

Annual Hebrew Book Week Report – 2017

In honor of the Annual Israeli Hebrew Book Week and 70 years since the establishment of the State of Israel, the National Library of Israel has published a special report on the books published in the past year (2017) and a comparison between the book types and subjects published in 1948 to those published today.

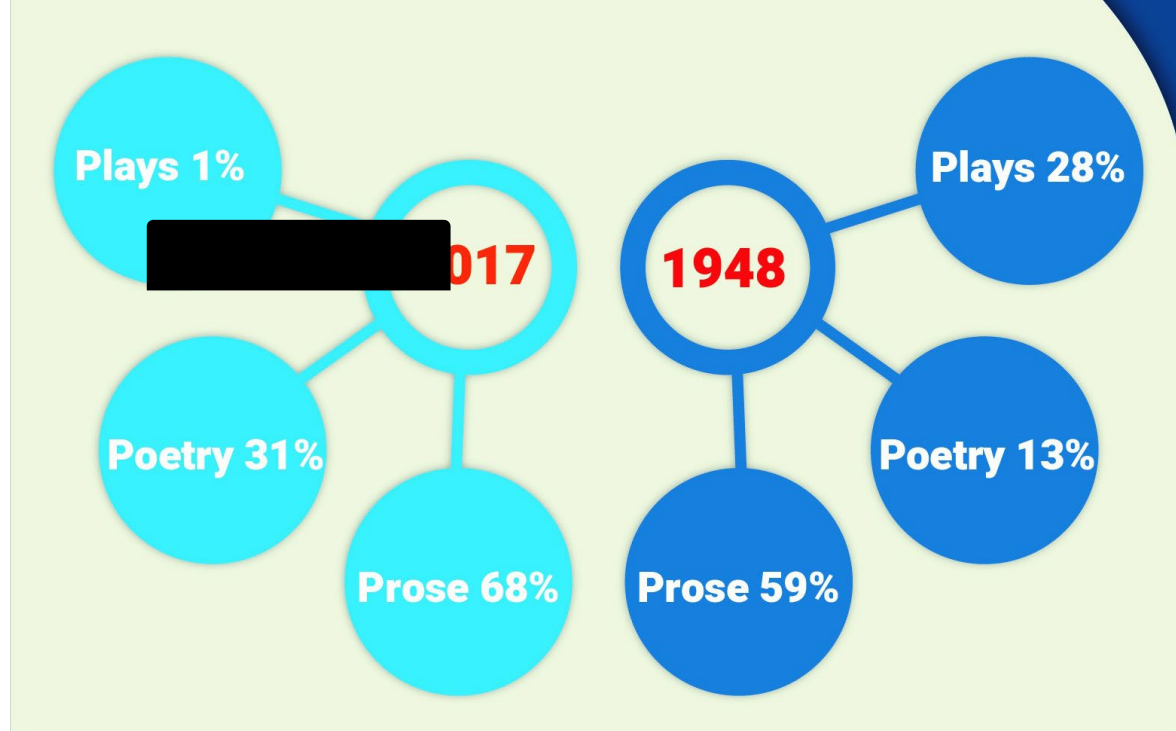
Interesting facts on publishing in the 2017 report:

- The majority of books translated into Hebrew were originally printed in English, but there is a continuing trend of prose books being translated from French.
- There have been various books published on the topic of leisure including 46 travel guides only 5 of which were about Israel. Also published were 44 cookbooks, and 112 books on the subject of self-help and empowerment (couple's counseling, nutrition, parental guides, etc.)
- This year approximately 50 books were published on subjects of science and nature, along with 133 books on law, insurance, and taxes.

Interesting facts comparing the publishing world of 1948 and 2018:

- In 1948, history, archeology and travel guides about Israel made up 20% of non-fiction books published as opposed to the 5% today.
- 67 original and translated plays were published in 1948 and made up 3% of all publications, as opposed to the 0.1% published in the last year. Only 11 plays were published in 2017.
- In 1948 only one cook book was published (as opposed to 44 published in 2017), but 94 books about the military and warfare were published.
- In 1948, the year of the War of Independence, 13 poetry books were published. Last year, in 2017, 387 poetry books were published.

Literary Genres: 1948 and Today



In honor of the celebration of 70 years since the establishment of the state, the National Library of Israel has published, on top of its annual data report on the Israeli publishing world for Hebrew Book Week, a special report comparing the publishing houses, subjects and genres of books published from 1947-1948 and those published from 2017-2018.

With the aid of the books published at the time, the report shows how from a state and society in the making, with a melting pot of languages, immigrants from all corners of the world and a culture that venerates nation-building and Israeli society as a whole over the individual – the State of Israel became a society with a common language, culture and narrative. Research from the books from the period of the founding of the state shows the intentionality of publishers of books and newspapers to be affiliated with specific political parties and factions and that these publishing houses also worked hard to recruit writers that would write Hebrew children's books that would promote and identify Zionist ideology.

The report shows how, over the years, once the basic nation building process was complete and the Jewish-Israeli culture found itself established and stable, personal expression and criticism found its place amongst the authors. Moreover, while at the founding of the state most of the publishing houses were owned by the party they were affiliated with, today the majority of publishers are privately owned and the subject matter written under their purview is very diverse and often written for specific target audiences.

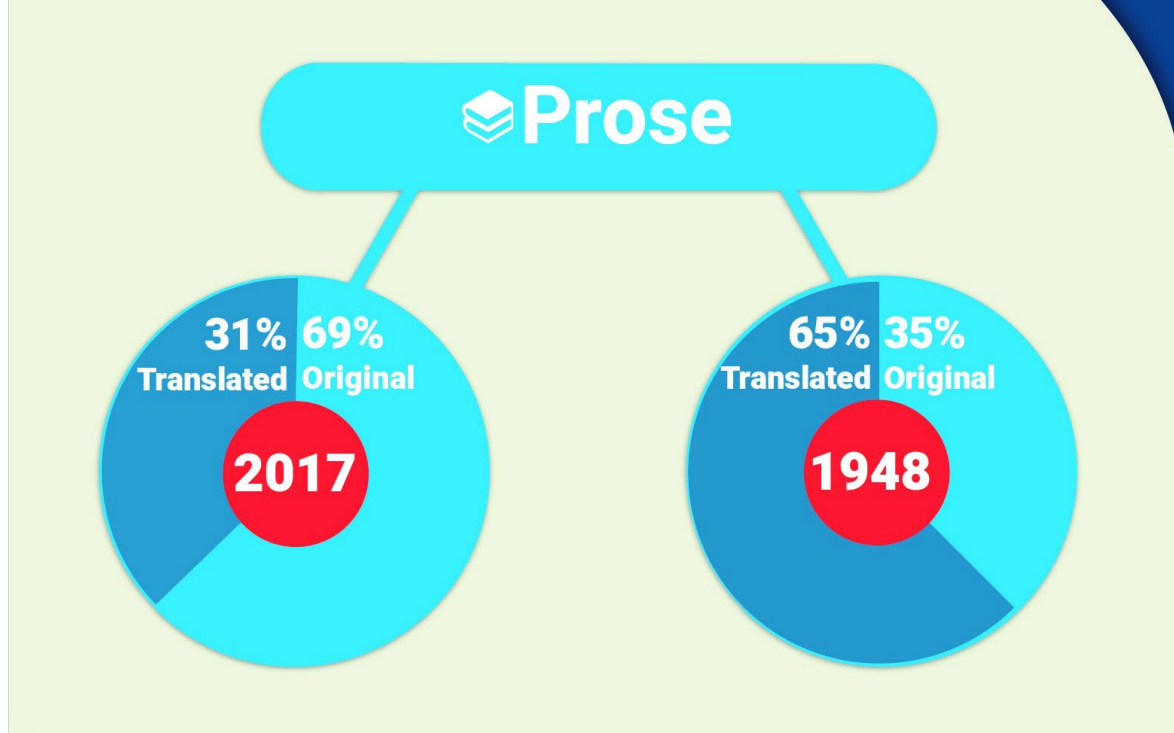
Highlights from the 2017 National Library of Israel Annual Report:

In 2017, 7,692 books were published in Israel (not including digital and audio books).

Original and translated

84% of the titles published in Israel in 2017 originated in Israel. The majority of translated titles were originally published in English (60%). Other languages with titles translated into Hebrew were French (5%), German (4%), Swedish (1.5%), and Arabic (1.3%). Titles were translated from a total of 40 languages, most of them European.

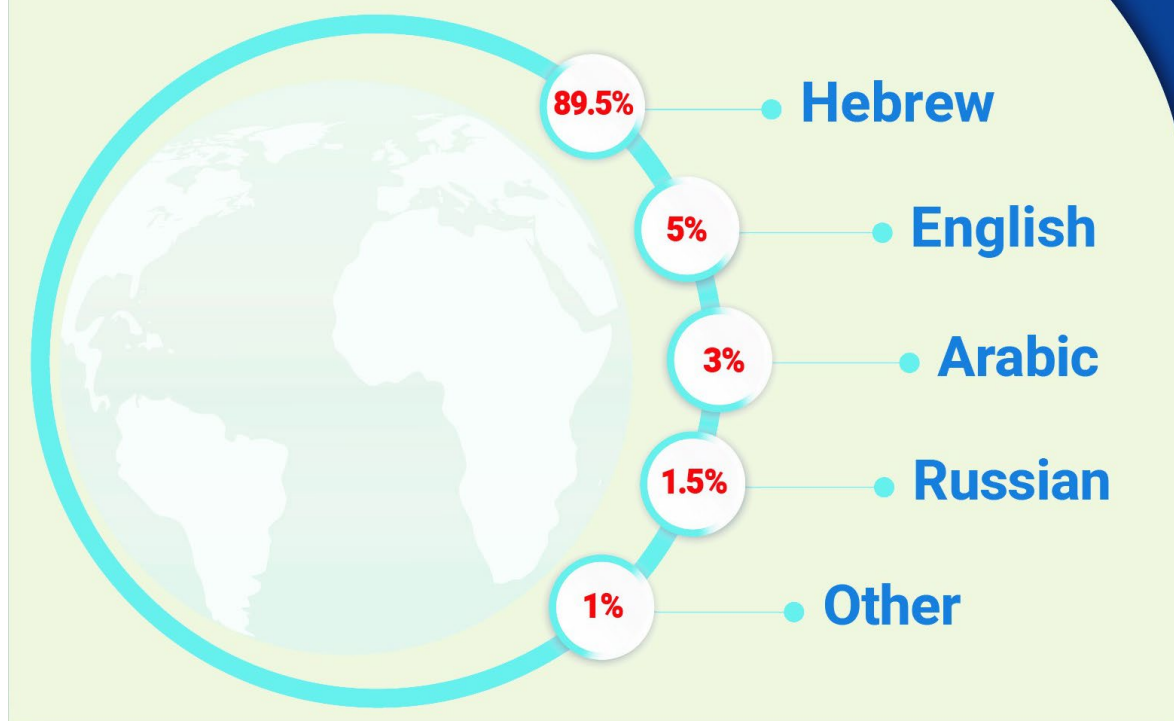
Original versus Translated: 1948 and Today



Hebrew and other languages

89.5% of the books that were registered with the National Library of Israel in 2017 were originally published in Hebrew. The second most commonly published language in Israel is English, which makes up 5% of the total. Books were also published in Israel in Arabic (3%), Russian (1.5%), Thai, Tagalog, Korean, and Japanese.

Books Per Language in Israel 2017



1947-1948 to 2017-2018: What's changed in the Hebrew book over 70 years?

Between 1948 and today

1948 was a seminal year in many ways. 1948 saw the end of the British Mandate, the founding of the State of Israel, the War of Independence, and the absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants – from Asia, North Africa, and the survivors from Europe. The difficulties, the struggles, and the economic downturn didn't stop the creative impetuosity of a flourishing culture, specifically when it came to book publication. Over 2,000 books were published between 1947-1948. However, it is interesting to note that, despite the considerable population growth, economic plenty, and technological advances in Israel today, the number of titles being published is only four times greater than it was 70 years ago.

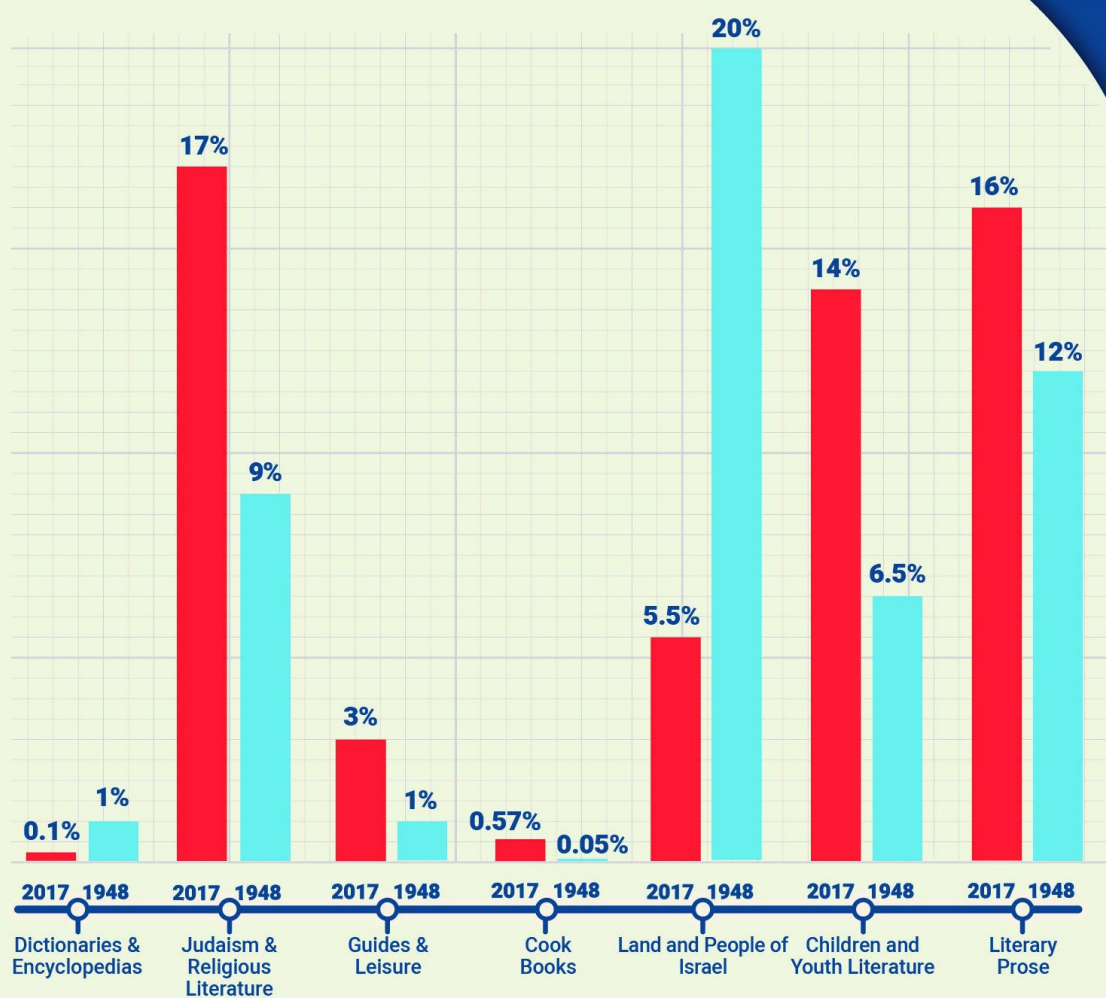
Subjects that matter:

The greatest changes are apparent in the shift in subject matter as well as the genre published between 1947-1948 as opposed to 2017, as well as the comparison between original titles and translated titles. In 2017 hardly any plays were published with only 11 titles coming to light, just 0.1% of all the titles, whereas in 1947-1948, plays were a major percentage of the titles published at the time. Between 1947 and 1948, 17 original plays were published and an additional 49 were translated into Hebrew, making up 3% of the books published at the time.

While plays were popular at the start of the state, poetry was less popular. Only 31 poetry books were published in 1947-1948, whereas 387 poetry books were published in 2017.

Another significant change from the time of the foundation of the state and the present are the numbers of original prose and translated prose. 65% of prose books were translated from European languages in 1948, whereas today only 31% are translated from European languages.

1948 and 2018: A comparison of subjects and genres

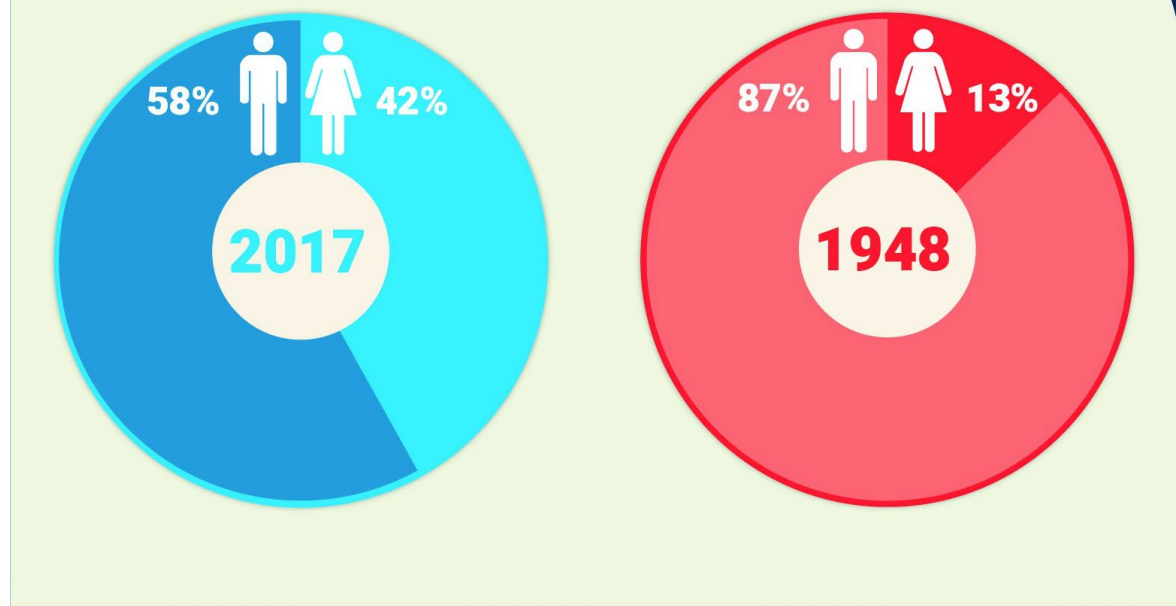


Gender differences

Much has changed to the support and visibility of women writers in Israel since the foundation of the state. In 2017, 42% of books were written by women. In 1948 only 13% of published books were written by female authors.

These numbers reflect the changes within Israeli society and the recognition women authors now get after years of not receiving the support they needed and deserved in order to write and create.

The Gender Divide: Men and Women Authors 1948 and Today



In summary:

The report published by the National Library of Israel indicates the changes and shifts that the State of Israel has gone through over the past 7 decades and acts as an incredible source of knowledge towards understanding Israeli culture.

The report indicates that, over the years, when it seemed the process of nation building and the formation of the New Israeli was complete, and an Israeli collective that shares a language, culture, and narrative was established – the voices of individuals, marginalized groups and communities began to emerge. Similarly, the publishing houses that were affiliated with political parties, shifted into private hands.

According to the National Library of Israel Director General, Oren Weinberg, the rising awareness and cooperation among the publishing houses that see the value passing along all their books and publications to the library, enables the public to access this important data.

"By correctly analyzing the patterns of publishing we can track the changing patterns of Israeli society. Accordingly, we can see the meaningful changes in writing genres," explained the Director General. "Literary fiction and children's books have become more significant in the last few decades, as opposed to plays and non-fiction; leisure books to do with self-help and empowerment were non-existent 70 years ago. While military literature was extremely popular in 1948, it has basically disappeared in the 21st-century; education books at the founding of the state were aimed at the general population and today they are aimed mainly at pupils. These changes, along with the social trends and the technological advances that enable the ease of printing, the differences in attitude to children and their needs, the great influence of the internet and television as shapers of identity and cultures, the change of the state of Israel from a country in austerity to a country of surplus, the prices of books – all these are a rich vein of research, learning, and the great interest that can be found in this special report.

