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#### Atıf Künyesi | Citation Info

Khalafova, S. & Mahammadli, D. (2025). Book Publishing in the Baltic States: Some Historical and Practical Issues. *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi*, 12 (5), 139-160.

### Book Publishing in the Baltic States: Some Historical and Practical Issues

#### Abstract

This article presents an academic study of the history and practice of book publishing in the Baltic States. The book culture of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania has developed from early traditions to the present, serving as a crucial instrument for preserving national identity and cultural heritage. The study examines the establishment of publishing houses, the impact of state policies, statistical indicators of the book market, and the formation of readership. Particular attention is given to children's literature, translation activities, and the role of scientific and educational publications. In the modern era, publishing in the Baltic States operates in both print and digital formats. The development of publishing technologies, integration with libraries, international cooperation, and state support are identified as key factors sustaining book culture. The analysis demonstrates that book publishing is strategically important for the region's social, cultural, and scientific development and plays a growing role in global cultural integration.

**Keywords:** Baltic States, Book Publishing, Book Culture, Digitalization, State Policy

### Baltık Devletlerinde Kitap Yayıncılığı: Tarihsel ve Uygulamalı Bazı Meseleler

#### Öz

Bu makale, Baltık Devletlerinde kitap yayıncılığının tarihini ve uygulamalarını inceleyen akademik bir çalışmayı sunmaktadır. Estonya, Letonya ve Litvanya'nın kitap kültürü, erken dönem geleneklerden

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*günüümüze kadar gelişmiş ve ulusal kimliği korumada ile kültürel mirası sürdürmede önemli bir araç olmuştur. Çalışma; yayınevlerinin kuruluşunu, devlet politikalarının etkisini, kitap piyasasına ilişkin istatistiksel göstergeleri ve okur kitlesinin oluşumunu ele almaktadır. Özellikle çocuk edebiyatına, çeviri faaliyetlerine ve bilimsel ile eğitimsel yayınların rolüne dikkat çekilmektedir. Modern dönemde Baltık Devletlerinde yayıncılık hem basılı hem de dijital formatlarda sürdürülmektedir. Yayıncılık teknolojilerinin gelişimi, kütüphanelerle entegrasyon, uluslararası işbirliği ve devlet desteği, kitap kültürünün sürdürülebilirliğini sağlayan temel unsurlar olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Analiz, kitap yayıncılığının bölgenin sosyal, kültürel ve bilimsel gelişimi açısından stratejik öneme sahip olduğunu ve küresel kültürel entegrasyonda artan bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Baltık Devletleri, Kitap Yayıncılığı, Kitap Kültürü, Dijitalleşme, Devlet Politikası

## Introduction

The Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—possess a rich cultural heritage and longstanding book traditions. In these countries, book publishing has historically served not only as a form of literary and scholarly activity but also as a crucial instrument for preserving national identity, culture, and language. Historical processes, including the influence of various empires as well as religious and political changes, have had a direct impact on the development of book publishing. The book culture of the Baltic States reflects both the region's unique characteristics and the broader cultural context of Europe. The purpose of this study is to examine the historical development stages, contemporary publishing practices, and future prospects of book publishing in the Baltic States. The research focuses on the historical and modern aspects of publishing activities in the region, with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's book culture serving as the object of study. Using historical-analytical, comparative, and structured analysis methods, the article systematically presents both historical and contemporary information. The introduction outlines the study's relevance, objectives, methodological foundation, and structure. The significance of this research lies in the fact that book publishing in the Baltic States remains insufficiently studied, particularly regarding contemporary digital publishing practices and aspects of international collaboration. In this regard, the study not only clarifies the historical context but also identifies future development prospects for the region's book publishing sector by highlighting modern trends.

## 1. Historical Context and Book Culture in the Baltic States

The book culture of the Baltic States has a long and complex history. In the early periods, religious publications and manuscripts played a central role in the region's cultural life. With the spread of Christianity, churches and monasteries became key centers for the production and preservation of books. In Estonian and Latvian territories, the first books primarily served religious

purposes, while in Lithuania they contributed both to religious life and the preservation of national identity.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, book publishing in the Baltic States became more systematic. In Latvia and Estonia, the expansion of education and scholarly activity was accompanied by an increase in book production. In Lithuania, publishing played a significant role in strengthening national-cultural identity through the preservation of the national language (Anderson & Johnson, 2019). Books from this period reflect both European influences and local cultural traditions. Before the Soviet era, book publishing in the Baltic States served both cultural and political roles. Printed works aimed to preserve national culture, disseminate scientific knowledge, and educate younger generations. During the Soviet period, publishing houses operated under state control, with censorship and ideological requirements influencing the content of books. Nevertheless, book publishing remained an essential tool for preserving and disseminating cultural heritage in the region. After independence, book publishing in the Baltic States was liberalized. New publishing houses emerged, and international collaboration expanded. In the modern era, digital publishing technologies and e-books have introduced new perspectives for the development of book culture. At the same time, book publishing continues to play a decisive role in ensuring sustainable development in connection with economic and social spheres, as well as in preserving national identity and culture.

## **2. Book Publishing in the Baltic States: Historical Stages**

### **2.1. Early Publications and Religious Press (16th–17th Centuries)**

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the first books in the Baltic States were predominantly religious. Christianity, particularly Lutheran and Catholic traditions, stimulated the development of printing. Churches and monasteries functioned as centers for both the production and preservation of books. Publications of this period primarily included religious instructions, prayer collections, and works on moral and ethical topics.

Books were also used for educational purposes. The establishment of schools and universities in the Baltic States contributed to the expansion of book publishing (Baker, 2020). In Estonia and Latvia, the first printing presses were mainly associated with religious schools. In Lithuania, book publishing became particularly important for preserving and promoting the national language. Books from this period thus reflected both European influences and local cultural traditions.

## **2.2. National Culture and the Development of Book Publishing (18th–19th Centuries)**

During the 18th and 19th centuries, book publishing in the Baltic States began to serve broader social and cultural purposes. Strengthening national identity and preserving cultural values were among the primary objectives. In Latvia and Estonia, the development of the education system coincided with the increased publication of educational and literary works. In Lithuania, publishing was particularly significant for safeguarding the national language and culture. In this period, publishing houses expanded their output beyond religious materials, disseminating literature, history, and scientific knowledge. Book publishing was supported both by state institutions and private initiatives. The number of publishing houses increased, and the quality of books and printing technologies improved. This era marked a stage in which the book culture of the Baltic States approached European standards, with printed works reflecting both national characteristics and broader continental cultural trends.

## **2.3. Book Publishing under the Soviet Period (20th Century)**

Following the establishment of Soviet rule, book publishing in the Baltic States operated under state control. Publishing policies were shaped according to ideological and political objectives. Published works primarily aimed to promote Soviet ideology and educate the population (Davis, 2021). Nevertheless, there were opportunities for the preservation of national culture and language, and publishing activity continued in these areas despite censorship.

## **2.4. Book Publishing under the Soviet Period (20th Century)**

During the Soviet period, publications underwent strict censorship and editorial oversight, with the subject matter and content determined by the state. Scientific, technical, and literary works were published within prescribed limits. Despite these restrictions, book publishing continued to play a vital role in the cultural development of the population. This period also witnessed the strengthening of publishing infrastructure and the modernization of printing technologies.

## **2.5. Independence and the Contemporary Era (21st Century)**

With the independence of the Baltic States, the book publishing sector was liberalized, and new commercially oriented publishing houses emerged. During this period, both the preservation of national culture and international collaboration became priorities. The book market became more competitive, and both print and electronic publications gained wide circulation.

In the modern era, digital technologies have fundamentally transformed the book publishing process. E-books, online publishing platforms, and open-access models have elevated book culture

in the Baltic States to a new level. Books remain an essential instrument for preserving national identity and participating in global scientific and cultural integration (Carlson, 2017). This period has also expanded opportunities for international cooperation, enhancing the region's cultural and scholarly influence.

### **3. Contemporary Book Publishing and the Printing Sector**

#### **3.1. Structure of the Book Market and Economic Aspects**

In the 21st century, book publishing in the Baltic States has undergone a profound transformation. These changes are primarily linked to the post-independence liberal economic environment, the adoption of digital technologies, and trends in global cultural integration. Today, book publishing encompasses not only cultural and scholarly objectives but is also closely connected with economic, social, and technological factors.

The contemporary book market in the Baltic States has expanded, with an increasing number of publishing houses operating on commercial principles. In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the range of published books includes literary, scientific, educational, and popular genres. Both local and international publications are present in the market, offering a variety of products to meet diverse reader demands (Eriksson, 2016). Economically, book publishing develops through both state support and private sector investments. Governments provide financial support, subsidies, and incentive programs for the publishing sector. Simultaneously, private publishers operate in a competitive environment, support new authors, and produce books across various genres. This dual system ensures the dynamic development and sustainability of the book market.

#### **3.2. Digital Publishing and E-Books**

The adoption of digital technologies has brought significant changes to the publishing sector. E-books, online platforms, and mobile applications have created new forms of interaction between readers and publishers. Digital publishing models in the Baltic States, in particular, contribute to expanding reading habits among the younger generation.

Electronic publications also increase accessibility, broaden opportunities for regional and global market access, reduce printing costs, and allow publishers to reach wider audiences (Brown, 2018). These technologies enable publishers to offer books in various languages and genres while also adopting innovative business models.

### **3.3. Cultural and Social Role of Books**

In the contemporary period, books serve not only as sources of information and knowledge but also as instruments of cultural and social integration. Book publishing in the Baltic States remains a key tool for preserving national identity, promoting language, and safeguarding cultural heritage. Modern publications help disseminate national and regional culture while educating and informing the readership.

### **4. State Policy and Regulatory Mechanisms**

Book publishing also plays an important role in the education system. Academic and educational publications serve as primary sources of information for students, teachers, and researchers. Additionally, popular literary and cultural publications contribute to raising the overall cultural level of society.

In the contemporary Baltic States, the publishing sector is supported through state policy. Governments invest in book publishing, provide subsidies, and implement special projects. A legal framework regulates the activities of publishing houses, covering copyright, authorship payments, and intellectual property protection. State support also extends to participation in regional and international projects, book fairs, and cultural initiatives. These mechanisms ensure the sustainability of book publishing and contribute to the cultural development of the region.

### **5. Publishing Practices and International Cooperation**

#### **5.1. Regional Cooperation**

Book publishing in the Baltic States has developed not only at the national level but also through international cooperation and the exchange of experience. In the contemporary period, the publishing sector has become an essential instrument for integration across cultural, scholarly, and commercial domains. Such cooperation enhances the quality of printed products and strengthens the region's global cultural influence.

Due to their cultural and geographical proximity, the Baltic States offer significant opportunities for regional collaboration. Publishing houses in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania actively engage in regional cooperative projects (Fischer, 2019). These initiatives include author exchanges, joint publications, and book fairs. Regional cooperation facilitates the dissemination of books in local languages, expands readership, and strengthens intercultural relations.

## **5.2. International Publishing Projects**

Contemporary publishers enrich their experience and adopt new methodologies through participation in international projects. Publishers from the Baltic States actively take part in book fairs across Europe and worldwide. These events provide opportunities to discover new authors, access foreign markets, and adopt advanced printing technologies.

International collaboration also promotes academic and scientific publications (Bayramov & Məhəmmədli, 2025). Exchange programs with scholarly publications from other countries enable researchers and authors in the Baltic States to engage in global scientific processes, contributing to the region's academic and cultural standards.

## **5.3. Multiculturalism and Language Policy**

International cooperation is also significant for multiculturalism and language policy. Book publishing in the Baltic States occurs in multiple languages, including works by both local and foreign authors. This reflects the region's multilingual and culturally diverse environment while broadening readership. A multicultural approach also enables foreign readers to familiarize themselves with the region's cultural and historical heritage.

## **5.4. Experience Exchange and Technological Development**

Within the framework of international cooperation, Baltic publishers exchange technological expertise. Experiences in printing technologies, digital publishing platforms, and e-book production are applied to local publishing practices. This contributes to higher book quality, the implementation of innovative business models, and the development of products that meet reader demands.

## **6. Challenges in the Contemporary Publishing Sector**

The Baltic book publishing sector faces several interrelated challenges, encompassing economic, technological, social, and cultural aspects (Green & Thompson, 2018). Economically, the limited size of the market, high production costs, and the financial risks of small print runs restrict the profitability of publishers and reduce their ability to invest in innovative projects. Technologically, the sector must constantly adapt to rapid digital transformations, including e-books, online platforms, and changing distribution models, which demand significant investment but also open new opportunities. From a social and cultural perspective, declining reading habits, especially among younger generations, and the growing dominance of digital media present further challenges to traditional print culture. At the same time, the preservation of national languages and

cultural identity requires continuous support through both publishing practices and state policy. Future prospects are therefore closely linked to digital transformation, international cooperation, and changing reader preferences. Expanding cross-border partnerships, adopting hybrid publishing strategies that combine print and digital formats, and implementing state-supported cultural initiatives are crucial for ensuring sustainability. In this way, the Baltic book publishing sector can balance economic viability with cultural responsibility, strengthening its role in both regional development and global cultural integration.

### **6.1. Book Market Challenges**

A primary challenge is limited economic resources and the small size of the market, which particularly affects small commercial publishers. High printing and publishing costs increase book prices, restricting access for readers. Another significant challenge is changing reader interests and the growing prevalence of digital information. Younger generations increasingly prefer digital content, leading to a relative decline in demand for traditional print, compelling publishers to adapt strategies and invest in new technologies.

### **6.2. Technological and Information Challenges**

Digitalization presents both opportunities and challenges. E-books, online platforms, and mobile applications expand readership but also affect the revenues of traditional print publishers (Hansen, 2020; Ismayilov & Khalafova, 2022). The level of adaptation to digital technologies varies across the Baltic States, and technological modernization imposes a financial burden on smaller publishers. Copyright and intellectual property protection remain critical issues. The proliferation of digital publications has increased piracy, negatively impacting the economic stability of the publishing sector.

### **6.3. Social and Cultural Challenges**

Declining reading habits, the preference for digital media, and challenges in preserving cultural diversity pose significant social and cultural concerns. While book publishing remains an essential tool for preserving national identity and language, social changes influence the sector. Publishers must therefore balance commercial viability with cultural and educational responsibilities.

## **7. Future Prospects**

The future of book publishing in the Baltic States is closely tied to digitalization, international cooperation, and innovative publishing models. Digital technologies enable publishers to reach



wider audiences and integrate print with electronic products. International cooperation and experience exchange are vital for improving publishing quality, accessing new markets, and implementing multicultural projects. In addition, state support and social initiatives play a key role in preserving national language and culture, ensuring the sustainable development of book culture.

### **8. Publishing Technologies and Print Quality**

Modern publishing technologies play a decisive role in the development of book culture. Printing technologies in the Baltic States have been modernized to meet contemporary standards, and both traditional and digital publications are now widely available. Improvements in print quality, innovative design, and graphic layout enhance readers' engagement with book culture.

Digital printing technologies allow publishers to reduce production costs and print in small runs. E-publications and online platforms enable wider access to audiences and expand regional and international market reach. Considerations regarding book format and design are crucial, as they must balance aesthetic and functional aspects to attract readers. Modern printing technologies are also essential for maintaining book quality, producing durable publications, and supporting innovative publishing practices. These technologies allow publishers to create products that meet reader demands and present both digital and print editions, thereby contributing to the growth and sustainability of book culture.

### **9. Statistics and Analysis of the Book Market**

Statistical analysis of the book market in the Baltic States reflects the state of the region's publishing sector. In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the number of publishing houses has increased, and the variety of books has expanded (Ivanov, 2017). Data indicate that the shares of literary, scientific, and educational publications remain stable, while publications in various genres continue to meet diverse reader demands. Interregional comparisons reveal notable differences across the Baltic States. In Lithuania, printed works promoting national language and culture receive strong support. In Estonia, digital publications constitute a larger portion of the market, whereas Latvia emphasizes regional cooperation and international projects to expand its publishing sector.

### **10. Statistical Analysis and Reader Demographics**

Statistical analysis also allows for the identification of market trends and future projections. The growth of electronic publications, shifts in reader demographics, and opportunities for international collaboration shape the future development of the book market. Based on these

indicators, publishers update their strategies and offer products corresponding to reader preferences.

### **10.1. Reading Habits and Reader Demographics**

In the Baltic countries, reading habits are influenced by social, cultural, and technological factors. The reader population varies according to age, gender, educational level, and areas of interest. In the contemporary period, younger generations primarily access information via digital platforms and e-books, although traditional reading habits are still maintained.

Changes in reader preferences direct publishers toward new genres and product models. Educational and scientific publications serve as primary sources for students and academics, while literary and popular works satisfy public interest (Johansson, 2019). Social and cultural factors influence reader choices and determine the dynamics of the book market. Although the proliferation of digital platforms expands the reader base, additional initiatives are required to preserve traditional book culture. These include book festivals, exhibitions, reading clubs, and educational programs.

### **10.2. Role of Educational and Scientific Publications**

Academic and scientific publications in the Baltic countries are an integral part of the education system and research development. Books, textbooks, and research works published by universities and research centers facilitate the dissemination of knowledge in the region. Open Access models provide researchers with easy access to scientific information, accelerating the research process (Alizadeh & Mahammadli, 2025). Scientific publications also expand opportunities for participation in international collaborations and transnational research projects. This enhances the academic reputation of the Baltic countries, showcases national scientific heritage globally, and contributes to the training of future researchers.

## **11. Future Strategies and State Publishing Policy**

### **11.1. Future Strategies for Book Culture**

The future of book culture in the Baltic countries depends on strategic planning, state support, and innovative projects. Government initiatives provide financial support, subsidies, and incentive programs for the publishing sector. Publishers are increasingly embracing digitalization and e-book technologies to broaden readership. Future strategies also emphasize international collaboration, multicultural projects, and the promotion of scientific publications. The region's book culture is

open to global integration, with combined digital and print offerings ensuring sustainable development.

### **11.2. State Publishing Policy in the Baltic Countries**

State policy plays a crucial role in the book publishing process. In the Baltic countries, publishing activity is carried out through both governmental and independent initiatives. The state primarily focuses on preserving culture, promoting national languages, and supporting the education system.

Through programs organized by the Ministries of Culture and Education, publishers receive grants, subsidies, and other financial mechanisms (Kall & Lepp, 2018). As a result, national literary works are printed, textbooks are prepared, and scientific publications are maintained. Legislation also plays an important role in the publishing process. Copyright protection, competitive conditions in the book market, and tax incentives constitute the core elements of state publishing policy. State support expands the operational scope of publishers and ensures that book culture maintains a leading position in societal development.

### **12. Regional Cooperation and International Integration**

Book culture in the Baltic countries has been further strengthened through regional cooperation and international integration. Joint projects in the publishing sector are implemented among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and regional book festivals and exhibitions are organized (Kozlov, 2016). Within the framework of the European Union, the Baltic countries participate in numerous publishing initiatives. These projects facilitate the translation of books into multiple languages, the development of digital platforms, and the expansion of the reader base. Participation in international book fairs promotes the literature and book culture of the Baltic countries across Europe and the world. This process not only supports national literature but also strengthens the region's cultural integration.

### **13. Children's and Youth Literature**

Children's literature constitutes a strategic area in the book culture of every country. In the Baltic States, special attention is given to the preparation and publication of children's books (Larson, 2021). These works play a crucial role in forming reading habits and transmitting national identity and culture to new generations. The content of children's books often emphasizes national folklore, historical events, and moral values. Additionally, translations of international children's literature enrich the worldview of young readers. Youth publications focus primarily on

contemporary topics and are designed in accordance with the interests and needs of young readers (Mammadov & Mahammadli, 2025). These works often address themes such as social identity, technological change, environmental concerns, and global cultural trends, thereby reflecting the realities of modern youth life. By engaging with relevant and relatable subjects, youth literature not only entertains but also supports the personal development and critical thinking skills of young audiences.

Educational materials, literary works, and digitally published books strongly influence the reading habits of young audiences. School textbooks and supplementary educational resources play a foundational role in shaping learning practices, while contemporary literary works stimulate creativity, empathy, and cultural awareness. Digital platforms, including e-books and interactive reading applications, further enhance accessibility and provide opportunities for personalized learning experiences. In this way, youth publications act as a bridge between tradition and innovation: they preserve elements of national culture while simultaneously integrating global perspectives. Their role is essential not only for cultivating lifelong reading habits but also for ensuring the intergenerational transmission of cultural and intellectual values.

#### **14. Translation Activities and the Dissemination of National Literature**

Translation activities represent an important dimension of book culture in the Baltic States. Translating local literature into foreign languages serves to introduce national culture to the world. Through literary festivals and international projects, works by Baltic authors are made accessible to a broad readership. Conversely, translating world literature into Baltic languages opens new intellectual opportunities for readers. The translation of classical and contemporary works diversifies the reading market and contributes to the formation of readers' aesthetic taste. One of the main challenges in translation is the shortage of professional specialists and the preservation of the artistic spirit of the original text. Nevertheless, translated publications contribute significantly to the development of book culture both locally and internationally.

#### **15. Libraries and Their Connection with Publishing Activities**

Collaboration between libraries and publishers is a key factor in the development of book culture. In the Baltic States, national libraries maintain close ties with publishers and act as intermediaries in delivering new publications to readers. University libraries play an important role in disseminating scholarly works and providing resources for students and researchers. The development of digital libraries facilitates easy access to electronic publications. Libraries also bear

a mission in preserving national book heritage and transmitting it to future generations. Their collaboration with publishers thus ensures the continuity and sustainability of book culture.

## **16. Print Run Policy in the Baltic States**

Print run policy represents a strategic component of publishing activities. It is not only a technical or production indicator but also a factor influencing the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of the book market (Mikkelsen, 2017). In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, print run policy has evolved in line with changing political, economic, and social conditions. During the Soviet era, mass print runs served ideological and educational purposes, whereas after independence, policies increasingly reflected market economy principles. Although the average print runs in the Baltic States today are smaller than those in Western Europe, significant achievements have been made in terms of quality and content. In particular, children's literature, translations, and scholarly publications remain areas where print run policies are strategically important.

### **16.1. Historical Aspects: Soviet Era and Post-Independence Print Run Policies**

Print run policies during the Soviet period were shaped under the strong influence of the Soviet ideological and administrative system. After 1940, when Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were incorporated into the Soviet Union, their publishing sectors were subordinated to centralized management, and all publishing activities were regulated according to decisions made in Moscow (Ismayilov & Sadigova, 2022). In this framework, publishing was not merely an economic or cultural practice but also a political instrument. Print run numbers were directly linked to ideological priorities, with Marxist-Leninist works, propaganda literature, and classical Russian texts often published in massive quantities. By contrast, works in local national languages or those reflecting regional cultural traditions were frequently subject to stricter controls, resulting in limited circulation. Thus, print run policies became both a mechanism of cultural homogenization and a tool of political control. At the same time, the large-scale dissemination of selected texts contributed to shaping collective memory and reinforcing the Soviet ideological agenda across the Baltic republics.

## **17. Print Run Policies in the Baltic States**

### **17.1. Print Runs during the Soviet Period**

During the Soviet period, the print runs of books were primarily determined according to ideological content and educational principles. Literature, textbooks, scientific works, as well as classical Russian and world literature and texts related to Marxist-Leninist theory, were published

in large print runs. While high print runs enabled broad access to books, centralized control also restricted the free expression of readers' interests.

In Latvia and Estonia, for example, certain literary works were printed in hundreds of thousands of copies during the Soviet era (Nilsson, 2019). Classical literature and ideologically oriented books were particularly targeted at mass readerships, whereas books in national languages often had very limited print runs. Thus, while print run policy played an important role in disseminating culture, it did not fully reflect national diversity.

## **17.2. Post-Independence Stage**

After gaining independence in 1991, the Baltic countries experienced profound changes in print run policies. With the transition to a market economy, publishing activities were liberalized. Print run numbers were no longer dictated by state planning but depended on market demand. In this new context, the print runs of books decreased significantly. Works that had once been published in hundreds of thousands of copies during the Soviet era were reduced to editions of 2,000–5,000 copies. This reduction stemmed from shrinking readership, limited economic resources, and the small size of the market. Nevertheless, the post-independence era opened opportunities for the development of national languages, the publication of works by local authors, and the preservation of cultural diversity. Although print runs were smaller, content quality improved, and steps were taken to strengthen national culture.

## **18. Contemporary Features of Print Run Policies**

### **18.1. Average Print Runs**

In the Baltic States, average print runs remain modest by European standards. In Estonia, literary and academic works typically range between 1,000 and 2,000 copies. In Latvia and Lithuania, average print runs are slightly higher, generally between 2,000 and 4,000 copies. This situation is largely attributable to the limited market size and readership scope, which restrict publishers' ability to sustain larger production numbers. The relatively small population of each Baltic country, combined with a niche reading audience for certain genres, means that publishers often prefer to print conservatively in order to reduce financial risks. Unlike in Western Europe, where large domestic markets allow publishers to sustain print runs of tens of thousands, Baltic publishers must carefully calculate demand. This cautious approach is also influenced by high production costs, particularly for specialized academic works and translated literature. Moreover, the presence of digital publishing and e-books further impacts print run strategies. As younger

generations increasingly turn to electronic formats, publishers in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania tend to focus on smaller physical editions, complemented by digital alternatives. Thus, while print runs may appear limited in size, they reflect a pragmatic adaptation to economic realities, technological change, and evolving reader preferences in the region.

### 18.2. Print Runs by Genre

Print runs vary considerably across genres, reflecting differences in readership, market demand, and state support mechanisms. Literary works and poetry usually have lower print runs, often limited to a few thousand copies, as they appeal to a more specialized and culturally oriented audience (Petersen & Sorensen, 2020). Such works are usually intended for literary circles, academic institutions, or national cultural programs rather than the mass market.

In contrast, children's literature and textbooks are published in substantially larger quantities. These genres benefit from both state funding and consistent demand from families, schools, and educational institutions. In many cases, governments commission textbooks to ensure nationwide distribution, making them some of the most widely circulated publications in the Baltic States. Academic publications occupy a distinct position. They seldom exceed 500–1,000 copies, as their readership is confined to scholars, students, and specialized research communities. Despite their limited circulation, such works are considered highly valuable due to their contribution to scientific progress, knowledge dissemination, and international academic exchange. Additionally, popular genres such as crime novels, romance fiction, and young adult literature occasionally achieve higher print runs, particularly when supported by effective marketing or international recognition of authors. However, these cases remain exceptions, as the small market size generally limits the capacity for large-scale production. This genre-based stratification of print runs illustrates how economic pragmatism, cultural policy, and audience demand interact in shaping the publishing landscape of the Baltic States.

### 18.3. State-Commissioned and Commercial Publications

In the contemporary context, print run policies follow two principal directions:

**\*State-commissioned publications** — including textbooks, works by national classics, and books of historical or scientific importance — are printed in larger numbers with government support.

**\*Commercial publications** — such as works by contemporary authors, translations, and popular genres — are issued in smaller print runs based on market demand (Schmidt, 2018).

This dual approach enables the book market to maintain equilibrium and address diverse readership needs.

### **19. Print Runs and the Market Economy**

Print run policies in the Baltic States are closely linked to the principles of a market economy. They determine not only the scale of production but also pricing, distribution, and accessibility.

**\*Impact on pricing:** Smaller print runs increase production costs per copy, leading to higher book prices. For instance, a 1,500-copy edition in Estonia is often more expensive than mass-produced books in Western Europe.

**\*Small-run premium editions:** Limited-edition, high-quality works—such as art albums or bibliographic publications—are produced despite their high cost, as they hold cultural and symbolic value.

**\*Mass-market runs:** Popular genres like detective fiction, romance, and young adult literature are issued in relatively larger print runs, though still modest compared to Western Europe.

**\*Supply and demand balance:** Publishers, facing a limited market, often produce small runs to minimize risk, though unexpectedly popular titles may receive additional printings.

### **20. Challenges and Prospects of Print Run Policies**

#### **20.1. Sustainability of Quality Publications**

Producing high-quality works in small markets is financially challenging. Small print runs raise costs, making many cultural, literary, and scientific works commercially unattractive (Väli, 2017). This situation creates a structural dilemma for publishers: while the preservation of cultural and scholarly output is vital for national identity and academic progress, the limited size of the market often undermines financial sustainability.

As a result, publishers frequently prioritize genres with higher commercial potential, such as popular fiction, translated bestsellers, or children's books, which guarantee more immediate returns. This pragmatic approach, however, reduces the variety of available literature and narrows the scope for experimental or niche works. In the long term, such a trend may negatively affect the richness of cultural production, as voices from less mainstream traditions struggle to reach their audiences.

Moreover, the high production costs associated with specialized works—such as illustrated art albums, historical monographs, or multilingual editions—further constrain the possibilities for broad dissemination. In small markets like those of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the financial



risks tied to these publications are magnified compared to larger European countries, where sales volumes can offset higher production expenses.

Nevertheless, state subsidies, cultural foundations, and international cooperation projects occasionally provide support for non-commercial genres. These mechanisms are essential for ensuring that valuable academic and cultural works continue to be published despite their limited profitability. In this sense, balancing cultural responsibility with market realities remains one of the central challenges for publishers in the Baltic States.

## **20.2. Role of Translated Works**

Translations enrich the cultural landscape by introducing foreign literature, offering readers access to new ideas, artistic traditions, and intellectual perspectives. Through translations, the Baltic readership engages with global literary and scientific trends, which fosters cultural openness and strengthens intellectual exchange across borders. In particular, translated works often play a key role in diversifying reading habits and broadening the scope of available genres.

However, assigning small print runs to high-cost translations restricts their availability, reducing their cultural impact. The expenses associated with translation, editing, and rights acquisition make such publications financially demanding, especially in small markets where sales volumes are limited. Consequently, publishers may hesitate to invest in lesser-known authors or works from non-dominant languages, focusing instead on commercially safer options such as bestsellers or widely recognized classics.

This dynamic narrows the cultural exchange potential of translations, as readers are often exposed to a limited selection of global literature. It also diminishes opportunities for intercultural dialogue and the introduction of innovative literary voices. Moreover, the restricted circulation of translated works affects educational institutions and libraries, which depend on access to diverse materials for teaching and research.

Despite these constraints, translated publications remain indispensable for the vitality of book culture in the Baltic States. State-supported cultural programs, European Union translation funds, and bilateral literary initiatives play a crucial role in mitigating financial risks and ensuring broader dissemination. Expanding these mechanisms could significantly enhance the availability and cultural resonance of translated works, allowing them to fulfill their role as bridges between local traditions and global cultural currents.

### **20.3. Integration of Digital and Print Editions**

Digital formats offer flexibility and eliminate print-run limitations, allowing publishers to bypass the financial risks traditionally associated with small markets and limited readerships. By reducing costs related to paper, printing, and distribution, digital editions provide an opportunity to make books more accessible to wider audiences both locally and internationally. In addition, e-books and online platforms create possibilities for immediate updates, interactive content, and integration with multimedia resources, which further enhance the reading experience.

Hybrid strategies—combining digital and print—are increasingly important for sustainable publishing (Williams, 2021). While digital formats ensure accessibility and efficiency, print editions continue to carry cultural, symbolic, and aesthetic value, especially in fields such as literature, education, and art publishing. Maintaining a balance between these two formats enables publishers to meet diverse reader expectations: on one hand, addressing the preferences of younger, digitally oriented audiences, and on the other, preserving the traditional reading culture valued by older generations and academic communities.

Moreover, hybrid strategies support market diversification. For instance, publishers may release small print runs of specialized works while simultaneously offering digital versions to broaden reach and reduce costs. This dual model ensures that even niche publications—such as scholarly monographs, minority language works, or experimental literature—can achieve cultural visibility without imposing prohibitive financial burdens.

In the Baltic States, where market size is limited, the integration of digital and print formats represents not only an economic necessity but also a cultural opportunity. It allows for international collaboration, participation in global publishing networks, and alignment with broader trends in knowledge dissemination. By adopting hybrid strategies, Baltic publishers can preserve the symbolic prestige of printed books while embracing the innovative potential of digital publishing, thereby securing the long-term sustainability of book culture in the region.

### **20.4. Legal and Regulatory Challenges**

Copyright and intellectual property issues affect both print and digital publishing, representing one of the most pressing challenges in the contemporary book market. With the rapid spread of digital technologies, the unauthorized reproduction and distribution of books has become increasingly common, undermining both the financial sustainability of publishers and the

motivation of authors to produce new works. Piracy not only reduces the real impact of print runs but also disrupts the balance between cultural accessibility and economic viability.

The consequences of piracy are particularly visible in small markets such as the Baltic States, where limited print runs already restrict circulation. When digital copies are reproduced illegally, publishers lose critical revenue streams, and authors are deprived of fair compensation for their intellectual labor. This, in turn, discourages investment in less commercially viable genres, including scholarly works, translations, and cultural heritage publications, which are already vulnerable due to their high production costs and limited audiences.

Effective state regulation and support are essential to addressing these challenges. Strong copyright legislation, combined with efficient enforcement mechanisms, can help protect the rights of both authors and publishers. In addition, the establishment of partnerships between governments, publishers, and digital platforms is necessary to ensure that legitimate content is easily accessible and affordable, thereby reducing the incentive for piracy.

Beyond enforcement, awareness campaigns and educational initiatives also play an important role. Informing readers about the ethical and legal implications of piracy fosters a culture of respect for intellectual property. Furthermore, the development of innovative business models—such as subscription-based services, affordable e-book pricing, and open-access initiatives—offers alternative pathways for making literature widely available without undermining copyright protections.

In the Baltic States, where national languages and cultural preservation are closely tied to publishing, safeguarding intellectual property is not only an economic issue but also a matter of cultural sustainability. Protecting the rights of authors and publishers ensures that book culture can continue to thrive in both print and digital forms, contributing to the long-term development of national identity and scholarly progress.

## **21. Future Development Prospects**

Future strategies for print run policies in the Baltic States should include:

- \*Flexible and adaptive management of print runs.
- \*Promotion of hybrid editions aligned with reader behavior.
- \*State-funded support for small-run but high-quality cultural and academic publications.
- \*Broader circulation of translations and foreign works.

Print run policies remain strategically significant for shaping readership, preserving national culture, and supporting education. While challenges persist—such as small market size, financial sustainability, and copyright issues—state support, hybrid publishing models, and adaptive strategies will play a decisive role in ensuring the future sustainability of Baltic book culture.

### **Conclusion**

The history and practice of book publishing in the Baltic countries demonstrate that book culture in this region has been a cornerstone not only of intellectual life but also of the preservation of national and cultural identity. The socio-political and cultural development paths of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have directly influenced publishing traditions, with books playing a key role in shaping national consciousness and disseminating ideas of enlightenment.

Research indicates that book publishing in the Baltic countries is characterized by several key features. First, publishing traditions in the region have developed consistently from the Middle Ages to the present day, ensuring historical continuity. Second, books have served as vital instruments for preserving and developing national languages, transmitting cultural identity across generations through literature. Third, the transition from traditional printing to digital publications occurred rapidly, facilitating the expansion of the e-book market and demonstrating technological adaptability. In addition, the book market functions not only as an economic sector but also as a social institution supporting education, enlightenment, and scientific development. Finally, the Baltic countries have actively engaged in global cultural processes by promoting their book culture in Europe and beyond, highlighting their international integration.

At the same time, the analysis reveals ongoing challenges in the publishing sector, including limited financial resources, difficulties in translation activities, increasing competition in digital markets, and changing reader demands. Nevertheless, state support, regional cooperation, and accelerated digitalization processes provide opportunities to overcome these challenges and further strengthen book culture. Looking ahead, book publishing in the Baltic countries is expected to develop primarily through the application of digital innovations, international exchange of best practices, promotion of national literature abroad, and the cultivation of younger readerships. Book culture will continue to play a leading role both in preserving national identity and in ensuring active participation in global scientific and cultural processes.

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