

The publication of educational works for the people of Iceland and their reception, c. 1770–1830

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This article deals with the publication of educational works for the people of Iceland and their reception in the period c. 1770–1830. The main focus is on the publication of secular material.¹ According to tradition in Icelandic historiography, the Age of Enlightenment in the country is considered to have begun around the middle of the eighteenth century and it came to an end about 1830; however, recent research has indicated that the influence of the Enlightenment in the country was very considerable in the last two thirds of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, as will be discussed below. The period dealt with in the article is determined in the following way: The publication of secular educational works in Iceland began on a large scale c. 1770. At the other end, the period is determined by the cessation of the publishing activities of Magnús Stephensen (1762–1833), who dominated book publishing in the country for decades.

At the outset of the main part of the article some of the basic aspects of the historical background which throw light on the subject matter of the article are discussed with special reference to the Icelandic Enlightenment. Then there is an analysis of the main publishers of educational works, an outline of the publishing history in the period and a consideration of the subject matter. The ideology behind the publication is examined with reference to its professed aims. It is considered in particular what methods some of the writers used in order to make the material accessible to the readers. The preconditions for the distribution of the educational works are discussed. Then the reception of these works is examined. Next the importance of the heritage of this period in the publishing history of educational works in Iceland is considered. Before conclusions are put forward, a chapter is devoted to an examination of the publication of educational works in Iceland in its European context, with particular reference to Denmark and Norway.

The subject is especially of interest in an Icelandic context because this is the period during which secular educational material was for the first time published on a considerable scale by the Icelanders. Seen in a wider setting, it is very worthwhile to exam-

ine the publication of educational works among a small nation on the fringe of Europe, where the influence of the Enlightenment was strong and where the social background of the movement was somewhat unusual, as will be dealt with below.

It is also an interesting approach to examine this publication activity as a part of the history of publication of educational material within the Danish, or, until 1814, Danish-Norwegian, monarchy. Obviously, the publication of educational works in Iceland was to a certain extent determined by what happened in Denmark, and a comparison with Norway is noteworthy in that Danish influences were strong in both countries; this applies also to Norway after the end of the political connection of the country with Denmark.

Some main features of the historical background, with special reference to the Icelandic Enlightenment

The Icelandic nation was very small, numbering only some 46,000 in 1770 and some 53,000 in 1830. The population was predominantly rural although fishing was of considerable importance in the economy of the country. Thus Reykjavík was only a small village at the time and no other settlements were larger than tiny hamlets. The Icelanders had a rich literary tradition and their own literary language, Icelandic. The history of the country was in many ways determined by its being a part of the Danish monarchy. Those Icelanders who went to university studied at the University of Copenhagen and a number of Icelandic scholars settled there permanently. All things considered, a very significant part of the intellectual life of the Icelanders took place in Copenhagen.

The publication of educational works in Iceland was largely carried out under the auspices of the Enlightenment. The nature of the Enlightenment has been hotly debated ever since the period commonly associated with the movement, and no less so in the last few decades than previously. While the aspects of the movement traditionally prominent in Enlightenment research continue to be investigated thoroughly, the field has expanded; thus emphasis has, for instance, been laid on the reception of the movement and characteristics in individual countries. Although the definitions of the movement vary a great deal, most scholars agree that a belief in progress, which implies a belief in the perfectability of man, which again has obvious implications as regards an emphasis on the value of popular education, is a central feature of its ideology.²

The Icelandic Enlightenment can be regarded as an offshoot of the German-Danish Enlightenment. The same is true of the Enlightenment in Norway and the Faroe Islands. The »enlightened« Icelanders were naturally well acquainted with the basic ideas of the French Enlightenment, but the Icelandic Enlightenment was definitely not

radical. While the champions of the Enlightenment wanted the common people to become more »enlightened«, they did not wish to see any major change in the structure of Icelandic society. The nature of the movement in the country was, *inter alia*, to a certain extent determined by the absence of towns and the relative absence of a bourgeoisie. In Iceland, the leaders of the movement were officials who had received university education in Copenhagen. The role of the officials in the movement was even more pronounced in Iceland than was the case in Denmark, Norway and Northern Germany. It is remarkable how many of the top officials, both secular ones and bishops, had an important role in the movement. Many other learned men were active in it. A number of parsons wrote articles and treatises in the spirit of the Enlightenment on secular matters, such as farming, no less than religious. Some of the sheriffs were also active in the movement. There were very few physicians in the country for the length of the Age of Enlightenment, but they contributed to the movement by writing and translating books and articles relating to public health.

The Icelanders were conscious of the existence of a movement that was called *upplýsingin* (the Enlightenment) in Icelandic. The movement was referred to under that name both by its champions and its ideological opponents, and Magnús Stephensen was sometimes called its leader by contemporaries.

The Enlightenment had considerable effect in various fields in Iceland.³ However, external conditions for the reception of the movement were in some ways not favourable. Thus poisonous gases that emitted from a volcanic eruption in 1783–1784 affected the livestock and the vegetation in most of the country, at least, leading to a famine; the population fell from some 52,000 in 1782 to some 39,000 in 1786 and only reached its pre-1783 level in the 1820s. Lack of importation of goods during part of the Napoleonic wars also led to a situation of hardship among a considerable section of the population, especially in the years 1807–1814. There is no doubt that these setbacks dampened the spirit of progress and made it more difficult to bring some of the ideas of the Enlightenment to fruition.

In the last few decades of the eighteenth century the Danish government took various measures in order to strengthen the Icelandic economy, in a way similar to what took place in other parts of the Danish-Norwegian monarchy. In some cases the initiative came from the Icelanders themselves. A few expeditions were organized which were meant to increase the knowledge of the nature of the country, partly with a view to strengthen the economy. Two commissions (1770–1771 and 1785) were established with the assignment to put forward proposals for improvement. The measures actually taken were wide-ranging; they aimed at strengthening the main branches of the economy, farming and fishing (which naturally were interconnected), and apart from that, for instance, factory industry was attempted, and a system of postal communications by

land was founded. Taken as a whole, these measures did not have a very thoroughgoing effect. The Danish government also carried out important changes in the administrative system of the country that can be connected with the Enlightenment.

The question how far the Icelandic Enlightenment is connected with attitudes that can be described as nationalistic calls for a discussion about the use of terms. In fact, it can be argued that there is an unclear dividing line between old-style patriotism and nineteenth-century nationalism. In the period covered in the article, the officials on the whole avoided criticizing the governance of Iceland openly. This changed after the end of the period when criticism of the administration of Iceland in the past and demands for increased self-government within the Danish state were put forward. However, it must be borne in mind that the champions of the Enlightenment emphasized that they were very much concerned with the welfare of the nation and progress that could be made in the economy. In this period, they also referred to the Icelanders as a nation within the Danish state, for instance in a supplication sent to the Danish government in 1795 in connection with trade with the country. Magnús Stephensen also said in one of his works that Iceland should not be treated as a colony.⁴ As discussed below, it can be said that the Icelandic Enlightenment was an extended phenomenon and that after the end of the period under review, the ideas of progress, largely derived from the movement, and ideas connected with nineteenth-century nationalism mingled to form one main ideological current among the Icelanders. In that sense the connections between the Enlightenment and nationalism are certainly important.

Even though the Icelandic Enlightenment was not radical, disagreement of many kinds was connected with it.⁵ A few important aspects can be pointed out.

Religion was one of the fields in which there was controversy; there was a clash between, on the one hand, the rationalistic ideas of Magnús Stephensen and those who held similar views and, on the other, those who, led by a group of parsons, adhered to orthodox Lutheranism. The controversy concerning religion was connected with rationalistic ideas in new books on religion, a number of which were published, and changes in the form of the sermon. This dispute was, *inter alia*, fierce in connection with the publication of a new hymn-book, edited by Magnús Stephensen and the bishop of the country, in 1801. Thus the rationalistic flavour of some of the hymns caused resentment. Another important book in which rationalistic influences are evident is a collection of sermons, published in 1822. There was also discontent with more emphasis being laid on morals than dogma.

While religious materialism was almost absent in Iceland in the period under review, the Enlightenment definitely contributed to secularization. Increased emphasis on various secular matters, not least the large-scale publication of secular educational works, is of importance in this respect.

Matters concerning book publishing were one of the fields in which controversy was sharp, as will be discussed below. Penal law was another field. There again Magnús Stephensen had a prominent role in his position as Chief Justice of the High Court of Iceland from its foundation in 1800 until his death. Many of the champions of the Icelandic Enlightenment lived in the south-western part of the country. Resentment felt by many people in the north connected with the policy of the authorities towards that part of the country was linked with controversy concerning the Enlightenment. In particular, the bishopric at Hólar was abolished as was the grammar school there and these amalgamated with the bishopric and the grammar school in the south. The dislike of some people with the considerable influence of Magnús Stephensen's family also had a bearing on this controversy.⁶

The publishers and the published works

In the 1770s there had been a printing press in the country for almost two and a half centuries. It is not known exactly when it started functioning. During most of this period the printing press was situated at the bishop's seat at Hólar, in the north, briefly in neighbouring areas, and for a short period at the end of the seventeenth century at the other bishop's seat, Skálholt, in the south. The bishops controlled the printing press. Very little secular material was printed in the country during these two centuries; this includes the records of the Alþing, the traditional assembly, which then functioned as a court, and some sagas.

There was a change in this respect when a printing press, founded at the initiative of Ólafur Ólafsson (Olavius, c. 1741–1788), a champion of the Enlightenment, started operating on the island Hrapsey, in the west of Iceland, in 1773. The printing press was granted the right to function alongside the printing press at Hólar, but it was not permitted to print religious material. During the next two decades some educational material intended for the general public was published there. The first Icelandic periodical, which was written in Danish, was produced there in 1773–1776.

In line with the widespread interest in agricultural improvements in Denmark in the second half of the eighteenth century, some books and pamphlets on farming and other practical matters in Icelandic were printed in Copenhagen and at Hrapsey with the support of the Danish government or bodies connected with it. At least a part of the copies printed of most of these works was distributed free of charge among the population. The first work of this kind was published in 1761, but most were published in the period 1770–1780.

Societies, including some that can be classified as learned ones, had a very impor-

tant role in the publication of educational works in the period, as was the case in many other countries. It is important to bear in mind, in connection with the learned societies which functioned in Iceland in this period, that they were mainly publishing or reading societies. As the settlements in the country were so small and communications so poor, it would have been difficult to hold many meetings.

In 1779, twelve Icelanders in Copenhagen founded a learned society, *Hið íslenska lærdómsslafélag*⁷ (the Society of the Learned Arts). One of its leaders was Jón Eiríksson (1728–1787), a high official. The society started publishing an annual in 1781. It was published in fourteen volumes until 1796; the fifteenth volume was incomplete and was never published officially. During the course of its publication the annual, which altogether contains some 4,600 pages, published a great number of articles, which chiefly contain educational material of various kind.

In 1794 *Hið íslenska Landsuppfræðingarfélag*⁸ (the Society for the Education of the Nation) was founded in Iceland itself. The society was the brainchild of Magnús Stephensen and he largely shaped its policy. The publishing history of the society is somewhat complicated because the publication of various works is attributed to institutions associated with the society, and Magnús Stephensen also published some works personally. The publishing activity connected in one way or another with Magnús Stephensen was extensive, especially until 1805. The society bought the printing press which had been operating at Hráppsey and in 1799 the printing press at Hólar was amalgamated with it. As from 1799 and for the remainder of his life Magnús Stephensen controlled in practice the only printing press in the country and thus decided what was published. On the other hand, he could not control what was published in Icelandic in Copenhagen. The Danish censorship laws did not visibly affect book publishing in Iceland.

Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag (the Icelandic Literary Society) was founded in 1816. It took over the property of the Society of the Learned Arts and consisted of two departments, one in Copenhagen, the other in Reykjavík, but the latter did not publish anything in the period under review. In the publishing activities of the Icelandic Literary Society the influence of Romanticism is seen as well as that of the Enlightenment, but it published several educational works in the spirit of the latter movement. In the annual *Ármann á Alþingi*, published by two Icelanders in Copenhagen in four volumes in the years 1829–1832, there was some educational material. Secular educational material in Icelandic was also published on a limited scale in Copenhagen by other bodies.⁹

A great many manuscripts were written in Iceland in the period under review, and many of these had a wide circulation. In various cases a large number of copies were made of the same work. It is noteworthy in this respect that there were many examples of printed material being copied by hand. An examination of the classified manuscript

catalogues of the National and University Library of Iceland shows that the manuscripts, most of which date from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – including a considerable number from the period under review – contain material which is very diverse indeed.¹⁰ The same is true of manuscripts preserved in a number of local archives in the country. Quantitatively, the most extensive categories are poetry and biographies, but there is a considerable number of manuscripts that can be classified as containing educational works concerning various fields (apart from theology and philosophy) such as history, farming, medicine and the natural sciences. It is difficult to estimate to what extent these manuscripts affected the level of education among the common people.

The forum for the publication of educational works was books, pamphlets and articles in periodicals, as generally was the case elsewhere. Anthologies, collections of miscellaneous pieces, were an important aspect of the publishing activities of the Icelandic champions of the Enlightenment. Thus pieces containing practical information mingled with tales with a moral message.

The subject matter of the secular educational works published in Iceland was quite varied although obviously not to the same extent as in more populous nations. There is generally a certain thread of continuity as regards the topics of the educational works although it changed somewhat in the course of time. The major change took place in the 1790s when Magnús Stephensen became the leader of book publishing in Iceland. Thus two main periods can be spoken of in this respect. As mentioned before, in the first period the authorities in Copenhagen supported especially the publication of works concerned with farming. The educational works published at Hráppsey covered a wide field, but material on farming and law was prominent. The contents of the articles in the annual of the Society of the Learned Arts were very varied, but farming and other subjects connected with the economy, the natural sciences and matters relating to public health predominated. In the period associated with Magnús Stephensen considerable attention was given to farming, which was one of his many personal interests, but the emphasis was not quite as strong as in the first period. However, at its end much space was devoted to farming in the annual *Ármann á Alþingi*.

In the second period there was more emphasis on history and on education and the upbringing of children than in the first one. Reporting of contemporary events abroad was also prominent in the second period. Moreover, a larger amount was printed of material that conveyed a moral message. In both periods much was published on matters relating to public health, the natural sciences and law. Not much material specifically intended for women was published.

Many of the educational works were written by Icelanders who were knowledgeable about their subject. A considerable part of the educational material published in

Icelandic was translated or adapted from Danish. Some of this was originally written in German. Much was also translated or adapted directly from German. It is noticeable, however, that not many whole books which can be classified as educational works were translated into Icelandic. Here one can mention books by two well-known German authors, *Kleine Seelenlehre für Kinder* by Joachim Heinrich Campe (1746–1818) and a work by Johann Georg August Galletti (1750–1828) on world history. Material by some well-known German authors such as Friedrich von Hagedorn (1708–1754), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) and Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener (1714–1771), which was meant to serve an educational purpose and convey a moral message, was also translated into Icelandic.

The ideology behind the publication of educational works

There is much material available about the ideology behind the publication of educational works, for instance in the constitutions of individual societies and in prefaces to individual works. The generalization can be put forward that the ideology of the Enlightenment permeates the publication policy of the age. Indeed, the Icelandic word *upplýsing*, which has a counterpart in other Nordic languages, was often used in this context, as mentioned above. The term had been used in a different sense before the Age of Enlightenment, but this particular sense is probably derived from Danish.¹¹

The influence of the Enlightenment on the publication of educational works is evident in belief in the possibilities for progress and the value of education; there was a belief that mankind could improve through the correct education. There was also deep concern with morals, so common among the champions of the Enlightenment in many countries, and an emphasis on practical and morally sound reading material replacing what was sometimes regarded as useless and frivolous or even immoral and positively harmful literature. Antipathy towards beliefs that were regarded as superstitious is very prominent here. This emphasis is particularly clear in the publishing activities of Magnús Stephensen.

It is noteworthy that the attitude of the champions of the Enlightenment towards the publication of educational works was to a certain extent determined by their belief that a system of schools would not come into being in the country, as it was so sparsely populated and communications so difficult. In fact, the publishing activities of Magnús Stephensen and some of his contemporaries can be described as a gigantic exercise in adult education.¹²

Various examples can be taken of the professed aims of those who were responsible for the publication of educational works. No manifesto was issued for the activity of

the printing press at Hráppsey, but Ólafur Ólafsson (Olavius) expressed the ideology behind the publication of one particular work, on horticulture, very clearly in its preface. He says that at the beginning it has turned out to be difficult for all nations to extirpate the old leaven, as he puts it, and introduce something new although it had been good and useful. The Icelanders can expect the same, and even more so as poverty troubles them more than other nations; nevertheless, if the will is good, something is always achieved, especially if there is mutual help.¹³

It is stated in the constitution of the Society of the Learned Arts that its aims should be to increase learning among the population and contribute to the progress of education in the country. As regards individual sectors, emphasis is laid on farming, but among other subjects that are singled out, theology, philosophy, the natural sciences and »useful branches» of mathematics may be mentioned.¹⁴

Magnús Stephensen says in a letter to his brother-in-law, Bishop Hannes Finnsson (1739–1796), in 1794, the year in which the Society for the Education of the Nation was founded, that the main objective of the society should be the dissemination of knowledge.¹⁵ In the constitution of the society it is stated that it wishes to increase the interest of the nation in learning and reading among all classes through the publication of good, chosen and jovial works for enlightenment, knowledge and entertainment.¹⁶

In the preface to the anthology *Skemmtileg vinagleði*, or »An entertaining meeting of friends» (1797), which contains instructive pieces of miscellaneous types as well as some poetry, Magnús Stephensen says that it is his feeble endeavour in the book to kindle a little light in the darkness, unveil the disgust of vices, praise the glory of Nature, and show how beautifully Nature praises the Creator.¹⁷

The preface to Magnús Stephensen's doctoral thesis, which was published in 1819, is an important source for his estimation of his own career and throws light on his self-image as a champion of the Enlightenment and the motivation for his publishing activity. He says:

Increased love of books and reading, as well as interest which is considered to accompany the reading of books, a burning desire to strengthen popular education, improve their [the Icelanders'] lot and extirpate abuse and tyranny of any kind. It is above all this desire which has permeated me during all my adult years and will do so in future, as long as my health and my fortune allow. This is the purpose of many works that I have composed.¹⁸

In the introduction to the first volume of the annual *Ármann á Alþingi*, written by Þorgeir Guðmundsson (1794–1871), later a parson, and Baldvin Einarsson (1801–1833), later a lawyer, it is said that in a situation in which it is difficult to hold meetings about individual branches of the economy, it is important to give the general public access to

an instructive work about farming which would serve the same purpose as a meeting of the above-mentioned kind. The annual, which would be willing to print articles by various authors, should be such a work.¹⁹

The desire to counteract so-called superstitious beliefs by providing what was regarded as appropriate reading material is evident in some of the prefaces. Thus Hannes Finnsson says in his preface to *Kvöldvökurnar 1794*, or »Evening entertainment in 1794« (1796), where he discusses what reading material is suitable, that it has often caused him pain to know that on many farms tales of giants are read together with tales filled with immorality and superstition.²⁰

In a report which Magnús Stephensen wrote for the government in 1799–1800, when the Society for the Education of the Nation had been in existence for some five years, he says of its publishing activities that by getting various of the most sensible men in the country to bring forward translations of certain works connected with natural history and ethics, the society has sought gradually to exterminate prejudices, blind superstition and foolishness, and kindle a light in the thick scientific darkness which has for so long covered Iceland.²¹

It is clearly seen in the prefaces to some of the educational works published in the period that the authors thought that they were doing the nation a service by providing material on subjects on which little had been published in the country previously. Two examples can be given.²²

Gunnlaugur Snorrason (1714–1796), a parson, says in the preface to his translation of a work on geography by the German Gottfried Schultze, in order to explain why it was published, that much material on history was available in Icelandic, but very little on geography.²³ It is also said in the preface to a work on geography, published in 1821–1827 and written by the Copenhagen department of the Icelandic Literary Society, that there is much need for such a work. The hope is expressed that the publication could serve as an entertaining and instructive reader for those who are not in a position to provide themselves with foreign works on this subject.²⁴

In certain cases references of this kind are placed in the context of knowledge available to the Icelanders in comparison with knowledge available to other nations. Thus in the preface to the anthology *Útvaldar smásögur, almenningi til fróðleiks og skemmtunar*, or »Select tales, for the education and the entertainment of the common people« (1822–1823), which contains, among other things, short pieces on history and brief biographies of famous men, one of Magnús Stephensen's main themes is that the Icelanders are much behind other nations. He mentions various fields with which the Icelanders should become better acquainted, such as nature, the manners of nations and the history of mankind. Accounts relating to matters in other countries are important for Icelanders in order to enable them to make comparisons.²⁵

It shows the concern of various writers in this period with making their educational material easy to approach for the readers, that in various cases the material is put forward in a dialogue form or a variant thereof where more than two people carry on a conversation. The method was much used in antiquity and has been well known ever since; it was, for instance, frequently used by the writers of the Renaissance, apart from its use in catechisms. Among well known works in which this method is used the following can be mentioned: *Atli* by Björn Halldórsson (1724–1794), a parson (1780, see below), Magnús Stephensen's *Skemmtileg vinagleði* (1797) and *Ræður Hjálmars á Bjargi fyrir börnum sínum*, or »The Speeches of Hjálmar at Bjarg to his children« (1820, see below), *Handbægt garðyrkju fræðikver* by Bjarni Arngrímsson (1768–1821), a manual on horticulture (1816), and much of the material in the four volumes of the annual *Árman á Alþingi*. It is remarkable how Bjarni Arngrímsson explains in his preface to *Handbægt garðyrkju fræðikver* why he chose this form. He says that he uses the approach that he thought would be to the liking of most people and uses the question and answer form; the question enhances the desire to read the answer and memorize it better.²⁶

In this preface by Bjarni Arngrímsson an example can also be found of a writer placing emphasis on accessible style. He says that he has avoided all affectation, in the way of thinking, phrasing and style, so that his writing will turn out to be attractive and easy to understand.²⁷

The emphasis on presenting material in as accessible a way as possible is also seen in the publication of religious material. Thus a translation of a book by the Norwegian theologian Svend B. Hersleb (1784–1836), *Stutt ágríp af biblíufrásögum banda unglíngum*, or »A brief summary of tales from the Bible for young people«, in which individual episodes in the Bible are presented, was published in 1828.

Some factors that affected the spread and reception of educational works

Various factors affected the spread and reception of educational works. It is important to note in this context that the great majority of the population was poor and had limited means of buying books. Commercial lending libraries were unknown in Iceland. An institution which later became the National Library of Iceland was founded in Reykjavík in 1818, but in the first few decades of its existence it did not have a very important role in making educational works available to the population at large. In the period under review reading societies did not have a significant part in the spread of educational works in Iceland. A few reading societies were founded as from c. 1790, but the members were mostly learned men. It was as late as the 1840s that the first specific reading societies intended primarily for the general public were founded in the country.

Some of the champions of the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century and the first few decades of the nineteenth century argued that the parsons should have a key role in providing the common people with education on secular matters; in some cases it was said that this should be done through their controlling libraries in their parishes.²⁸ However, these ideas did not become a reality in the lifetime of these men.

The standard of literacy in the country was relatively high. By 1800 most adults mastered reading at least at an elementary level.²⁹ As regards educational matters in general, the requirements were geared to religious education. The most important measures taken in this respect include a confirmation regulation of 1746, similar regulations having been enacted in Denmark and Norway in 1736, and a royal letter which was the equivalent of a law of 1790. The minimum requirements, to be supervised by parsons, were determined by the need for reading knowledge for receiving religious instruction.

The two schools for children founded in the eighteenth century were both short-lived, and the third one was not founded until 1830. While the confirmation regulation for Iceland was based on a Danish model, the development of education for children there followed a path which was different from that in Denmark, where schools had functioned on a considerable scale for most of the eighteenth century and a law concerning education of children, which implied the foundation of schools throughout the country, was issued in 1814. The Icelandic learned men obviously knew very well what was happening in this field in Denmark, and it was only natural that they considered whether there was a basis for establishing a system of schools for children in Iceland. Those who expressed an opinion on this matter agreed that because of the external conditions in the country, referred to above, there was no basis for a system of schools for children covering the whole country. In the period there were no other educational institutions in Iceland except two grammar schools, which were amalgamated in 1801, the graduates of which were qualified to become parsons in Iceland. It was as late as 1879 that the Alþing issued a law, confirmed in 1880, concerning education for children which entailed that the homes, under the supervision of parsons, were responsible for the education of children in writing and arithmetic. It was only in 1907 that a law was enacted, in effect from 1908, which established compulsory education in schools for children aged 10–14.³⁰

The state of communications in Iceland affected the possibilities of the functioning of societies and the dissemination of educational works in many ways. From 1778 regular mail ships sailed between Copenhagen and Iceland. For most of the period they sailed once a year, with an interval in the years 1808–1815. There were no coastal shipping services. In the country itself there were no roads to speak of, and almost all the rivers were unbridged. An elementary domestic postal service only came into function in 1782. Under such conditions the transport of books and periodicals in the country

was expensive and difficult. In some cases the easiest way of bringing parcels and letters between individual parts of Iceland was to send them first to Copenhagen and then back to Iceland again.

It facilitated the spread of the educational works that many officials, who were champions of the Enlightenment, were behind their publication. On the other hand, it was of importance in this respect that Magnús Stephensen was a controversial figure. It did not facilitate the reception of his views that he was not diplomatic in expressing his opinions and attacked his ideological opponents rather ferociously at times. Thus, in an epilogue to one of his works he refers to them as »enemies of light» (*Líóss-óvinir*).³¹ His dislike of old books also caused resentment, and in some people's view he did not adhere enough to native traditions in the exposition of his message. Moreover, while he chose the conversation form in some of his educational works, no doubt in order to make them as accessible as possible, the complicated sentence structure in much of the material that he wrote for the general public must have made it less attractive than otherwise would have been the case.

The spread and reception of educational works

Various methodological problems come into consideration when it is attempted to estimate the spread and reception of educational works. Evidence has to be pieced together from what is known about the number of copies printed of particular works, about the number of copies sold, and the estimate of contemporaries and writers of later generations of how well or badly individual publications were received.

The factor of book loans is important here. As mentioned before, educational works did not spread to any considerable extent through reading societies or libraries, but private loans were very important in this respect as regards secular books, unlike religious ones; thus the ratio of secular books owned by individual households as compared with religious ones does not indicate the proportion of books on secular matters which were accessible. It was very common for people to borrow books from neighbours and friends. It is noteworthy that Magnús Stephensen complained in 1821 that there were cases of a number of people, three, four and up to ten, or even whole parishes, co-operating in subscribing to *Klausturpósturinn*; he said that copies of the periodical went like vagrants from farm to farm.³² Therefore books could reach a much larger audience than the number of copies sold would suggest.

A few examples can be given of the number of copies printed of individual works. The number of copies of the works distributed free of charge to the Icelanders by the Danish authorities ranged from 500 to 1,300.³³ Magnús Stephensen's *Ræður Hjálmars á*

Bjargi were printed in 710 copies.³⁴ Of the first volume of *Klausturpósturinn* 1,012 copies were printed,³⁵ but much fewer of most of the later volumes. It was common to print a few hundred copies of educational works,³⁶ which is a considerable number among such a small nation. However, it must be borne in mind that it varied how well these works sold.

The estimate of contemporaries of the reception of the educational works differs somewhat. Nonetheless, there are important testimonies to the effect that some of them were well received. Thus it was argued in 1835 that »after fifty years» the annual of the Society of the Learned Arts was a useful work for the common people of Iceland.³⁷ The assessment of Jón Espólin (1769–1836), who was Magnús Stephensen's cousin, but no blind admirer of his, seems to be fair. He said that the first books published by the Society for the Education of the Nation were not well received by everybody, and some people were offended by what Magnús Stephensen wrote in the prefaces and epilogues to his works, but many people held the books themselves in high regard.³⁸

A remarkable testimony concerning the reception of the educational works published in the period under review is found in articles by two writers, Þorkell Bjarnason (1839–1902) and Ólafur Sigurðsson (1822–1908), about what works were read by the common people in the region Skagafjörður in the north around the middle of the century. Among such works are several that Magnús Stephensen wrote alone or for the most part; *Atli*, the annual published by the Icelandic Society of the Learned Arts, *Kvöldvökurnar 1794* by Hannes Finnsson and the annual *Ármann á Alþingi*.³⁹

The parson Þórarinn Böðvarsson (1825–1895), the author of *Lestrarbók banda alþýðu á Íslandi* referred to below, who should have been in a position to form a balanced judgement on this matter, put forward the following estimate of Magnús Stephensen's influence: His intention was to educate his compatriots in accordance with the ideas which were then current in Europe; the reception varied, but he had a considerable success.⁴⁰ The historian Jón J. Aðils (1869–1920) wrote that Magnús Stephensen's works were popular into the lifetime of his own generation.⁴¹

Guðmundur Hjaltason (1853–1919), best known as an itinerant lecturer working for the youth societies movement in Iceland, says in his autobiography that he read Magnús Stephensen's works eagerly in his childhood, and that Magnús Stephensen was one of his two best leaders in his youth (*bestu skuleiðtogar mínir*).⁴²

Certain books that gained popularity can be mentioned. *Atli* by Björn Halldórsson is a work in dialogue form in which an experienced farmer instructs a young and inexperienced one on farming and various other subjects, such as the upbringing of children. It shows the popularity of this work that it was republished twice, in 1783 and 1834.

Kvöldvökurnar 1794, translated, adapted and edited by Hannes Finnsson, is a collection of miscellaneous pieces, including stories for entertainment and tales with a moral message, intended for children and young people. This work was republished in 1848.

Among Magnús Stephensen's popular works, two may be mentioned. *Ræður Hjálmars á Bjargi fyrir börnum sínum* sold out in a year; the author was very pleased with the reception, which he regarded as exceptionally good.⁴³ In this book Magnús Stephensen uses an approach which is in fact a variant of the dialogue form. A farmer speaks with his children, three sons and two daughters, about a variety of subjects, including farming, household matters and the division of society into classes. Information about taxation is also conveyed.

Magnús Stephensen published the periodical *Klausturpósturinn* in the period 1818–1827; for the most part of the period it was produced monthly. Magnús Stephensen wrote most of the periodical himself. Instructive articles about a wide variety of subjects appeared there, together with, inter alia, news from home and, particularly, abroad and some poetry. There is ample evidence that *Klausturpósturinn* was popular among the common people right from the beginning and indeed for decades. A few examples of evidence for this can be taken. In 1821 the ecclesiastic Árni Helgason (1777–1869) wrote that people in Skagafjörður thought that they needed no other book than *Klausturpósturinn*.⁴⁴ In 1834, Árni Helgason argued in a circular when a new periodical, *Sunnanpósturinn*, was launched that people missed *Klausturpósturinn*.⁴⁵ The same point is made in an introductory essay to the first volume of the periodical *Fjölur*, in the following year, where it is said that the periodical had been of much use to the country.⁴⁶ The poet Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal (1826–1907) wrote in 1870 that a great number of people had received most of their education from *Klausturpósturinn*.⁴⁷ Ólafur Sigurðsson mentioned *Klausturpósturinn* when he reminisced about what books were read in Skagafjörður around the middle of the century.⁴⁸

The question what effect the educational works had on the common people can be approached at different levels. First, what was the influence as regards practical matters which are directly connected with daily life such as farming and issues relating to public health? Secondly, there is a question of a change in attitudes, for instance concerning ideas that were regarded as superstitious. Thirdly – and this is the most difficult aspect of the matter to be investigated – in what way did these educational works affect the general level of knowledge among the common people?

Regarding the first issue, it seems likely that the various works concerned with farming had some effect. The difficulties that the Icelanders experienced, referred to above, no doubt served to diminish the impact of the proposed novelties in farming, both through acts of the Danish government and educational works written by the Icelanders. However, horticulture was one field where the efforts of the Danish government, Det Kgl. danske Landshusholdningsselskab (the Royal Danish Agricultural Society, see below) and the Icelandic champions of Enlightenment, largely through the publication of a number educational works, books, pamphlets and articles, had a con-

considerable effect. The developments in this field were slow for most of the period commonly known as the Age of Enlightenment in Iceland, but as from the 1810s there was a huge increase in the area devoted to horticulture. Potatoes, cabbage, white cabbage, turnips and Swedish turnips were grown, together with other crops. While most of the garden plots were very small, there was a great increase in their number. In 1810 there were altogether 1,194 such plots, 3,078 in 1830 and 5,042 in 1849.⁴⁹ It is hard to estimate whether suggestions in educational works concerning preventive measures against diseases and personal cleanliness, et cetera had much effect.

Nor is it easy to find an answer to the question what influence the publication of these educational works had on the attitudes of the common people, that is to say, to what extent these works did change their world of ideas. It is difficult to generalize about how big a section of the common people became, from the point of view of the champions of the Enlightenment, more »enlightened«. As mentioned before, efforts to uproot beliefs that were regarded as superstitious were an important element in the publication activities of the champions of the Enlightenment in Iceland. The evidence of contemporary sources regarding the effect of these efforts is somewhat contradictory. There is no doubt that there is at least an element of truth in the claim made by Magnús Stephensen and some other »enlightened« Icelanders that so-called superstitious beliefs had dwindled, but it seems clear that while their writings had considerable influence in this field, it was less than they had hoped for.⁵⁰

It is a commonplace that channels of dissemination of knowledge can be difficult to disentangle. With regard to Icelandic society in the period being discussed, it is evident that knowledge about various matters which were written about in the educational works and which were within the field of daily life, such as farming, fishing and health matters, spread to a considerable extent by word of mouth. Moreover, it cannot be estimated with any degree of certainty what role manuscripts had in the dissemination of knowledge. We cannot judge exactly, either, what proportion of the common people read the educational works. However, in a society where there were hardly any schools for the common people, the generalization can be put forward that as regards the section of the general population that read the educational works these must have contributed to increasing their general knowledge and broadened their horizons.

The heritage

It can be argued that the heritage of this period in the history of the publication of educational works in Iceland was very important. Partly this is connected with the fact, referred to above, that very little secular educational matter had been published in

Iceland before 1770. Various trends in this field were established in the period that has traditionally been labelled the Age of Enlightenment in Iceland, which continued for a long time.

This is linked with the fact that Enlightenment was what can be called an extended phenomenon in Iceland. This situation, needless to say, was not limited to Iceland,⁵¹ but it can be maintained that because of the structure of Icelandic society, the long-term influence of the movement was particularly strong in the country in the last two thirds of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The tradition that influential men wrote in the spirit of the movement continued; the changes that took place in Icelandic society were considerable, but generally speaking not very extensive so that many people thought that the ideology associated with the movement was still applicable. At the same time the general public was on the whole more receptive to this ideology than had been the case in the period traditionally labelled the Age of Enlightenment. In this later period people continued to speak of a belief in progress, the Enlightenment and enlightened people. There were now many more societies that laid emphasis on working for progress than had been the case in the period traditionally labelled the Age of Enlightenment. The Icelanders continued to use the term *upplýsing*.

There were more and more instances, as the decades passed, of writers who can be classified as belonging to the common people writing about progress, for instance in connection with farming, in a manner that falls within the Enlightenment tradition. This is very significant while it is unlikely that ideas of progress appealed much to the large section of the population that lived under very poor material conditions. Although the emphasis on progress was not necessarily in all cases derived from the Enlightenment, the similarity in approach is so close that it is safe to assume that in an overwhelming majority of instances there is an unbroken tradition.⁵²

In the last two thirds of the nineteenth century the publishing activities of Magnús Stephensen and some of his contemporaries were referred to in laudatory terms.⁵³ Some of the titles of periodicals launched in this period were modelled on periodicals published in the Age of Enlightenment, for instance the title of the annual *Ný félagsrit* (1841–1873), published Jón Sigurðsson (1811–1879), the political leader of the Icelanders from the 1840s until his death, and his associates. It uses the title of the annual of the Society of the Learned Arts, which was commonly known as *Félagsrit* (from the mid nineteenth century sometimes referred to as the »old» *Félagsrit* as opposed to the »new» ones).

In the 1830s and 1840s the publication of educational works was not particularly extensive, but after the middle of the century, especially as from around 1870, there was a very marked increase in publishing activities of this kind.⁵⁴ The Icelandic Literary Society and *Hið íslenska þjóðvinafélag* (the Icelandic Patriotic Society), founded in

1871, were particularly active in this field. In the absence of an established school system, many influential Icelanders in the last two thirds of the nineteenth century – and indeed to a certain extent in the early twentieth century, after various schools and other educational institutions had come into being – thought that the education of the general public was best provided by means of the publication of educational works. The fields that received most coverage were the same as before, such as farming, matters relating to public health, the natural sciences and history, and these were written about in a way similar to that in the period traditionally labelled the Age of Enlightenment.

It is remarkable that some of the ideas of the »enlightened» Icelanders concerning the dissemination of education among the general public became a reality as from the 1870s. Thus reading societies intended for the general public were founded on a large scale,⁵⁵ and parsons had an increasing role in the secular education of the general public. No major encyclopedic work was published in Icelandic, but to a limited extent the dreams of two of the champions of the Enlightenment of such a work⁵⁶ came true, as in 1874 Þórarinn Böðvarsson published a book which covered many fields of knowledge and which became very popular among the population at large, *Lestrarbók banda alþýðu á Íslandi*, or »A reader for the common people of Iceland».⁵⁷

The publication of educational works in Iceland examined in its European context, with particular reference to Denmark and Norway

It is interesting to consider what is unusual concerning the publication of educational works in Iceland in the period under review when it is examined in a general European context.⁵⁸ Some of these aspects are discussed below with particular reference to Denmark and Norway.

Some features which determined the nature of publication in Iceland are closely connected with the nature of Icelandic society. In many other European countries this was an important period in the publication of educational works. It formed a watershed even though a fundamental change did not take place to the extent that was the case in Iceland. The country falls very well within a larger pattern in that the influence of the Enlightenment was very strong. As regards sheer quantity, the publication activity was obviously on a much larger scale in these countries than it was in Iceland and the topics of the educational works more varied (although they were surprisingly wide-ranging in Iceland, considering the external circumstances). The absence of towns in Iceland is a significant factor in a comparison of this kind. The number of copies printed of individual works for the Icelanders was much lower than among most other nations. Unlike in many other countries, there were no commercial lending libraries in

Iceland in this period and reading societies intended primarily for the common people had yet to come into being there.

It is obvious that in many ways the publication of educational works in Iceland was determined by what happened in Denmark in this field. The Icelanders who were leading in this sphere had been at the University of Copenhagen and been influenced by attitudes towards popular education common in Denmark, and in some cases the publication of particular educational works was directly modelled on Danish ones. As mentioned before, some of the educational works were distributed free of charge by the Danish authorities in the early part of the period. The Danish authorities, including the king personally, supported some of the publication ventures of the Icelanders financially. There were cases of Icelandic educational works being dedicated to the king, the queen, or the Royal Danish Agricultural Society, which was founded in 1769.⁵⁹ One such work, *Um garðyrkjunnar nauðsyn og nytsemi fyri Ísland*, or »On the necessity for and use of horticulture for Iceland«, by Bjarni Arngrímsson (1820), was published in response to a call from that society for a prize essay on horticulture.⁶⁰ It is clear that the society influenced the Society of the Learned Arts, and it also affected farming in Iceland in other ways. All things considered, the impact of the society on the publication of educational works in Iceland was very considerable. As referred to above, some of the educational material which was not directly translated from Danish was adapted from Danish or indirectly based on works in the language. Moreover, a part of the material that was originally composed in German was translated into Icelandic from Danish.⁶¹

When a comparison is made between Iceland and Norway in this field, it is, of course, a fact of fundamental importance that both countries were until 1814 governed by the same state authority, and throughout the period under review Danish cultural influences were very strong in both countries. Some of these differences are directly connected with the Norwegian nation being much more populous than the Icelandic one and the market for educational works much larger.

There is a remarkable difference connected with the fact that Danish was the literary language of the Norwegians at the time. Therefore educational material published in Denmark, in many cases specifically for Danes and not with a Norwegian readership particularly in mind, could be used by all Norwegians who were interested in such material. Even so, it is of importance that many more titles were printed in Norway. In so far as there are parallels, it should be noted that what happened in Norway in this field was on a larger scale. It is noticeable that difficulties in communication played a role in the dissemination of educational material in both countries.⁶²

A comparison of this kind between the three countries, Iceland, Denmark and Norway, shows that some matters are similar while others are not. In all three countries learned societies played an important role in the publication of educational material.

The significance of the Royal Danish Agricultural Society and Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab (the Royal Norwegian Scientific Society), founded (under a different name) in 1760, and Det Kongelige Selskab for Norges Vel (the Royal Society for the Welfare of Norway), founded in 1809, is comparable with that of the Icelandic societies.

A considerable part of the educational material published in all three countries appeared in periodicals. However, in Denmark and Norway there were some periodicals which published rather specialized matter; this was not the case in Iceland. In Denmark, almanacs were an important forum for the publication of educational material. No almanacs at all were published in Icelandic in this period.

Generally speaking, there are various similarities in the emphases in the subject matter of educational works in all three countries when they are taken as a whole. The wave of interest in publications on farming which arose in Denmark around 1780 was very evident in both Iceland and Norway. A part of the educational material published in all three countries was distributed free of charge.

During the period under review reading societies and libraries had an important role in spreading educational works to the common people in Denmark and Norway, unlike in Iceland. There were important differences in that a number of schools for children functioned in Denmark and Norway in the period. Such schools were almost non-existent in Iceland, which of course affected the relative importance of educational works. Also, lectures aimed at educating the general public were given in Denmark and Norway. This was something unheard of in Iceland. Furthermore, neither in Denmark nor Norway did one man have such a dominating role in the publication of educational works as Magnús Stephensen had in Iceland.

There are clear similarities in the importance of the heritage of the publication of educational works in the period under review in all three countries. The insistence on popular education (in Danish: *Folkeoplysning*) was prominent in all of them. There is a distinct difference in that important societies in the field of popular education were founded both in Denmark and Norway in the decades immediately following the period under review. Among them were Selskabet for Trykkefrihedens Rette Brug (the Society for the Correct Use of the Freedom of Printing) in Denmark (1835), and Selskabet til Folkeoplysningens Fremme (the Society for the Furtherance of Popular Enlightenment) in Norway (1851). In Iceland, on the other hand, publication in this field was not particularly active in these decades, but it intensified as the century progressed.

A comparison of the kind made above throws light on the importance of the publication of educational works in the Age of Enlightenment in the three countries. It also throws light on the special nature of the Enlightenment in countries where the influence of *die Aufklärung* was strong.

Conclusions

The publication of educational works for the people of Iceland and their reception c. 1770–1830 is, seen in a wider context, a remarkable example of how the influence of the Enlightenment transformed the publication of secular books among a small nation. At the same time a study of the subject shows how big a role book publishing played among a nation in a multi-national absolute monarchy where this was one of the fields where the native champions of the movement had much scope for initiative.

The main conclusions of individual aspects of the investigation are as follows: The period under review constitutes a turning point in the history of the publication of educational works for the people of Iceland. Such material of the secular kind was now for the first time printed on a considerable scale. This publishing activity was largely carried out by a few societies. The role of one man, Magnús Stephensen, partly through his leadership of one of these societies, was outstanding in this field. The ideology of the Enlightenment very much determined this publishing activity. The subject matter of the educational works was quite varied, with emphasis, *inter alia*, on farming, the natural sciences, law, pedagogy, and matters relating to public health. The extent of the publishing activities was, of course, determined by the small size of the Icelandic nation. The reception of the educational works was somewhat mixed. It is difficult to assess their impact, but it definitely was considerable. Undoubtedly there was some influence as regards practical matters such as horticulture. It is not easy to estimate to what extent the champions of the Enlightenment succeeded in their conscious efforts to make the Icelanders more »enlightened« through the publication of educational works, but without doubt there was some effect in this field. The Icelanders' acquisition of general knowledge of various matters through educational works was significant. Much of what happened in this sphere was determined by the close connection of Iceland with Denmark. Apart from differences relating to the special nature of Icelandic society, there were various parallels with publishing activities of this kind in Denmark and Norway and to a certain extent in various other European countries. Societies played an important role in the publication of educational works in all three countries and the emphases as regards subject matter were in some ways similar in all of them. However, the publication activity was more varied in Denmark and Norway and it is important regarding the spread of these works that reading societies and libraries intended for the common people were unknown in Iceland, unlike in the other two countries. The publication of educational works for the people of Iceland in this period served as a model for many decades to come, not least in the last few decades of the nineteenth century.

1. In the period there was also extensive publication of works of religious instruction, such as catechisms. Most of these were translated or adapted from Danish. Thus a catechism by Nicolai Balle was translated in 1796 and was in use for many decades.
2. Among books which deal with recent research on the Enlightenment the following may be mentioned: Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment*, 2nd ed., Studies in European history, Basingstoke 2001; Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 2nd ed., New approaches to European history 7, Cambridge 2005. A valuable collection of articles on the Enlightenment in individual countries is Roy Porter & Mikulaš Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in national context*, Cambridge 1981.
3. The influence of the movement in various individual fields is dealt with in Ingi Sigurðsson (ed.), *Upplýsingin á Íslandi. Tíu ritgerðir*, Reykjavík 1990.
4. Ingi Sigurðsson, *Hugmyndabeimur Magnúsar Stephensens*, Reykjavík 1996, p. 48.
5. Controversy concerning the Icelandic Enlightenment is dealt with in Ingi Sigurðsson, »The champions and opponents of the Icelandic Enlightenment«, in *Transactions of the Eighth International Congress on the Enlightenment. Bristol 21–27 July 1991*, I, Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century 303, Oxford 1992, pp. 629–632.
6. The history of Iceland period under review is, inter alia, dealt with in the following survey works: Lýður Björnsson, Guðbjörn Sigurmundsson & Þóra Kristjánsdóttir, *Saga Íslands*, 8, Reykjavík 1996; Þorkell Jóhannesson, *Saga Íslendinga*, 7: Tímabilið 1770–1830. Upplýsingaröld, Reykjavík 1950. For an overview on the Icelandic Enlightenment in the period under review, see Ingi Sigurðsson, »Upplýsingin og áhrif hennar á Íslandi«, in *idem* (ed.), *Upplýsingin á Íslandi. Tíu ritgerðir*, Reykjavík 1990, pp. 9–42.
7. Some variants of the name of the society occur in its publications.
8. Just as is the case with the Society of the Learned Arts, some variants of the name of the society occur in its publications.
9. Various aspects of the Icelanders' book publishing in the period under review are dealt with in the following works: Loftur Guttormsson, »Bókmenning á upplýsingaröld. Upplýsing í stríði við alþýðumenningu.« *Gefið og þegið. Afmælisrit til heiðurs Brodda Jóhannessyni sjötugum*, Reykjavík 1985, pp. 247–289; Jón Helgason, *Hrappseyjarprentsmiðja 1773-1794*, Safn Fræðafélagsins um Ísland og Íslendinga 6, Copenhagen 1928; Böðvar Kvaran, *Audlegð Íslendinga. Brot úr sögu íslenzkrar bókaútgáfu og prentunar frá öndverðu fram á þessa öld*, Reykjavík 1995; Helgi Magnússon, »Fræðafélög og bókaútgáfa«, in Ingi Sigurðsson (ed.), *Upplýsingin á Íslandi. Tíu ritgerðir*, Reykjavík 1990, pp. 183–215; Ólafur Pálmason, *Magnús Stephensen og bókmenntastarfsemi hans*, mag.art. thesis in Icelandic studies at the University of Iceland 1963.
10. Grímur M. Helgason & Ögmundur Helgason, *Handritasafn Landsbókasafns*, additional volume 4, Reykjavík 1996, pp. 311–350; Páll Eggert Ólason, *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins*, 3:2, Reykjavík 1935–1937, pp. 352–474.
11. On the use of the term *upplýsing*, see Ingi Sigurðsson, *Erlendir straumar og íslensk viðborf. Áhrif fjölbjódlegra hugmyndastefna á Íslendinga 1830–1918*, Reykjavík 2006, pp. 33–38; Ingi Sigurðsson 1990, pp. 30–35.
12. The ideology of Magnús Stephensen in general is dealt with in Ingi Sigurðsson 1996.
13. Ólafur Ólafsson (Olavius), *Íslensk Urtagarðs Bok. Söfnud og samantekn Bændum og Alþýðu aa Íslandi til reyngslu*

og nota, Copenhagen 1770, p. [xii].

14. *Ens Íslenska Lærdoms-Lista Félags Skraa, eptir Samkomulagi sett oc i Lioos leidd í Kaupmannabefn*, [Copenhagen] 1780, pp. 2–6.

15. A letter from Magnús Stephensen to Hannes Finnsson, 26 July 1794, Lbs. 29, fol., The National and University Library of Iceland.

16. *Samþykktir hins Íslenska Landsuppræðingar-Félags*, Leirárgarðar 1796, p. 3.

17. Magnús Stephensen, »Til Lesaranna», in *idem* (ed.), *Skémtileg Vína-Gledi í Fróðlegum Samræðum og Liódmælum leidd í liós*, Leirárgarðar 1797, p. v.

18. Magnús Stephensen, *Commentatio de legibus quæ jus Islandicum bodiernum efficiant, deque emanationibus nonnullis, quas hæ leges desiderare videantur [...]*, Copenhagen 1819, p. v. – The original text:

Intentior librorum & lectionis amor, necnon aliquid curæ his tributum, ardens studium popularem cognitionem in Islandia promovendi, iniquam eorum sortem pro virili sublevandi, abusus & arbitraria quævis abrogandi, hoc, inquam, studium maturam ætatem mihi maxime ex parte occupavit, & porro occupabit, quamdiu per valetudinem & sortem licebit. Hic finis est complurium quæ elaboravi scriptorum [...]

19. Þorgeir Guðmundsson & Baldvín Einarsson, [Preface], in *Armann á Alþingi* I, 1829, pp. iii–iv.

20. Hannes Finnsson, »Til Lesenda og Heyrenda Bókarinnar», in *idem* (ed.), *Qvöld-vokurnar 1794*, I, Leirárgarðar 1796, p. xxi.

21. A report by Magnús Stephensen to the Danish government, »Kulturens og Skolevæsenets Tilstand i Island mod det nittende Aarhundredes Komme», DK G.5 1799–1810: Akter ang. Forhandlingler om Foranstaltninger til Islands Bedste, the National Archives of Denmark, p. 21.

22. See also, e.g. Magnús Stephensen, »T[il] L[esaranna]», in Johann Georg August Galletti, *Kénnslu-Bók í Sagna-Fræðinni fyrir Vidvæniga*, translated by Jón Espólín, Leirárgarðar 1804, p. [viii]; Oddur Hjaltalín, *Íslensk grasfræði*, Copenhagen 1830, p. 8.

23. Gunnlaugur Snorrason, »Formaale Utleggjarans», in Gottfried Schultze, *Ny-Yferskodud Heims-Kringla [...]*, translated by Gunnlaugur Snorrason, Hrappsey 1779, p. [vi].

24. Deild Hins íslenska Bókmentafélags í Kaupmannahöfn, »Formáli», in Gunnlaugur Oddsson *et al.*, *Almenn Landaskipunarfræði*, I, Copenhagen 1821, p. iii.

25. Magnús Stephensen, *Utvaldar Smá-Sögur, Almenníngi til Fróðleiks og Skémtunar*, I, Viðey 1822, pp. [iii–iv].

26. Bjarni Arngrímsson, *Handbægt Gardyrkju Fræði-Over, ætlad midur æfðum Kaal-Bændum til Glöggvunar*, Beitistaðir 1816, p. vi.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. vi–vii.

28. See particularly the following works: Tómas Sæmundsson, *Island fra den intellectuelle Side betragtet*, Copenhagen 1832, esp. pp. 10–11, and Stefán Þórarinnsson, »Hugleidningar um Híalpar-Medöl til ad útbreidda Bóklesrar-lyst a Íslandi [...], in *Rit þess Konúngliga Íslenska Lærdoms-lista Félags* 13, 1794, p. 237.

29. See, inter alia, on literacy in this period Loftur Guttormsson, »Læsi», in Frosti F. Jóhannsson (ed.), *Íslensk þjóðmenning*, 6: Munnenntir og bókmening, Reykjavík 1989, esp. pp. 133–137.

30. Education in general in the period under review is, inter alia, dealt with in Loftur Guttormsson, »Fræðslumál», in Ingi Sigurðsson (ed.), *Upplýsingin á Íslandi. Tíu ritgerðir*, Reykjavík 1990, pp. 149–182.

31. Magnús Stephensen, »Pro Memoria, til allra Myrkra-manna og Lióss-hatara á Íslandi», in *idem* (ed.), *Skémtileg Vina-Gledi í Fróðlegum Samræðum og Liódmælum leidd í liós*, Leirárgarðar 1797, p. [327].
32. Magnús Stephensen, »Auglýsing», *Klaustur-Pósturinn* 4, 1821, p. 2.
33. Loftur Guttormsson 1985, p. 266.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
35. Ólafur Pálmason, »Beitistaðaprent», in *Helgakver. Rit þetta er tileinkað Helga Tryggvasyni bókbindara á áttíuálfmáli hans 1. marz 1976*, Reykjavík 1976, p. 75.
36. Various figures concerning the number of copies of individual books printed in the period under review are given in the following works: Loftur Guttormsson 1985, pp. 266–270; Helgi Magnússon 1990, pp. 195, 205, 209.
37. »Fjöltnir», in *Fjöltnir* I, 1835, p. 6.
38. Jón Espólín, *Íslands Árbækir í sögu-formi*, II, Copenhagen 1854, p. 76.
39. Þorkell Bjarnason, »Fyrir 40 árum», *Tímarit Hins íslenska bókmenntafjells* 13, 1892, p. 225; Þorkell Bjarnason, »Fyrir 40 árum», *Tímarit Hins íslenska bókmenntafjells* 16, 1895, p. 217; Ólafur Sigurðsson, »Fyrir 40 árum», *Tímarit Hins íslenska bókmenntafjells* 15, 1894, p. 230.
40. Þórarinn Böðvarsson, *Lestrarbók banda alþýðu á Íslandi*, Copenhagen 1874, p. 372.
41. Jón Jónsson [Aðils], *Dagrenning. Fimm alþýðuerindi*, Reykjavík 1910, p. 83.
42. *Æfisaga Guðmundar Hjaltasonar skráð af honum sjálfum [...]*, Reykjavík 1923, pp. 16–17.
43. Magnús Stephensen, *Brjef til Finns Magnússonar*, Safn Fræðafjellsins um Ísland og Íslendinga 4, ed. by Bogi Th. Melsteð, Copenhagen 1924, p. 22.
44. Árni Helgason, *Biskupinn í Görðum. Sendibréf 1810–1853*, ed. by Finnur Sigmundsson, Íslensk sendibréf 2, Reykjavík 1959, p. 70.
45. Quoted in Ólafur Pálmason 1963, p. 194.
46. »Fjöltnir», *Fjöltnir* I, 1835, p. 6.
47. Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal, [Preface], *Gefn* I, 1870, p. 2.
48. Ólafur Sigurðsson 1894, p. 230.
49. Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, *Lýsing Íslands*, 4: Landbúnaður á Íslandi. Sögulegt yfirlit, part 2, Copenhagen 1922, p. 109.
50. The following examples of estimates of the prevalence or otherwise of such beliefs can be taken from the works of men who lived in the nineteenth century: Þorkell Bjarnason 1892, pp. 227–236; Jón Espólín 1854, pp. III–II4; Ólafur Sigurðsson 1894, pp. 231–235; Magnús Stephensen, *Eptirmáli Atjándu Aldar [...]*, Leirárgarðar 1806, pp. 798–799; Kristleifur Þorsteinsson, *Úr byggðum Borgarfjarðar*, ed. by Þórður Kristleifsson, I, Reykjavík 1944, pp. 27–29.
51. The long-term influence of the Enlightenment in Denmark, Norway and Sweden is, inter alia, dealt with in the following works: Øystein Sørensen & Bo Stråth, »Introduction. The cultural construction of Norden», pp. I–24, and Nina Witozek, »Fugitives from Utopia. The Scandinavian Enlightenment reconsidered», both in Øystein Sørensen & Bo Stråth (eds.), *The cultural construction of Norden*, Oslo 1997, pp. 72–90. The long-term influence of the movement in Norway specifically is dealt with in Øystein Sørensen,

Norsk idéhistorie, 3: Kampen om Norges sjel 1770–1905, Oslo 2001, esp. pp. 18–21.

52. The influence of the Enlightenment in Iceland in the period 1830–1918 is dealt with in Ingi Sigurðsson 2006, esp. pp. 25–70.

53. See Ingi Sigurðsson 1996, pp. 122–124.

54. Trends in book publishing in the period 1830–1930 are dealt with in Loftur Guttormsson, »Framleiðsla og dreifing ritaðs máls«, in Ingi Sigurðsson & Loftur Guttormsson (eds.), *Alþýðumenning á Íslandi 1830–1930. Ritað mál, menntun og félagsbreyfingar*, Sagnfræðirannsóknir 18, Reykjavík 2003, pp. 37–65.

55. Reading societies for the common people are, inter alia, dealt with by Jón Jónsson, »Lestrarfélög fyrir almennig«, in Ingi Sigurðsson & Loftur Guttormsson (eds.), *Alþýðumenning á Íslandi 1830–1930. Ritað mál, menntun og félagsbreyfingar*, Sagnfræðirannsóknir 18, Reykjavík 2003, pp. 171–193.

56. Tómas Sæmundsson 1832, p. 15; Stefán Þórarinnsson 1793, p. 238.

57. Continuity in the publication of educational works in Iceland in the period traditionally labelled the Age of Enlightenment and in the lifetime of succeeding generations is dealt with in Ingi Sigurðsson, »Arfleifð upplýsingarinnar og útgáfa fræðslurita á íslenzku«, *Skírnir* 168, 1994, pp. 135–160. The spread and reception of such works in the period 1830–1930 is dealt with in Ingi Sigurðsson, »Útbreiðsla og viðtökur alþýðlegra fræðslurita«, in Ingi Sigurðsson & Loftur Guttormsson (eds.), *Alþýðumenning á Íslandi 1830–1930. Ritað mál, menntun og félagsbreyfingar*, Sagnfræðirannsóknir 18, Reykjavík 2003, pp. 115–147.

58. Within the large body of literature on the reception of books among the common people that has appeared in the last few decades, the reception of popular educational works is not the most prominent field. While there exist influential studies, such as Carlo Ginzburg's *Il formaggio e i vermi*, on how reading affected the world of ideas of certain individuals in the past, there are not many specified studies on the reception of popular educational works among large groups of people. See, inter alia, on the publication of educational works and their reception in Europe the following works: Martin Lyons, »New readers in the nineteenth century: women, children, workers«, in Guglielmo Cavallo & Roger Chartier (eds.), *A history of reading in the west*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Cambridge 1999, pp. 313–344 (the way in which autodidacts acquired knowledge through reading is dealt with on pp. 337–342); Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek. Geschichte einer literarischen Institution (1756–1914) [...]*, Beiträge zum Buch- und Bibliothekswesen 29, Wiesbaden 1990; S. H. Steinberg, *Five hundred years of printing*, new edition, revised by John Trevitt, London 1996, esp. pp. 126–128; Reinhard Wittmann, »Was there a reading revolution at the end of the eighteenth century?«, in Guglielmo Cavallo & Roger Chartier (eds.), *A history of reading in the west*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Cambridge 1999, pp. 284–312.

59. The history of the society in the period under review is dealt with in H. Hertel, *Det Kgl. danske Landbusholdningsselskabs Historie*, I: Selskabets historie i tiden fra 1769–1868, Copenhagen 1920.

60. Bjarni Arngrímsson, *Um Gardyrkjunnar Naudsyn og Nytssemi fyrri Ísland*, Copenhagen 1820, pp. iii–viii.

61. The publication of educational works in Denmark and their reception in the period is, inter alia, dealt with in the following works: Henrik Horstbøll, *Menigmands medie. Det folkelige bogtryk i Danmark 1500–1840. En kulturhistorisk undersøgelse*, Copenhagen 1999; Helge Nielsen, *Folkebibliotekernes forgængere. Oplysning, almue- og borgerbiblioteker fra 1770erne til 1834*, Copenhagen 1960.

62. The publication of educational works and their reception in Norway in the period under review is, inter alia, dealt with in the following works: Rolf N. Nettum, »Opplysningstiden», in *idem et al.*, *Folkelig kulturarbeid. Det frivillige folkeopplysningsarbeidet i Norge*, Oslo 1958, pp. 1–101; Jostein Fet, *Lesande bønder. Litterær kultur i norske allmugesamfunn før 1840*, Oslo 1995; Jostein Fet, *Skrivande bønder. Skrifkultur på Nord-Vestlandet 1600–1850*, Oslo 2003.