

Handwritten books in the 19th Century Iceland

David Olafsson*

I. *Introduction – 19th-century Iceland.*

In the 19th century, Iceland was a large but sparsely populated region in the Danish kingdom. According to a census made in the year 1801 the population was just shy of 50,000, as the nation was just recovering after the great eruption of Skaftareldar in 1783-84 and the famine that followed.¹ Iceland was almost exclusively rural: there were no cities or towns, and Copenhagen served as the political and cultural capital of the country. A few seamen lived in small and unstable fishing villages, but these villages were little more than few shacks and did not have the function of an urban area.

From the early ages there had been two schools in the country, one located at each bishopric – in Skalholt in southern Iceland and Holar in the north – and their role was to educate priests. Around 1800 they were consolidated and transferred to Reykjavik, which later became the cultural and political center of the country.² Children were educated in their homes under the surveillance of priests, but the first elementary schools were not founded until the latter part of 19th century. Before the year 1907 it was an exception if children enjoyed constant teaching with a professional teacher.³

A large majority of the Icelandic people were farmers, peasants or servants, and the farmers only practiced fishing as secondary occupation. Approximately 90% of farmers were tenants, but the number of farms had remained virtually unchanged for centuries.⁴ When the population grew, more and more people had to settle for the status of farm laborer for their whole life, but in the last quarter of the 19th century more and more of them moved to the coast, and the small fishing villages grew into towns.

* David Olafsson is a doctoral student at the University of Reykjavik. davidol@akademia.is

¹ Gunnarsson 1987: 20.

² Thorsteinsson og Jonsson 1991: 255.

³ Thorsteinsson og Jonsson 1991: 314 and Magnusson 1997: 76–79.

In the year 1870 Icelanders numbered approximately 70,000. Reykjavik had a population of around 2000, and few other towns had more than 500 inhabitants.⁵ It was not until the first decades of the 20th century that Iceland began to develop into a modern urban society with all its institutions. Until that time it was predominantly a rural peasant society where the farm and the family were the basic units. The farmer and his wife, their children, other relatives and servants formed a unit that functioned as school, workplace, and social arena: a forum for entertainment, production and consumption.

The most important local institutions of the society were the ecclesiastical parish and the district. The priest's obligation was to spread the word of God, maintain moral standards and Christian behavior. Moreover, the priest was to see that the children received a basic education. The fundamental role of the district council was to maintain the fragile order based on connection between family and household. Access to a farmstead was an absolute necessity for forming a household, and those who did not have land had to hire themselves out as casual laborers.⁶

In this poor rural society were few cultural institutions other than the churches, and education and literature were not a priority among farmers, neither for them nor for their children. Hard physical work was what was required, and the whole family had to consolidate its effort just to get by. But the cultural history of late modern Iceland gives mixed signals when it comes to literary work. Among farmers and servants were men who dedicated their lives to books and literature, in spite of the dominant negative attitude to such useless activity. There was also a demand for their work, and their knowledge and skill made them an important part of the cultural landscape. They were poets, historians, storytellers and teachers, and they served both as "printing press" and libraries.

For more than 300 years, from the 16th to middle of the 19th century, there was only one printing press in Iceland. This printing press was, for all intents and purposes, under the sole control of the church. Jon Arason, the last Catholic bishop of Holar, established the first printing press in Iceland around 1530. In the memoirs of Gisli Konradsson (1787–1877), one of Iceland's best-known lay

⁴ Gunnlaugsson 1988: 32.

⁵ Juliusson, Isberg and Kjartansson 1992: 110–111.

⁶ Gunnlaugsson 1988: 32–33.

scholars in the 19th century, Jon Gudnason discusses people's access to secular writings through the centuries. He says, among other things:

Though printing technology arrived in Iceland in the early 16th century, book-making developed slowly, to say the least, until the close of the 19th century. For the common citizen, the bulk of ancient Icelandic writings were a buried treasure; and even educated men did not have free access to them because most works were extant only in manuscript form. The only way to own them was the same as it had been for centuries: to have them copied. Diligent and discriminating writers were thus the "publishers" of their era, though their output was miniscule compared to the huge volume of books that printing made available.⁷

In this excerpt Jon makes clear that he, like so many others, has noticed the unique status of the manuscript culture that flourished in Iceland long after the coming of the printing technology of Gutenberg. On the other hand, he seems to underestimate both how common this form of publishing was and how widely literary and historical knowledge were distributed by this means, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Printed books in 19th century Iceland were relatively rare, expensive and hard to come by. At the same time more and more common people were learning to read and write, and the 19th century became the age of handwritten books. The manuscript department of the National Library in Iceland holds almost 15,000 manuscript-numbers, a palpable sign of the importance of handwritten books in a society lacking formal cultural institutions and a true book market. My argument is that handwritten books played a great role in the mental life of 19th century rural Icelanders at a time when printed secular books were rare and were published under the monopolistic control of the church or a cultural elite.

The supply of printed books increased in the last quarter of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, and people had freer access to them. The growth of coastal towns created an economic basis for bookstores and printing factories, and people had more money to spend on luxuries such as books. It can be argued that the first quarter of the 20th century was a golden age of reading

⁷ Gudnason 1966: 100–101.

societies who supplied homes with diverse reading material, and printed books were more widely distributed than ever before. These books can be divided into six categories: Traditional literature (Sagas, rhymes, folktales, etc.), contemporary literature, translations, educational books, children's books, and periodicals.

II. *Education and Literary Culture in the 19th Century.*

For us to be able to understand the nature and meaning of those handwritten books, it is necessary to examine the status of education in the Icelandic peasant society of the 18th and 19th centuries. It is generally believed that almost all Icelanders in the 18th century were able to read, despite the absence of a public school system. The credit for this is mostly due the Lutheran church and the efficient system of church, state and household in the form of home education. The home education was firmly fixed with acts from 1790 on the education of children and until 1880, this education only consisted of the ability to read and understand the word of God.⁸

Pietism was a variation of Lutheran dogma that shaped the debate on education from the mid-18th century. Characteristic of pietist ideas was a certain fatherly dominance of spiritual and worldly authorities, whether they take the form of king, priest or father; therefore the whole general public were receivers of the grace of those of higher rank. This is clearly evident in the attitude towards education, where the citizenry were to be used in the reception of Christianity, but other aspects were ignored.

The educational vision of the Enlightenment era, which dated from the latter part of the 18th century through the first decades of the 19th, had a practical and worldly purpose. The farmer must be educated so that he could truly be the leader of his people, and priests were to be encouraged to study science so that they could serve as role models for the people. This education would result in the unification of social classes and the strengthening of the community's infrastructure. Manifestations of this were, among other things, the publishing of secular educational material by cultural societies in the late 18th century. The common people were still receivers but, as Icelandic historian Loftur Guttormsson has pointed out, one of the things that separated the Enlightenment

⁸ Guttormsson 1990a: 166-168.

from pietism was the Enlightenment's positive attitude towards writing and mathematics. The pietists did not consider such skills as a symbol of God-fearing Christianity.⁹

While it is undisputed that literacy rates increased in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the question remains whether we can give all the credit to the church and the state. The success of the campaign, according to Loftur Guttormsson, rested on the wide distribution of religious publications along with a steady social pressure from the local priest and parents. Guttormsson also points out that the Enlightenment made an enormous difference in terms of the availability of secular literature and, through its ideology, laid a solid foundation for universal literacy.¹⁰

We can accept this argument up to a point; a formal system made every parish responsible for the mental and spiritual development of its members. The priests had a supervisory role, the parents and guardians carried out the actual teaching, and children were not accepted into the secular or the spiritual society via confirmation without mastering certain compulsory skills. On the surface, the system looks both effective and functional, but this alone can not explain the high level of literacy in Iceland.

The participation of the common people in the development of education and schools can roughly be divided into two opposite viewpoints without clear boundaries. On the one hand, there is the conflict of interests between the common people's way of living and the ideas of authorities on education; on the other hand, there is the people's longing for education. Historian Gudmundur Halfdanarson has described how child labor was a substitute for the school system in the peasant society. Parents had the obligation to instill in their children the virtues of sobriety and work; thus child labor paralleled elementary school education and ended with confirmation instead of final examinations.¹¹ Loftur Guttormsson describes this struggle between work and education in the 18th century by saying that there was no need for command from authorities to make children work indoors and outdoors; it was simply one of life's necessities. Formal education was different: it had no direct relation to the reality of people's daily lives, says Guttormsson.¹²

⁹ Guttormsson 1990a: 174.

¹⁰ Guttormsson 1990b: 133–137.

¹¹ Halfdanarson 1986: 139.

¹² Guttormsson 1983: 163.

A great deal of work was necessary, and men, women and children alike had to unite in order to ensure that the family earned a living. Books and literature were not considered of much worth among the general public, whose lives often depended on that everyone's united effort to feed the family. The lack of ink and paper was always an issue, but the greatest resistance to formal education came from parents and custodians of children. It was widely held that education affected children's work and filled people with unrealistic expectations towards the quality of life. Innumerable reports exist of children who did not have the opportunity to study the subjects that their talents and desire demanded.

But not all common people were against literature, even though they often had to resort to manual labor. It was true that reading books did not put food on the table, but many saw that reading and writing could satisfy other kinds of hunger. People read, wrote and retold stories and recited poetry, and they put great stock in disseminating all sorts of knowledge in spite of limited means, as well as the lack of schools, printed material and other conditions deemed necessary for the development of culture.

According to Icelandic historian Sigurdur Magnusson, one key to understanding why Icelanders became so literate during the 19th century lies in the fundamental work process in the country and the nature of this process. During the winter, household tasks were divided into two parts: First, the livestock needed to be fed and milked, a task that usually took between two to four hours each day. The rest of the day was used to work wool. Men, women and children worked on the wool throughout a long workday, and all were urged to be as productive as possible. To entertain the people and to keep them awake, one of the family members usually read aloud.¹³

It was customary for grown-ups to teach the children while working hard at the same time. In this way family members could listen to the children read, correct them, and give them directions when necessary. Moreover, lessons became a form of adult entertainment and therefore even helped to increase productivity as well. If it had not been possible to combine work with education, all attempts to improve education would have been in vain, and children would not have had the opportunity to learn to read. But this does not fully explain the eagerness of most children to learn to read and write.

¹³ Magnusson 1995: 302.

Despite all this, only few knew how to write by the end of the Enlightenment-era (around 1830), and the acts from 1880 stipulated for the first time that children should learn to write as well as read. Scholars have estimated that up to 1/4 – 1/3 of adults had acquired the skill of writing by the mid 19th century.¹⁴ Until 1880 the urge to learn to write came from within the individual and, unlike reading skills, did not result from legislation or decree from the authorities, according to Guttormsson.¹⁵ Writing was not a standard skill for the public during the 19th century, though it spread slowly but steadily as the years went by. The ability to read and write opened many new doors to the common peasant, the laborer and the fisherman. It made it possible to keep an account of the farming and the household, to correspond with family or friends, and to enjoy literature, history and genealogy. We have many examples of common people who endured a great deal in order to acquire this skill, and they played an important role in the cultural life in their district by distributing and copying manuscripts, lending books, etc.

If we look back for a while, we see an interesting and conflicting picture emerging. On the one hand, we notice that Icelandic popular culture managed to produce people who often had a deep-rooted interest in gaining knowledge and education. On the other hand, we see an extremely primitive educational system with minimal infrastructure that still managed to form a successful framework around the education that was offered. A large part of the population was left with little or no formal education, and few youngsters over the age of fourteen had any opportunity for further education until new school laws were passed in the 1930's. This is even more astonishing since ownership of secular books was indeed quite limited, especially in the first three-quarters of the 19th century.

III. *The Manuscript-Culture in the 19th Century*

When people peruse the Manuscript Department of the National Library, they soon become convinced that only a small part of the Icelandic writing culture in former centuries was in printed form. The immense number of manuscripts shows how people used their knowledge to write for

¹⁴ Guttormsson 1990b: 117–144.

¹⁵ Guttormsson 1990b: 137.

communication and creation, collection and distribution. The archive is full of handwritten books, production and reproduction of literary and scholarly material such as traditional poetry and prose, *rimur*, sagas and folktales, history and genealogy. Manuscripts were written, rewritten and copied, and sometimes printed books were copied in the same manner and distributed as handwritten books.¹⁶

As was mentioned before, while the family worked, someone in the household read aloud. Almost without exception families read aloud during winter evening readings. Children then took the book and memorized all the poems. In many instances family members copied the poems, allowing the children to practice their writing and preserve the poems at the same time. In fact, there was another twist to the story, a darker one, which had to do with children's emotional outlook in the peasant society. Sigurdur Magnusson has argued that children often had difficulty coping with reality in this poor agrarian society. They were burdened with a heavy workload and a great deal of responsibility, often carrying out their duties far away from the farms in isolation from the rest of the family.¹⁷ Moreover, they also had to face frequent and untimely deaths of relatives and friends. To be able to deal with all such hardships they turned to literature, especially the Icelandic Sagas, where they found some relief and moral guidance. This interplay between work, death and education is responsible, according to Magnusson, for the fact that people in 19th-century Iceland were universally literate.¹⁸

He has also argued that secular literature was the determining factor when it came to the question of whether children became interested in learning to read. The high literacy rate has in fact been a puzzle because of the lack of available secular reading material for the greater part of the 19th century. In general, people were not selective about their reading material but read whatever was available. Most families in the latter part of the 19th century owned some secular books or had access to books, including Icelandic and Scandinavian sagas, some magazines, newspapers and poems, as well as translated novels. Low income levels limited individual access to books, however. Reading societies open to the public were established throughout the country during the last quarter of the 19th century. Their function was to purchase books and distribute them among their members.

¹⁶ Another important part of these manuscripts are the personal writings of thousands of people, letters, diaries and autobiographies. Among these documents are little over 200 diaries from 18th, 19th and 20th century written by preasts, officials, farmers and servants. Olafsson (1997), (1998) and (2001).

¹⁷ Magnusson 1995: 305.

¹⁸ Magnusson 1995: 302–314 and 1997b: 273–278.

Historians have focused almost exclusively on formal channels like the distribution of printed books. There can be no doubt, however, that access to written secular material must have been much greater than the printed cultural legacy from the period indicates. Despite the fact that printing started with great vigor in the second half of the 19th century, the distribution of printed material was limited and in no way met the demands of the market in rural Iceland. Published editions were small, and the means of acquisition were minimal; books definitely did not top the list of priorities. It is quite obvious, then, that another explanation is needed.

Historian Loftur Guttormsson is of the opinion that writing skills spread out "from below", as official institutions did not pay attention to such education until the late 19th century. Writing sprouted straight out of the grassroot itself, as a response to public needs, but such self-generated interest, especially among the younger population, often met resistance on the part of adults and the ruling class.¹⁹ This development seems to have taken place around the middle of the 19th century, during the period between 1830 and 1880.

Thousands of manuscripts, preserved in the Icelandic National and University Library and in local libraries throughout the country, clearly show that many let neither worldly nor spiritual adversity hinder their pursuit of literary activity. Furthermore, there thrived a prosperous manuscript culture, including both writing and copying (or reproduction). This activity, which bore a resemblance to medieval practice, lasted well into the 20th century.

To give an example of the importance of those who produced handwritten books, we can look at two Icelandic lay scholars, Sighvatur Grimsson (b. 1840) and Halldor Jonsson (b. 1871). They were both servants and, later, tenant farmers in the western part of Iceland, but every spare moment of their lives was dedicated to books and scholarly work. Sighvatur Grimsson was 23 years old when he began to keep a diary, and the reader can instantly see that as a young man he was obsessed with books and literary work, even though he had to earn his living as a servant and a fisherman. We can also see how he supplied his friends and neighbours with all kinds of writing services and had contact with men who had the same interests.²⁰

¹⁹ Guttormsson 1990b: 37.

²⁰ Lbs 2374 4to – Diaries of Sighvatur Grimsson 1863–1864.

In his diary entry of January 25, 1863, Sighvatur writes, "In return for my writing *Fostbraedrasaga*, Jakop gave me a pair of trousers, a vest, some socks, and a rag of a shirt, all of it much mended and virtually useless."²¹ The diaries make numerous references to his writing for others. Sighvatur functioned as a lending library as well, if one can believe literally his entry of February 11, which states, "Johann from Fjordur came; I lent him stories that I had written myself, Krokrefur's *rimur*, *Gislasaga*, six historical volumes, a *History of Civilization*, and *Hellismannasaga*." Sighvatur's services as a scribe were diverse, as may be seen in his diaries. In a few days' time he composed a letter in verse for one Axel to send to Madam Johanna, the widow of Olafur Sivertsen, wrote a eulogistic poem by Gudmundur Jonsson from Braedrapartur, and copied a commentary to accompany the New Testament. Sighvatur bent all his efforts toward acquiring books, and he spent all his spare time quenching this thirst.

Sighvatur Grimsson is one of the best-known and most productive lay scholars in the 19th century. His collection, a very important part of the manuscript department of the National Library, consists of around 180 volumes, including a 22-volume autobiographical dictionary of Icelandic priests, 6 volumes of genealogy, 8 poetry anthologies, many collective books of rhymes, chivalric romances, sagas, etc. Also among his works are a vast number of personal sources concerning his own life, diaries from 1863-1930, some 1700 letters written to him, and a short autobiography written in 1892.²² Among the handwritten books in the archives of the National Library one can find *Eyrbyggja* (The Saga of the People of Eyri), written for the Rev. Hjalmar Jonsson from Ytri Husum, 1879 and *Kormaks saga*, written in 1881 by Sighvatur Grimsson for goldsmith Jens Kristjan Arngrimsson. from Isafjordur. Among Sighvatur's manuscripts are his collection of Icelandic sagas from various periods, the oldest dating back to the period 1861–1867. The title page of the book provides a fairly good indication of when it was written and under what circumstances. It says: "Icelandic sagas. Based on the best manuscripts, which are not widely available, from ancient times. Written in a cold fishing camp while all were ashore but finished on the island of Flatey in Breidafjordur in 1867, by Sighvatur Grimsson of Borgarfjordur, October 1, 1861 – December 13, 1867."²³ The book contains a total of some 30 chapters or stories.

²¹ Lbs 2374 4to – Diaries of Sighvatur Grimsson: January 25, 1863.

²² Sigmundsson 1997: 136–137.

²³ Lbs 2328 4to – Collection of Icelandic Sagas copied by Sighvatur Grimsson 1861–1867.

His literary works can roughly be divided into 6 categories:

- Copying manuscripts and printed books. Selling, exchanging or giving away
- Writing letters and other small projects
- Composing poetry for special occasions, birthdays, funerals, etc.
- Reading sagas and rhymes in winter evenings, while people were working.
- Lending books and manuscripts.
- His own studies, composing, copying, collecting and studying literature, history, genealogy, etc.

In the year 1892, when Halldor Jonsson was twenty-one years old, he owned 52 books.²⁴ Among them were his manuscripts, both personal diaries and poetry, genealogy and all kind of anthologies. He also owned a few older manuscripts that he had bought or obtained in some other way, as well as some printed books from the 18th century. Approximately 1/3 of his books were religious. His collection grew rapidly, and he owned 99 books in the beginning of the year 1896, including 34 manuscripts of a personal, historical and literary nature. Many of Halldor's manuscripts are now preserved in the National Library: 15 volumes of poetry and 5 anthologies, along with letters and a short autobiography and his diaries dating from 1890 until the time of his death in 1912.²⁵

Halldor kept records about his writing and editorial work, including what he was paid for each project, in volumes of memoranda during the years from 1889-1895. In 1889 he records five projects, noting that he was paid for two of them: the *rimur* of Indridi Illbreidi (3 volumes) and a collection of poetry. In 1890 he lists 17 works, most of which he undertook for himself. He received payment for four of them. In addition, he made 14 almanacs that year, though it is likely that he gave them away rather than selling them. During the following year, 1891, Halldor received significant income from his writings, e.g., for *rimur*, a genealogy, monograms, almanacs, and copy-books, in addition to serving as the scribe for the savings bank. In 1895 Halldor lists 14 works, primarily poems and almanacs, as his writings for the year, in addition to his diaries and memoranda. That same year he wrote 41 personal letters and received 21.²⁶

²⁴ Magnusson 1997b: 154.

²⁵ Magnusson 1997b: 55–56.

²⁶ Magnusson 1997a: 294–297 and 300–302.

IV. *Conclusion*

It becomes evident to anyone who acquaints himself with the collection of manuscripts in the Icelandic National Library that many of the authors were literary institutions in their own right, every bit as much as the country's printing houses, schools, and renowned authors. The term "literary institution" is meant to denote individuals, groups or formal institutions that have influenced the consumption of literature and had an effect, in one way or another, on taste and on the dissemination and discussion of literature. In modern society, publishers, critics, literary theoreticians, educational institutions, the media, writers and authors and, finally, readers play this role. In all probability, many lay scholars of the 19th century took it upon themselves to play all of these roles. They often collected books and manuscripts in greater quantity than one would expect from poor farmers and took time off from work, if necessary, to rewrite manuscripts which they had not seen before, just to make sure that their context would remain in the community. Together they formed an informal association with the aim of exchanging material and supporting one another. There can be no doubt that the companionship formed among these lay scholars both encouraged and fortified literary activity. In fact, one can argue that the companionship between the scholars in the western part of Iceland was so important that we could talk about an informal Academy that was intact at least until the end of the 19th century. The cooperation of its members was so extensive and their productivity of such magnitude that it is tempting to argue that their influence was enormous among the general population; they functioned like a semi-institution focusing on cultural matters. Both Sighvatur Grimsson and Halldor Jonsson were members of that group.

This pattern is also well known in the northwestern community of Skagafjörður 50 years earlier, when a group of scholars gathered there around Jon Espolin, sheriff and historian. The group consisted mainly of priests, public servants and farmers; all of whom were united in a spirited interest in historical writing and the writing of annals. Gisli Konradsson is a sort of a historical link between the two groups. He had a position in the innermost court of Jon Espolin and was mentor and friend to Sighvatur Grimsson.

Historian Kristmundur Bjarnason has maintained that this impressive group of scholars fuelled an interest in writing among the young men in Skagafjörður County. And this, he believes, is the reason why young people in the county were, without exception, able to write before the passing of the law on writing education in 1880. Bjarnason points out that manuscripts were handed down

from one person to another, farm to farm, for the purpose of copying, and teenagers longed to be able to express themselves in a similar way.²⁷

What influence did these informal "institutions" have on the cultural landscape of the 19th century? One thing is certain: they played a major role in the distribution of written material in each community in the country. Lay scholars usually sat and copied manuscripts day in and day out, not just on their own initiative but also by request. This material was later handed from one person to another and from one home to another. This became fodder for rich and poor alike in their attempt to gain access to as much knowledge as possible in a country with limited printing facilities.

Sigurdur Magnusson's argument is that education was obtained through the psychological drive of young children as a means of coping with emotional strain. To these children education became an extremely important tool for their mental and spiritual survival. This strong desire for education would not have been possible if the informal academy that was driven by the network of lay scholars and functioned as a sort of "printing press", had not existed.

²⁷ Bjarnason 1986: 224.

Unprinted material

Lbs 2374 4to – Diaries of Sighvatur Grimsson 1863–1864.

Lbs 2328 4to – Collection of Icelandic Sagas copied by Sighvatur Grimsson 1861–1867.

Printed material

Bjarnason, Kristmundur (1986): "Althydufraedsla i Skagafirdi framundir sidustu aldamot. Nokkrar athuganir." *Gefid og thegid*. Reykjavik. Pp. 221–246.

Gudnason, Jon (1966): "Gisli Konradsson." *Merkir Islendingar. Nyr flokkur V*. Reykjavik. Pp. 89–113.

Gunnarsson, Gisli (1987): *Upp er bodid Isaaland. Einokunarverslun og islenskt samfelag 1602–1787*. Reykjavik.

Gunnlaugsson, Gisli Agust (1988): *Family and household in Iceland 1801–1930. Studies in the relationship between demographic and socio-economic development, social legislation and family and household structures*. Studia Historica Upsaliensia 154. Uppsala.

Guttormsson, Loftur (1983): *Bernska, ungdomur og uppeldi a einveldisold. Tilraun til felagslegrar og lydfraedilegrar greiningar*. Ritsafn sagnfraedistofnunar 10 (From the Historical Institute collection, no. 10). Reykjavik.

(1990a): "Fraedslumal." *Upplýsingin a Islandi. Tiu ritgerdir*. Ed. Ingi Sigurdsson. Reykjavik. Pp. 149–182.

(1990b): "Laesi." *Islensk thjodmenning VI. Munnmenntir og bokmenning*. Ed. Frosti F. Johannsson. Reykjavik. Pp. 117–144.

Halfdanarson, Gudmundur (1986): "Born – hofudstoll fataeklingsins?" *Saga XXIV*. Pp. 121–146.

Juliusson, Arni Daniel; Jon Olafur Isberg and Helgi Skuli Kjartansson (1992): *Islenskur sogu Atlas 2. Fra 18. old til fullveldis*. Reykjavik.

Magnusson, Sigurdur G. (1995): "From children's point of view." *Journal of Social History* vol. 29, nr. 2. Pp. 295–323.

Magnusson, Sigurdur G. (ed.) (1997a): *Braedur af Strondum. Dagbaekur, astarbrief, almenn brief, sjalfsaemisaga, minnisbaekur og samtiningur fra 19. old*. Reykjavik.

(1997b): *Menntun ast og sorg. Einsogurannsokn a Islensku sveitasamfelagi 19. og 20. aldar*. Sagnfraedirannsoknir 13 (Historical Research no. 13). Reykjavik.

Magnusson, Sigurdur G. and David Olafsson: *Barefoot historians. Education in the Modern Period*. To be published in Denmark fall 2001.

Manntal a Islandi 1801 I-III (1978–1980). Reykjavík.

Olafsson, David (1997): "Ad skra sina eigin tilveru. Dagbaekur, heimsmynd og sjalfsmynd á 18. og 19. öld." *Einsagan – olikar leidir*. Reykjavík. Pp. 51–88.

(1998): „Dagbaekur i Handritadeild Landsbókasafns.“ *Ritmennt. Journal of the Icelandic National Library*. Reykjavík. Pp. 109–131.

Olafsson, David and Magnusson, Sigurdur Gylfi (ed.) (2001): *Burt – og meir en bæjarleið. Dagbaekur og personuleg skrif Vesturheimsfara a siðari hluta 19. aldar*. Reykjavík.

Sigmundsson, Finnur (1997): "Prestaaefir Sighvats Borgfirdings mest lesna rit Landsbokasafnsins." *Arsrit Sogufelags Isfirdinga*, Pp. 136–137.

Thorsteinsson, Bjorn og Bergsteinn Jonsson (1991): *Islandssaga til okkar daga*. Reykjavík.