

“To date nothing has appeared that could truly replace books as we know them,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, as he opened the largest book fair in the Nordic countries in Göteborg. “To date nothing has appeared that could truly replace books as we know them,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, as he opened the largest book fair in the Nordic countries in Göteborg yesterday, where this year’s guest of honor was Estonia.

“One can find out “everything” faster through the Internet. More precisely, one can find something about everything,” said the Estonian Head of State. “But books continue to embody that which is indispensable to spiritual and intellectual life—time. Time that is spent reading, concentrating, learning, and understanding. Also learning to know each other, to understand who are the people whose language we do not understand, but with whom we are building this great shrunken world and small enlarged Europe.”

According to the Estonian Head of State, nations knew each other through books long before they learned to trust each other in life or politics.

“Books, those outwardly even-tempered and obedient little things, have time and again turned out to be more willful and insubordinate than some despot could have anticipated,” said President Ilves.

At the same time, he recognized the rulers who understood the sovereign power of books and tried to harness this power in the service of enlightening people. According to the President, it was the Protestant kings of Sweden in their day that made the country people in their Livonian province into the Estonian nation with their own written language, into a book nation. As opposed to the local Baltic lords of the country, the Swedish rulers viewed things from a distance and so the first truly Estonian-language books were born.

In his [opening speech](#) at the book fair, the President also recognized translators, who since the dawn of written culture have reminded people of the great richness and integrity of this culture.

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