook were reformed to add breadth and diversity. A very important role in this process was played by books and newspapers. Their content and distribution reflect in the best way the development of the national culture.

The improvement of the educational system favoured the spread of literacy, which in turn gave rise for demand of books. The rate of literacy in the Baltic provinces was very high compared with the other provinces of the Russian Empire. According to the results of the 1897 census, 91.2 % of the Estonian population were literate, the corresponding figure for Latvians being 80% and for Lithuanians 54%; at the same time the literate population in Russia was estimated to comprise only 30% and in Ukraine 28% [8, 86].

The growing need for reading inspired people to engage themselves in book production and book trade. The Printing Decree,

adopted in 1865, simplified the procedures of establishing printing houses. The results of these processes were soon reflected in the growing number of enterprises: in Estonia, the number of printing houses grew from nine in 1861 to 20 in 1880 [10, 137–138].

The average of the Estonian language book production per year more than decupled: if during the decade 1850–1860 on an average 38 Estonian books were published per year, in 1911–1917 the average production per year increased to 632 books. The total circulation figures of books published in 1850–1917 exceeded 43.6 million, with the average circulation of 3350 copies [7, 183]. By content, printed works are classified as follows in Chart 1.

By 1913, Estonia held a considerable place in Russia in terms of both publishing and distribution of books. In 1910, book production in the Estonian language took the 6th place in Russia after books in Russian, Polish, Jewish, German, and Latvian. Among the 16 biggest Russian publishing towns which issued 96% of all book production (including St. Petersburg and Moscow which together published 75% of all books), Tallinn held the 9th and Tartu the 14th place in 1910–1912 [8, 90].

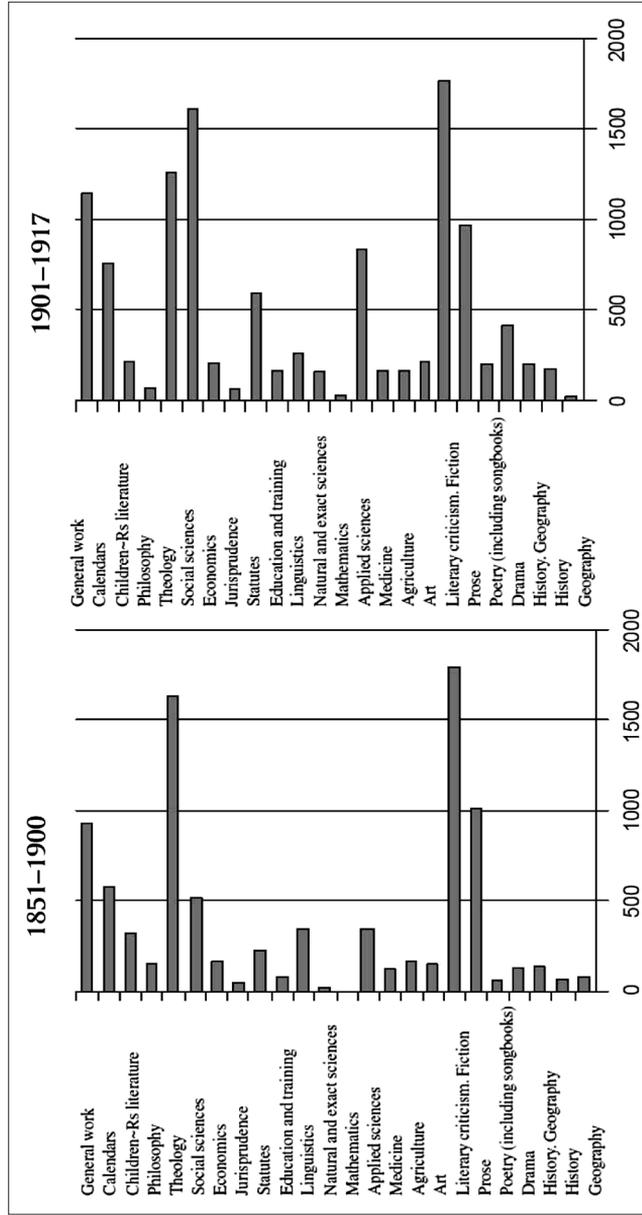
Until the last quarter of the 19th century, books in the Estonian language were for the most part published by printing houses, which means that printing house owners financed the publication out of their own pockets. **The most important publishers of Estonian books during the period**

1860–1890 were Heinrich Laakmann and the Schnakenburg family in Tartu. When the book production and the number of bookstores increased, publishing began to separate from printing step by step. In the last decade of the 19th century, in addition to printing houses, booksellers started publishing books as well. Booksellers took their place as publishers next to printer-publishers and eventually printing houses became a little more than companies fulfilling the orders of publishers.

Still, the picture regarding publishing is not quite clear as numerous books do not have any note on the publisher (the person who covers the expenses). However, the number of people dealing only with publishing was still small. on the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, only A. Ginemann and Jakob Hermann Vahtrik in Tallinn were active in this field. Organisations such as the Society of Estonian Literati and Estonian Students Society were also engaged in publishing. However, publishing became an independent business only at the beginning of the 20th century [10, 150–151].

The best known publishers in the last decades of the 19th century were Ado Grenzstein, the editor of the newspaper *Olevik*, who founded a bookshop in Tartu in 1882, and August Busch who acquired the business of Alexander Eduard Brandt in Tallinn. In addition to Grenzstein, the most important publishers in Tartu in the second half of the 19th century were Martin Vares and Wilhelm Adolph Just. The best known publishers early in the 20th century were

Chart 1. Printed works classified by content [3, 63]



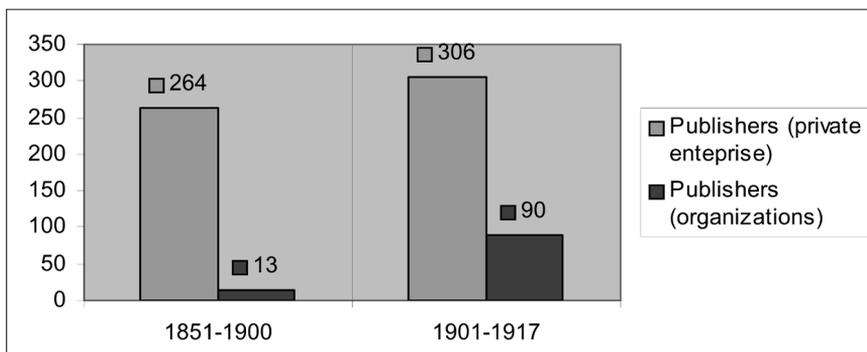
Jakob Ploompuu and Gustav Pihlakas in Tallinn [10, 151].

Despite the fact that bookstores and printing houses were found in all smaller towns, the publishing houses were situated mainly in Tartu and Tallinn. During the 19th century, the purchasing power of Estonian readers was still small, and the publishers conformed to the purchasing power of readers. Thus, to reduce the prices, the books were thin, paperback, and printed on cheap paper.

The impressions of books were rather large. For example, the calendar compiled by the publisher Mats Tõnisson could be found in every other family. As the number of titles increased, the impressions started to lessen. The number of purchasers did not increase proportionally with the growth of titles which means that the number of new purchasers was smaller than the number of new titles. The selling period of books was rather long, sometimes even 20–30 years [8, 88–89].

The annual quantity of publications in Estonian was increasing constantly in the second half of the 19th century. A remarkable number of people were engaged in publishing in 1851–1917: about five hundred persons and about a hundred organisations are mentioned as issuers of publications in Estonia in the retrospective bibliographies *Estonian Book 1851–1900* and *Estonian Book 1900–1917*, compiled by Endel Annus. During the both periods, only 45 persons could maintain their occupation. In addition to publishing houses, books were also issued by private persons, and their share was relatively large. However, many of them published only a couple of books. Several educational and cultural organisations, such as *Edu* [Progress], *Haridus* [Education], *Kultura* [Culture], also dealt with publishing. The number of organisations who dealt with publishing started to increase in the 20th century when publishing houses that issued newspapers and journals, such as the publishing house of the journal *Eesti Kirjandus* [Estonian

Chart 2. Publishers in Estonia in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century



Literature] and the publishing house of the newspaper *Postimees* [the Postman], started book publishing.

BOOKSELLERS AS PUBLISHERS IN THE PERIOD OF THE NATIONAL AWAKENING MOVEMENT, 1860–1880

In the 1860s, the number of bookshops and printing houses started growing rapidly. If during the earlier period the bookshop owners were mainly Germans or persons of Baltic German origin, gradually the book trade and printing undertakings went over to Estonian owners. In 1867, Heinrich Laakmann, a publisher and printing shop owner of German origin in Tartu, opened the first bookshop to sell Estonian-language books; in Tallinn, such a shop was opened in 1872. Altogether, during the period of the National Awakening movement, 39 new bookshops were opened and 45 persons were engaged in selling books. By the end of the period, most bookshop owners were of the Estonian origin [6, 71–74].

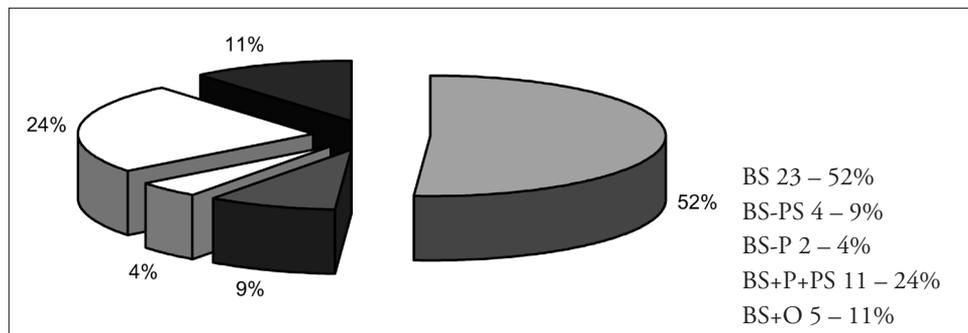
The business activities of booksellers in the second half of the 19th century were diverse.

The statistical data show that almost a half (48%) of the 45 booksellers who started book trade during the period of the national awakening movement were active in several areas: 13 bookshop owners were involved in publishing (P) and 15 booksellers owned printing houses (PS). Some booksellers were also active in other areas (O) such as journalism, photography, trade, agriculture, banking, etc. [5, 115–116].

The most important publishers of Estonian books during the period were Heinrich Laakmann (1802–1891) and the Schnakenburg family in Tartu.

Heinrich Laakmann was born on 7 October 1802 in Lübeck. He started in book business in 1816 as an apprentice in L. Römheld's printing house, in 1826–1827 he worked in Paris in Firmin Didot's printing house. His first visit to Tallinn took place in 1832 on invitation of the local print shop

Chart 3. Business activities of booksellers who started book trade in 1851–1880
(BS – bookshop; PS – printing shop; P – publishing house; O – other occupation)



owner Friedrich Montag, with whom he had made friends during his journeyman years. Laakmann failed to get printer's job in Moscow and instead he was for some years a private teacher in Moscow. After the death of his friend in Tallinn, he rented the Montag's printing house *Lindfors'i Päriljad* [Lindfors' Heirs]; in 1837 he opened the branch office in Tartu and in 1840 became an independent undertaker under the name of H. Laakmann's printing house [9, 104–106].

Laakmann was the most successful entrepreneur, as his company owned a printing house, publishing house and, from 1867 on, also a bookshop [10; 148–149]. The publishing house of Laakmann published approximately 30% of all Estonian books published between 1860 and 1880. His most popular publication was the calendar *Maarahva Kasuline Kalender*, a periodic publication with useful tips for household. A large number of the books published by Laakmann were textbooks, such as *Kooli lugemise raamat I–III* [School reading-book], a book that taught reading skills, and the geography book *Väike geograafia* [Little Geography]. The books he published also included numerous popular and religious books, as was characteristic of the spirit of that era [1; 12].

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Schnakenburg family emerged as another remarkable publisher of Estonian books by continuing and expanding the publishing activities of printers and publishers Eduard Julius Karow and Wilhelm Gläser whose printing house and lithographic printing

office they acquired in 1875. Conrad Edmund Heinrich Schnakenburg established a printing house first in Riga in 1859; the Tartu enterprise was managed by his sons Ludwig Heinrich and Heinrich Emil, later by his daughter Emilie Constance [4, 465]. Schnakenburg's publishing house produced several books of high literary value (such as reprints of the Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg*) and, as did Laakmann, he also published many schoolbooks and calendars [10, 156].

The first Estonian bookseller and publisher in Tallinn was Aleksander Eduard Brandt who founded a bookshop and started the publishing business in 1879 [11, 146]. Brandt published relatively little, mainly popular books. The publication business took off when the bookshop passed to Busch who soon started publishing mostly fiction, but also dictionaries, spiritual books, plays, songbooks, etc. [10, 157].

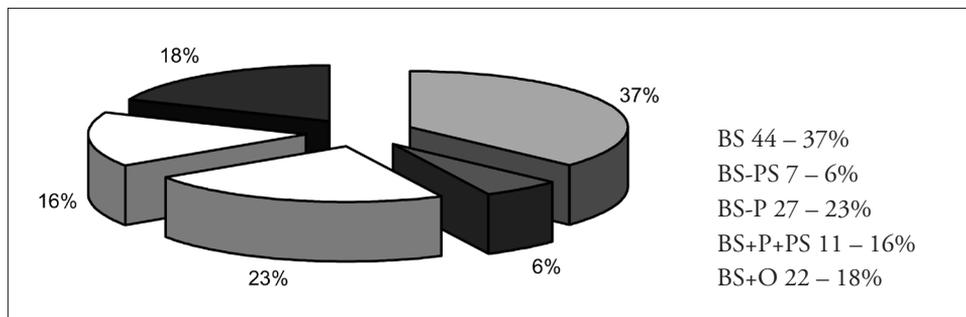
The main publisher of literature in foreign languages was the book store of Kluge & Ströhm in Tallinn.

During this period, publishing was still closely connected to printing houses. Booksellers mostly published best-selling items, such as calendars, text books and fiction.

THE PERIOD OF THE RUSSIFICATION REFORMS, 1880–1900

Russification reforms had no visible consequences on book publishing and book trade. Numerous new bookshops were opened in Tallinn and Tartu, as well as in smaller towns. During the last two decades

Chart 4. Business activities of booksellers who started book trade in 1881–1900
(BS – bookshop; PS – printing shop; P – publishing house; O – other occupation)



of the century, 119 persons were engaged in selling books, and 104 new bookshops were opened. The majority of these shops were in business for a short time, less than five years [5, 57].

The number of booksellers operating in several areas increased compared with the earlier period. Seventy-five of the 119 bookshop owners who started their businesses in the last decade of the 19th century sold a variety of goods, and 46 booksellers were also publishers. Nineteen persons and seven companies owned, in addition to a bookshop, also a printing house. Twenty-two booksellers held other jobs: they were teachers, journalists and town clerks (Chart 5). The number of booksellers-publishers increased considerably during the period, whereas the number of booksellers-publishers-printing house owners decreased [5, 79–80].

The publication of books increased compared to the years 1840–1850 tenfold. The average of the Estonian language book pro-

duction increased to 173 between 1880 and 1889 and to 274 between 1890 and 1900.

The most successful businessman of the period, involved in other areas besides the book trade, was the journalist Ado Grenzstein (1849–1916), the editor of the newspaper *Olevik*, who founded a bookshop in Tartu in 1882, and August Busch who acquired the shop of A. E. Brandt in Tallinn [10, 150–151].

Ado Grenzstein was born on 5 February 1849 in Tarvastu in South Estonia. He studied in the years 1871–1874 in Valga Schoolteachers' Seminar and since 1876 was a teacher at Hollmann's Teachers' Seminar in Tartu. In 1878–1880, Grenzstein continued his education in the pedagogical training college in Vienna. In 1881, he founded the newspaper *Olevik* [Presence] and was its publisher until 1901, a year later Grenzstein opened a printing house and in 1884 a bookshop in Tartu. In 1901, he left Estonia and lived first in Dresden and then in Paris [4, 71].

Grenzstein was a many-sided man of letters. He wrote poetry and political essays, compiled text-books and put together the first Estonian language chess instructions. He enriched the Estonian language with the word 'publisher' in 1884.

In addition to Grenzstein, the most important publishers in Tartu were the booksellers Martin Vares and Wilhelm Adolph Just; in the last decade of the century Mihkel Hermann and the poet Karl Eduard Sööt started publishing. The activities of the latter continued into the 20th century, and the products of his publishing house, a total of 102, included many valuable books. In addition to his own poetry, he compiled the first anthology of Estonian poetry, published popular books and children's books. As a publisher, K. E. Sööt paid attention both to the content and appearance of books.

Booksellers in smaller towns also started publishing during this period: Reinhold

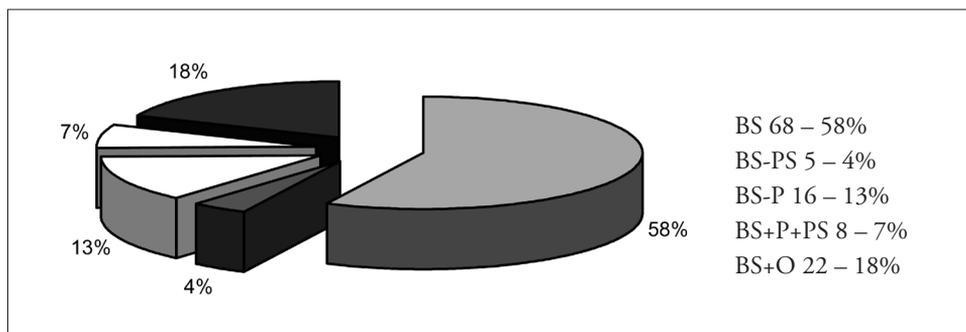
Pöder in Narva, Adolf Seidelberg in Paide, Nikolai Erna in Rakvere and Hans Leoke in Viljandi. The latter specialised in theatrical literature and published a series containing 234 plays [10, 153].

THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY, 1901–1917

The beginning of the 20th century, because of the crucial political events, was not favorable for book production and distribution. The first year of the World War I did not reflect in numbers – in 1914 still 652 Estonian language books were printed. After two years, the publication number decreased considerably, and in 1916 only 318 books were printed [2, 9]. The number of new bookshops increased during the first decade of the 20th century and fell during the years of the war. Altogether, 119 bookshops were opened during the period, but the majority of shops were closed in a short time [6, 64–65].

Chart 5. Business activities of booksellers who started book trade in the first decades of the 20th century

(BS – bookshop; PS – printing shop; P – publishing house; O – other occupation)



The number of bookshop owners (51) who operated in several book-related areas was somewhat modest compared to the total number of those who started in this business (119). There were five booksellers-printing house owners, 16 booksellers-publishers and eight booksellers-publishers-printing house owners. Altogether, 24 booksellers were engaged in publishing. Twenty-two people had other jobs besides being booksellers, but considering the relatively short lifetime of bookshops it can be assumed that the job of bookseller was a brief diversion for people of other professions. Being both a teacher and a bookseller was the most common combination (with eight known cases) [6, 81]. However, the activity period of bookshops that were opened at the beginning of the 20th century was generally very short, which means that many of their owners had never a chance to expand into other areas [7; 187].

The best-known bookseller-publisher who worked in Tallinn at the beginning of the 20th century was the journalist and publisher Jakob Ploompuu (1872–1948) who by 1913 had risen to the top of the list, with an annual production of 4197 pages [10, 151].

Jakob Ploompuu was born on 11 October 1872 in Kõvasoo village in North Estonia. He worked as a translator since 1894 and as a journalist since 1897; he published the almanac *Rahva Leht* [Peoples' Leaf] in 1896–1916 and different calendars. In 1900, he opened a bookshop in Tallinn and became a full-time bookseller and publisher. In

1905, he also founded a lending library by his bookshop. Altogether, he published some 600 different titles. Ploompuu published mostly books by Estonian authors, textbooks, dictionaries and popular literature. One-third of his publications were children's books of rather unimpressive content, although they were colourfully illustrated [3].

Gustav Pihlakas (1864–1937) was the second major publisher in Tallinn at the beginning of the 20th century.

Gustav Pihlakas was born on 17 February 1864 in Mäepea village in North Estonia.

He was engaged in book business at a very young age in the firm of his uncle Tõnis Pihlakas, who was a bookseller and a publisher. Already in 1879 Pihlakas became an independent travelling bookseller who sold books all over North Estonia; in 1880 he started with book publishing. In 1898 he opened his own bookshop in Tallinn and later a printing house in Narva. Pihlakas focused mainly on works by Estonian authors (including those of Ed. Vilde), but later he also published schoolbooks, popular science literature and various handbooks on health care, treatment of animals, gardening, cookery, etc. [10; 155].

Although publishing activities were mainly concentrated in bigger towns, there were some bookseller-publishers also in the countryside, for example, Jüri Reimann in Kilingi-Nõmme.

The number of publishers compared to the number of booksellers was not large. The most important publishers were also booksellers, indicating that publishing was

still a relatively important field of operation for booksellers.

CONCLUSIONS

In the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, book publishing or book trade as separate spheres of activity did not guarantee undertakers sufficient income. Traditionally, persons who were engaged in book production and distribution combined one sphere with another and worked as printers-publishers or booksellers-publishers. Among the 283 bookshop owners of the period 1850–1917, 38 headed companies comprising a publishing house, a printing office and a bookshop; 45 persons were engaged both in publishing and book trade, while 16 were involved in both printing and book trade. There were also school teachers, parish clerks and people of other professions, altogether 49 persons, who traded in books [5; 83]. Analysis of the activities of booksellers shows that 83 booksellers were engaged in publishing between 1850 and 1917 [7, 188].

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According to the retrospective national bibliography, booksellers published 3210 books and brochures which constituted 22.7% of the total book production of the period.

The most active period of booksellers as publishers lasted between 1880 and 1900. Booksellers that started their activities during this period published a total of 1949 different titles. Booksellers whose activities started after 1850 published 688 books, but most of these (549) were published by Heinrich Laakmann. Booksellers-publishers whose activities started after 1901 issued the smallest number of books – 73. However, this does not mean that booksellers lost their importance at the beginning of the 20th century, because booksellers who had started their activities earlier still continued working during this period. These figures allow concluding that book trade was a popular but not profitable sphere of activities. Most successful were individuals who were active in several fields of book business: publishing, printing and trade.

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XIX A. PABAIGOS–XX A. PRADŽIOS ESTIJOS KNYGŲ PREKYBININKAI, LEIDĖJAI IR SPAUDOS DARBUOTOJAI

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Santrauka

Straipsnis aptaria bendruosius Estijos knygų prekybos ir leidybos raidos bruožus, būdingus XIX amžiaus antrajai pusei ir XX amžiaus pradžiai. Jo tikslas – atskleisti Estijos knygų prekybos formavimąsi, išanalizuoti Estijos knygų prekybininkų vaidmenį leidžiant knygas estų kalba. Straipsnis remiasi Estijos retrospektyviosios nacionalinės bibliografijos (1850–1917) duomenimis, mokslinio tyrimo literatūra ir duomenimis, surinktais rengiant daktaro disertaciją.

Knygos, laikraščiai ir žurnalai estų kalba atliko svarbų vaidmenį formuojant ir plėtojant tautinę savivoką ir tautinę kultūrą. Spaustuvių ir knygynų skaičius augo greitai. Kamet buvo leidžiama vis daugiau knygų estų kalba. Laikotarpio pabaigoje metinis leidinių skaičius išaugo dešimteriopai. Knygas daugiausia leido spaustuviės, knygynai, įvairios sąjungos ir patys autoriai. Bendras asmenų, susijusių tik su knygų leidyba, skaičius buvo nedidelis.

1850–1917 metais buvo įkurti 263 knygynai, o 283 asmenys tapo knygynų savininkais bent ke-

lerius metus. Knygų prekyba buvo populiarī veiklos sfera, tačiau negarantavo pakankamų pajamų, todėl knygynai dažnai veikė kitose knygūninkystės srityse, dažniausiai dalyvavo knygų leidyboje ir gamyboje. Iš 283 knygynų 83 taip pat dirbo kaip leidėjai. Retrospektyviosios nacionalinės bibliografijos duomenimis, knygų prekybininkai išleido 3210 knygų ir brošiūrų, o tai sudaro 22,7 proc. visos tuo laikotarpiu pasirodžiusios knygų produkcijos. Aktyviausiai knygų prekybininkai kaip leidėjai reišėėsi 1880–1900 metų laikotarpiu. Tie knygų prekybininkai, kurie pradėjo veiklą tais metais, iš viso išleido 1949 įvairius spaudos vienetus. Po 1850 m. į knygų leidybą įsitraukę knygų prekybininkai išleido 688 knygas, bet daugiausia jų (549) – Heinrichas Laakmannas. Knygų prekybininkai leidėjai, kurių veikla prasidėjo po 1901 metų, išleido tik 73 knygas. Tačiau tai nereiškia, kad XX a. pradžioje knygų prekybininkai prarado svarbą, nes tie, kurie pradėjo veiklą anksčiau, tuo metu vis dar tęsė darbą.

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