

The lack of printing regulations and the unenforceability of British copyright law in the American colonies made it possible for colonial printers occasionally to act as publishers.

Although they rarely undertook major publishing projects because it was difficult to sell books as cheaply as they could be imported from Europe, printers in Philadelphia did publish work that required only small amounts of capital, paper, and type.

Broadsides could be published with minimal financial risk.

Consisting of only one sheet of paper and requiring small amounts of type, broadsides involved lower investments of capital than longer works.

Furthermore, the broadside format lent itself to subjects of high, if temporary, interest, enabling them to meet with ready sale.

If the broadside printer miscalculated, however, and produced a sheet that did not sell, it was not likely to be a major loss, and the printer would know this immediately. There would be no agonizing wait with large amounts of capital tied up, books gathering dust on the shelves, and creditors impatient for payment. In addition to broadsides, books and pamphlets, consisting mainly of political tracts, catechisms, primers, and chapbooks were relatively inexpensive to print and to buy.

Chapbooks were pamphlet-sized books, usually containing popular tales, ballads, poems, short plays, and jokes, small, both in format and number of pages, they were generally bound simply, in boards (a form of cardboard) or merely stitched in paper wrappers (a sewn antecedent of modern-day paperbacks).

Pamphlets and chapbooks did not require fine paper or a great deal of type to produce they could thus be printed in large, cost-effective editions and sold cheaply.

By far, the most appealing publishing investments were to be found in small books that had proven to be steady sellers, providing a reasonably reliable source of income for the publisher.

They would not, by nature, be highly topical or political, as such publications would prove of fleeting interest.

Almanacs, annual publications that contained information on astronomy and weather patterns arranged according to the days, week, and months of a given year, provided the perfect steady seller because their information pertained to the locale in which they would be used