Publishing & Book Culture in Africa: A Repository of Selected Resources

Pilot edition, as at 30/04/2022

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Publishing & Book Culture in Africa Network
https://www.africabookculture.org/
(Website under development)
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How to search the Repository

Searches for literature by author, subject/topic-specific, or country-specific, can be made by using the Ctrl+F(ind) function when accessing the Repository. For example, typing ‘Ghana’ into the search box will find any text/records in titles of articles, reports, blog postings and other documents, or if part of the annotations/summaries, containing the word ‘Ghana’.

The same search function can also be used to search for names of authors of articles; or those mentioned in interviews and publisher profiles.
INTRODUCTION

The repository aims to provide quick access to key literature about the many aspects of book culture, and publishing and book development in Sub-Saharan Africa generally, and at the same time provide a mapping of the past. This initial selection provides access to over 900 critically annotated records (published through to the end of February 2022.) While not all of them could be considered as seminal, or offer significant analytical depth, many are contributions to the literature that are interesting, insightful, timely, or even provocative, and hence their inclusion here. The emphasis is on fairly recent studies (2000-2021), and those that, for the most part, are accessible online. A selection of earlier studies and documents on the African book industries (1960-1999) have also been included, with an emphasis on those now available online. A good number of these – mainly articles and studies published in journals – have now become available in digital formats, while some others (books, collections, or conference proceedings) that are now long out-of-print, should still be accessible in major academic and university libraries.

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Current issues and trends of the African book sector

The range of documentation and analysis of the literature on publishing and book development in Africa has shifted significantly over the last two decades or so. While earlier studies focus primarily on the general picture of the publishing landscape and the book industries in Africa – its progress and its many challenges – much of the recent literature is now concentrating on studies in more topic-specific areas, notably these: digital and e-book publishing, book history and reading culture, children’s book publishing, as well as publishing in African languages, which, as is evident from the number of records included, has seen a very substantial increase in the literature about this important area of African publishing, including reports and evaluations of a variety of indigenous language publishing projects and programmes.

There have also been many interesting and insightful studies on the topic of (frequently strained!) author-publisher relationships; meantime in the field of academic/scholarly publishing has seen many papers on more topic-specific areas, such as copyright and copyright legislation, licensing, the prospects of open access and its forms of funding; and most recently also on book piracy. The latter has become a real threat to the African book industries, with copyright law enforcement still weak in many African countries. Another area that has seen an increase in the literature is the murky landscape of ‘predatory’ publishing.

That the topic of digital publishing has been prominent in recent years is not surprising, as the publishing environment has now changed so dramatically. The digital versus print debate is still in full flow, and is not likely to come to an end any time soon. There have been many studies, interesting ongoing discussions, and investigations about the potential of digital
books in Africa. There are also a number of digital evangelists who keep reminding African publishers that they are not doing enough to build global publishing reach and connect with wider audiences to sell their books. They say that digital reading and digital platforms are the only way to go forward in Africa for both publishers and readers; whereas, on the other side of the debate, are those who believe that e-books are not likely to replace print versions in the immediate future, and that it is more likely that both formats will coexist in the foreseeable future. Some have also argued that there will always be learners who are better able to comprehend print over digital content. On the other hand, it seems clear that more and more of the leading publishers are now moving towards offering digital products, although the output of e-books by African publishers is still limited at this time.

In discussions about the importance of overcoming the challenges that the publishing industry is now facing in Africa as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, it has been suggested that the pandemic could be seen as a tipping point to digital transition in the publishing industry in Africa. However, it can also be argued that it isn’t really a matter of print or digital, but simply access to books; and that, at this time at least, the conventional book continues to have numerous practical advantages over the e-book and, as a format, the book remains flexible and accessible.

One very positive development is that much progress has been made in gender equality in African publishing in recent years, which has seen the emergence of a whole new generation of agile, visionary, and enterprising women publishers. The literature about women in publishing in Africa has been rather scant in the past, but more recently there has been a whole broadside of articles, profiles, interviews, news stories and blog postings about women involved in the book trade in Africa today; reporting about the wide range of publishing initiatives and activities in which women are involved, and the passion and commitment these women have brought to their careers in publishing.

There have been several high-level conferences and seminars on publishing in Africa over the past four years, organized and hosted by the International Publishers Association (IPA), the Global Book Alliance and its funding partner USAID, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the ADEA Working Group on Books and Learning Materials, among others, which have been followed by detailed recommendations and action plans over a wide range of topics, prominent among them the urgent need for national book policies, and the need for the establishment of national book development councils. However, despite the best of intentions of the hosts and participants at these meetings, these action plans are still to implemented; and in the absence of tangible and positive support of African governments for its publishing industries, and the book sector generally, most of these recommendations have yet to be put into practice and remain wishful thinking, for the time being at least.

For example, a few years ago, there were active national book development councils (or their equivalents) in several African countries, in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, carrying out a diverse range of promotional activities in support of publishing and book development in their respective countries. Prominent among them was the South African Book Development Council (SABDC), which did some excellent and innovative work over the years. Yet in
August 2021 the SABDC, starved of funds over a long period, announced that it was compelled to finally close down its activities. Earlier, the regional East African Book Development Association with headquarters in Kampala, founded in 2011 – which had hosted and supported an extensive range of book promotional activities – ceased operations a few years ago when donor support ceased. This leaves just one functional book development council on the African continent, that of Ghana, which enjoys a measure of government funding.

Libraries, too, still do not appear to play a significant role in the social development thinking of African governments. In most parts of Africa, public libraries face a daunting task: they need to serve their current generation of users, while at the same time anticipating future needs, in a rapidly changing and now increasingly digital environment. Seriously underfunded for decades, they struggle to offer modern, technology-oriented services to the communities they serve. It has been suggested in recent literature that public libraries in Africa suffer from a perception problem among potential development partners, and are thus unable to attract funding. This is probably true, but one could add that they also seem to have been suffering from a “perception problem” among successive African governments—who have failed to positively support them over the last four decades at least.

Many libraries in Africa face a daunting task, they need to serve their current generation of users, while at the same time anticipating future needs, in a rapidly changing and now increasingly digital environment. Yet it could be argued that going all-digital would, in any event, be an unwise choice for most African public libraries. The conventional printed book lives on: books are sturdy and resilient, easily transported, and they do not require a reading devise, a power source, recharging, or servicing. This is not to deny of course that e-books and e-readers have their own attractions and advantages, especially in terms of portability and mass storage capabilities.

The persistent failure of African governments to adequately support their libraries is also the principal reason why overseas book donation organizations continue to be needed to fill library shelves, and they will likely continue to ship millions of new and used books to Africa every year, to the detriment of, and with potential negative consequences for, the local book industries. Three or four decades of library neglect in Africa has also had an adverse impact on indigenous publishing, with the local library markets severely diminished, or now virtually non-existent.

As has been stated many times before by those writing about the challenges of African publishing, a sustainable book industry can only flourish with positive government support

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that recognizes the strategic importance of publishing, and demonstrates this in its official commitment through policies and budgets, and the creation of national book policies.

Lack of investment, resources, and capacity in the book sector has meant that many well-intentioned strategic plans to build and promote a vibrant book industry, and effectively support library development, have still not been realized for the most part.

The absence of national book policies does not mean that the indigenous African publishing industry has not been growing. There have been many encouraging developments. Although competing against the multinationals, or the major publishing conglomerates, will always be very challenging for independent publishers anywhere, it is probably true to say that some of the larger indigenous publishers in Africa have now gained a much stronger foothold over the last decade or two and have edged out the multinationals, in some countries at least. Other positive developments include, for example, the strong presence of African books in the international market place through the activities of the African Books Collective, which has now been successfully trading and supporting the indigenous book industries in Africa for over 30 years.

Finally, it can be said that – with the exception of South Africa – research and documentation on African publishing, and the book sector generally, remains a seriously neglected area in most African countries. While a measure of research has been undertaken by a few African university institutions with publishing or book studies programmes, only a small proportion of this research is freely and easily accessible at institutional online repositories.

Without ongoing research, systematic analysis, and compilation of new reference and information resources, it will not be possible to produce meaningful and high-quality data about the book sector on the continent. In the absence of such data, it will be difficult to guide decision making, deliver policy advice, or book publishing intelligence; and without such research and documentation activities one cannot get to know and understand the complexities and challenges of the African book industries.

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Sources for the repository

Material included in the repository has been primarily selected from among over 4,000 records listed in the following sources:


(ii) New records added to the PB&RSSA database from November 2008 to November 2014.


and,

(iv) Analysis and write-ups of recent (2020-2021 published) items.

Scope/Type of material included

The repository covers books, chapters in books and edited collections, journal articles, Internet documents and reports, theses and dissertations, interviews, opinion pieces, publisher profiles, audio/video recordings and Zoom ‘events’, podcasts, as well as a number of blog postings (with their posting dates indicated). Short news items or stories, press releases, etc. are not included. Newspaper articles are also not generally included, unless of substantial length or of special significance.

At this time, scope and coverage is limited to literature about publishing, book development, and book history and culture, in *anglophone sub-Saharan Africa*. It is hoped that the repository can be expanded in the future by the inclusion of new material on a regular and systematic basis; collected, analysed, and written up by way of collaborative curation of the repository. It is also anticipated that select literature on the book industries in francophone Africa, and North Africa, can be added to the repository at some point in the future.

Arrangement and classification

Records are grouped under a series of main headings, together with a range of sub-sections devoted to country- or topic-specific headings, listing records in alphabetical order by author. Multiple papers by authors are listed in date of publication order, most recent first.

A number of topic-specific headings include explanatory notes on scope, limitations, or exclusions. For added utility, a series of cross-references guide the user to related topics/sections.

All records included here – journal articles, books, papers in collections, etc. – have been personally examined by the compiler, unless indicated otherwise.

It should be noted that, as a general rule, most articles on particular *topics* or areas of publishing of the book industries in Africa – for example, children’s book publishing, digital and e-book publishing, publishing in African languages, or reading culture and reading promotion – are listed under *Topic-Specific Studies*. Thus, a study on children’s book publishing in Ghana, a paper on publishing in African languages in South Africa, or an article on reading...
promotion in Nigeria, will all appear under the relevant topic heading, rather than under country-specific headings.

As will be evident from the country-specific sections, there is wide discrepancy in the number of entries for the individual African countries covered in the resource. Some, like Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and to some extent Zimbabwe, have a fairly substantial number of records, whereas others – and/or countries with very limited current publishing output at this time, such as Botswana, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, or small nations like Eswatini (ex-Swaziland), Lesotho, or The Gambia – have just a few entries in the repository, or there is no published and significant recent literature at all that would merit inclusion; other than a small number of chapters in books, such as those in Roger Stringer’s still very useful The Book Chain in Anglophone Africa: A Survey and Directory, published by INASP twenty years ago in 2002 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf, although now inevitably considerably dated.

Nature of annotations/Abstracts
There is considerable disparity in the length of these, largely depending on the nature or significance of each document. The annotations can be quite long, some amount to mini-reviews! However, this analytical, and to some extent evaluative touch – together with sometimes fairly extensive citing of passages from the text, and/or the conclusions – sets it apart, it is hoped, from the typical dryness of conventional bibliographic listings or repositories. The annotations can also be helpful in as far as they summarize the key points within each article or book, or can serve as quasi-abstracts. At the same time the repository can serve as a critical narrative of past and current thinking on the growth and development of indigenous publishing, book culture, and the promotion of books and reading in Africa.

While there has been an attempt to offer a balanced picture of the literature available, it must be added that the text of some annotations is subjective, offering qualitative judgements, and expressing the compiler’s personal opinion, or critical appraisal, and which may not always be shared by everyone.

Free access vs articles behind a paywall
This ¶ (Pilcrow) symbol is used to indicate articles that are behind a paywall, i.e. that access is subscription-based or subject to payment of a fee; or, if relating to a book or e-book, requiring purchase, either from the publisher, through Amazon, or through second-hand book dealers. For articles behind paywalls, most users at academic institutions in the countries of the North should be able to get access via their university library services, although, unfortunately, this may be less the case in some African countries. For articles, reports, blog postings, etc. that are freely accessible online, last accessed dates are indicated in square brackets.

Digital vs print
There are a small number of articles or books/collections (such as conference proceedings) for which no digital versions are available – or unlikely to ever become available digitally – but which have been included regardless, on the grounds that they are considered to be important documents.
Back issue runs of some journals carrying frequent articles and reports on African publishing and the book trade have now been fully digitized. For example, these journals: Logos. Journal of the World Book Community, Publishing Research Quarterly, Research in African Literatures, Information Development, Scholarly Publishing/Journal of Scholarly Publishing, and especially The African Book Publishing Record (ABPR). The latter, currently in its 48th year of publication, carried numerous articles and reports over the years, although not many recently. All of them can now be accessed online—albeit at a charge for each article.

Another journal that has carried a good number of articles on the book sector in Africa over the years is African Research & Documentation. Journal of SCOLMA. The UK Libraries and Archives Group on Africa (ARD), which, from issue no. 100 onward, is also available online via ProQuest Direct https://www.proquest.com/. However, ARD has now merged with Africa Bibliography, published annually by the International African Institute (IAI) and Cambridge University Press. As part of this merger the entire ARD archive of back issues is being digitized, to become available during the course of 2022 and, at which time, URLs to the online versions will then be added to all ARD records included in the repository.

The introductory articles included in earlier issues of the annual Africa Bibliography continue to be freely accessible. It includes many on topics related to publishing in Africa, most of which are included in the repository. The complete list of articles can be found at this page: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/africa-bibliography/introductory-articles.


The impermanence of the Web

The reference resource Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Bibliography (PB&RSSA), published in 2008, listed a total of 2,517 records, the majority of them published during the period from 1980 through to the end of 2007, of which, at that time, some 500 articles and other resources were available online. During the seven-year period from 2008 to 2014 a further 638 new records were added to the database, bringing the total number of records to 3,154, although that figure also included a small number of new records of organizations and book trade associations. During that period a steadily increasing number of articles, conference papers, blog postings, etc. became accessible in digital formats. This was further evidenced in more and more literature on publishing and book development in Africa listed in the subsequent five annual literature reviews Publishing & the Book in Africa: A Literature Review for …. [2015-2019], a total of 706 records, the majority of them available online.

However, in compiling this repository, recent investigations have found that quite an alarming number of web pages/links originally included in the PB&RSSA bibliography, and its subsequent updates through to 2014, no longer work and come up with ‘Not found’ messages, or a page that states ‘You were trying to access a page that doesn’t exist.’
substantial number of articles, conference papers and presentations, etc. – some of high quality and published only a few years ago – are, it would appear, no longer accessible. A small number have migrated to new URLs which have been tracked down, but many others (well over a hundred) seem to have disappeared forever into the black hole that is the Internet. These also include dozens of links to various conference presentations and seminar papers on topics relating to publishing and book development in Africa that were accessible online just a few years ago (including material on websites of donor organizations, foundations, NGOs, or organizations such as the British Council, INASP, or some World Bank reports, etc.), but which are no longer available, and now apparently gone forever. Others have changed URLs of papers or other resources without any re-directs. Many articles, interviews, and much material published in various blogs, seem to have been short-lived in terms of accessibility.

This would seem to strikingly illustrate the impermanence of the web – especially as it relates to some African websites and resources, articles and reports – and it is very concerning.

**Theses and dissertations**

More and more theses and dissertations on various aspects of publishing and book development in Africa are now being published, and an increasing number are freely accessible on either digital repositories at university institutions or on other platforms. The repository includes a small number of PhD and a few MA/MPhil theses of high quality, and which can be accessed online.

**Social media, and social networking websites and platforms**

There is just one Facebook group at this time (February 2022) that is intended for book publishing and bookselling professionals, as well as media professionals and authors with a strong interest in publishing and the book trade in Africa, the Facebook *Book Publishing in Africa Group*, which can be found at [https://www.facebook.com/groups/233568780016434/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/233568780016434/). A public group created in 2011, it currently has 3.9k members, although a large proportion of these are writers – and quite a few writers keen to be *published* writers! – rather than book industry professionals. The Group administrators stress that the group is *not* a vehicle for publishers or authors to promote their books, or for publishing services' providers to advertise their services. While there have been some interesting conversations on the group from time to time, it would be good to see a wider range of postings discussing or debating the many challenges of the book sector in Africa.

In recent years there has been a welcome increase in the number of social networking websites and platforms for finding and sharing research, in the form of free and open repositories of academic journal articles and other research publications. Notably among them – especially in the social sciences and the humanities – are ResearchGate [https://www.researchgate.net/](https://www.researchgate.net/) and Academia.edu [https://www.academia.edu/](https://www.academia.edu/). Among others are Semantic Scholar [https://www.semanticscholar.org/](https://www.semanticscholar.org/), for scientific literature, and Mendeley [https://www.mendeley.com/](https://www.mendeley.com/), that is described as “a free reference manager that can help you store, organize, note, share and cite references and research data.”
Academia.edu, for example, allows users to create a profile, upload their work, tag certain interests, and then to tap into large networks of people with like research interests. It enables users to follow other researchers in their field, and receive analytics such as the number of views their papers have enjoyed, get to know when their work has been mentioned or cited, and more. (For an evaluation of Academia.edu see also this recent [2016] article at https://www.academia.edu/25506097/Some_Observations_about_Academia_edu_from_the_Non_academic_Point_of_View.)

**Education for publishing/Book industry training**

Professional skills development for the book industries is clearly an important area, yet there is a dearth of recent articles and studies on this topic, much less availability of training manuals or practical guides, courses, and handbooks for publishing education in Africa. Back in 2008 PB&RSSA provided details of over 70 articles and reports, together with listings of almost 30 training manuals and handbooks (published up to the end of 2007), most now inevitably rather dated and many out-of-print. In the late 1990s and early 2000, the ‘old’ African Publishers Network (APNET) published a series of useful training manuals – as did the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)-Working Group on Books and Learning Materials https://www.adeanet.org/en/working-groups/books-learning-materials and its excellent ‘Perspectives on African Book Development’ series – but none of these would appear to be currently available, or have been long out-of-print.

Surprisingly, over the past ten years or more, very few articles, surveys, reports, or training needs assessments have been published that deal with publishing education and training in Africa. The management of the ‘new’ APNET https://african-publishers.net/ have pledged to continue to publish such training tools, but this has not materialized thus far, apart from a useful survey of publishing training published by APNET in 2019, accessible at https://african-publishers.net/images/APNET_PUBLISHING_TRAINING_SURVEY.pdf.

However, there is now an urgent need to determine the gaps – as well as identifying the challenges of existing needs – that might then eventually lead to a capacity building framework for the African book industry professions, which could be used to guide the development of a range of training programmes.

**How to search the Repository**

Searches for literature by author, subject/topic-specific, or country-specific, can be made by using the Ctrl+F(ind) function in the Repository. For example, typing ‘Ghana’ into the search box will find any text/records in titles of articles, reports, blog postings and other documents, or if part of the annotations/summaries, containing the word ‘Ghana’.

The same search function can also be used to search for names of authors of articles; or those mentioned in interviews and publisher profiles.

**Have we missed out any significant articles or other contributions?**

There are no doubt gaps in the coverage of the literature, and if we have missed any substantial and significant articles/papers, books, theses, or other relevant documents on the topics covered by this repository, the Network administrators and myself would be grateful.
if these could be brought to our attention. Please email details to hanszell@hansell.co.uk, together with an electronic file of the document(s), or a link to it. They will then be reviewed, and considered for inclusion in subsequent updates to the repository.

Lochcarron, Scotland,
Hans M. Zell, April 2022
hanszell@hanszell.do.uk
Part I: REFERENCE, GENERAL STUDIES, BOOK HISTORY & CULTURE

Reference resources, bibliographies, and library collections

The African Book Publishing Record
Edited by Cécile Lomer
ISSN: 1865-8717  1975- quarterly  Latest volume is vol. 48 (2022).
The only bibliographical tool which offers systematic and comprehensive coverage of new and forthcoming African publications in a single source, providing full bibliographic and acquisitions data. In addition to its bibliographic coverage, ABPR also features a variety of news, reports, and articles about African book trade activities and developments. The titles included in the bibliographical section are arranged according to subject area, country and author. Indexes of publishers and currencies complete the journal. Earlier issues, up to volume 33, included an extensive and influential book review section, but unfortunately that is no longer the case due to a number of constraints.

https://www.goethe.de/resources/files/pdf90/survey_publishing.pdf [17/06/21]
The Goethe-Institut Johannesburg and the Frankfurt Book Fair conducted a survey in 2012 on the publishing industry and their current activities in eight of sub-Saharan African countries, “in order to understand the needs of the publishing sector.” The Frankfurt Book Fair and the Goethe-Institut Johannesburg looked at ways on how they could assist in this sector, and whether cooperation with other institutions would be feasible and practicable, and whether this could lead to more sustainable and effective projects.” Information was also collected relating to aid programmes in the book sector, book fairs and festivals, literacy campaigns, book donation programmes, financing and financial support for the industry, professional training, and distribution systems. The results of the survey are presented here, and for each of the eight countries it offers a brief overview of the current publishing situation and infrastructure, followed by listings – with full address, telephone numbers, email address, website where available, and contact persons – of publishers (most with short profiles) book professional organizations and training institutions, book fairs, details of national library services and library associations. The author also offers some general views and observations on the state of publishing in each of these countries and summarizes her findings in a “Conclusion”. A directory of international organizations supporting the book and library sector is included as an appendix. While now considerably dated, (and there is a very patchy bibliography), this survey remains a useful resource.

Hans Zell Publishing Links [to organizations, associations, book prizes and awards, book fairs, etc. that are supportive of African publishing]
http://www.hanszell.co.uk/links.htm  [21/05/21]
This extensive links section of websites – and Facebook pages, where available – of organizations (other than publishers), groups, and associations that are supportive of book and journal publishing, the ‘book chain’, and reading promotion in Africa. A number of dealers and distributors of African-published books are also included, as are links to some of the major (Pan-African) book prizes and awards, book fairs and other book promotional events, as well as a number of African literary magazines and blogs that focus on cultural and literary production in Africa. The links collection was last fully updated (with all links verified) as at March 2021. A number of links have been deleted when it was not possible to verify that the organizations were still active, or where websites have been permanently down. Over 20 new links/organizations have been added recently, now bringing it to a total of over 130 links. It should be noted that the links only include organizations and associations that have been verified to be currently active, but users should be aware that the websites of a number of African book trade organizations tend to suffer from frequent downtime.

https://www.modjajibooks.co.za/titles/2021-african-small-publishers-catalogue/
Outside African distributed by African Books Collective
https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/2021-african-small-publishers-catalogue

The latest (2021) edition of this very useful directory and reference resource (now published in a miniature book format) that aims to serve as “a showcase of the variety and extent of independent and small publishing in Africa”. Lists a wide range of over 60 small and independent publishers in countries from around Africa, and some elsewhere. For each publisher included is provides full address details, telephone number, email address, website, Facebook page and Twitter handle (where available), company logo, contact details, together with a short profile for each with information about each company, the nature of their list, overseas distributors, etc. The catalogue also contains a number of short articles about indie publishing in Africa and elsewhere.


https://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/about/african-publishers.phtml [21/05/21]
Developed by the International African Institute (IAI) in association with the African Books Collective (ABC), this new database is “aimed as a resource for authors and publishers of
books on African topics and countries to locate possible co-publishers for their work in the African continent.” Arranged in country order, it is a most useful reference resource for authors and publishers alike, but those accessing it should note that they will need to use their horizontal scroll bar to access vital information. Like for example nature of publishing programme and subject areas covered in field G, website in field J, or social media platforms in field K. You may also need to (temporarily) adjust your browser/zoom settings. Very full contact information is provided in most cases, including principal contact person, postal address, email address, and telephone. A total of 196 organizations are listed at this time.


Access to the books and journals collection can be found at
https://kwasu.edu.ng/clinic/images/blog/book.pdf (Book collection and ephemera)
https://kwasusite.kwasu.edu.ng/pb-rssa/ (Serials in the collection)
For more details about the collection see also
http://www.hanszell.co.uk/Site/PDFs/Press%20release.pdf
This collection, donated by publisher Hans Zell to Kwara State University Library in Nigeria in 2015, covers the twenty-year period from 1996 to 2014, and is a continuation of an earlier collection and archive (for the 1960-1995 period) that was donated to the African Publishers Network/APNET in Harare in 1995. (Note: The current status of this earlier collection is unknown, see https://african-publishers.net/images/img/apnet_brochure.pdf - ‘Collecting Resource Materials’.)

The collection has been fully catalogued and records have been created for each item and integrated in KWASU’s Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). A complete listing and inventory of the collection (which includes unpublished and archival material) can be found at the above link. This page also includes a user guide, and an online form to register for access to and use of the collection. Access is free to any bona fide scholar or researcher from around the globe.

Note: For more information about the new database, or access to the physical collection, contact Teslim B. Balogun, Project Director, PB&RSSA, teslim.balogun@kwasu.edu.ng.

Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Saur, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110936766 ¶ [29/05/21]
African Books in Print (ABIP), founded by Hans M. Zell (1st edition published in 1975), can be said to be the most authoritative reference and selection tool for African book publishing output. It covers material from numerous African countries, written in English, French and a selection of African languages. The 6th edition, edited by Cécile Lomer, provides full bibliographic details of 31,684 titles in print, from 893 publishers and research institutions with publishing programmes, in 45 African countries, published until the beginning of 2006. In addition, Volume 1 includes the introductory and prelim matter, the directory of publishers, the subject index, and the A-J author index – listing titles under some 7,500 subject headings/sub-headings, country and regional headings, language headings, etc., and extensively cross-referenced – with the K-Z author and the title index making up volume 2.
ABIP includes publications from professional organizations, academic unions, university institutions etc. The sixth edition of ABIP cumulates all the publications listed in the quarterly African Book Publishing Record (ABPR) between the beginning of 1992 and the beginning of 2006, plus 1,550 entries not previously listed in either ABIP or ABPR. It contains a directory of publishers with complete details of names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, email addresses and websites (where available), as well as the names and addresses of European and US distributors. An online version of the sixth 2006 edition was published in 2011. No further editions have appeared either in print or online format.


Describes the difficulties encountered in the data gathering and verification process for the 5th edition of African Books in Print/Livres Africaines Disponibles, and the various new features introduced for that edition, which was published in 2000.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation/ CODE Europe Special Collection on Publishing in Africa, Oxford Brookes University


This collection is based upon a donation of an extensive range of books, reports, booklets and other material by CODE Europe. The cost of physically housing the collection, and, cataloguing and other establishment costs was met by a generous donation from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Further funding was given by Macmillan and Heinemann Publishers. The subject coverage of the collection is somewhat broader than just publishing. All areas of the book trade in Africa are covered, as well as libraries, information provision, literacy and education, where they relate to the industry. Some examples of the output of the publishing industry in Africa are also included. Subsequent acquisitions have included novels that were included in promotions such as Africa’s 100 Best Books. Notable material in the collection includes press releases and other items from the records of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair; a large number of titles from the Heinemann African Writers Series, a selection of books from African literacy projects, and a number journals covering publishing in Africa and related fields. Items in the collection can be found using a library search at https://oxfordbrookes.on.worldcat.org/v2/search?databaseList=638&queryString=nu%3A%2FAfrica+Publishing+Collection%22.

The Oxford International Centre for Publishing Studies at Oxford Brookes University https://publishing.brookes.ac.uk/ and the University Library “are looking to build the Collection by both acquisition and donation and would be pleased to hear from organisations or individuals who may be able to help this process.”


https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [29/05/21]

Albeit now somewhat dated, this survey and directory, freely accessible online, remains a valuable information resource that provides a country-by-country analysis of the “book chain” in 18 English-speaking Africa countries, together with an annotated directory of the
major players that make up the book chain within those countries. Four introductory essays 
provide overviews of book and library development in anglophone Africa from different 
perspectives. These are followed by country surveys, each prepared by a book professional 
from the country concerned, most of them librarians. The final section, a 170-page Directory 
of Selected Organizations in the Book Chain in Anglophone Africa, provides listings of the 
major players in the book chain in each of the countries covered, including professional 
associations, major publishers, printers, booksellers and libraries; regional and international 
odies supporting book development, and training institutions for librarianship and the book 
industries. Each entry gives full address, telephone number, email addresses (and Web sites 
for some), and many entries include a short description.

The fourth and final volume of the Book Trade of the World, a series of books that aimed to 
provide a convenient reference tool to the world’s publishing and bookselling industries, and 
to the institutions, organizations, and journals that are associated with them. The information 
on each country is contributed by a leading authority in the field and is presented under 35 
thematic headings. The African volume contains an extensive introductory essay by Hans 
Zell, and an index to all four volumes in the series, compiled by Caroline Bundy. While now 
inexitably very dated, the book is still useful as source showing the historical development of 
the book trade in African countries, from the earliest times up to the period of the early 1980s.

Bibliography. (Print and online)
With an introductory essay by Henry Chakava.
http://www.hanszell.co.uk/backlist.htm

Note: access to the above database remains temporarily unavailable. The database is still in the process of being 
restarted by its new host institution, Kwara State University Library in Nigeria, see ➔ above, and see also 
http://www.hanszell.co.uk/pbrssa.htm.
Access to the books and journals collection can be found at 
https://kwasu.edu.ng/clinic/images/blog/book.pdf (Book collection and ephemera) 
https://kwasusite.kwasu.edu.ng/pbrrssa/ (Serials in the collection)
A new, substantially recast and fully updated edition of a reference resource first published 
in 1996 under the title Publishing and Book Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Annotated 
Bibliography (co-edited with Cécile Lomer), and which in turn was based on the earlier 
of the Sahara, covering all segments of publishing and the book trade, as well as including a 
large number of entries on many other topics as they relate to books and reading in Africa. 
This edition contains over 2,500 for the most part fully annotated entries. Most of the material 
listed is in English, but there are also a considerable number of citations in French and on 
publishing and the book sector in the francophone nations of Africa. Material is arranged 
under five main sections, and is extensively cross-referenced throughout. It includes an index 
by author, subject, as well as an index of organizations and associations, to enhance the 
bibliography’s utility.

A series of five annual reviews of select new literature in English that has appeared on the topic of publishing and the book sector in sub-Saharan Africa for the period from 2015 through 2019. The 2019 literature review was the last under Hans Zell’s editorship, and in the front matter of the 2019 review he expresses the hope that an African institution, or a book professional organization, can now be found to take on the work that he has been doing in the field of research and analysis of the African book industries over the past three decades.

Extensively and critically annotated and/or with abstracts, each of these annual surveys bring together new literature published during the course of the preceding year. The literature review covers books, chapters in books and edited collections, journal articles, Internet documents and reports, theses and dissertations, interviews, audio/video recordings and podcasts, as well as some blog postings. Short news items, or press statements, etc. are not included. Newspaper articles or stories are also not generally included, unless of substantial length or of special significance.

The five annual literature reviews can be found as follows: (The pre-print versions on Academia.edu are all freely accessible.)

**2019:**

https://www.academia.edu/41749647/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_A_Literature_Review_for_2019 (Pre-print version)


**2018:**

https://www.academia.edu/38243661/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_A_Literature_Review_for_2018 (Pre-print version)


**2017:**

https://www.academia.edu/35877629/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_A_Literature_Review_for_2017 (Pre-print version)

Back in June 2019 the International Publishers Association (IPA) stated that 40 African publishers’ associations had gathered ahead of a two-day IPA seminar in Nairobi, as the International Publishers Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the African Publishers Network and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa to formalise the IPA’s commitment to the region. “Straight after the signing”, the report said, “the three organizations took advantage of the presence of the heads of 40 African publishers’ associations to set out the first steps of the newly formalised partnerships.” This is a welcome development, especially as it has been generally recognized that book professional associations are still weak in many African countries, often due to lack of resources and skills. Several are dormant or carry little clout, while others seem to have ceased activities altogether.

A total of 41 national book publishers’ associations in Africa were identified, although a substantial number of them are not very active at this time; some have been dormant for several years now, or are still in the process of formation. Only 10 African publishers’ associations maintain active and currently accessible websites (as at March 2021).

The author contends that, in terms of global reach, and in today’s digital world, a web presence is essential for any book industry organization. “Publishers’ associations in Africa are in need of a higher profile. They will want to become more proactive, more visible in shaping policies and identifying needs; and publishers and book trade associations should be driving research, data gathering, and developing training programmes for the African book professions. It could be argued that this is even more important now when, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the book industries everywhere are facing hugely difficult and uncertain times.”

While not specifically on publishing in Africa, this paper is partly personal recollections of someone who has been involved in Africana book and journal publishing for almost four decades, and partly an attempt to provide some analysis of the current state [as at 2005] of reference book publishing in the African studies field, including many reference resources on Africa. It offers some views and observations from the perspective of the small independent publisher, while trying to shed some light on how and when academic libraries buy books, and what influences their purchasing decisions. Additionally, the paper offers some insights into selling African studies reference works in the current very difficult trading conditions, and in an environment of constantly declining sales and unpredictable markets. It also looks at the ongoing debate about open access from the point of view of the publisher, the issue of digital vs. print resources, and makes an attempt to predict what the future might hold.

Now inevitably very dated, the *African Publishing Companion* was a practical tool for publishing and book trade practitioners, published both in a print version and in electronic format, that provided a collection of concise yet detailed information about many aspects of African publishing, previously only available through consultation of a number of separate sources.

First published in 1977, and a fourth edition published in 1989, this resource provided comprehensive, fully annotated listings of over 4,600 libraries, publishers, booksellers, magazines and periodicals, as well as major newspapers throughout Africa. Now very dated and no further editions have been published. Copies can still be examined in major African studies libraries.

**African book professional magazines and newsletters online**

*Note:* All freely accessible, unless otherwise indicated.

Edited by Editorial Committee
ISSN 1019-5823/1992-2004 quarterly (ceased)
New series: ISSN 2665-0959 vol. 1, issue 1, February 2019- twice yearly/irregular
Publisher: African Publishers Network [https://african-publishers.net/](https://african-publishers.net/)
Note: Latest issue, as at November 2021, is vol. 1, issue 2, October 2020; also available in a French version https://african-publishers.net/images/APNET_NEWSLETTER_2019_(FRENCH).pdf
Back issues online: Only three back issues of the African Publishing Review are current available online, namely volume 12, 2003, nos. 4-6, freely accessible at the UK Core site at https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/14520143.pdf.

Afro-Asian Book Council Newsletter
Edited by Sukumar Das
ISSN: n/a 1990- twice yearly (dormant)  Latest issue is Autumn 2013.
Publisher: Afro-Asian Book Council http://www.aabookcouncil.org/

ANFASA Magazine
https://www.anfasa.org.za/blog/anfasa-magazine/
Edited by Editorial Team, Keyan G. Tomaselli (Editor)
ISSN: n/a 2008- 3-4 times annually, back issues online from vol. 2, no. 4, 2009 (Free access)
Latest issue is Volume 6, Issue 1 (2022).
Publisher: Academic and Non-Fiction Authors’ Association of South Africa
https://www.anfasa.org.za/
Not a book trade magazine, but of equal interest of both authors and publishers. ANFASA was formed as a national association especially for authors of general non-fiction works, textbooks and academic works, but it does not exclude authors of fictional works from membership. It seeks to “build a strong organisation to support and respond to authors’ needs and interests and to enable their agency in directing their personal development as creative workers, … and to inform authors of their intellectual property rights and ensure that they are properly remunerated for their work.” Recent articles have included contributions on the changing publishing (and copyright) environment in South Africa, open science/open access, funding for open access book publishing, scholarly books and their prices, editing indigenous language books, and more.

Bellagio Publishing Network Newsletter
http://www.bellagiopublishingnetwork.com/newslett_index2.htm
Edited by Katherine Salahi and Sulaiman Adebowale
ISSN: n/a 1992-2002 3 times annually  issues 1-31 (ceased)
Publisher: Bellagio Publishing Network http://www.bellagiopublishingnetwork.com/
(organization no longer active)
The Bellagio Publishing Network was dedicated to the promotion of books and publishing in the countries of the south. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, its information-rich Newsletter was issued three times a year. Although the organization is no longer active, its archive of newsletters is still accessible and remains a valuable resource. Complete text of articles is provided from Issue 20, 1997 to date. PDF versions are available from Issue 26, 2000 to date. Table of contents are provided for Issue 11, 1994 to 19, 1997. In addition, both subject and author indexes for Issue 1-20 and 21-30 are available online.

Bookmark. Magazine of the South African Booksellers Association
https://www.sabooksellers.com/bookmark/
Edited by Heleen Liebenberg
ISSN: n/a 2005- quarterly  back issues online from vol. 11, July-September 2007 (Free access)
Latest issue is no. 101, 2020
https://www.sabooksellers.com/wp-content/assets/Bookmark_101-D.pdf
Publisher: South African Booksellers Association https://www.sabooksellers.com/
**Book News Magazine** (Kenya Publishers Association)
ISSN: n/a 2018- irregular/occasional (only one issue published to date, ceased?)
Publisher: Kenya Publishers Association  https://kenyapublishers.org/

**Ghana Book News**
ISSN: 0855-0980 E- ISSN: 2756-714  2016- irregular/occasional
Edited by Kofi Asante Twumasi
Publisher: Ghana Book Development Council (formerly published by the Ghana Publishers Association)  https://gbdc.gov.gh/

**PEGboard. Newsletter of the Professional Editors’ Guild**
ISSN: 1815-3607  2013- twice yearly
Latest issue is vol. 28, issue 1, January 2021
Edited by Wilna Swart
Publisher: Professional Editors’ Guild (South Africa)
https://www.editors.org.za/default.aspx

**Publish Africa – The Digital Advantage**
https://www.streetlib.com/publishafrica
ISSN: n/a  July 2019- bi-weekly/irregularly (10 issues published as at July 2020.)
Edited by Mark Williams
Publisher: The New Publishing Standard (The Gambia)
https://thenewpublishingstandard.com/
This newsletter offers “bi-weekly insights into Africa’s publishing transition”, and is described as a review of the Pan-African publishing scene across all formats, “but with an unashamed tilt towards the digital opportunity unfolding.” General news stories about the African book industries, including book fair reports, digital publishing developments in Africa, reports about conferences, interviews, and more can be found at https://thenewpublishingstandard.com/category/africa/.

**Publishers & Books** (Print & online, in French and English, Access subscription-based)
http://www.oape-africa.org/pages/publishers-books/
ISSN: n/a  2018- monthly  Latest issue is no. 115 (May/June 2020)
Edited by Ulrich Talla Wamba
Publisher: African Observatory of Publishing Professionals/OAPE (Cameroon)
http://www.oape-africa.org/
Social media, blogs and other platforms

**Book Publishing in Africa - Facebook Group**
https://www.facebook.com/groups/233568780016434/
Moderators: Colleen Higgs, Holger Ehling, Roger Stringer, and Hans Zell.
A public Group, currently (January 2022) with 4.1K members. The moderators of group, created in 2011, describe Book Publishing in Africa as “a group for book-publishing and bookselling professionals, as well as media professionals and authors with an interest in publishing and the book trade in Africa. It is NOT a space for individual authors to showcase their unpublished work, or for blog posts that are not focused on book publishing in Africa. Nor is it a vehicle for publishers or publishing services providers to advertise their services to writers. Writers looking to get published won’t find relevant information here.”

**Edit Africa – Réflexion et information sur le monde du livre africain**
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/EditAfricaOnline/
Twitter: https://twitter.com/raphthierry
Hosted by Raphaël Thierry, this is an information-rich resource and platform for dossiers, news, reports, articles, analysis, and links about African publishing generally, and the francophone African book world more particularly. It recently added a series of podcasts, *EditAfrica Sessions*. Thierry says this represents a new format for him to express personal reflections: “I will deal with various issues such as African publishing’s relationship with international book markets, the history of publishing in Africa, institutional dynamics, and more.” At this time the broadcasts are in French with introductory texts in both French and English. Full transcripts may be added at a later time.
*Note:* See also: Les premiers 10 ans http://www.editafrica.com/les-premiers-10-ans/.

**FeedSpot Top 70 African Literature Blogs & Websites.**
https://blog.feedspot.com/african_literature_blogs/#h4958763
This is the latest (2022) version of a very useful, critically annotated listing of African literature blogs and web pages, “ranked by traffic, social media followers, domain authority and freshness.” Some of these blogs contain occasional articles about publishing aspects of African literature, and views and debates about author-publisher relations.

**Book review media**

**Africa Book Link (ABL)**
Edited by: Gilbert Braspenning
https://www.africabooklink.com/
ISSN: n/a 2013– quarterly (free access) Latest issue is Fall 2021 (complete set of back issues freely available)
Publisher: Africa Book Link info@africabooklink.com or africabooklink@telenet.be
*Note:* Covers new and forthcoming African literature and literary criticism. Rich in content, *Africa Book Link* highlights new books and articles from leading publishers and journals worldwide, including those published in Africa and the diaspora. It offers free access to substantial articles, book alerts, full-length book reviews, and
reproductions of new book covers; as well as articles, essays, papers, and book chapters. Other content includes insightful interviews and conversations, and news items about conferences, seminars, and book promotional events.

**The Africa Review of Books (ARB)/Revue africaine des livres**


Editor: Bahru Zewde, Francophone Editor: Mansour Kedidir, Managing Editor: Asnake Kefale

ISSN: 0851-7592  2004- Print and online twice yearly (in English and French)

Latest issue: vol. 14, no. 2 (2018) ceased?


Publisher: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)

*Note:* The Africa Review of Books covers works on Africa and the social sciences, humanities, and the creative arts (published in Africa and elsewhere), and the journal also aims to serve as a forum for critical analysis, reflections, and debates about Africa. However, no further issues would appear to have been published since volume 14, 2018.

### Some early studies on books and publishing in developing countries


https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/publishing-and-development

Co-published with the Obor Foundation this is a collection of nine articles/reprints (previously published elsewhere) on key issues affecting the book industries in the developing world, including Africa. They cover topics such as multinationals and Third World publishing, the economics of publishing, copyright, distribution, educational publishing and book provision, the transition from state to private sector publishing, and electronic publishing and new technologies that have transformed the book publishing process.


(no digital version available at this time)

This benchmark volume stems from the papers commissioned for a major international seminar on Publishing in the Third World, held at Bellagio, Italy, in February 1991. It presents the first full scale discussion of publishing in Asia and Africa, and features perspectives from 25 prominent publishers and recognized leaders in the field. It aims to provide a better understanding of the problems and the accomplishments of book publishing in Africa and Asia. Includes discussions of innovative ideas in Third World publishing, loan guarantee programmes, joint marketing and distribution, translation programmes and co-publication. Other papers analyse a number of programmes and initiatives sponsored by Western agencies, the World Bank, and multilateral programmes.
Also reprinted in *Readings on Publishing in Africa and the Third World*, by Philip G. Altbach. Buffalo, NY: Bellagio Publishing Network, Research and Information Center (Bellagio Studies in Publishing 1), 1993, 87-91. Reviews the access for Third World countries to international knowledge systems, and comments on the need for governments to be reminded that “free and flourishing publishing industries” should be both encouraged and assisted.

Textbooks are an integral part of the educational process and are especially important in the Third World. However, the process of textbook development is particularly difficult in these regions because of problems associated with multinational publishing companies, copyright law, and difficulties in developing indigenous publishing industries in less developed countries.

Also published in *Harvard Educational Review* 45, no. 2 (May 1975): 226-236. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.45.2.f2p87v8h618322m2 [29/05/21]
Describes the difficulty of publishing in the Third World as part of a larger relationship of dependence of developing countries on industrialized nations. Gives an overview of the special problems of books in the Third World, with a discussion of the heritage of colonialism, the current [1976] situation, the orientation of intellectuals, the economics of the book trade, and scholarly publishing, offering possible strategies for the development of this sector of the book industries.

(Also published in French as *La faim du livre.*)
One of the earliest studies providing an overview of publishing in developing countries. After the 14th UNESCO General Conference approved a book development programme, meetings were held in the developing world between 1966 and 1972 to find ways to promote book distribution and production. A result of these studies was this book, which includes: (1) a discussion on “book hunger”, production, likely future trends, distribution, copyright, and reading habits; and (2) a “Charter of the Book,” a statement of policy beginning with “Everyone has the right to read,” establishing the necessity for books, writing, the publishing and bookselling industry, libraries, documentation, book distribution, and ending with “Books serve international understanding and peaceful cooperation.”

A collection of 16 papers that focus on what has been learned in two decades of developing and implementing large-scale national textbook programmes, and the World Bank’s role in assisting textbook development. Organized into four parts it covers (1) The Design and Implementation of Textbook Programs: An Overview; (2) Policy Issues in Textbook Program Development; (3) Provision of Textbooks: Developed Systems and Infant Industries; and (4) The Future: Will New Electronic Media Make the Textbook Obsolete? Includes a case study on Lesotho.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225121644_Protection_of_the_textbook_industry_in_developing_countries_In_the_public_interest [29/05/21]
Takes a deliberately provocative stance on the question of protecting the book industries in developing nations, discussing under what circumstances, how, and who among governmental or non-governmental bodies should be in the business of producing educational materials. The author argues that governments should get out of the business of textbook production—and adds “publishers who are not employed by governments may find this a very welcome piece of advice, but my arguments may shock those who are.”

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000020817?posInSet=3&queryId=dc14f830-edf0-4696-b37a-b1839ef82316 [29/05/21]
Based on the findings of a detailed survey of publishers in various parts of the developing world, this classic study identifies the key problems for the book industries in the countries of the South. Offers a general picture of the state of publishing in each of the regions, including Africa, and proposes a range of strategies to help strengthen the book sector.

https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627542100113 ¶
The late Datus C. Smith jr., Director of Princeton University Press between 1942 and 1953 – and later President for 15 years of Franklin Book Programs, which had offices in many developing countries, exchanging books and personnel with publishers in the United States – believed publishing in Asia and Africa had a bright future. Writing in 1975 he forecast, correctly it now turns out, that the future promised significant improvements in manufacturing methods, and that one of the most useful developments, in both educational and business terms, might be the integration of publishing with electronic media. However, he felt that the most critical publishing need was development of nationwide distribution systems for mass marketing of books at low prices. He also suggested that, in the scholarly publishing field, Asia and Africa, were not yet immovably locked into a pattern and thus might be able to provide “a serviceable kind” of scholarly publishing; that they would do well
to avoid some wasteful American practices, and might use on-demand publishing as an economical method for some specialized materials with low sales potential.


An update of an earlier article published by Walter Bgoya in Development Dialogue, nos. 1-2, 1984 (see ➔ record below) providing an extensive overview of indigenous publishing in Africa [as at 1997], reviewing progress, developments, and achievements since the first Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation https://www.daghammarskjold.se/ conference on indigenous publishing held in Arusha in April 1984 - ‘Arusha I’. It also examines what Bgoya sees as the essential requirements for the future of the book industry in Africa, and the possible scenarios that might lead to success. He argues that only if there are clear policies in the areas of education, books and language, backed up by practical implementation, will be the conditions created in which indigenous publishing can grow and flourish. He suggests a number of practical self-help options that publishers might wish to consider, including joint ventures with overseas publishers, and South-South co-operation. The article includes a useful Appendix: “Frame work for establishing equitable and mutually beneficial joint ventures in publishing in Africa.”


Examines how small independent African publishers struggling to survive might successfully compete in the area of textbook publishing in the face of state monopolies in some countries, when they have to compete against transnational corporations who still maintain a stronghold on textbook publishing in many African countries, and where the transnationals “are almost in conspiracy with the governments of countries where they go to marginalize independent publishing.” Bgoya believes that one impediment is the generally poor though gradually improving quality of books from many autonomous African publishers, and he examines ways to improve the quality of African publishing in order to gain a competitive edge, one area being more training programmes for the African book professions. On the question of state participation in publishing, the author says that “state companies still have a place as long as governments do not legislate other publishers out of the market.” He also suggests that “in the final analysis, independent African publishers will have only one way to go in the future. They must leap-frog into electronic publishing.”

A wide-ranging essay examining the state of the African publishing industry “which is cast in a special position of privilege and disadvantage.” Starts off with a broad overview of publishing in Africa, and then analyses textbook publishing as a tool for the promotion of culture, liberation history as a special publishing project, and the factors influencing the growth of the indigenous book industries, such as curricula, market size, the colonial legacy, and language issues. It also examines the role played by recent collaborative initiatives, book fairs, copyright issues and, in a final section, the author discusses the prospects for publishing of African creative writing, and journals publishing. In his conclusion Bgoya argues that “cultural publishing deserves just as much attention as educational publishing”, and that “publishing in African languages should be given first priority, so that as many people as possible may encounter the adventures of living that are found in fiction, poetry, and drama.


Now inevitably rather dated, this article remains a useful overview of publishing in Africa in the 1980s, by one of its leading practitioners. Contains a wide-ranging discussion of the ideological, practical, and technical issues involved in book publishing. The author argues that transnational publishing houses cannot serve as acceptable alternatives to autonomous, indigenous publishing firms, regardless of how well they may perform, or how appropriate their books may be.


https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/publishing-and-development ¶

Offers some insights into the problems and issues in the transition from state to private sector publishing now underway in several African countries. Based on studies undertaken in Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi, and based on observations and discussions with publishers from elsewhere, the author sets out the background to state intervention in the book sector and analyzes some of the effects of state control in publishing, its advantages and its critical weaknesses. While welcoming the transition to commercialization, the author identifies some flaws in some approaches to textbook provision by the private sector and states that there is “the apparent failure to recognize that the commercial sector must provide the impetus for change and demonstrate the technical proficiency required for textbook provision”; and that the commercial systems requires genuine competition among publishers, rather than being dominated by one or two, and without which it is likely to suffer many of the shortcomings of the previous state monopolies. The author also argues forcefully that a liberalized system
of textbook supply must include all those who are part of the “book chain”, including booksellers and the retail book trade, and that Ministry of Education officials should not assume the role of booksellers, or attempting to manage book distribution systems.


Brickhill argues that the only chance for survival of the African book industries is in the development of a sustainable, commercially viable book chain, and that this means publishers and booksellers must work closer together. He then sets out the essential components of a functioning book chain and makes some proposals which he believes would work to mutual benefit for both publishers and booksellers, and, at the same time, would bring them closer together.


In October 1985 the International African Institute (IAI) in London organized a symposium on "The Book Famine in Africa." The problem was placed before the Africanist community by comparing the “terrible dearth of books and other teaching materials that afflicts nearly all African countries south of the Sahara” to the food crises in Ethiopia and Mali, with the conclusion that though less "newsworthy" it would, unless remedied, "do incalculable long-term harm to Africa and the ability of its people to deal with the problems that beset it today.”

One of the speakers at that conference was the distinguished Africanist scholar the late Professor Michael Crowder who, in his address, contrasted the book famine in Africa with the [then] well-publicized food and technology famine and states that this “insidious famine...may mortgage Africa’s future for several generations to come.” Discusses the reasons why education has not been the “cure-all” expected, partly due to the brain-drain of intellectuals, but also due to the intellectual starvation of those who stayed behind.

Note: on this conference see also A Perspective on the Book Famine by Corrinne Nyquist http://www.progressivelibrariansguild.org/PL/PL03/043.pdf


Swedish publisher Per Gedin views the establishment of an autonomous publishing industry in Africa as the most central issue in creating a vital African literature. He argues that that financial organizations, in conjunction with educational institutions, should guarantee loans for autonomous publishing. Concludes that “a strong autonomous publishing industry is a prerequisite for a great, varied and vital indigenous literature and that it is something that can be achieved at a comparatively very low cost. And with the establishment of a publishing
industry, development of the infrastructure of distribution centres, bookshops, book clubs, etc. will naturally follow.”

Hutchinson, Robert “Neo-colonial Tactics.” Africa, an international business … monthly, no. 23 (July 1973): 74-79. (no digital version available at this time)
While published almost 50 years ago and now very dated, this critical examination of the partnership between the Macmillan Company and the Tanzania Publishing House (TPH) remains of interest as it was widely quoted at the time. Gives details of the agreements and arrangements between TPH and Macmillan and asserts that this “partnership” was “partly in order to create the veneer of a national publishing house.” Gives examples of how Macmillan “made easy money”, vigorously criticizes the management’s poor attempts at publishing of creative writing and the lack of training opportunities offered to Tanzanians. Concludes by observing that TPH faces a “major challenge of building a strong self-reliant publishing house that combines professional efficiency and financial integrity with a comprehensive and creative editorial programme.”

Also published in French as Le livre en Afrique aujourd’hui.
Sam Kotei’s book was one of the first major in-depth studies on the state of the book and publishing in Africa, in which the author looked back on a decade of special efforts to alleviate the “acute shortage of books” identified at the UNESCO meeting on books in Accra in 1968 (see record below). The author notes that progress was uneven and that many of the problems identified in 1968 still remained, although African publishing had generally made “impressive strides”. The author surveyed the available literature, questioned writers, publishers, printers, libraries, bookshops, national book development councils, and interviewed book industry professional in several African countries in order to produce this overview of the situation in the 1970s and 1980s. Concludes with an examination of the future prospects of the book industry in Africa. Kotei’s book remains a seminal study, not least for purposes of comparison as it relates to the growth of the African book industries since the 1980s.

This was one of the earliest articles on autonomous African publishing, by the former director of the East African Publishing House in Nairobi. Nottingham argued that Africa needs a strong indigenous publishing industry, with ownership, production, personnel, and profits controlled by Africans, and proposed that local branches of British publishing houses should become indigenous companies, with majority shareholding held by Africans. Founded in 1965, the East African Publishing House in Nairobi, although originally set-up with the assistance of the British publisher André Deutsch, can probably be considered the first major indigenous publisher in East Africa. EAPH quickly built up a substantial and high-quality list,
and this included the work of what later became very well-known East African writers such as Okot p’Bitek. Sadly, the company went into receivership in 1988.


An important, now seminal document that brings together the proceedings of the International Conference on Publishing and Book Development held at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in December of 1973. Contributions came from many prominent figures in the field of African publishing active in the 1970s, as well as from writers (Chinua Achebe among them), editors, booksellers, and librarians. The volume includes some of the contributed papers, summaries of all papers, and the recommendations that were put forward at that time. Conference participants concluded “there is no doubt that a lively and flourishing publishing industry is vital for the development of the reading habit, to foster and preserve a country’s culture, and to produce inexpensive books which meet local needs.” Long out-of-print, but copies should be available in major academic libraries.


A provocative paper contributed to the Ife conference (see ➔ record above) by the pioneering Nigerian publisher Gabriel Onibonoje. It begins by addressing “the futility of grandiose conference aims and pious resolutions”, tracing the aims, resolutions and sponsorship of previous conferences on publishing, in an attempt to demonstrate that they are “invariably barren of any worthwhile and lasting results.” Concludes “the African author must speak the language, fulfil the expectations and satisfy the needs of the ordinary African reader. The social richness of African literature, that is, the number, the intensity and quality of the ‘earth’ connections, must be determined by the African reading public. Our literature must find its inspiration from the hard life of the people and focus on our reality, know it better and thus create the necessary critical consciousness among the people and ultimately lead them to true development and freedom.”


An overview of publishing in Africa up to the mid-1970s, including a historical perspective and account of the early days between 1945 and the late 1950s when African publishing for schools and universities was controlled and directed from outside. The author (who was Director of the Africa Division of the Longman Group), thereafter describes the catalysts of educational expansion, the major publishing influences, problems facing publishers, and other constraints hindering book development on the continent, offering some suggestions how developing nations in Africa might solve these problems.


A provocative paper, published in the mid-1970s, that considers various aspects of publishing against a background of illiteracy, an emphasis on achievement reading rather than reading to for pleasure, and the numerous constraints that limit the development of a local publishing industry. Contends that international market forces determine general and non-fiction publishing and that educational publishing is dominated by multinational publishing companies. The author finds that state participation in publishing has not been very successful, and that African governments have taken only limited action to strengthen their indigenous book industries.


(Also available in French *Réunion regionale d’experts sur les stratégies nationales du livre en Afrique. Rapport de la Réunion*)

Contains the working papers, contributions submitted by participants, and the final report of the Regional Meeting of Experts on National Book Strategies in Africa, which was held in Dakar in February 1982. It opens with a working paper submitted by the UNESCO Secretariat on National Book Strategies in Africa, followed by general overviews of the state of the book and publishing in Africa, and studies on book development and book policies in Benin, Congo (Brazzaville), Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. Now inevitably very dated, but still useful for historical background on the development of the book industries in several African countries.


Also published in French as *La Promotion du livre en Afrique: problèmes et perspectives*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000133149?posInSet=1&queryId=2ce063ee-18d2-4122-9053-5cc5775763ee [29/05/21]

A historically important document (and still available online at the UNESCO website above), this was one of the earliest studies on publishing and book development in Africa. It consists of a report of a meeting of experts on book development in Africa, convened by and held in Accra in February 1968. Delegates to the conference examined in detail the problems facing book development in Africa, looking at the role of books in economic and social development, suggesting measures to promote book production in the general and educational publishing
sectors, as well as considering aspects such as the distribution, promotion, and the international flow of books.

Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/1462141/The_Other_Famine [03/11/21]

“Almost daily over the past two years” [1986-87], the author says, we “have been haunted by the spectre of starving African children on our TV screens. Meanwhile, another form of starvation, largely unnoticed and receiving little media attention, is taking place in Africa - book famine.” In an assessment of the situation of the state of the book and the indigenous book industries in Africa [in the late 1980s] he states, “after enjoying a period of relative boom and rapid expansion in the 1970s, is currently in a severe state of crisis. There are few countries in Africa today which do not face deep recession and collapsing economies. The chronic balance of payments problems and ensuing scarcity of foreign exchange have not only substantially curtailed the flow of new books from local presses; the long payment pipelines - and the effects of import controls - have also meant that the number of imported books reaching Africa has dropped sharply.” Zell reviews the activities of a number of book donation organization and proposes action on a number of fronts, to alleviate the situation.

**Book history and book culture**

See also ➔ General and regional studies on African publishing and the book sector
➔ Country-specific studies
➔ Author-publisher relationship/Publishing of African writers and African literature
➔ British and multinational publishers in Africa


This volume – containing papers originally published in the Journal of Southern African Studies, ➔ see record below – “is concerned with the institutions and processes informing textual production, circulation and consumption in the region, over a broad historical period from the late 18th century to the present day.” Drawing together interdisciplinary research and diverse methodologies, the collection encompasses a range of perspectives, including literary studies, anthropology, publishing studies, the history of the book and art history, and many of the chapters are based on previously unexamined archives and collections. The volume seeks to contribute to current debates “and opens up new and exciting ways of furthering the study of postcolonial literature and African book history.”

Research into print culture studies in Africa has largely been dominated by histories of how European missionaries, colonial administrators and traders brought the book and literacy to Africa. This collection addresses some important issues that have been widely neglected. And the focus here is on black southern African writing, publishing and readerships, in contrast with the often white-dominated narrative of print culture, even within African scholarship. Drawing together interdisciplinary research and diverse methodologies, this special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* offers a range of perspectives, including literary studies, anthropology, publishing studies, the history of the book, art history and information science. Many of the articles are based on previously unexamined archives and collections, for example authors’, publishers’ and state archives, and oral history research. The work has its origins in the British Academy project ‘Print Culture and Publishing in South Africa in the 20th Century’ (2012–16), based at Oxford Brookes University and the University of Pretoria and led by the guest editors of this volume.

The issue is organized around three closely related themes: First, it presents original research into the formation of reading publics and the impact of reading cultures, uncovering obscure but important reading communities and circuits of book distribution and reception. A second theme is the relationship between print and politics. Given the inequalities resulting from colonial, apartheid and more recent forms of governance, there is a particular focus on networks of power: how control over the production and circulation of printed books has shaped literary and cultural development, how it has regulated access to publishing platforms, and the collusion among education departments and publishing monopolies. The third theme is transnational print culture, and the role of publishers as agents and gatekeepers, with particular attention to how the economic, ideological and political control exercised by publishers in Europe and America has shaped literature and society in southern Africa.

This collection has its origins in a ‘The Book in Africa’ symposium, held in October 2012 at the Institute of English Studies in London. It provided a forum for the discussion of new research and critical debates about print culture in Africa, and brought together leading scholars in African literature with interests in literary and cultural history, publishing studies, and the history of the book. The papers presented at the symposium, and brought together in this volume, include case studies from across Africa, from Cameroon to Zambia. In their introduction the editors rightly point out that the discipline of book history in Africa is barely mentioned, or omitted entirely, in the major book history studies and readers, or in histories of the major British publishing houses. In the few histories that have been published “the invariable pattern has been to give little attention to Africa’s pre-colonial, manuscript tradition, and to focus instead on the spread of printing by missionaries and colonial administrators in the nineteenth century.” The essays are grouped in relation to three broad critical debates: Part I, ‘From Script to Print’ considers the transition between oral, manuscript, and print cultures, with case studies of the Cape Colony, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Mali examining the relationships between transcribed manuscripts and printed books in these


Based on extensive oral testimonies and new archival research in, among others, the archives of Oxford University Press, this is a meticulously researched study about an eclectic but now largely forgotten series of postcolonial literature, the Three Crowns series. At the same time the book presents an insightful examination of the activities of three branches of Oxford University Press in Africa over a period of several decades. The Three Crowns series was launched by OUP in 1962. It was terminated in 1976, although it lived on for a short time thereafter as OUP branches in Africa were allowed to continue to use the Three Crowns name and logo for their locally published literary titles. The series became the vehicle for the international publication of the works of several prominent African writers such as Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, Joe de Graft, Athol Fugard, Oswald Mtshali, Lewis Nkosi, and Léopold Sédar Senghor, among others. Although small, financially unsuccessful and hence short lived, the series, Caroline Davis says, “provides a unique insight into the process of postcolonial literary production and transcultural relations.” The study also probes into to two broader questions: how did Britain impose and maintain its cultural dominance over Anglophone African literature beyond the end of former colonisation in the continent; and what role was played by British publishers in the creation of African literature in this period of decolonisation.


Addresses the creation of Athol Fugard’s plays not as performances or as texts, but as material objects, and examines how the meaning and value of his plays were constructed through the interventions of his publisher. The paper draws attention to the sharp distinction in the way that Fugard’s performances and published plays have been received, most acutely with respect to the plays *Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island and Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act.* These plays directly addressed and attacked apartheid legislation and enforcement. In performance in South Africa between 1972–1973 they were regarded as radical and subversive by the South African authorities as well as by audiences and critics. The Oxford University Press edition of this trilogy, *Statements: Three Plays* (1974), was by contrast packaged as a literary and commercial product that circulated free from censorship. This essay, the author says, “explores the reasons for this dichotomy through a detailed author/publisher case study of the publication history of the plays. It analyses the means by which Fugard was re-branded as an ‘Oxford author’” through the book’s publication in the Oxford Paperback Series, and assesses the impact of this brand on the reception of Fugard’s plays. The published book was also a more individualistic creative product than the performances of the plays: the Press applied a conventional model of authorship which served to defuse the radical, interracial partnership between Fugard and his co-writers Winston
Ntshona and John Kani. Likewise, the political content was neutralized as the plays were promoted as allegorical literary works of universal significance.” By these means, the author argues, “Fugard was successfully incorporated into the literary establishment in the UK, the USA and South Africa under apartheid.”


This history of Oxford University Press (OUP) in South Africa draws on archival records and oral testimonies. It first considers OUP’s rationale and vision for its work in pre-war South Africa. This is followed by a discussion of the development of the branch’s anti-apartheid general and academic lists alongside its educational list from the late 1940s to the 1960s, reflecting on the dilemmas and contradictions entailed in this dual policy. It then reviews the radical change of management approach towards South Africa in 1970 and the ensuing crisis in the branch and conflicts in London and Oxford, as the branch’s liberal position was sacrificed in order to maintain its commercial position in the country. The article contends that OUP in the UK as well as Cape Town increasingly depended on profits from the publication of ‘Bantu Education’ approved texts, which led to an avoidance of the publication of ‘controversial’ or anti-apartheid texts. It reviews how OUP represented its work in South Africa in narratives and histories of publishing that veiled the company’s commercial interests while emphasising its cultural and educational mission. [Not examined, from the abstract]


Examines the production, through copying and circulation, of pamphlets, catechisms, handmade booklets, or student notebooks at the Cape of Good Hope from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. In tracing the history of these scribal and copying traditions, the author argues these practices shaped the production, distribution and reception of the book at the Cape. “Ordinary readers impacted print capitalism as they adapted to it. Politics, religion, language, class and personal identity were linked to the practice of producing reading material through copying and circulating, and through communal reading.”


Also online at [http://www.printculturesouthafrica.org/publications/details/book_history_in_south_africa_recent_developments_and_prospects][28/07/21]

There is now a growing albeit still relatively modest body of work on the history of the book and print culture in South Africa. The author provides an overview of current [2013] developments and recent research activities in this area (focusing primarily on work that appeared between 2010 and 2012), and briefly sketches some prospects for the future. He suggests that the most significant step forward for book history in South Africa “would be a teaching programme at a research-intensive university, or a research centre that focuses on book history and/or print and digital cultures. Another way forward would be to connect
South Africa’s manuscript, book and print culture scholars to existing centres or projects in Africa with broader but germane research themes.”


This study aims to demonstrate how the common practice of reading can illuminate the social and political history of a culture. It reveals resistance strategies in the reading and writing practices of South Africans, strategies that have been hidden until now for political reasons relating to the country’s liberation struggles. By scrutinizing records of early readers at the Cape, and those from women’s associations, army education units, universities, courts, libraries, prison departments, and political groups, and more, the author examines the key works of fiction and non-fiction, magazines, and newspapers that were read and discussed by political activists and prisoners. Uncovering the book and library schemes that elites used to regulate reading, Archie Dick exposes incidences of intellectual fraud, book theft, censorship, and book burning. Through this methodology, the author shows how South African readers used reading and books to resist unjust regimes and build community across South Africa’s class and racial barriers.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02582470609464927

In an introduction to a special issue of the *South African Historical Journal* devoted to book history, the authors describes the broad area of book history in different parts of the world and its historiographical traditions; thereafter discuss the emerging field of book history in South Africa, and set out some of the strategies and intellectual opportunities that come with the field.

Isaac, Samuel *The History of Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa, Including the Most Notable Literary Works Written by African Authors about African History from the 2nd Century BC to the 19th Century AD.*


A very interesting posting in UnCensored, an independent, self-funded platform “whose goal is to tell the stories that commercial media ignore”, that traces the history of the written word, and early African literary culture, in Sub-Saharan Africa. It covers African literary works from Chad to Tanzania and from Senegal to Ethiopia, dating back to between the 9th and 7th Century BC, with the oldest inscriptions of the ancient South Arabian script, and including scripts from across the sub-region. In his concluding comments the author states “Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the world’s oldest literary cultures, yet despite evidence to the contrary, the myth of non-literate African societies persists. Part of the blame rests on colonial racial anthropologists who created that image. The other factor are the European armies that destroyed the libraries that held these manuscripts starting with the Portuguese in Kilwa and the Swahili coast, the French in Segu and the British in Asante. The other group that shoulders
much of the blame are historians who chose to exclude these manuscripts and instead preferred non-African sources. … In recent times however, this phenomenon has been changing with more historians including these African writers in their books, and the digitisation of many of these manuscripts will hopefully see a paradigm shift in how African history is written and interpreted.”

Jamra, Mark **Kigelia. A Typeface for Africa.**
https://kigelia-font.com/ [28/05/21]
Designed by Mark Jamra and Neil Patel, Kigelia is a large typeface family that contains the most prominent writing systems in Africa, each system comprising 10 fonts in 5 weights. The system is named after the Kigelia Africana, a tree which occurs throughout tropical Africa from Eritrea and Chad to northern South Africa, and west to Senegal and Namibia. It is described as containing “a typographic richness and technical functionality previously unavailable for several languages on the African continent.” The scripts are Adlam, Arabic, Cyrillic, Ge’ez, Greek, Latin (IPA & ARA), N’ko, Osmanya, Tifinagh, and Vai. It is a type system that can handle multilingual tasks, and is also designed with mobile devices in mind. The developers say that they hope the use of Kigelia “will help promote literacy and commerce in Africa, as well as the creation of rich and relevant local content, which is essential to increasing the availability of important resources online.”

Note: More details are set out in an attractive 54 page colour booklet https://www.jamra-patel.com/booklet/kigelia-booklet Kigelia. A Typeface for Africa, which can be obtained for the cost of packing and shipping.

Le Roux, Elizabeth **“Compiled Hindsight? Publishers’ Archives in South Africa.”**
Also at (freely accessible) https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/39853/LeRoux_Compiled_2013.pdf?sequence=1 [27/07/21]

Publishing is an important cultural industry, and its products form part of the record of our social and cultural history. Yet what of the records of the publishers themselves – the voluminous correspondence, financial information, manuscripts, policies, review reports, and so on – and what is preserved of such records? In this paper, the author examines the manner in which South African publishers keep – and do not keep – archives. “If we are to write a full publishing history in this country, then it is imperative that there should be archives, records, sources of information. Yet publishers, while concerned with record-keeping for corporate purposes, turn out to be not particularly good at keeping records for posterity.” This paper aims to examine which kinds of traces survive, and under what circumstances, in the archives of South African publishers, using a case study approach.

In her conclusions, ‘Towards preserving South Africa’s publishing past’, Le Roux states: “The development of preservation guidelines would be of use to researchers who are seeking to write publisher histories, as well as to publishing houses with haphazard policies for sorting and retaining records for archival purposes … A basic starting point would be the preservation, conservation and in some cases digitization of corporate historical records and artefacts deemed to be of permanent value in documenting the company’s founding and growth.” However, “decision-making guidelines are required, taking into account the
significance and value of certain categories of records, while advice is also needed on how to preserve or digitize records. This could lead to the development of a rich – and sustainable – resource for future scholars.”

Pre-print version (freely accessible), published as “Publishing in the South: A Literature Review of Book History Studies in South Africa.” https://www.academia.edu/311916/Publishing_in_the_South_A_literature_review_of_book_history_studies_in_South_Africa [19/06/21]

The study of book history is in its infancy in South Africa, the author says, with only a small group of scholars working in the area and little sense of a shared body of literature, which could be used as foundational texts for those wishing to conduct research in this field. This article “describes an attempt to map the terrain of book and print culture studies in South Africa to date. Although it is only in recent years that writings have come to be grouped under a broader heading of book history (whether at conferences or in special issues of journals), work has been done in this field since the early twentieth century. This is similar to the situation in other countries, where the ‘accidental’ growth of book history has meant that a great deal of work has been done on a wide variety of relevant topics. The article describes key strands in the literature, including print history, publishing history, the overlap with literary history, as well as studies of readership and reception.

Also at (click Request Full-text pdf) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260100334_Book_History_in_the_African_World_The_State_of_the_Discipline

African print culture has not been widely studied from a historical perspective. Many studies focus on the present “without interrogating the historical developments that led to the present situation”. While there is information available on what has been published over time, the author believes little attention has been paid to the material forms of texts, their distribution, marketing, readership, or impact; and that much earlier work is also largely descriptive, and it is only very recently that theoretical models of book history have begun to influence studies in this field. “Current studies of African publishing tend overwhelmingly to focus on contemporary problems: low literacy rates, low per-capita incomes, poor infrastructure, the small reading publics and thus small audiences for indigenous publications. This focus on the present is also often linked to book development themes. There is thus little historical nuance in most studies of African publishing.”

This essay and literature review is thus “a first attempt to organize book historical studies in an African context” and, at the same time, it presents a sampling of the most significant work and highlights trends. Beth Le Roux states that a great deal of attention is being paid to newspapers and the readerships they create through their circulation, and that the concept of
‘written culture’ is also growing in use, indicating an awareness of the use of texts prior to the coming of printing presses on European ships. “But considerable gaps remain. The selling and circulation of books has received little attention (even in South Africa and Nigeria, which have been the subject of more study than other regions); more detailed publisher profiles and histories are needed; and comparative or transnational studies should be conducted. There is also an ongoing need for statistics and quantitative data on the publishing industry, throughout the continent.” An exceptionally comprehensive and valuable bibliography of African book history is included as an Appendix.


The systematic study of the ‘history of the book’ and the impact of print and writing in African countries has not yet received widespread recognition as a discipline, although, over the past two decades, levels of knowledge and interest in the field have grown. This essay aims to trace the trajectory of research carried out in this discipline. Evidence shows that an early interest in locally focussed or national histories appears to have endured, but some transnational and comparative studies have now also emerged. However, the author believes that, without more baseline studies of the origins and development of printing and publishing, a solid basis has not yet been laid for more far-reaching studies; and that considerable gaps remain, thus offering scope for further research.


This substantial collection of essays – with contributions both by key scholars in the field as well as book professionals – aims to explore the power of print and the politics of the book in South Africa from a range of disciplinary perspectives, thus illustrating its relevance to South Africa’s literary and cultural history. In his introductory essay the editor describes it as “a history of the book and of the history of its study in Southern Africa”, that seeks to provide a comprehensive and representative introduction to the study of print and of the book in South Africa, with essays examining the relations between the production and consumption of books and the rich social history of South African print cultures. Contents is divided into eight sections, with essays addressing a wide range of topics such as the role of print cultures in contests over the nature of the colonial public sphere in the nineteenth century; orthography; book-collecting and libraries; print and transnationalism; how the fates of South African texts, locally and globally, have been affected by their material instantiations; the popularity of photocomics in Apartheid South Africa; censorship during and after apartheid; books about art and books as art; as well as South African academic publishing.


A small section, freely accessible as part of OUP’s monumental reference work *The Oxford Companion to the Book* – covering the book, broadly conceived, throughout the world from ancient to modern times – this is a useful condensed history of the book in sub-Saharan Africa. It is divided into six sub-sections: MS Cultures, The Impact of Slavery and Evangelism, West Africa, East and Central Africa, Southern Africa, and Book Production in Africa Today, albeit the latter consisting of just a single paragraph.


“Recent scholarship has transformed our understanding of the extent of the written word in Africa. It was long believed that the spoken word characterised African culture and that the written word was exceptional.” Manuscripts, precious because of their rarity, immediately attract the attention of the scholar and the curator, but also capture the imagination of the general public. There is a need for policies to conserve and promote these sources. Less attention has been given to Africa’s printed heritage, which to date has never been the subject of any widespread recovery project. These considerations were the starting point of a research project that the author conducted in the period 2009–11, in partnership with the Research and Documentation Centre of Asmara (RDC), the institution that serves as the National Archives and Library of Eritrea. It allowed the documentation of almost all printed documents produced in Eritrea in the period between 1867 and 1941. Eritrea thus has now a national bibliography for this entire period.

**Book industry statistics and data**

*Note: *Publicly accessible book industry statistics and data is currently only available for one country in Anglophone-speaking Africa, that of South Africa.


These three volumes are the continuation of a series of book industry profile studies that forms part of a systematic data collection exercise and central database developed and housed at the Department of Information Science (Publishing Studies Division) at the University of Pretoria. The reports and surveys aim to provide a mechanism to track changes in the "South African book value chain", and which can also be used as a tool to monitor the impact of the country’s national book policy. As no survey was done for the 2009 calendar year, the latest survey questionnaire collected the full range of data for 2010, and all the data for 2009 necessary to produce the standard Broad Trends Report covering the calendar years from 2008 to 2010. A separate abbreviated report is available for 2009.


Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/37581588/African_Book_Industry_Data_and_the_Sate_of_African_National_Bibliographies

No less than three major international meetings on publishing in Africa have taken place recently [between 2017-2019], which have been followed by detailed action plans. Among many other recommendations, calls for action to find solutions to perennial problems, as well as discussions focusing on sectorial innovation and revitalization of the African book industries, participants in all three meetings were strongly urged to start collecting and disseminating book industry data. It is true that reliable figures of book publishing output for the continent of Africa do not exist at the present time, with the exception of a very small number of countries, notably South Africa and Morocco. Meantime the state of African national bibliographies, which can form the groundwork of book industry data, presents a picture of neglect for the most part, with many national bibliographies seriously in arrears, currently dormant, or having ceased publication altogether. Only a small number are accessible in digital formats. Book publishing data and book production statistics are important elements in measuring the growth and vitality of indigenous publishing in any part of the world. In the absence of such data for most of the African continent, there is a need for research, analysis, documentation, and systematic gathering of current, reliable data and statistics on the whole book sector in Africa. However, there are huge challenges and complexities in the goal of collecting data for book industry surveys, which must not be underestimated. Many questions will need to be asked: for example, how is data going to be collected and analysed; what will be the parameters; and what are going to be the sources and...
the methods? Who should be responsible for undertaking the research and the compilation of such book industry data; and, crucially, who is going to fund the research and the data gathering process on a systematic and ongoing basis?

Collecting book industry data is closely interrelated with the publication of national bibliographies and, in addition to examining the issues and challenges relating to the creation of book industry statistics, this paper also provides an analysis of the current state of national bibliographies in Africa, as well as linked matters such as legal deposit legislation, and compliance of legal deposit. Most national libraries and bibliographic agencies in Africa continue to operate under severe constraints, and have been chronically underfunded by their governments for the past four decades or more. An analysis of the current status of African national bibliographies sadly presents a dismal picture.

It is unlikely that reliable data for the African book industries can be collected and published without the input and full cooperation of national libraries or bibliographic agencies. There is equally an urgent need for much more active collaboration and interaction between the agencies producing national bibliographies with publishers and book trade associations in each African country. Any attempts to revive the fortunes of African national libraries, and the resumption of publication of high quality and timely national bibliographies, will amount to a formidable task. This paper offers a range of suggestions and recommendations how the situation might be addressed and improved, but also points out that regular compilation of a national bibliography, and effective maintenance of legal deposit, necessitates adequate staff in terms of both numbers and expertise, which is not the case at this time.


Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/4549278/How_Many_Books_are_Published_in_Africa_The_Need_for_More_Reliable_Statistics [05/06/21]

This article is a call for more reliable statistical information about African book publishing output. In much of the literature on publishing in Africa numerous writers of articles and reports on the state of the book sector in Africa have raised the issue of Africa’s total book production, comparing it with that of the rest of the world. Almost always they have cited the figure to be between 2-3% of the world’s publishing output. This is the figure that has been cited perpetually for the last two decades at least, and is based on statistical analysis published the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). Those figures, in turn, came from the statistical data presented in the ‘Culture and Communication’ domains in the now discontinued UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks from 1963 to 1999, and which, as the author demonstrates in this article, have been chronically patchy, unreliable or suspect for a number of reasons.
General and regional studies on African publishing and the book sector (1990-2021)
See also ➔ Book history and book culture
➔ Publisher histories and profiles

Alfredsson, Henrick *Her Mission: To Bring African Books to a Global Audience.*
http://nai.uu.se/news/articles/2017/06/07/144445/index.xml (Posted 07 June 2017)
Another version also at http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/her-mission-to-bring-african-books-to-a-global-audience [04/06/21]

Mary Jay, former CEO of African Books Collective Limited
http://www.africanbookscollective.com/ reflects on the prospects and challenges of the African book industries, and her involvement over the past three decades promoting the works of African authors and academic scholars to a global audience. Surprisingly, she says, “few are aware of the importance of encouraging and supporting African publishing, even in the academic world of the Global North. Today in many UK universities, and probably elsewhere in the world as well, you can take a degree or master’s in African studies without reading a single book published in Africa.” In many African countries and regions, like so many other sectors of the book market, has also been infected by corruption and unfair competition, in some cases caused by big and powerful actors from the Global North. Meantime overseas book donation programmes on a massive scale can have unintentionally negative consequences. In some cases when book aid organisations send large quantities of books, often textbooks for educational purposes, they unwittingly kill the market for regional or local publishers and writers. The donated books are almost without exception published outside of Africa, and written by non-African authors, Jay says. “It is vital that African children have access to books published from within their own cultures, books that relate to their own lives and experiences. It would be preferable for Northern donations to be in the form of budgets for purchase, rather than the expense of shipping container-loads of books, which are too often simply library or publisher overstocks.”

Al Qasimi, Bodour *“Africa Publishing Innovation Fund (APIF): Ideas to Keep African Children Learning and Communities Connected.”* 

In 2019, an estimated 100 million African school-age children were designated ‘out-of-school’, the highest numbers in the world the author says, who is the current President of the International Publishers Association (IPA) https://www.internationalpublishers.org/. Now the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically worsened that already bleak picture because school closures have cut off any children who cannot access education remotely. “Though the new figure is not yet known, it is clear that a generation of children will fall by the wayside unless decisive steps are taken to address the systemic, infrastructural and cultural hurdles that are preventing African children from learning. That would be a huge setback for African development, with potentially disastrous consequences in years to come.” Al Qasimi reports about the second year of operation and activities of the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund
Bodour Al Qasimi, President of the International Publishers Association (IPA) https://www.internationalpublishers.org/, says that the African and Arab publishing markets have followed similar trajectories in which colonization, and then subsequent independence, have significantly shaped publishing markets development. Now some recent new initiatives, and the new digital publishing environment, are enhancing their international visibility. Digitization and Internet connectivity are key drivers of cultural globalization in both the Arab world and Africa, which can lead to rapid integration of global publishing markets. However, she cautions, “African publishers and writers are subjected to a new era of colonialism through digital imperialism if they ignore digitization trends in the publishing industry. In addition to developing indigenous publishing industries focused on printed books and textbooks, the new challenge is indigenous, locally relevant content.”

The transcript of a wide-ranging conversation between Bodour Al Quasimi, President of the International Publishers Associations (IPA) https://www.internationalpublishers.org/, and Samuel Kolawole, Chairman of the African Publishers Network (APNET) https://african-publishers.net/ and Managing Director of University Press, PLC in Nigeria https://universitypressplc.com/, how the pandemic has affected publishing and the book trade in Africa, and how publishers are coping with the situation in these very difficult and uncertain times. Kolawole also talks about current initiatives – including those supported by the IPA – to help publishers moving to a digital environment and explore the prospects of remote learning. There are many caveats and challenges in this respect, Kolawole says: “One of the major challenges we have is the vast land mass that we have in Africa. There are cities that are well developed where infrastructure is available. But there are also many people in the remote areas. If we are looking at remote learning, we are looking at it not just from the aspect of learning away from brick-and-mortar schools, but from taking learning to those who are in remote areas. Most people in the cities can afford [it], many private schools are online now, teaching is going on. But what about those in the rural areas? What about those in areas where there is no Internet, the infrastructure is not good, the electricity is poor? How do we reach them? That is the major challenge that I see. The remoteness is not just in terms of
distance you need to cover to get to them, it is also the remoteness from the kind of infrastructure that they need to be able to get educated.”


A conversation with Brian Wafawarowa, former President of the Publishers Association of South Africa, who says publishing in Africa has “has made huge strides”, but today faces some major challenges, which could well reverse those gains, namely that governments across the continent are “enacting new policies that are often detrimental to the book sector. These policies include copyright amendment programs and severe restrictions on approved books for schools. … Many countries are looking into reducing the number of titles approved for education to as little as one and others are contemplating state publishing.”


Although not specifically dealing with the African situation, and primarily intended for educational planners and policy makers in developing countries – and their counterparts in development, and donor agencies – this is an excellent (albeit now slightly dated) guide that aims to assist governments to establish technically and economically sound and sustainable planning and management systems for the development and provision of good quality learning materials. The author identifies the most acute problems in book provision, describes the different publishing processes, and the professional skills required in the publishing industry. Other chapters set out the differences between general publishing and the development, production and distribution of educational materials, and how to deal efficiently with the issues and problems that are raised in this book, together with suggestions for the development of an effective national book policy.


The Working Group on Books and Learning Materials of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa/ADEA https://www.adeanet.org/en/working-groups/books-learning-materials convened a major conference on book development in Africa in Nairobi in October 2011, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders in the field of African education and the African book and publishing sector. Its main objective was “to take stock of the state of writing, publishing, printing, bookselling, distribution, marketing, dissemination and promotion of books and reading in support of education in African countries within the framework of the role of the governments in policy formulation and enforcement.” These pages offer access (as individual PDF files) to the conference programme, the post conference reports and recommendations (with summaries of the keynote papers presented, or full text of the papers), press releases, and some other post conference material.
Attwell, Arthur *The Problem with Self-publishing.*

A thought-provoking article by South African entrepreneur and founder of Book Dash http://bookdash.org/ Arthur Attwell, who says what self-publishers lack is not skill, but the relationship between an author and a publisher. The value of having a publisher doesn’t lie in their skills, but in their relationship to your book. “That relationship is a very special one: when a publisher invests in an author’s work, both parties are personally committed, first and foremost, to the success of the book.” ‘Creative control’ is often touted as a reason to self-publish, Attwell says: “That’s like choosing to be a single parent because you believe you’ll do a better job on your own than with a committed partner. There are many good reasons to self-publish (it’s faster and more profitable per sale, for instance) but creative control is not one of them.”

Does that mean self-publishing is always a bad idea, and that self-published books will never be as good as published ones? “Of course not. There are many great self-publishers and, just as in marriages and parenting, there are lousy publishers—often too tired, broke, overstretched or inexperienced to do the job properly. And, anyway, finding a publisher can be one of life’s great snipe hunts. But this remains: if your book doesn’t have two independently minded parents, you will have to work much harder, and get much luckier, to make your book all it can be.”


Seeks to demonstrate some of the issues and adverse effects of the domination of ex-colonial languages for intellectual life in Africa. The author notes that English serves fundamentally the interests of those for whom it is both an export commodity and a language of conquest and domination. He argues that there is no compelling reason for adopting a foreign language as a national one, and that there is ample evidence that such linguistic imposition does more harm than good. When a language is artificially imposed, students are rarely able to master it sufficiently to work comfortably in it. Not only do they fail to acquire proficiency in the foreign language; they also lose proficiency in their own languages, becoming twice disadvantaged. The author sees dependency on a foreign language, like other forms of dependency, “as a liability that a nation can ill afford.”

http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/publishers-authors-and-africa-s-cultural-development [05/06/21]

The keynote address delivered by Tanzanian publisher Walter Bgoya at the 3rd East African Literature and Cultural Studies Conference, held in Dar es Salaam in August 2017. As a
publisher who has been involved in the African book industries for forty-five years, he shares his thoughts about publishers and publishing, writers and writing, and their role in African cultural development; and thereafter reflects on this question: do the African intelligentsia and African state really care? He pays particular attention to the situation of textbook publishing in Tanzania, where conflicting approaches and interests about the development, control and delivery of educational books to schools in the country have been a feature of the Tanzania publishing industry from the very beginning. It has gone through the experience of state publishing (1966–1985), private sector publishing (1991–2012), and in 2014 it reverted yet again to state publishing. The country’s Institute of Education (TIE) has been put in charge of all aspects and all levels of textbook publishing, including commissioning, manuscript development, through to production and distribution. However, there has been public uproar about the unacceptable quality of the books produced by TIE. Members of Parliament and the public, who had previously been vociferous in calling for a return to the state publishing model, are now silent and the government has not revealed the next steps to remedy the situation. According to Bgoya, a vast amount of money was squandered, millions of books were pulped, and school children have gone without textbooks. The pre-emptive policy change left publishers with published but unsold stocks and many manuscripts at different pre-printing stages. Meantime no redress to the publishers has been entertained.

In drawing attention to this ill-fated situation Bgoya says: “My intention is to explicate the effect that such policy insecurity can have on any publishing industry that relies heavily on textbooks, which is pretty much the situation in all African countries. The disruption of the process of building up human resources capacity: publishing managers, editors, typesetters, book designers, illustrators, book distributors and bookshops, will have a far-reaching negative impact on developing a book and literary culture. And this is the experience in most countries, including South Africa, which has the most developed publishing industry in Sub-Saharan Africa.” Given such a situation, can African publishing survive and prosper? “When the problem of publishers’ dependence on winning textbook tenders is disconnected, the urgent question to ask is: why do our societies appear unable to support publishing industries that are not dependent for survival on supplying schoolbooks? Is there no interest in locally published works of fiction, children’s books and trade books, including social science and humanities? Or is this simply a self-fulfilling projection that has been ingested and acted upon by publishers; so focussed on textbook publishing that they do not take the risk to see if they can survive and even thrive moderately without kow-towing to state officials in charge of education. Or even possibly that there is no sufficient research to validate the assumptions made about the prospects of independent publishing.”


Also in Research in African Literatures 44, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 17-34. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/reseafrilite.44.2.17

Another version (freely accessible) https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/publishing-in-africa-from-independence-to-the-present-day/ [28/05/2021]
Reprint of an article first published in *Research in African Literatures* in 2013. It examines the current [as at 2013] state of play of independent publishing in sub-Saharan Africa, and the key issues and policies that have affected, and will continue to affect, the growth of autonomous African publishing. Bgoya and Jay chart the growth of publishing in Africa from the post-independence period in the 1970s and early 1980s, through to the late 1990s and beyond. The 1990s witnessed the establishment of a number of important initiatives intended to strengthen African publishing, including the African Books Collective, the Bellagio Publishing Network, and the African Publishers Network (APNET), as well as the launch of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, all of them generously donor-supported. However, the picture changed in the post 1990s, when donor policies shifted and when agencies changed their strategies to focus on supporting the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which notably do not include culture. Yet "African books and publishing development, being integral to broader development as such, merit support and assistance in terms of appropriate policies by African governments and overseas partners. In practice, overseas support has depressingly become 'charitable' work of support for reading in Africa.” This has added to “the (in)visibility of Africa’s own scholarly and literary output on the continent” they assert. The authors also argue that the premise of donating British or American books to libraries and educational institutions in Africa solves the problem of books and reading is fallacious. "On the contrary, such policies are an inescapable part of the problem because they fail to respect fair practices in relation to indigenous African publishers and publishing."

Language of publishing and instruction remains a key issue in postcolonial Africa. Continuing discrimination against African languages in education, in Tanzania for example, has very negative consequences on publishing, readership, and on the development of literature in general. ... The implications of these language policies on publishing are numerous and onerous, one result of which is that "indigenous African publishers are largely active only in primary level publishing. They are barely visible in tertiary publishing and certainly not in Scientific, Technical, and Medical (STM) publishing” the authors say. Whether the mind-set "that dismisses African languages as languages of instruction for a modern education is or is not a legacy of colonialism is not important. What is important, given the fifty odd years of independence and the crisis of African education, is that language policy remains central to education and critical thinking and to the autonomous all-around development of culture, in which publishing plays an important part."

While the digital age is now empowering African publishers, there are still several caveats of an infrastructural nature. African publishers, the authors conclude, “want to look to the future, but cannot escape the past without fair and equitable policy environments, notwithstanding continuing efforts to circumvent the hurdles.”


This is a slightly edited version of a keynote address which the author delivered at the 50th Anniversary Conference of the African Studies Association UK at the University of Sussex, on 10 September 2014. In this address, the role of progressive African intellectuals fifty years after independence, and in the context of African postcolonial, political and socio-economic
conditions, is examined. “African intellectuals have been marginalized by the African state, and progressive intellectuals have been disunited in their struggle for relevance.” The possibilities for African intellectual autonomy and international solidarity are demonstrated through a recollection of the flourishing intellectual environment and local publishing output of post-independence Tanzania. In a section devoted to ‘Publishing and Progressive Intellectualism in Africa’ Bgoya briefly sketches issues that have dominated debates on African publishing in the last fifty years, and looks at progressive publishing elsewhere. He seems relatively optimistic about the future prospects of African publishing: “there are indications that new prospects are opening up for scholarly publishing as university funding improves. Private indigenous publishing is also doing moderately well and in some countries it is thriving.” The indigenization of the former UK multinational companies, Heinemann and Longman in Kenya, “showed just how African publishers knowing their people and societies well could do the job of publishing in all genres better than the multinationals who always thought they knew better. Two Kenyan publishers, East African Educational Publishers (EAEP) and Longhorn Publishers, along with Fountain Publishers in Uganda and several other publishers in Tanzania are turning out a fair number of scholarly titles every year.”


In the 1970s and 80s, most African countries controlled publishing of textbooks for schools through state-owned monopolies, thus excluding the private publishing sector from the school book markets; and, with central purchasing authorities and through free textbook provision, also effectively bypassed booksellers. However, since the 1990s there has been a decisive shift towards greater liberalization of textbook provision, and interaction, and partnerships, between the state and the commercial book sector is growing rapidly, leading to more decentralized procurement of books for Africa’s schools. This ADEA study charts the trend toward the increasing liberalization in textbook provision, and identifies some of the key challenges in public-private partnerships. It is based on field research undertaken in 13 African countries, the findings of which are presented here as a series of country studies. They are preceded by an excellent eight-chapter introductory section and overview, which sets out the background to textbook provision in Africa, its gradual liberalization, and the emergence of the indigenous commercial sector. In their conclusions the authors of the study advocate diversity, as opposed to monopoly approaches, as the cornerstone of national and textbook policies, and as “a positive development path on which to strengthen bookselling, publishing, readership and access to books generally.” The study finds that the key challenge in emerging public-private sector partnerships in textbook provision is how to increase the capacity, resources and diversity of the private sector in such a way that schools are the direct and long term beneficiary; and that policy approaches and triangular relationships in textbook provision – involving government, funding agencies, and the private sector – must always be considered against one performance indicator, “the quality, volume and scope of learning materials in the classroom, leading directly to improved education levels and equity.” This is a highly informed and penetrative analysis of textbook procurement in Africa, and the policy shifts and fundamental changes that have taken place in this area of the African book sector over a period of time.

Brickhill argues that the only chance for survival of the African book industries is in the development of a sustainable, commercially viable book chain, and that this means publishers and booksellers must work closer together. He then sets out the essential components of a functioning book chain and makes some proposals which he believes would work to mutual benefit for both publishers and booksellers, and, at the same time, would bring them closer together.


Offers some insights into the problems and issues in the transition from state to private sector publishing now underway in several African countries. Based on studies undertaken in Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi, and based on observations and discussions with publishers from elsewhere, the author sets out the background to state intervention in the book sector and analyzes some of the effects of state control in publishing, its advantages and its critical weaknesses. While welcoming the transition to commercialization, the author identifies some flaws in some approaches to textbook provision by the private sector and states that there is “the apparent failure to recognize that the commercial sector must provide the impetus for change and demonstrate the technical proficiency required for textbook provision”; and that the commercial systems requires genuine competition among publishers, rather than being dominated by one or two, and without which it is likely to suffer many of the shortcomings of the previous state monopolies. The author also argues forcefully that a liberalized system of textbook supply must include all those who are part of the “book chain”, including booksellers and the retail book trade, and that Ministry of Education officials should not assume the role of booksellers, or attempting to manage book distribution systems.

Brouillette, Sarah On the African Literary Hustle.
https://blindfieldjournal.com/2017/08/14/on-the-african-literary-hustle/ [28/05/21]

Sarah Brouillette’s research interests include economic and political circumstances that underpin and influence the production, circulation and reception of contemporary literature and culture; and that includes African literature, and how that literature circulates in Western markets. In this long, provocative, and arguably somewhat contentious essay, she asserts that “the recent renaissance in African literature has had little do with development of viable literary readerships in Africa, and viably capitalized production facilities. The post-independence quest to develop literary readerships and publishing and printing trades faced massive hurdles; it was nearly stopped by IMF & World Bank structural adjustment and trade liberalization in the 1990s, and has now been all but abandoned. The field of contemporary
Anglophone African literature relies instead on private donors, mainly but not exclusively American, supporting a transnational coterie of editors, writers, prize judges, event organizers, and workshop instructors. The literary works that arise from this milieu of course tend to be targeted at British and American markets.”

She then follows this with a short section entitled ‘Aspects of the History of Literary Publishing in Africa’, quoting from some of the recent literature. We have witnessed, Brouillette says, an African literary revival, or “literary hustle”, and there is now a thriving African literary community across key cities. However, they are “a coterie, often working with donor support for their publications and workshops, and able to build upon the connections and synergies that exist within any small relatively wealthy group of cultural producers and consumers – journalists, musicians, academics, and so on. Writers who belong to this particular coterie are published abroad, supported by US creative writing and English department professorships, and by US- and UK-based literary agencies.” As a result, “while there is a small readership in these urban centers, it isn’t that important that there be local readers. These writers have bypassed the problem of the absent African reader. There is donor funding to support the activity of writing, to award prizes to authors, and to facilitate access to US and other foreign markets.”

Brouillette argues that it is fair to claim that the writing that emerges from this scene is Western-facing – targeted primarily at British and American markets, but that one could make the point with greater precision: “The situation is one of donor-supported funding of networks of writers who are more dependent on each other as cultural brokers, on international donors, and on foreign markets, than they are on the existence of a local readership for literary works.” She concludes: “Today we naturally witness a decline in material and affective supports for the acquisition of the literary disposition, and so find wrapped up together – in a classic story of deprivation and concentration of wealth – the declining interest in university English, the industry’s concern about how to secure new readerships, the reliance on donor funding, the rise of festivals as money-making events, the close coteries, the prestige events, the posh bookstores, the powerful agencies, and the prizeing. Signs of concentrated vigour evince health and decline all at once.”

https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2014.127.1.33 ¶
Also at (freely accessible) 
https://www.academia.edu/7850317/Unesco_and_the_Book_in_the_Developing_World
[28/08/21]
Seeks to establish the importance of UNESCO’s role within the global history of the book. Its focus is the research on the book in the developing world that UNESCO sponsored in the 1960s and 1970s, and how that research supported claims that government should intervene in book and media industries in order to shift the dramatic imbalance in the global media system. However, the author argues that these claims were undermined by developed-world interests and side-lined by the emerging discipline of book history. She discusses how the research backed by UNESCO, “which was debated behind the scenes and at official meetings, and which informed the organization’s policy statements and programmes, tended to
conceive the book in highly political and embattled ways. Books were positioned as agents of
cultural and economic development. By suggesting that the book industries could only be
properly understood in relation to such a contested process as ‘progress,’ UNESCO made the
book industries themselves the subject of intense scrutiny and debate. The majority of those
who participated in this debate used their knowledge about how culture is produced, traded,
and consumed as the basis for recommendations about how local and global governments
might work to mitigate imbalances in capitalist cultural markets.”

Carré, Nathalie “From Local to Global. New Paths for Publishing in Africa.” Wasafiri 31,
no. 4 (December 2016): 56-62.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02690055.2016.1216282 ¶
Another (slightly longer) version at
https://hal-inalco.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01389097/document (freely accessible) [08/06/21]

Historically, the writing, selling, and reading of books have been a central means through
which stories have been shared across borders. However, despite the wide-ranging nature of
print, the author says, “in Africa, books and publishers still struggle to get their share of
attention. Not only is the volume of African book production dramatically underrepresented
in the world but the African publishing industry has also had to contend with the ongoing
legacies of former colonial monopolies. At the same time, if printing books and selling them
across national borders has always been one of the main stumbling blocks to the African
publishing trade, then it is reasonable to think that the new technologies and media that have
emerged at the turn of the millennium might enable the written word to travel more easily
across the continent and beyond, expanding the reach and circulation of African publishing,
and African knowledge today.” The author examines some of these issues, as well as issues
of uneven trading relationships, the relationship between local and global, publishing in
African languages, and new opportunities for publishing and readership now offered by
digital media. “New technologies seem to offer a real opportunity for publishing in Africa,
but will that lead to more diversity or, on the contrary, a reign of global standardisation? The
question is still open.”

Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Bibliography, edited by Hans M. Zell. Lochcarron,
https://www.hanszell.co.uk/Site/PDFs/Chakava,%20Introductory%20essay%20in%20PBRSS
A,%202018.pdf (freely accessible)

In his wide-ranging introductory essay, Kenyan veteran publisher Henry Chakava, former
Chairman of East African Educational Publishers in Nairobi, provides a succinct state of the
art analysis of the African book industry today [as at 2008], exploring most of the key issues
from a historical perspective. He reviews progress since the historic Ife conference held in
1973, and offers a candid assessment of the present state of publishing, books, and writing
and reading in the countries of Africa south of the Sahara, highlighting the most significant
problems and constraints that remain, and identifying the challenges that lie ahead.

In his conclusion at the time [2008] he stated: “African book development is part and parcel
of African development itself, and cannot be seen in isolation. The book does not reside where
there is extensive poverty, where people have no access to medical care; where there is
inadequate shelter and poor roads, where there is no food. The book thrives where there is a responsive government that provides security, good governance, shies away from graft, and constructively engages its citizenry in nation building—in such an environment it will be possible to develop strategies that can enable government and industry to marshal the resources and manpower needed to take African book development to the next stage.”


Henry Chakava – who attended a meeting held between African publishers and officials of the World Bank https://www.worldbank.org/en/home in September 1997 – detected a wind of change at the Bank, and reports that “it became clear that the bank is ready to change and to adopt new policies that could strengthen the role of local publishers and, in the process, drastically reduce the dominance of the multinational publishers in the developing world.” If the recommendations that emerged for the meeting are adopted as Bank policy, and a programme of action is put in place for their implementation, “local publishing in the developing world will undergo a sea-change and the World Bank will emerge as a strategic partner in a new deal.”


A collection of essays and articles by one of Africa’s most experienced and respected publisher, and also most prolific commentators on the African publishing scene, bringing together his writings on many diverse topics, such as autonomous publishing, book marketing and distribution, author-publisher relations, regional cooperation, the World Bank and African publishing, reading promotion, the inequalities of international copyright, and the problems of censorship and government repression.


Justin Cox, CEO of African Books Collective Ltd http://www.africanbookscollective.com/, provides an introduction to a special Logos issue devoted to publishing in Africa, which offers some penetrative analysis of the book industry across the continent. “Publishing development in Africa is integral to wider development—social, economic, and cultural. Yet the industry is not recognized by African governments as strategic, and policies rarely encourage independent local publishing.” Running through the articles, he says, is the lack of a ‘book chain’, particularly poor distribution networks and a scarcity of bookshops. Allied to this is the paucity of an intra-African book trade, there being no continent-wide distribution systems of any kind. Cox also notes the heavy reliance by African libraries on overseas book donations because of their sparse funding, an issue which he sees as a serious impediment to local publishers. “If container loads of largely unrequested foreign books are sent to libraries, that
not only distorts the availability of books from within African culture, but also excuses the allocation of public or university funding from book buying for libraries. ... The costs of shipping these kinds of books to Africa could more productively be used to purchase locally published books selected by the recipients, thereby contributing to effective library support, the reading and dissemination of African scholarship and literature, and not least to indigenous publishing.” He goes on to suggest that “an assault by [African] publishers on inappropriate book donations, explaining the need for donations to consist mainly of locally published books, could greatly benefit publishers.” Despite facing myriad problems, there are also positives for African publishers, and while digital publishing presents challenges in Africa, it is equally clear that “with local know-how and infrastructure, it presents opportunities.” E-books and digital publishing are still in their infancy in Africa, but the evolving developments need to be monitored as publishers worldwide experiment with the digital models: “the African publishing industry needs to develop its own collective solutions and policies, as it did in the past with respect to conventional overseas distribution.”

https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XSNC.pdf [04/10/21]
A very interesting, comprehensive, and meticulously documented study by Richard Crabbe – a former Chair of the African Publishers Network/APNET, and formerly with the World Bank – published by the Global Book Alliance https://www.globalbookalliance.org/ and USAID https://www.usaid.gov/. In the Executive Summary of the document, Crabbe states: “The book publishing industry in Africa is not a single monolith; it is growing, attracting young talent, willing to experiment, and producing more than just textbooks. The opportunities and challenges these businesses face reflect the larger dynamics of their countries and regions. Content and production quality have improved dramatically over the last 10 years. There is growth in digital content, particularly fiction in Nigeria, by a young cadre of publishers. There is increasing interest in the production of books in local languages, partly to support changes in school curriculum, as this gains ground. And there is growing interest in cross-border publishing. East Africa shows strong regional market operations by publishers—especially from Kenya and Uganda—in neighbouring countries such as Rwanda, South Sudan and Zambia. Meetings have been held and there is ongoing communication among industry players to revive the African Publishers Network to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information, and to assist in capacity building. Africa’s demographics—in 2015 children aged 0-14 years numbered 474 million,1 about 41 percent of the population—coupled with ongoing improvements in literacy and education, should point to a bright future for the industry.”

But many challenges remain, some of which have persisted for decades, despite assistance programmes and various attempts at getting industry players to work together: “In addition to the challenges, reliable statistics on the book publishing industry are hard to obtain. Record-keeping at industry- and government-level is weak, a characteristic that hampers advocacy and strategic planning. Over the past 40+ years, many pan-African or regional organizations, programmes, networks, and other initiatives in the book sector have failed, despite their best intentions. So, what can be done to breathe new life into the African book publishing industry and make it sustainable?” Richard Crabbe sets out a number of recommendations how this
might be achieved. The report also includes a series of informative country profiles, including responses to questionnaires mailed to gather information, from publishers and book industry associations in Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

https://www.academia.edu/38243661/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_-_A_Literature_Review_for_2018 (Pre-print version, pp. 6-13, freely accessible) [28/05/2021]
https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2019-0004

The keynote speech given by Richard Crabbe at the opening ceremony of the 16th Ghana International Book Fair, held in Accra, Ghana, August 30, 2018, an eloquent and timely address, which offers a succinct summing-up of the state of publishing and the book sector in Africa today. It is reproduced here in full as a ‘Guest Essay’ and part of the introductory section in this annual literature review. Previously Head of Client Relations in the World Bank’s Office of the Publisher, Richard Crabbe is a former Chair of the African Publishers’ Network (APNET), and also a past President of the Ghana Book Publishers Association.


A keynote plenary address by the former Chair of the African Publishers Network https://african-publishers.net/ presented at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair ‘Indaba 2000’. It outlines some of the major market trends and developments in the African book industry, and the changing needs of African readers. Growing gender awareness, the growing significance of local language publishing, the rising influence of information technology, improved networking, and increasing cross-border trade are among them.


A report about an important seminar, held in March 1996, sponsored by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation https://www.daghammarskjold.se/, which brought together 30 participants from eight countries, including publishers, writers, librarians, academics, and bankers. The report summarizes developments in indigenous African publishing since 1984 (when the DHF organized an earlier seminar on 'The Development of Autonomous Publishing Capacity in Africa'), and thereafter identifies the key issues that emerged from the papers presented and from the discussions: publishing as a strategic industry, reading and cultural environment, national book policy, communication and networking, the electronic
revolution, marketing and distribution, and finance. Also includes a summary of the conclusions, and a list of participants.

Edoro, Ainehi *Africa's Changing Literary Scene*.  
http://panafricannews.blogspot.co.uk/2017/10/africas-changing-literary-scene-october.html  (Posted 22 October 2017) [28/05/21]  
Today we are witnessing the emergence of an African literary market, and small independent publishers have sprouted all over the continent. But there’s a catch the author says: “This industry is emerging at one of the most difficult times in global publishing. Aside from grappling with the issues everyone else is facing, African publishers have problems of their own. First, Africa lacks a strong tradition or infrastructure for publishing. Second, the $14 it costs to buy a Penguin Classic is what many Africans earn in a week. Finally, within the continent, African literature has to compete in a media space monopolised by Nollywood and the thriving pop music industry.” Moreover, unlike publishers in the West who can depend on library sales and the bookstore circuit, “the African publisher depends solely on an extremely volatile and unregulated market run by daredevil pirates and colluding customers looking for a cheap buy.” So how can African publishers leverage what is still an unorthodox reading culture to establish a functional literary market? The contemporary audience for African literature, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf of Ankara Press (an imprint of Cassava Republic Press, publishing romantic fiction) https://www.ankarapress.com/ explains, is more discerning: “They make more demands on their writers. They expect more. They don’t expect to be patronised. They feel like I can choose, I don’t have to be bogged down reading African literature if I don’t want to. They don’t feel a sense of anxiety about their taste as they may have done in the past.”

A thoughtful blog posting on the African literary market, and the challenges of publishing in Africa [as at 2015]: “Today we are witnessing the emergence of an African literary market. Independent publishers have sprouted all over the continent: Cassava Republic and Farafina in Nigeria, Modjaji Books, Chimurenga, and Jungle Jim in South Africa, Kwani? in Kenya. But there’s a catch. This industry is emerging at one of the most difficult times in global publishing. Aside from grappling with the issues everyone else is facing, African publishers have problems of their own. First, Africa lacks a strong tradition or infrastructure for publishing. Second, the $14 it costs to buy a Penguin Classic is what many Africans earn in a week. Finally, within the continent, African literature has to compete in a media space monopolized by Nollywood and the thriving pop music industry. According to a recent UNESCO study, there is one library to every million Nigerians. Unlike western publishers who depend on library sales and the bookstore circuit, the African publisher depends solely on an extremely volatile and unregulated market run by daredevil pirates and colluding customers looking for a cheap buy.”

The author concludes: “The literary market is a vast ecosystem in which writers, publishers, readers, and critics are only some of the players in the chain of content production and distribution. The task of building an independent, free, and literary culture in Africa requires
productive interaction among the different facets of this system. But underneath the nuts and bolts of commercial publishing lies the simple fact that a new generation of Africans wants African literature that effectively conveys the social and emotional contexts of an ever-changing continent delivered with tools from the modern era that are ubiquitous and easily accessible.”

Emelife, Jennifer On Publishing Business in Africa: Emma Shercliff. [http://www.praxismagonline.com/cassava-republic-press/](http://www.praxismagonline.com/cassava-republic-press/) (Posted 08 April 2016) [10/06/21] This talk with Emma Shercliff of Cassava Republic Press [http://www.cassavarepublic.biz/](http://www.cassavarepublic.biz/) is the final one in a series of insightful interviews with a number of small independent publishers in Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda (see ➔ individual entries under Country-Specific Studies), and published in the lively *Praxis Magazine for Arts and Literature* [http://www.praxismagonline.com/tag/publishing-in-africa/](http://www.praxismagonline.com/tag/publishing-in-africa/). This interview addresses some of the most frequently mentioned issues and challenges in the interviews: For example, on the price of books and how it affects the young African reader: Shercliff says “I think it is partly about perception. Young people may well be prepared to spend 1000 Naira on phone credit to chat to their friends, but baulk at paying the same price for a novel. However, we do try and price our titles as sensitively as possible.” Commenting on the quality of books published in Africa she says there are two separate issues here: “The first is the poor quality of physical production; the second is poor editorial control. Unfortunately, the quality of printing within Nigeria is not always of a high a standard or as consistent as we would like it to be. … For this reason, we now print outside the country.” In terms of improving editorial quality of books “the answer is simple: more publishers need to introduce rigid editing processes, including multiple checks and proofing. … We work very closely with our authors to ensure that each finished work is a product of which they and we can be proud, but this process is expensive and time-consuming, which is why some publishers sometimes circumvent it.”

On the many challenges of distribution, Shercliff says one of the major issues with distribution in Nigeria (and elsewhere in Africa) is that retail outlets do not pay publishers in a timely fashion. “Authors are understandably upset when they visit a bookstore and don’t find copies of their books there, but if the bookshop owes a publisher a large amount of money, the publisher simply can’t supply more stock without receiving payment. We have had several examples of bookshops and distributors who have gone bankrupt or disappeared altogether without paying for books – such instances make it difficult for publishers to have faith in the book distribution network.” Meantime the book-buying individual has been hampered in the past by the high cost of delivery. In terms of distribution elsewhere on the continent, intra-African distribution remains problematic due to the high cost of transportation, customs and import tariffs, and the unreliability of the road network. “Somewhat counter-intuitively, it will be easier and more cost-effective for us to use our UK office to distribute our African-authored titles into East and South Africa, rather than ship them to other African countries from Nigeria.”

Despite the myriad number of problems “publishing in Africa has come a huge way in recent years. Although the large educational publishers still dominate the industry, there are a number of young, dynamic companies across the continent publishing contemporary fiction and non-fiction and providing outlets for African-based writers.”

Note: Olatoun Gabi-Williams also reports about a partnership formed by the IPA with the Nairobi-based Insight Wells Research to undertake a pilot programme called ‘Pulse of the African Publishing Industry Survey’ – designed to inform policy, advocacy, and planning for future seminars – and the publication of an African Publishers Survey 2019. This was described on the Insight Wells Facebook pages “as the first comprehensive report on the state of publishers in Africa” [which it is not], and that the findings were to be disseminated during the IPA Nairobi meeting. Subsequently it was rescheduled to be published in time for the IPA 2020 summit in Marrakech, Morocco (later postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic), but this document does not appear to have been published to date.

A conversation with the current President of the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA), Gbadega Adedapo, talking about his background, his work, and his functions and activities as the NPA chief. He also talks about the ‘Lagos Action Plan’ drawn up as a result of the International Publishers Association’s (IPA) Seminar held in Lagos in May 2018; its objectives, progress on its implementation to date, and achieving its goals. A Steering Committee has been appointed to ensure its implementation and sustainability: Adedapo says “We have decided to streamline priorities for Africa into 5 basic Transformation Goals which are strategically developed to address industry challenges and realise opportunities. We have developed Pilot Programmes and we require elaborate stakeholder partnerships. The spell-out goals are: Goal 1 - Enhancing Stakeholder Collaboration and Coordination, Goal 2 - Advancing Innovative Solutions to Long standing Challenges, Goal 3 – Making Africa’s Copyright Framework Fit for the Digital Era, Goal 4 – Leveraging Data for Advocacy and Digital Transformation, Goal 5 – Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness in Global Publishing.”

However, the implementation process of the Action Plan is not apparently without its challenges: Adedapo states that he does not foresee any obstacles “other than gaining the full support of stakeholders on actions and rapid response as may be required to make progress with the designed programmes. The programmes are designed 100% around industry
stakeholders. We conducted an online survey some time ago and found we had to keep pushing and pressing for submissions for a survey of no more than 10-15 minutes. We had to extend the submission deadline! This is why we continue to urge book industry players in Africa to offer these programmes their responsiveness. Without their responsiveness, nothing will be achieved. Nothing.”

Gabi-Williams, Olatoun **Elliot Agyare** [Interview]
http://bordersliteratureonline.net/globaldetail/Elliot-Agyare [22/12/2019]
An interview with Ghanaian publisher Elliot Agyare, CEO of Smartline Publishing Ltd. http://smartlinepublishers.com/, immediate past president of the Ghana Book Publishers Association http://ghanabookpublishers.org/, President of the Commonwealth Book Publishers Association, https://cbpa21.wildapricot.org/, as well as one of the leading lights behind the organization and development of the annual Ghana International Book Fair https://ghanabookfair.com/. In this wide-ranging conversation with Olatoun Gabi-Williams he speaks about the activities of his publishing company, capacity building in African publishing, his recent participation at the International Publishers Association (IPA) regional seminar focusing on the African book industries held in Lagos in 2018 and the ‘Africa Rising’ IPA summit Nairobi in 2019, and the need to increase visibility for African books: “Books that are published in Africa should find space across the world. Books that are published in Africa should have significance in that they are contributing to the knowledge economy”, he says; with the “capacity building that is taking place in African publishing, you can publish locally and still be heard out there. African knowledge can originate here, but become available worldwide.”

The IPA itself is “beginning to realize that it needs to hear the African voice. But the African voice is not enough in itself, it must also go forth with something. … I mean this [the Nairobi] conference is almost exclusively supported by the IPA. Africa Rising means that we support ourselves.” He adds “I think Africa and African publishing can develop all the funds needed for Africa. It’s a strategic industry. If it’s organized properly, it can help in education and cultural enrichment.” Speaking about the need for a closer working relationship with government, he says the publishing industry should be seen as a cultural industry, and as should be recognized as a priority industry by the government: “I think that because of the critical nature of the publishing industry and of literacy, this industry should have support in the same way that we prioritise the building of hard infrastructure. And until government and people in position, the policy makers, realize the importance of the publishing industry, it will not attract attention. Because for now, that kind of enlightenment is not there.”

https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-020-09716-2 ¶
“Globally, Christian publishers have been known to drive publishing innovations and development in diverse socio-economic circumstances. In Nigeria, their roles in outsourcing, subsidiary rights transactions, distribution, innovation and export have received only passing mentions notwithstanding the pivotal nature of their sustained undertakings in the book trade. Relying on interviews, document analysis, website and bookshop observation, this
study, therefore, presents evidence indicating that churches and ministries create local content, install their own presses and nurture their own distribution networks whereas Christian commercial publishers prefer to acquire already successful American titles and outsource reprinting tasks to Asia. Consequently, sustainability of content creation and printing expertise is undermined due to excessive offshore outsourcing, and may stunt growth in the entire industry.” [Not examined, abstract]

Jay, Mary, and Stephanie Kitchen *Decolonisation and Co-publishing.* http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/decolonisation-and-co-publishing (Posted 04 September 2019) [04/06/21]

In 2018 the African Books Collective (ABC) http://www.africanbookscollective.com/, the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) and the African Studies Association (ASA, US) launched an initiative to draw attention to the need for a more equitable playing field in co-publication between publishers in the North and in Africa. At this time barriers to expanding co-publishing include small local academic markets, prices, frequently high manufacturing costs, lack of distribution channels, lack of subsidies to support African editions and the weak state of university presses on the continent. With notable exceptions, in West Africa neither Ghana nor Nigeria have significant active university presses able to co-publish academic work. As practitioners, the authors state, “we can say that despite some modest progressive efforts outlined above, the book publishing model that is skewed against African publishing will not change in the foreseeable future without (i) serious participation and investment in African publishing by the continent’s universities (including in university presses), funders of research and policymakers; (ii) serious engagement with African publishing from agencies in the North, including funders and those setting policies for research, publishers, academic authors themselves and their representative bodies.” The purpose of the ABC initiatives described here, as well as those by the International African Institute (IAI) https://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/, “is to kickstart what’s possible, making research available where it is carried out and most relevant, and strengthening African publishers, whilst drawing attention to the wider problems.”


http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/african-publishing-in-a-globalised-world (Text of lecture) [09/06/21]

Mary Jay, former CEO of African Books Collective, presents the annual Adam Helms Lecture for 2016 held at Stockholm University on 21 November. Her lecture discusses international publishing connections in the context of wider co-operation for development, digital or otherwise, and also touches upon issues of cultural independence, and how that impacts in Africa. She sets out a brief history of globalization as a context to independent African publishing, provides an overview of colonial and post-independence African publishing, talks about the genesis and activities of African Books Collective, the role of partnerships and assistance, and reviews the current challenges and prospects for African publishing in the digital age. The lecture is followed by a discussion with members of the audience.
Jay is critical of two of the British multinational publishers who have recently been involved in corruption scandals, and says the multinationals “take the lion’s share of the textbook market in Africa, invest little, if any, of those profits within the country in which they are made; and the non-textbook sector is insufficiently developed by indigenous publishers, partly because of their long effective exclusion from the textbook market.” A further continuing and deleterious activity, she says, are overseas book donation programmes and book aid charities that are shipping millions of free books to Africa every year. As a result “governments do not have to finance and resource libraries, including university libraries, if books are donated free, often irrespective of their relevance. Very few of these organizations match requested needs; rather they send publisher or library over-stocks. The shipping costs of the containers sent could in fact pay for locally published books requested by libraries in Africa …. What sort of charity is that, holding back a self-sustaining publishing industry, and continuing to swamp local culture by imported books?” On the topic of adoption of globalization opportunities, IT and the digital revolution, Jay believes that these developments have brought significant opportunities and benefits; and a great plus for African publishers has been digital marketing, enabling them to widely disseminate their print and e-books through the myriad mechanisms. On the negative side of globalization, Jay says “given our understanding that globalization broadly breaks down barriers, we might expect that there would be very much more cooperation between African publishers and the international publishing community. I am sorry that there is not a great deal of evidence of such cooperation.”

Kamau, Kiarie “The State of Publishing in East Africa.” Logos: Journal of the World Publishing Community 26, no. 3 (2015): 23-30. https://doi.org/10.1163/1878-4712-11112080 ¶ Examines the state of publishing in East Africa (and also reviews the situation in Malawi and Zambia) demonstrating that there has been significant growth in the industry, and that indigenous publishers have gained a stronger foothold in the last ten years and have edged out the multinationals. However, this growth has largely been in the area of school textbooks. Government funding for the rollout of curricula has been a blessing to publishers because the budget includes substantial allocations for textbook purchases. “The attraction of ready revenue from textbooks, the huge amounts of funding, and the increasing number of learners in primary and secondary schools have prompted most publishers to direct much of their resources towards textbooks.” However, this emphasis on textbook publishing has also sounded something of a death knell for the publication of general books such as novels and biographies. Sadly, general publishing has continued to suffer, “and this situation is not likely to change, especially with the exit of the ‘old-generation publishers’ who valued both the spiritual and commercial aspects of the business. The current leaders have adopted the same model that obtains in other businesses—a strictly commercial mindset that demands a return on investment within a specified short timeline, after which part of the profit is paid out in the form of dividends and the rest ploughed back into the same system of quick return on investment. The future of general publishing is therefore rather bleak.” In his conclusion the author asserts that unless the publishing model changes, general publishing will continue to be relegated to the back-burner, and publishers are urged to embrace digital publishing, since “that is where the future of publishing lies.”

See also selected papers from this collection in this and other sections.

The sixteen chapters in this book form a Festschrift in honour of Henry Chakava, the distinguished Kenyan publisher who is widely recognized as one of the continent’s most dynamic and most innovative publisher, as well as being a prolific author of numerous articles and studies on many aspects of publishing and the book sector in Africa. Preceded by a foreword by Walter Bgoya – another icon among African publishers – the first five chapters in the book are tributes to Chakava’s work, his commitment, courage and vision, and assess his intellectual and professional contribution to publishing and book development in Africa, as well as his involvement in the African world of letters. These five chapters are: “The Guru of Publishing: Assessing Henry’s Chakava’s Contribution in Africa” by Kiarie Kamau; “Henry Chakava: The Gory and Glory of African Language Publishing” by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o; “The Triangle that Defined AWS: Nairobi – Ibadan – London” by James Currey; “Publisher and Intellectual: The Work of Henry Chakava” by Simon Gikandi; and an orature epic in prose poetry commemorating Henry Miyinzi Chakava’s 70th birthday, “African Orature: Back to the Roots”, by the Kenyan writer and scholar Micere Githae Mugo. The subsequent eleven chapters focus on different areas of African publishing, containing papers on scholarly publishing, copyright, publishing in the digital age, African books in the international market place, professional training, and the need for research and documentation on the African book industries.

Kolawole, Samuel  **Book Development in Africa Today: Challenges & Opportunities.**
[https://african-publishers.net/images/BOOK%20DEVELOPMENT%20IN%20AFRICA%20TODAY%20%20SK.pdf](https://african-publishers.net/images/BOOK%20DEVELOPMENT%20IN%20AFRICA%20TODAY%20%20SK.pdf) (2019)

This paper, presented by the current Chair of the African Publishers Network (APNET) [https://african-publishers.net/](https://african-publishers.net/) at an APNET/ADEA Lagos forum, “highlights historical transformations and the state of book development in Africa today; its challenges and opportunities for Africans and internationally.” The author describes the work of foreign missionaries in promoting books and reading, early book development in local languages, developments in the post-independence era, through to book development in Africa today and its many challenges—including issues such as piracy and copyright violations, the lack of publishing sector statistics, and book industry training needs. The author makes a number of recommendations on the way forward and concludes: “Educational attainment is impossible without the book. Book development should be of top priority to governments across Africa to ensure societal development. This should be approached through encouragement of private sector-led book industry, with government and its agencies providing [a] conducive environment for private enterprise to thrive in a sane environment where all stakeholders understand their roles and respect each other’s boundaries.”

Kor, Buma  **“The Abandoned Milestone of Book Development in Africa: CREPLA.”**
In this paper delivered at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair ‘Indaba’ held in July 2019, Buma Kor, a seasoned observer of the African book sector, examined the reasons for the failure of the UNESCO co-sponsored Centre Régional de Promotion du Livre en Afrique/Regional Book Promotion Centre for Africa (CREPLA) – established in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in 1975 – and seeks to explain “what went wrong”, the numerous difficulties and challenges the Centre faced, and which led to its ultimate failure. Learning from this experience, and looking toward the future of book development in Africa, Buma Kor calls for a higher measure of professionalism, the need for national book policies, and a strong collective voice for the African book professions. “My experience is”, he says “that unless we have a collective voice, we cannot put pressure to bear on most African government officials. A collective voice is necessary. What this means is that we must have in our respective countries strong professional book associations that can engage with governments on this matter, such as writers, publishers, booksellers, printers, librarians and other professional book bodies. The practice so far is that where these associations exist, they have been more concerned with micro-publishing issues of survival of their industries, than with the bigger picture of macro-publishing – book development.”

MacPhee, Josh *Judging Books by Their Covers* [African presses and magazines].
https://justseeds.org/channel/judging-books-by-their-covers/ [01/06/21]

*Judging Books by Their Covers* is Josh MacPhee’s ongoing series of writings and image collections of book covers from many parts of the world. He says: “Although sometimes they feel marginal today, books have been a primary form of information and cultural exchange for almost 400 years. Book covers are often a person’s first contact with the ideas inside, and in the hustle and bustle of contemporary life, cover designs are even more likely to shape the opinions of those that pick them up since many of us are too busy to ever read the entirety of the books. Judging Books by Their Covers largely focuses on – but is not exclusive to – the book covers and design coming out of the Left.”

This interesting and often fascinating series also covers the output of a number of small presses in sub-Saharan Africa, at this time most of them for the period of the 1970s through to the early 1990s (although “small press Africa” here also includes the branches/affiliates of two UK multinational publishers operating in Africa.) Each posting includes notes, insightful descriptions, critical commentary and observations about artwork and design, and sometimes a bit of historical background, together with images of the covers (and cover art credits/attributes, where available), as well as full bibliographic information on each book. A number of posts also include reproduction of some pages of text and illustrations.

Below are the links to the image collections of the book covers from African (and African writing-related) publishers that are thus far available: [01/06/21]

no. 197: Ghana Publishing House [Corporation], Accra/Tema (posted October 2014)
http://justseeds.org/jbbtc-196-ghana-publishing-house/


The author, who was the Executive Secretary of the East African Book Development Association (not currently active) compares African publishing “to a child learning to swim; has the love and motivation for the sport but limited skills with which to beat the currents.” She then proceeds to examine some of the reasons for Africa’s underdeveloped book sector, which she says can be explained at three macro-levels: history’s effect on African publishing, the effects of Africa’s weak economies, and socio-cultural limitations to the promotion of reading in Africa, as well as looking at some other factors, such as the place of language in African publishing and development. She concludes that “the responsibility of developing African publishing requires the joint effort for all stakeholders including the private book practitioners themselves, government, and development partners”, but expresses regret that development partners seem to have once again shifted their funding policies from channelling support through NGOs to working directly with governments; and that, as a result, the African publishing sector is feeling the adverse effects of these policy changes. She believes that there is a “need for development partners to rethink their position if efforts in developing African publishing are to continue.”


The author of a major ADEA study on intra-African book trade Expanding the Book Trade Across Africa: A Study of Current Barriers and Future Potential (see ➔ record below) revisits some of the issues raised by the study and examines what the study established. She summarizes some of the key aspects in favour of a cross-border book trade in Africa (such as trade liberalization,
harmonization and reduction of import taxes, reform of exchange rate regimes, and facilitation of movement of goods and people) and then makes a number of recommendations for more effective collaboration between African publishers, and book trade and book development organizations, with regional economic communities. The author concludes “lobbying regional economic communities for favourable policy formation on book trade will result in harmonised national book policies in most African countries and equitably upgrade their levels of book trade.”

Also published in French as Pour le développement du commerce du livre à travers l’Afrique. Etude des obstacles actuels et du potentiel future.
A ground-breaking study commissioned by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Working Group on Books and Learning Materials https://www.adeanet.org/en/working-groups/books-learning-materials on the fiscal, legal, communication, and other constraints of intra-African book trade. The study was designed to present information on the potential of the book industry in African countries, their capacity to trade with each other, reviewing the policies that govern the publishing sector, and the opportunities and barriers that promote or hinder such trade. Phase one of the project focused on the book trade in the Southern African region, but also gathered comparative case study material and overviews of national book industries in East and West Africa. It includes a number of recommendations addressed to African governments, African publishers, and national publishers’ associations. The second part of the study examines policies on intra-African book trade in books, and makes recommendations on how regional economic policies could be more responsive to the needs of the African book industries.

Also at (‘Request full text’) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292914273_Globalization_and_the_cultural_economy_Africa [02/11/21]
The author uses publishing and filmmaking to illustrate the impact of global hierarchies and local repression on the cultural economy in Africa, and states that publishing and film-making demonstrate “how the logic of profitability impinges on the cultural economy in and on Africa.” Nyamnjoh argues that African cultural production does not attract sufficient attention from cultural entrepreneurs, who are mostly white and located in the global North, unwilling to risk profitability through investing in cultures that are largely perceived to be socially inferior, economically uncompetitive and located in ‘hearts of darkness’ difficult to penetrate. Nor are African investors, intellectuals and political elites – “well-schooled in negative representations and debasement of Africa” – all that keen to develop these sectors in
ways that capture their creative encounters with cultural others. In this article published in 2008, he then proceeds to make the somewhat puzzling claim, that “there is little or no publishing of books of interest and relevance to the African majority, and of those that are published, most are by multinational publishers who target the elite few who can read and write European languages and who – for economic, cultural or political reasons – reproduce work informed by a global hierarchy of creativity in which Africans are perceived to be at the very bottom.” In his conclusions and policy recommendations the author states “the African is, because of his race and place in society or geography, allowed to excel in consumption of cultural products and its vehicles of transmission, but not to harness the technological processes and political economy of the cultural economy.” Nyamnjoh further argues that although African publishing is heavily reliant on school textbooks, the lion’s share of subventions for and business in such projects goes directly to multinational publishers or their local affiliates. “Yet these multinational publishers are less keen on investing some of the profit made into developing the local publishing industry, local content and/or promoting publishing in local languages. The disadvantaged African publishers who are interested do not make enough from textbooks to venture into other aspects of publishing. This calls for policies that protect African publishers against uneven competition with established giants driven primarily by profitability.”


Also at (freely accessible) https://www.nyamnjoh.com/files/publish_or_perish.pdf [02/11/21]

Draws on the African publishing industry’s initiative to determine ‘Africa’s 100 Best Books of the 20th Century’, to discuss writing, scholarship and publishing in and on Africa. It highlights the challenge of promoting commitment to African humanity and creativity “without producing a simplistic reductionism or the inflation of belonging in Africa.” The author also argues for the need “to problematize” what is published and read on Africa, and to determine how sympathetic to Africa culturally, morally, and scientifically authors and publications are. The article concludes with suggestions on how to reverse the process of writing and publishing on Africa and Africans as the ‘heart of darkness’ dreamt up by Joseph Conrad “and perfected by social science at the service of ambitions of dominance.”


A collection of position papers, written over three decades, that highlight the critical role of the publishing industry. It addresses the numerous issues that hinder the development of the book industry in Africa, and offers a range of insights into ways in which the book value chain might be nurtured, strengthened and supported to grow. Nyariki writes about the many challenges facing the book sector in Africa: “Due to lack of policy on book development, most African countries have largely remained consumers and not producers of knowledge and information”, she says.
In addition to, among others, chapters on university bookselling and the distribution of academic books in Africa, poverty reduction through appropriate ICTs, the need for national book and reading policies, and the role of school libraries, two chapters are perhaps of special interest: Chapter 1: Bibliographic Control in Africa, is a good recent overview of efforts to improve bibliographic control in Africa, the role of national libraries, and the publication of national bibliographies – and the many compelling reasons why they are essential to record and disseminate a country’s publishing output. The author describes efforts in enhancing bibliographic control, and the publication of national bibliographies, in four African countries (Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, and Tanzania), setting out the current challenges, and looking at the prospects of future development. Nyariki’s investigation found that there is a lot of room for improvement, and “not much has been achieved in bibliographic control. Africa has to wake up and begin to determine the priority actions in pursuit of its socio-economic and cultural development endeavours … without relevant information for decision-making African governments will not achieve much … it will be a never ending cycle of half successes at all our policies, because, as it is, most African countries do not even have national information and communication policies.”

Chapter 5, Lobby for the Book: The Politics of African Publishing and the Growth of Professional and Trade Organizations, provides an overview of the African publishing scene over the past three decades or more, as well as including a general historical perspective of the publishing industries in sub-Saharan Africa. It sets out some of the main obstacles and problems facing the industry, notably the lack of government support, and the absence of robust national book policies. This is followed by a summary of the activities of the major book trade organizations and book promotional bodies in Africa, as well as organizations and initiatives outside Africa that have supported the indigenous African book industries over the years. Sadly, several of the organizations that were operating in Africa are now dormant, or have shut down altogether, “due to financial constraints”, but the author might have wished to investigate the reasons why all these organizations have failed, or currently exist in name only, once donor or other external support ceased. Is it perhaps a failure of collective will? Or are there other reasons?

Throughout all chapters in this collection Nyariki writes passionately about the many challenges facing publishing and book development in Africa, and re-states what many African publishers have stated many times before, namely that a sustainable book industry can only flourish with positive government support that recognizes the strategic importance of publishing, and demonstrates this in its official commitment through policies and budgets. In a short concluding chapter, Way Forward for African Book Development, she reiterates her call on African governments to act decisively to support the publishing industry, libraries, books, and reading, and as well as once again stressing the vital need to establish viable national book policies. Sadly, on the evidence this time at least, these pleas seem to continue to fall on deaf ears, and tangible government support for the African book industries is still largely absent.

Another version, and interview, published as Akoss Ofori-Mensah.Sub-Saharan Publishers, Ghana
https://www.readafricanbooks.com/interviews/akoss-ofori-mensah/ [01/06/21]
The prominent Ghanaian publisher Akoss Ofori-Mensah writes about the conditions of publishing in Nigeria and Ghana, where textbooks dominate the economics of publishing, both attracting profit-hungry multinationals and marginalizing home-grown trade publishing. The lack of an effective retail/bookselling infrastructure, the under-development of reading habits, and chronically underfunded libraries are some of the main problems. Public libraries lack the funds to replenish old stock and acquire new publications, and the main national library authority is cash strapped and “has purchased no books from publishers for years.” Meantime failing standards in education in Ghana are now a cause for serious concern.

The economic necessity for authors to secure a readership outside Africa have prompted a number of initiatives to advance the fortunes of publishers seeking to publish locally authored books serving the needs of African readers. Ghanaian and other African writers who have achieved international success by publishing with major publishers in the countries of the North often find that their books are not available in their own country, and are thus caught in the dilemma between publishing and being read overseas but not at home, and publishing in Ghana and being read locally but remaining unknown abroad. Happily some of these concerns can now be alleviated if their books are published locally, but are internationally distributed by the Oxford-based (but African-owned) African Books Collective http://www.africanbookscollective.com/.

Finally, the once highly reputed Zimbabwe International Book Fair has unfortunately been in decline for years and is now a shadow of its former self. However, the author believes that a well-conceived and organized pan-African book fair is an essential requirement if African publishing is to prosper: “We had something wonderful going for us in Harare, but, alas, it appears we are unable to keep anything going unless there is some donor support or drive. An African book fair must be a commercial entity and African book professionals must be prepared to pay for it.”

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/coming-of-age-1

Nigerian publisher Ayo Ojeniyi provides a synopsis of the development of educational and school book publishing on the continent, with broad overviews of the situation in a number of countries in West, East, and Southern Africa, and describing the challenges, and the vagaries, of textbook publishing both for schools and tertiary education. The size of the textbook market can be huge in some countries like Nigeria or Kenya, and can amount to over 90% of total revenue of the book industries. Many African countries share similar experiences in the textbook sector, and from reading Ojeniyi’s account one gets the impression that most of the problems associated with textbook publishing remain largely the same today as they were two decades or more ago: among them the lack of national book policies, inconsistent
educational and fiscal policies, and frequently changing curriculum and teaching syllabuses (leaving publishers stuck with obsolete books), as well as slow payment to publishers for books supplied to schools or through government agencies. In Nigeria “some publishers are still being owed huge sums of money for books supplied thirty years ago” Ojeniyi says, while a weak retail sector and a poor distribution network is another serious handicap, and “is perhaps the weakest link in the book chain in Africa today.”

Among other problems he cites is a fragile local printing infrastructure that is frequently unable to cope with rapid technological advances in the printing industries, together with high import tariffs on raw materials required for printing and binding including paper and boards. A relatively new, but now very serious menace is piracy, coupled with inadequate enforcement of copyright laws in most African countries. While state control of school book publishing is now largely a thing of the past, a new threat to textbook publishers are moves by some governments – for example in Tanzania recently, or in South Africa currently – to replace a choice of several textbooks for each subject with just one book per subject and per class. Some African “governments would appear to favour the single textbook system as a quick fix to the funding challenges for the education sector.”

Despite this litany of problems, and by virtue of the massive expansion in education in Africa, Ojeniyi feels optimistic about the future, and that “the publishing business generally and textbook publishing in Africa more specifically have bright prospects”, but warns that publishers in Africa currently lack the capacity to meet the textbook demands; that it is therefore essential to enhance capacity and that this requires an enabling environment for books and other learning materials to be made available in the right quantity, quality, and variety.

https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/a-very-brief-history-of-african-publishing-from-independence-to-the-present/ [22/05/21]
Seeks to provide a brief account of the development of African publishing from the years following independence from European powers through to today. Indigenous publishing, the author says, is integral to national identity and cultural, social, and economic development, reflecting a people’s history and experience, belief systems, and their related expressions through language, writing, and art. “Publishing preserves, enhances, and develops a society’s culture and its interaction with others. And against many post-independence challenges, African publishers have continued to innovate to spread the word.” There have been significant challenges from COVID-19 over the course of the past year, adding to the many challenges the book and cultural sectors perennially face. However, “undoubtedly publishers will find a way through. From a small band of publishing risk-takers in the 1960s, publishing across the continent has grown to all corners. African publishers have achieved remarkable things with the odds stacked against them. Imagine what they can achieve with the digital revolution before them.”
By virtue of a grant from the Open Society Foundations and designed to strengthen African scholarly publishing, the HUMANA Institute for Humanities at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the Laboratoire d’analyse des sociétés et pouvoir/Afrique-Diasporas (LASPAD) at the University of Gaston Berger in Senegal, have launched this welcome new initiative starting from January 2021. The project commenced with a year-long continent-wide study “to document the specific interventions required to decolonise African publishing.” Headed by the Senegalese social anthropologist Dr. Divine Fuh, former Director of the Publications and Dissemination Programme at the Council for Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA) and Mame Penda Ba and Rachid Id Nassine at LASPAD. Collaborations will include, among several others, with the African Books Collective, the Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative in Cameroon, and African Minds Trust in South Africa.

There have been eight sessions thus far (as at September 2021), two of them in French), as online events on video/Zoom, with sessions recorded live, but for which no paper versions or transcripts would appear to be available at this time, except for an abstract for session 6 and 8. However viewers can switch on the subtitles facility. A final report, “Strengthening African Scholarly Publishing” will be published at the end of 2021.

Session 1
Mamadou Diawara "What the Master Did Not Tell Us." Living with Copyright in Sub-Saharan Africa: Oral re, Music and Alike.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWBxf9UYxNE&list=PLYFGl0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=5 (Video, 1:12:08) [28/07/21]

Session 2
Marc-André Ledoux L’édition numérique panafricaine: avancées et défis.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjAs1XoStn8&list=PLYFGl0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=4 (Video, 1:05:54) [28/07/21]

Session 3
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4F_0U24LQo&list=PLYFGl0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=3 (Video, 1:18:12) [28/07/21]

Session 4
Abdoulaye Diallo L’état de l’édition académique en Afrique francophone.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS_N7waxV-w&list=PLYFGl0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=2 (Video, 1:18:01) [28/07/21]
Session 5
Stephanie Kitchen African Publishers Database and Co-publishing.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkzpEDguKwc&list=PLYFGI0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=1 (Video, 1:01:14) [28/07/21]

Note: See also International African Institute Database of African Publishers in ➔ Reference resources, bibliographies, and library collections
https://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/about/african-publishers.phtml

Session 6
Walter Bgoya Limitations to What an African Publisher Could do if Money Were not a Problem.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiOG03HcsTw&list=PLYFGI0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2 (Video, 1:19:21) [07/08/21]

“I shall discuss a few issues pertinent to African publishers from my 49 years in publishing. I shall speak on African publishers’ paralysing dependency on textbook publishing; and unethical practices and domination of the textbook industry by multinational corporations. I shall make a few comments on Scholarly publishing and why money is not the only problem. I shall, self critically address the narrow perspectives of the industry of most African publishers; why African private publishers appear to have neither the support of the states nor of the people; and finally, why the prospects of the African publishers in the near term appear bleak.” (Abstract)

Session 7
Ndiaye, Mandiaye Productions scientifiques et Accès Ouvert.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEyAdx95ILw&list=PLYFGI0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=2 (Video, 50:15) [29/01/21]

Session 8
Eleanore Reinders South-North Publishing Partnerships.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dW_mXtZ9kyU [Video, 1:01:56, 29/09/21]
A talk by Eleanore Reinders (Taylor & Francis/Routledge, South Africa): about the potential of collaboration and partnership programmes to boost African publishing internationally, bridging South-North divides. Discuss some of the ways “publishers can responsibly champion African scholarship, supporting its contribution to the world’s knowledge ecosystem as well as to the local knowledge economy from which it emerges. I’ll provide background on the co-publishing journals programme Taylor & Francis operates out of South Africa and discuss some of the opportunities and challenges inherent in the collaborative work that we do locally.” Primarily focusses on publication/partnerships of scholarly journals.

Session 9
Diaware, Mamadou Living with Copyright in Sub-Saharan Africa.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWBx9UYxNE&list=PLYFGI0-hEJRKWV2CEt-HIGO5anbhBBlZ2&index=10 (Video 1:12:08) 06/11/21]

Sävström, Johan Narrow Income Opportunities Turn Authors Into Activists.
https://nai.uu.se/news/articles/2018/05/23/110123/index.xml (Posted 23 May 2018) [20/06/21]
Reports about Erik Falk’s research project at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, ‘East African Literature on the Market 2000-2010’, which seeks to investigate the disjunctive relationship between literary markets for East African fiction in English. The study, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods, falls into two parts: Part one maps the production and circulation of literary fiction across the East African region with a particular focus on genre and key narrative features, while part two analyses the circulation and reception of internationally renowned East African writers on the world stage. The project seeks to investigate what kinds of books are published and how far they reach; and it also aims to provide an up-to-date picture of the status of East African literature. Through contacts with authors, publishers, and libraries in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, Falk hopes to get an overall idea of literature in the region, although obtaining data is a task of some magnitude. One way is to follow the money – how many books are sold and where they are sold – but it is difficult to get hold of sales numbers. Statistics on library loans are difficult to interpret, while weak distribution systems are one of the big challenges for literature in the region, mainly due to a lack of resources and networks.

http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02690055.2016.1216270 ¶


Introduces a survey, gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews, of fourteen well-known independent publishers based across the African continent (from Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe), publishing primarily in English and African languages, as well as a number of recorded longer interviews (see entries by Raphael Thierry, p. 15) with four francophone African publishers. The survey intends to offer “a glimpse of the energy surrounding current African literary production in English, French and in African languages”, as well as drawing attention to the many challenges the book industries face. Each publisher was asked to respond to 14 questions, which included a kind of ‘mission’ statement about each imprint, date founded, size of the company and staff employed, the number of women in management roles, the nature of the list and/or areas of specialization, number of new titles published annually, bestselling titles, interaction with and assistance provided to authors, funding, methods of distribution and marketing, a whether digital technologies play a significant role in their operations, as well as each publisher’s views on the prospects and priorities over the next five years.


Reports about the second Ake Festival, which took place from 18-22 November 2014 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, and its theme was ‘Bridges and Pathways’. There was considerable focus in the pre-festival workshops on mentoring new writing, and the success of these support structures is hugely significant for aspiring writers, as exemplified by the he Mabati-Cornell
Kiswahili Prize for African Literature [http://kiswahiliprize.cornell.edu/]. However, Emma Shercliff suggests that it is equally important to build bridges and pathways between authors and the wider public, and between authors and publishers – and that these were both weak links at Ake this year. She says, being particularly conscious of the difficulties faced by African publishing companies, “I felt that Ake missed some valuable opportunities to offer support to local publishers. With the exception of HEBN and Mosuro Booksellers, individual publishers and booksellers were not permitted their own stands. …Furthermore, a panel discussion entitled ‘What Are Publishers Looking for in Fiction?’ did not include any publishers on the panel. … Therefore, the discussion was limited to a debate about what a) writers think publishers are looking for and b) what those involved in literary prizes think publishers are looking for. This made for an interesting exchange, but one that was far removed from the realities of publishing in the Nigerian market today.”


Also at (freely accessible) [https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/156510/10/jfairtrade.2.1.0013.pdf](https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/156510/10/jfairtrade.2.1.0013.pdf) [03/10/21]

Seeks to articulate some of the major theoretical difficulties raised by associating book publishing with Fair Trade, “building on the concept of the ‘distant producer’ as critiqued by both Frank Trentmann and Matthias Zick Varul. Where these scholars examine the framing of the Fair Trade producer as always being based in the global South, this article explores an instance of a ‘distant Northern producer’ of sorts, with particular reference to the publishing of ‘francophone African literature’,” and the activities and ethos of the Paris-based International Alliance of Independent Publishers [https://www.alliance-editeurs.org/]. The dominance of Northern publishers in this field “creates a complex series of ‘normalisations of the North’, in which Paris is normalised as the centre of cultural production; the French language is normalised as the dominant language of culture; and non-print literatures are marginalised in global cultural production.”

In her conclusions the author states that “the range of questions raised by the Alliance’s deployment of the idea of fair trade in book publishing … could serve to highlight the unequal relationships examined by Trentmann and Varul, and to initiate a debate on the ways in which ideas of fair trade as applied to book publishing may be of service in opposing the damaging inaccuracies that these scholars examine. The ‘distant production’ of books is a problem for publishers in ‘francophone Africa’ that is not replicated identically in all ‘francophone African’ countries, in other African countries or in other parts of the South.”


Unfortunately, the authors state, “government leaders in many countries do not fully grasp the critical role books and reading play in the cultural, social and economic development of nations, and that the book and access to relevant information is the transformative tool and controls a nation’s development. As such, many African governments lack a coherent agenda
on books and reading, and do not have a national book policy.” And this, one might add, despite numerous past conferences that have called for the establishment of national book policies, and urged African governments to provide tangible support for the book industries generally.

This useful and freely accessible toolkit, along with a series of supporting documents as PDF files (Continental Framework, Brochure, and Questionnaire), is intended to “serve as a quick reference guide to stakeholders to easily understand the need for the policy and the process for systematic and coherent formulation and implementation of a National Book and Reading Policy (NBRP).”

A meticulously-documented and extensive study introducing a newly coined term literary NGO (LINGO), to describe “a distinct model for Anglophone African creative writing and cultural politics.” The book “explores the mode by which contemporary Kenyan and Ugandan writers interact with the world of literary production and the socio-cultural as well as socio-political dynamics of their societies through literary activities on the basis of locally established writers’ associations.” To illustrate this relatively new phenomenon the author focuses on the activities – and evaluating its publishing output – of two such LINGOs: FEMWRITE. The Uganda Women Writers Association https://femrite.org/, and the Kwani Trust in Kenya http://kwani.org/, both of which support literary talent, events, competitions, and publishing in the non-profit sector. The book also includes a discussion of earlier LINGOs such as Transition magazine, the Chemchemi Creative Centre in Nairobi, and the Mbari Club in Ibadan, and is supported by a range of interviews with writers, academics, civil society activists, filmmakers and journalists recorded between 2006 and 2011. In her concluding chapter Strauhs says “African LINGOs, I believe, are not only sites for political and socio-cultural interventions, but breeding grounds for literary creativity and upcoming writers”, and looks at possible future scenarios of the African LINGO in the twenty-first century.

A interview with Lily Nyariki, who serves as Focal Point contact (for Anglophone African countries) for the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Inter Country Quality Node for Teaching and Learning (ICQN -TL), and its Books and Learning Materials section http://www.adeanet.org/en/working-groups/books-and-learning-materials, which is responsible for raising awareness about books and reading. In June 2019 ADEA, in partnership with the Global Book Alliance, the African Union Commission and the Ministry of Education Kenya, held a three day-high level Workshop on National Book and Reading Policies in Africa. The discussions centred around the urgent need for African countries to adopt a Continental Framework on National Book and Reading policies in Africa developed by the Africa Union Commission, in order to assist to African countries to establish and develop their own national book and reading policies. It is important, Nyariki says, “for African countries to formulate their own policies through the guidance of the framework that provides clear
guidelines on the process.” She also argues that “African governments need to have clear language policies that give local languages the opportunity to be used especially in lower primary grades before they are introduced to international languages like English and French.” There is, she says, a mistaken view that local languages do not offer an economic opportunity for the users, “but I think it is because local languages have not been marketed and made readily accessible via reading materials that will interest readers. Local languages have been easily marketed through radio and the same can be achieved through reading materials in suitable formats, like audio books, print and e-books.”

Wafawarowa, Brian The Business of Book Publishing in Africa. (Document ref. WIPO/IP/IND/GE/07/14)
A paper presented to the World Intellectual Property Organization/WIPO International Conference on Intellectual Property and the Creative Industries, Geneva, October 29-30, 2007. The author finds that, compared to the developed world, the African and the developing world’s book publishing industry is too dependent on textbook publishing and procurement by the state, the World Bank, and donor agencies. This presentation looks at the challenges facing general book publishing in Africa as a whole and South Africa in particular and offers a number of recommendations on how best to go about publishing for Africa and the developing world. Wafawarowa contends that general publishing is a better indicator of the level of development of any publishing sector, and highlights some of the problems that inhibit publishing and distribution of general books across the continent. Through a series of case studies he attempts to demonstrate how some of these challenges can be overcome through the creation of better economies of scale, and how collaboration and simple production technology can be utilised to achieve this.

Wafawarowa, Brian Publishing for Africa. Working Creatively Around the Challenges.
Brian Wafawarowa, a former Chairman of the African Publishers Network https://african-publishers.net/ believes the way forward for African publishing is through publishing partnerships, exploiting economies of scale, and making more effective use of recent advances in production technology. “In scholarly publishing, especially where the economies of scale are too small to warrant conventional publishing, it is high time that African publishers embraced the open access agenda and look at how best to network the activities of scholarly publishers on the continent and outside the continent.” Publishing for Africa is a tough challenge “that takes a publisher who can think around all the barriers and challenges by working creatively with other book practitioners on the continent and take appropriate advantage of existing technology.”

https://www.bu.edu/phpbin/ijahs/publications/?pid=248 ¶
Now invariably dated, this investigation – from the point of view of a prominent African Studies librarian - examines the complex factors that affect publishing in Africa, using a three-part model involving the reader, the writer and the publisher. Among the topics the author covers are the importance of textbooks in any discussion of African publishing, the need for children’s books, the dynamic between writer and reader, the relationship between writer and publisher, and the myriad problems African publishers face, especially in the area of marketing and distribution. Walsh suggests that to approach publishing rationally, it is essential that there is interaction between writer, reader and publisher, making it possible for real change to be effected in Africa both in and through the book trade.


An fascinating analogy from the World Intellectual Property Organization https://www.wipo.int/portal/en/index.html. The Baobab tree is a common part of the African Savanna landscape and a powerful feature in its folklore. It is the biggest and most resilient tree, known to live more than a thousand years in the most arid parts of the continent. The Baobab tree can be seen as a symbol of a viable publishing sector. The roots symbolize the creative part of the book sector. This sector includes authors, rights holders, professionals like publishers, editors, proof readers, typesetters and other people that work in the sector. The trunk of the Baobab anchors the Baobab tree and supports the upper part, i.e. the branches, the leaves and the fruit. The trunk of the baobab represents the policy environment in the book sector. These policies link the creative sector with readers, publishers, booksellers and education, and its components include copyright, procurement policy, national book policies, and sales tax policies such as VAT. Finally, the branches, leaves and fruit, the flourishing part
of the tree, can represent the industry and can represent society, education and economic development, which benefit from the efforts of the creative and policy sectors. Like the various parts of the Baobab tree, the book sector has many interdependent parts. “These parts need to be coordinated through policy to ensure a thriving and sustainable book sector. Without such co-ordination, these parts cannot work at cross-purpose and fail to achieve reading, educational, economic and social development needs and objectives.”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf
Also at (freely accessible)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [29/07/21]
Discusses, first, general trends in book and library development in anglophone Africa and, secondly, focuses on two key challenges: the questions of literacy and language. In a concluding section the author assesses the challenges and opportunities offered by the new information and communication technologies for the development of African publishing and reading cultures, and, at the same time, analyses some of the problems of ICTs and electronic publishing in terms of access, Internet connectivity, cost, archiving, and issues relating to technical competence. Zeleza argues effectively that it is easy to dismiss the need for e-publishing, to stress that there are more pressing needs in other areas. “But we must resist giving in to despair or to the populist dismissal of new technologies on the grounds that they are patronized by a minority or the elite. The same can be said about print publishing and libraries themselves: the vast masses of African peoples do not buy books or go to libraries, but few would regard that as sufficient reason to shut the libraries and publishers down.” The challenge, Zeleza states, “is to expand their usage and utility for more people.”

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/the-african-writers-handbook ¶
A slightly edited version of an eloquent keynote speech delivered by Paul Zeleza – winner of the 1994 Noma Award for Publishing in Africa – at an 'Indaba' on national book policies held during the 1996 Zimbabwe International Book Fair. It focuses, first, on the political and cultural economies of the African book industry and, secondly, the social contract which the author believes needs to be forged between the six stakeholders he identifies, namely African governments, publishers, writers, educational institutions, libraries, and the general reading public. The author contends that a social contract for books, for the development of a vigorous reading culture and a flourishing indigenous book industry, requires specific commitments.
and tangible contributions from each of the stakeholders. He sets out what these requirements are, and concludes, “Culture and books are too serious to be left to sympathetic foreigners or governments. All of us have a stake in them, for they embody our values, practices and possibilities, dreams and destiny, pasts and futures, our investment in a reflective, critical, and tolerant humanity.”

[https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2021-0007](https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2021-0007)

Also at (free access)  
https://www.academia.edu/50746203/African_Publishers_Associations_on_the_Web_An_Inventory_and_Directory [06/08/21]

This document offers an inventory and directory of book publishers’ associations in Africa, and their presence on the web and on social media. The website of the African Publishers Network (APNET) lists a total of 44 national publishers/book trade associations with ‘Full membership’ status, plus three more ‘Prospective members’. However, at this time (as at March 2021) only ten African national publishers’ associations maintain active and currently accessible websites.

Zell says “It has been pointed out from time to time that, for African publishers, a web presence is perhaps not as vital for marketing and promotion – and generating sales – as it may be for other publishers in the countries of the North; and that some African publishers may well have other priorities, strategies, and needs at this time. That is true to some extent. However, it is also a fact that a good number of African publishers have realized that a web presence is now absolutely vital for them, if not necessarily to generate sales alone, but above all for visibility of their publishing activities, and, perhaps most importantly, visibility for their authors. Equally, in terms of global reach, and in today’s digital world, a web presence is essential for any book industry organization. Publishers’ associations in Africa are in need of a higher profile. They will want to become more proactive, more visible in shaping policies and identifying needs; and publishers and book trade associations should be driving research, data gathering, and developing training programmes for the African book professions. It could be argued that this is even more important now when, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the book industries everywhere are facing hugely difficult and uncertain times.”

[https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-03003004](https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-03003004)

[https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-03004001](https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-03004001)

Pre-print version (freely accessible)  
https://www.academia.edu/39210555/Publishing_in_Africa_Where_Are_We_Now_An_Update_for_2019 [19/05/21]

Extracts from this paper also at https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/publishing-in-africa-where-are-we-now/ [19/05/21]
This article is an update and sequel to a two-part paper published in *Logos. Forum of the World Book Community* over ten years ago in 2008/09. (See ➔ details and links below.) It seeks to provide a broad round-up of the current situation of the book industry in Africa today (primarily that in English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa), together with a brief review of the work and activities of the various organizations and associations that have been supportive of African publishing over the years. Part One looks at the persistent failure of African governments to support their book industries in a tangible and positive fashion, and their lack of support of public libraries. It reviews the current status of book development councils in Africa, and the unsatisfactory progress that has been made in establishing national book policies; examines the challenges of generating book industry data, and the opportunities now available to African publishers by the new digital environment.

Part Two offers a number of reflections and recommendations on the way forward, particularly as it relates to capacity and skills building, training for book industry personnel (including training for digital publishing), strengthening book professional associations, South-South linkages and knowledge sharing, encouraging international collaboration, the need for ongoing research and documentation, as well as issues as they relate to African books in the global market place, and the important but neglected area of publishing in African indigenous languages. An appendix provides a list of conferences, meetings, and seminars on publishing and book development in Africa held between 1968 and 2019.


https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-01904006
Also at (freely accessible)
https://www.academia.edu/2514809/Publishing_in_Africa_Where_Are_We_Now_Part_One_Some_Spurious_Claims_Debunked

"Publishing in Africa: Where Are We Now? Part Two: Accomplishments and Failures."

https://doi.org/10.1163/095796509X12777334632186
Also at (freely accessible)
https://www.academia.edu/2514842/Publishing_in_Africa_Where_Are_We_Now_Part_Two_Accomplishments_and_Failures

Pre-print version (freely accessible)
https://www.academia.edu/40687022/Indigenous_publishing_in_sub-Saharan_Africa_A_chronology_and_some_landmarks [18/05/21]
A chronological timeline that sets out some of the key dates, events, and landmarks in the history and development of indigenous publishing in sub-Saharan Africa. It also includes details of the major conferences, meetings or seminars on African publishing, held in Africa or at venues elsewhere, since 1968. An earlier version of this chronology first appeared in *The African Publishing Companion: A Resource Guide* (2002), and has now been updated through to the period up to 2019, and considerably expanded to also include publication of a
number of benchmark studies, conference proceedings, journals, and reference resources on the African book world.

Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/26872848/African_Publishing_Coming_of_Age._A_Review_Essay
and at [Extracts only] https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/publishing-in-africa-where-are-we-now/ [27/07/21]
The 16 chapters in this book form a Festschrift in honour of Henry Chakava, the distinguished publisher who is widely recognized as one of Africa’s most dynamic and innovative publishers, as well as a prolific author of articles and studies on many aspects of publishing and the book sector in Africa. This is a review article of its contents.

Pre-print version (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/24429073/Indigenous_publishing_in_Africa_the_need_for_research_documentation_and_collaboration [27/07/21]
Sets out the need for more systematic and more vigorous research and documentation, data gathering, and analysis of the African book sector. This should include, for example, compilation of publishing data and book production statistics, as important elements in measuring the growth and vitality of indigenous publishing in Africa today. It also argues for the desirability for more collaboration, knowledge sharing, and information and skills exchange within Africa; as well as the possible development of North-South links and partnership programmes, such as for example a programme to establish a North-South research group, a new research cluster or network, bringing together suitable academic and research institutions in Africa, Europe, and North America. A final section offers some pointers for reinvigorating research, and possible forms of collaboration.

Pre-print version (freely accessible) http://www.academia.edu/4246145/Oxford_University_Press_in_Postcolonial_Africa_A_Review_Essay [27/07/21]
A book review essay of Creating Postcolonial Literature. African Writers and British Publishers by Caroline Davis (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013, see ➔ above record in this section for Davis, Caroline). Based on extensive oral testimonies and new archival research in, among others, the archives of Oxford University Press, the book is a study about an eclectic but now
largely forgotten series of postcolonial literature, the Three Crowns series. At the same time
the book presents an insightful, critical examination of the activities of three branches of
Oxford University Press in Africa over a period of several decades.

Zell, Hans M. “Publishing in Africa.” In International Book Publishing. An Encyclopedia,
A broad sweep of the development of publishing in Africa, from the first mission printing
presses in Nigeria in the nineteenth century to indigenous publishing in Africa today [in the
mid-1990s]. Provides some historical background, examines the role of the multinational
publishers which dominated the publishing scene in the 1960s and 1970s, and charts the
establishment and growth of autonomous, African-owned publishing enterprises. Also
analyses some of the key issues that have effected the development of the book industries in
Africa

Zell, Hans M. “Publishing in Africa: The Crisis and the Challenge.” In A History of
Twentieth-Century African Literatures, edited by Oyekan Owomoyela. Lincoln & London:
University of Nebraska Press, 1993, 369-87.
https://www.academia.edu/2981731/Publishing_in_Africa_The_Crisis_and_the_Challenge
(freely accessible, full text of entire volume) [30/07/21]
Now very dated, examines the crisis in the African book industry and the challenges facing
indigenous publishers. [in the early 90s]. Also provides an overview of literary publishing in
Africa south of the Sahara, including publication of literary periodicals and magazines, which
tend to live a somewhat precarious existence.

Also published in Publishing and Book Development in the Third World, edited by Philip G.
A critical examination of the state of the book and the African book industries in the late 1980s,
which is described as a publishing industry in severe crisis, heavily affected by a weak
infrastructure in most African countries, as well as by “past corrupt regimes, capital flight,
devastating years of drought and famine, political unrest, and the consequences of the major
hikes in the price of oil.” The author states that “the picture of Africa at the end of the 1980s
is largely of a bookless society” and examines the book famine, that is inflicting long-lasting
damage across a whole generation going through primary, secondary and university
education in Africa. While the author argues that a viable indigenous publishing industry is
“still a dream in most parts of the continent”, a despite the overall gloomy picture, the very
difficult economic conditions and lack of government encouragement, new imprints,
nonetheless, continue to mushroom all over Africa and “some privately-owned firms have
shown imaginative entrepreneurial skill in the midst of adversity.”
Part II: COUNTRY-SPECIFIC STUDIES

Botswana

Examines the challenges of publishing in local languages in Botswana, discussing aspects such as readership and the limited market for books, the prospects for developing local language publishing, and the important role indigenous language publishing has in eliminating illiteracy and creating a reading and writing culture.

A fairly comprehensive review, albeit now very dated, of the history and development of the publishing industry in Botswana. Addresses issues such as publishing laws and legislation, book professional associations, literacy, writers and illustrators, publishers, bookshops and libraries.

Now rather dated, this is part of a series of useful country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

Cameroon

The author offers “a rare insight into creative writing activities in Anglophone Cameroon by reviewing the publishing landscape, including the present digital area”. Cameroonian authors writing in English have found it a struggle to break into print, and to be published by either European, African or francophone Cameroon publishers, and this prompted some of them, like the enterprising Buma Kor, to establish their own publishing houses some years ago. Several other shoe-string publishing operations were started by other writers, and by academics, but sadly none of them survived. Happily, the picture has now changed more recently by the establishment in 2007 of the not-for-profit organization Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group http://www.langaa-rpcig.net/ in Bamenda who (using largely print-on-demand/POD technology) have published a wide diversity of high-quality scholarly publications as well as a great deal of creative writing. Langaa’s now [as at 2015] very substantial list of over 150 titles (in both English and French) is distributed by the Oxford-based African Books Collective, thus ensuring wide international visibility for their publications. Meantime Cameroonian writers have taken advantage of the new opportunities now offered by digital platforms. Self-publishing is flourishing, as are a number of vibrant blogs. Social media is now also widely used, and – although the quality of writing is often poor or amateurish – it all helps to enhance and promote the visibility of Anglophone Cameroon writing. However, Ashuntantang also notes that income/royalty earnings from digital publishing, whether self-published, or published via Langaa or other publishers, are still negligible.


The mission of the Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group (Langaa RPCIG) http://www.langaa-rpcig.net/ is to contribute to the cultural development and renaissance of Africa. This is achieved by conducting research, providing training in research and writing, and publishing and promoting African scholarship and creative writing. The not-for-profit Langaa is supported by founding members and other contributors, financial grants, and efforts of volunteers. Located in Bamenda and Buea in Cameroon (although its members and volunteers operate from different parts of the world) it has thus far published over 500 titles, primarily on Cameroon, but also a wide variety of critical perspectives and studies on other African countries. In this interview with the head of the organization, Francis Nyamnjoh, he describes Langaa’s commissioning strategy and how they market and distribute their books within Africa and internationally, Langaa’s readership worldwide, their writing workshop programmes, what they see as their most important challenges. What does he think is needed to strengthen research, publishing and distribution systems for general and academic publishers in the African continent? “We need to be curious and ask questions. We need to read and write. We need to encourage reading and writing. We need to promote Langaa, a desire for knowledge. We need to value knowledge generation in Africa and from African perspectives. We need to support African publishers.”

Note: For more information about Langaa see also this blog post by Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Kathryn Toure Desire for Knowledge – Langaa and Publishing in Africa http://www.langaa-rpcig.net/+Desire-for-knowledge-Langaa-and+.html (Posted 24 September 2017)


Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi, and Ambroise Kom “Francophone Cameroon Literature: A Conversation with Ambroise Kom.” Tydskrif vir Letterkunde 53, no. 1 (January 2016): 30-50. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/tvl.v.53i1.3 ¶ Also at (freely accessible) http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/tvl/v53n1/03.pdf Ambroise Kom is a distinguished Cameroonian literary critic. In this wide ranging and insightful conversation, he talks about the evolution of Francophone Cameroon literature, and the interview also covers some ground about the history and current [2016] status of publishing in the country. For example, about the role played by Editions CLE in the seventies and eighties and the turbulent 1990s – a period heavily dominated by government censorship – although CLE did not publish any books that were considered to be politically sensitive. Kom also talks about the creation and selection of government approved textbooks, and the distribution and importation of books, an area still largely in the hands of a major French multinational that enjoys a monopoly for the distribution of newspapers and books. The lack of a national book policy, and the absence of positive government support for the book industries, has created a highly unfavourable climate for the growth and survival of the small number of publishing houses that currently exist. “Publishing within our national boundaries is tough, selling books within our national boundaries is not easy either. Most books published by our own people are in the diaspora – old and new – in Europe, America; they publish and some of their books can get here, generally shipped by themselves.” An indigenous and sustainable book industry is still a far way off, “the book industry in this country is not yet born. It is yet to exist because the conditions do not allow for it.”

A “diagnosis” of the book sector in Cameroon, covering professional initiatives, public partnerships, and the government’s involvement and responsibilities, which the author hopes will stimulate discussion “to provide a remedy to the dearth of the book culture in Cameroon”, and a revamped indigenous book industry.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/09/21]

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

Eritrea

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/09/21]

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Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)


One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.


One in a series of overview articles in a special issue of ISBN Review focusing on the book sector in various countries of Southern Africa. This article concentrates mainly on the activities of the Macmillan Swaziland National Publishing Company (which is part-owned by the government) and its partnership with the Swaziland Ministry of Education.

Ethiopia

Ashanafi, Neamin Reading the Book Market. https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/content/reading-book-market (Posted 15 August 2017) [05/06/21]

These days, the author writes, “everywhere you go to in Addis, it seems that books are easily available. It is also a common sight to have people carrying around books on the roads and selling them to people sitting in cars, cafes’ or to the pedestrians.” This is a relatively new phenomenon that has taken over the city, as years ago “the book market and readership was not widespread like it is today and members of this generation were severely criticized by the older ones for not reading.” But the issue this time around is not so much the number of readers, but the lack of quality – especially in terms of design, editing and proof-reading – in many of the books published recently, as well as the absence of an organized institution that works towards improving the quality of books. Apart from this, Ashanafi says, there is also another factor that contributes to the problem associated with the issue of quality: there are still only a few publishers in the country and the publishing sector remains at an infant stage, which brings different challenges for writers, many of whom have had to resort to self-publish their works, thus not benefiting from any book professional input.

Note: for a useful listing of bookshops in Addis see these Facebook pages https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=book%20stores%20in%20addis%20ababa%20ethiopia
https://doi.org/10.1006/iilr.1994.1012

An interesting, though now account that provides an overview of literacy, education, printing, publishing, and library provision in Ethiopia. Discusses the role of the church, the development of education, including higher education, and reviews printing presses and publishing houses in the country. The printing of Ethiopian works started as early as printing itself, but in Ethiopia began in 1863 at Massawa. The first commercial printing press was introduced at Massawa in 1890. Most of these presses were used for printing newspapers, magazines, religious literature, government documents and the like, but little use was made for educational material. “At present there are about 25 presses in the country, but publishing in Ethiopia “is essentially non-existent”, the author says.

Selman, Mohamed *The Booksellers on the Street.*
https://www.penopp.org/articles/booksellers-street?language_content_entity=en
(Posted 03 May 2019) [04/06/21]

The Pre-Abiy era in Ethiopia – before Abiy Ahmed became that country’s prime minister in 2018 – was marked by repressive martial law and states of emergency. Publishing and bookselling were a perilous business, with government banning some publications, imprisoning authors and vendors, threatening printing houses, and raising the price of newsprint. This gave birth to underground publishing houses. Mohammed Selman was previously an editor at Littmann Books, one of the leading publishing houses in Ethiopia, and in this intriguing account he provides a glimpse how, despite grim times, authors, publishers and street vendors warily united to deliver books in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa. In their self-defence, the author reports, “itinerant vendors came up with a strategy to tuck safe bestsellers – cookbooks, romance, self-help, and ‘soft politics – close to their chest, like a European ferenj [foreigner] carrying a baby. And like village kids toting backpacks, vendors strapped to their back’s books [of] ‘hardcore politics’ considered trouble. … From their own ‘cocaine hideouts,’ vendors evolved important skills, like drug dealers having to quickly assess potential buyers. Pro-incumbent or opposition? Which books do customers eyeball?”


One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.
The Gambia

Anna Stelthove-Fen has contributed significantly to provide access to quality children’s books in The Gambia, by way donations personal commitment. In this short interview with her, held in Accra during the 2019 IBBY Africa Regional Meeting, she talks of her book donation initiative in The Gambia, her motivation to support African children literature, the nature of the books included in the scheme, and the many constraints faced by children’s book publishing and availability: “The general situation of books and reading is – as far as I see – bad. There is a small group of children – often visiting private schools – who have access to books and are able to read very well. And there is a bigger group of children attending school with much hope but no support from the parents (because they are not well educated and often thinking reading wouldn’t be worthwhile). These children have to be supported e.g. with reading material and additional reading classes. … I would like to see children taught in their mother language and fully able to use this language. English or another language should be taught additionally. There should be more books of African origin and ideas. To put it briefly: the syllabus and the libraries have to be decolonised.”
Note: see also this further interview with Anna Stelthove-Fen (in German) about the organization she is involved with, the Afrika Kooperative in Münster https://afrika-kooperative.de/ at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk5fJbZdJA4 (Video, 5:15mins)

Jarju, Momodou Gambia: Publishing Industry Grows as Two Gambians Launch Books
(Posted 06 November 2019)
Publishing output by Gambian writers are reportedly on the increase, and so are publishing activities in the country: “Their publications have added to the proliferation of writing in the country recently, especially since the dawn of the new Gambia.”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08ad3133e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/09/21]
One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.
While the literature on publishing and the book in The Gambia remains sparse, it is good to learn of new publishing activities in that country, and also of initiatives to reinforce the country’s Copyright Act of 2004 – and in turn legal deposit legislation, and its enforcement – that will seek to strengthen the book industry. Literary activities are vibrant and the publishing industry is growing, according to this report from the Gambian National Centre for Arts and Culture [https://ncac.gm/]. Until fairly recently there were no private sector indigenous publishers in the country, but a small number of new publishing companies have now emerged, and self-publishing is blossoming.

Patterson, J.R. Timbooktoo: The Pipeline Bookshop (Posted Summer 2021) [27/10/21] [https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2021/summer/timbooktoo-pipeline-bookshop-j-r-patterson] [27/10/21]  
A portrait of an enterprising bookshop in The Gambia: “With its cool blue and chalk-white edifice, the Gambia’s Timbooktoo Bookshop has all the remove of the American consulate on nearby Kairaba Avenue, without any of the latter’s aggressive iron fencing or the speciously green lawn. No wonder, then, that while sitting on Timbooktoo’s second-story terrace, drinking an espresso, and looking down over the taupe dust of Garba Jahumpa Road, which rises in thick, tight clouds behind each passing car, I finally felt the relief of arrival”, the author says. Its owners are Katie Paine and her husband Ousainou Jagne, and they operate from the “drowsy suburb of Fajara”, some eight miles west of the nation’s capital, Banjul. It exists not only for the many European tourists who visit the Gambia as a tourist destination, as the majority of its business actually comes from school books—textbooks, notebooks, and lesson manuals—that are ordered by schools throughout the Gambia. They also send books to outlying schools who can’t afford them, or wouldn’t otherwise be able to receive them.

Ghana  
See also ➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for women  
➔ Publisher histories and profiles  

Accra named as UNESCO World Book Capital for 2023.  
UNESCO has named Accra (Ghana) as the UNESCO World Book Capital for 2023, following and evaluation of the World Book Capital Advisory Committee. The citation states: “The city proposed to the committee a broad programme that targets marginal groups with high levels of illiteracy including women, youth, migrants, street children and persons with disabilities. Measures to be implemented include the reinforcing of school and community infrastructure and institutional support for lifelong learning, in order to foster the culture of reading. By championing the publishing sector and other creative industries, the programme also aims to encourage professional skills development to stimulate the country’s socio-economic transformation”. Activities will also include the introduction of mobile libraries to reach marginalized groups, holding of workshops to promote reading and writing of books in
different Ghanaian languages, the establishment of skills and training centres for unemployed youth and the organization of competitions to showcase Ghanaian arts and culture and promote inclusivity.

This is the third time that an African city has received this honour, and previous UNESCO World Book Capitals were Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in 2014, and Conakry, Republic of Guinea in 2017.

Note: While it was exciting to hear about Accra being named UNESCO World Book Capital for 2023, here is a report (and accompanying video) about less happy news, “Publishers Turning Text Books into Toilet Rolls Following Reversal of Decision to Roll out New Curricula.”

Publishers have reportedly been compelled to pulp textbooks produced for the new curricula in Ghanaian schools at the lower levels, following the government’s failure to implement the new curricula. In this interview (and accompanying video) the current president of the Ghana Publishers Association https://gpagh.org/, Asare Yamoah, states that “in our bid to empty our warehouses and create space for the new curriculum-based text books, we have sent all those ‘old’ books to the paper mills to be turned into toilet rolls”; on the grounds, that the government’s National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA) did not proceed with its proposal to phase out the old curriculum books “since there isn’t much difference between the old and new curricula in terms of content.”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/10/21]

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

http://gbdc.gov.gh/sites/default/files/GHANA%20BOOK%20DEVELOPMENT%20AGENCY%20BILL%20C%20%202018%20CURRENT.pdf [04/06/21]

The Ghana Book Development Council http://gbdc.gov.gh/ has announced that the existing Council is to be superseded by a new Ghana Book Development Agency that will oversee the development, regulation and effective planning of the book industry in Ghana. In the introductory pages of the Bill it states: “Since the establishment of the Ghana Book Development Council by Gazette publication in December 1970, no legislation has been passed to give legal status to the Agency. Many developments have taken place within the book industry, thus making it challenging to effectively regulate the industry without a
comprehensive legal framework. Apart from this handicap is the phenomenon of sub-standard publishing in the industry. In order to regularise and create the requisite framework for the book industry generally, there is the need to enact the Bill.” The Ghana Publishers Association [http://www.ghanabookpublishers.org/](http://www.ghanabookpublishers.org/) provided significant input in the drafting of the Bill and there are reportedly still ongoing discussions before the Bill is debated in Parliament. The existing Book Development Council was patterned on the UNESCO model (as indeed are most others in Africa), but was not seen to be productive, nor did it significantly help the industry.

While some national book development councils in Africa have formulated and published a range of national book policies, none of these agencies enjoy any formal legal status at this time. Without legal backing for policy documents, the implementation of policy, and the enforcement of legislation, will continue to be problematic and is unlikely to succeed. This Ghanaian initiative therefore seems to be a step in the right direction to improve the effectiveness of national book development councils in Africa.


The introduction to this document states that the Ghana Book Development Agency Bill (GBDA) (see also ➔ record above) provides in section 3(f) that the GBDA is to “prescribe and enforce standards for the printing and publication of final book proofs by publishers and printers in the book industry in accordance with international best practice.” This section of the Bill also mandates the GBDA to ensure the removal of books that do not comply with the national standards from circulation. The Bill notes that “the absence of standards currently has resulted in practitioners in the book industry adopting their own production standards and methods, which often do not conform to international standards.” The establishment of such book industry standards therefore seek to regulate the industry, and make books produced in Ghana conform to both national and international standards. The purpose of now setting standards for e-books as well is to further guide the book industry, and make the production of electronic books conform fully to international standards.


This outstanding and meticulously documented thesis examines law and policy in the book publishing industry in Ghana, together with an evaluation of the success of government-sponsored institutions that have been established in support of publishing and book development in the country. It seeks to provide an understanding of the socio-cultural and economic conditions under which policies were formulated, and as such it is probably the first qualitative content analysis of book publishing law and policy, which, although vitally important to publishing development, is an area that has been neglected in the research on the African book industries. Issues concerning publishing development in Ghana and in other
countries in Africa, the author says, have attracted considerable debate and coverage in the literature, but the focus of the debate has mainly centred on challenges confronting publishing development in the continent, and the promotion of sustainable schoolbooks provision. While there is quite a substantial body of existing literature on the historical development of book publishing in Africa and its challenges, the role of law and policy, and the contributions of government-sponsored institutions to publishing development, has not adequately been investigated. This thesis therefore provides the first analysis of law and policy in one African country, and provides an evaluation of government-sponsored institutions supporting the book sector. The research identifies law and policy, examines the rationale for policy formulation, the policy-making process itself, the experiences of various stakeholders in the formulation of these policies, and issues relating to the implementation of policy.

A major challenge of the book publishing industry in Ghana is the lack of resources to enforce legislation and implement policies. Mahama also recommends that institutions should be strengthened through review and restructuring, and there is equally a need to review the country’s textbook policy towards developing a national book policy that will recognise book publishing as a strategic national industry. The author established that the promulgation of the 2002 textbook policy – notwithstanding the inconsistencies and challenges in the procurement process and implementation – gave private commercial publishers in the country the opportunity to participate in educational publishing. The involvement of private sector publishers in educational publishing “has brought optimism to publishers because a share of the educational market means a vast amount of work for publishers as well as enormous economic gains.” However, a “main obstacle to the implementation of policy and legislation is that there is a general lack of compliance with, or partial compliance with all legislation and policy documents that were identified. …. Without a legal backing for policy documents, and education for stakeholders in publishing and the general public, the implementation of policy and the enforcement of legislation will continue to be problematic.”

In offering a range of useful recommendations for good practice, Mahama says “the findings of this thesis should prompt government and other stakeholders in the book publishing industry to review the existing textbooks policy towards the formulation of a national book policy, that properly positions the book publishing industry as a strategic national industry that would contribute to the general development of the country. ... A comprehensive National Book Policy is essential and requires the political will of both publishers and government for it to be achieved.”

book publishing industry in Ghana have caused significant financial loss to the rights owners, and is evident from the analysis are the difficulties associated with enforcing the law due to lack of awareness of the law by the right owners, and lack of awareness and expertise by enforcement agencies. The study recommends public awareness campaigns for the public and stakeholders in the industry. It is also important, the author says, that training is given to law enforcement agencies, and the support of stakeholders enlisted in enforcing the law.

One often cited challenge to effective mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBE) in multilingual countries like Ghana is the difficulty of developing curriculum and instructional materials in many languages. To explain this situation, factors such as shortage of writers and teachers in the local languages, lack of interest on the part of publishers in view of the wide availability of textbooks in multiple languages, as well as official support for dominant western languages, such as English, are usually cited. This paper discusses the veracity of these claims, by examining pre- and post-independent governments’ efforts at material development to support MTBE in Ghana. The authors point out that, while most educational policies and reforms in pre- and post-independent Ghana have emphasised the importance of mother tongue education, there has in fact been no concerted attempt to design and implement a language-in-education policy that incorporates the urgent need to develop curriculum materials for MTBE. This is attributed primarily to a lack of political will, exhibited in the limited support in terms of resources offered for the development of Ghana’s languages by successive governments, as well as fuelled by myths and misconceptions about mother-tongue education: “The fact remains”, the authors state, “that the use of an unfamiliar language as a medium of instruction denies full access to education for the majority of children from socio-economically disadvantaged families.”

Assesses the performance of the Ghanaian government’s ‘National Textbook Development and Distribution Policy for Pre-Tertiary Education’ of 2002. It examines the policy in theory and in practice by exploring the extent to which the liberalisation of the textbook sector has helped to improve textbook procurement, production and distribution, availability, quality and access to the books. The paper discusses the context leading to the transition from the state-controlled policies to the present liberalised textbook provision policies. The tensions that marked the transition period, and the role of the World Bank and other development agencies in the policy shift, are also discussed. The authors identify a number of implementation challenges that prevented the full realisation of the objectives of the textbook policy, including the Ministry of Education’s interference in the textbook procurement
process. The paper concludes with a range of recommendations how the situation might be improved.


With a steadily growing market for audio content in Africa, the founder and thus far the only distributor of African audiobooks in West Africa, the Accra-based Akoo Books http://www.akoobooks.com/ (Akoo meaning ‘Parrot’ in Ghana’s Akan language) is hoping to capitalise. In this interview with Ama Dadson – conducted during the 2019 Frankfurt Book Fair – she sets out the background that motivated her to launch AkooBooks, the range of services her company offers and their working methods, the potential market in Ghana as well as Africa-wide, and her views on the opportunities and challenges for the African audiobook market. The global outlook for the audiobook publishing industry is very good, she says “the industry is on the rise but African voices are absent from this digital publishing space. The explosion of African writing talent, the advent of new mobile technologies and the emergence of ‘voice’ as an important commerce platform (e.g. smartphone and smart speaker voice assistants), bring the opportunity for Africa to offer digital African audio publishing experiences to a global community. … We believe that cultural diversity contributes to the vitality and quality of life throughout the world. Through the dissemination of African audiobooks and audio programming, we seek to strengthen people’s engagement with their own cultural heritage and to enhance their awareness and appreciation of Africa’s cultural heritage.”

Kenya
See also ➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for women ➔ Publisher histories and profiles


According to reports in Kenya’s Standard Digital newspaper (March 27, 2017), a raid recently conducted under the auspices of the Kenya Publishers Association http://kenyapublishers.org/ and the Kenya Copyright Board http://www.copyright.go.ke/ has unearthed a multi-million-shilling school textbook piracy racket, amidst allegations that rogue head teachers are colluding with hawkers to rob textbooks from public schools. The article depicts two routes used by this kind of operation: In one “brokers … rope in school head teachers, who without following laid-down procurement laws, give them tenders to supply books. [The brokers] then link up with book pirates who operate backstreet printing firms which quickly print the books and directly-supply them to schools.” In another racket involving textbooks “pirates, brokers, teachers and hawkers all work together to stage school break-ins, steal books to sell on the streets to unsuspecting buyers.”

In an interview ahead of the IPA Nairobi Seminar in June 2019 Peter Kimani asserts that the key characteristics of the Kenyan publishing scene is that it is very much geared toward school curricula, and that the bulk of the books published in Kenya are still school texts. “Lack of imagination on the part of publishers is hampering the development of a reading culture in Kenya and frustrating many young writers from pursuing careers in writing. … Since the death of the Heinemann African Writers Series in 2002, there have been severe difficulties in the way African fiction travels within the continent and in [the] diaspora.” Kimani also calls for a distributive network within the continent, and adds: “Even with the development of digital publishing, it will be a while before the continent and its people abandon the good old printed book.”


Reprint (extracts only) of an article that first appeared in *Publishing and Development in the Third World*, edited by Philip G. Altbach. London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1992, 119-150. Originally published in 1992 (see ➔ record below) and now reprinted in the above collection, this was probably the first comprehensive discussion of the origins and development, successes and failures, and opportunities and challenges of the Kenyan book industry, from the time of Kenya’s independence through to the early 1990s. It starts off by discussing the state of the industry at independence, the coming of foreign publishers, the creation of new institutions and the emergence of local publishers. Thereafter continues with an analysis of the (then) present state of affairs in the early 1990s of all areas of the book sector, concluding that (at that time) the percentage of books imported was still far too high and was a matter of serious concern, and recommending strategies for reversing this trend. Back in 1992, Henry Chakava stated that the book industry can only be independent if it is fully owned and controlled by Kenyans, “and if it projects and is seen to project a truly Kenyan image locally and abroad.” He also set out the requirements for a fully Kenyan publishing industry to be independent, and that certain assumptions had to be met: namely, (1) continuous availability of book paper from the local paper mill; (2) a government that provides an enabling environment for the local book market, and discontinuing the (then) monopoly enjoyed by state parastatals; (3) the need for professional associations for the book industry to be strengthened, including the setting up of a national book development council; and (4) that the industry, already fully Kenyanised, “will be manned by trained book professionals who are to provide the management skills that are crucial to the success of any enterprise.”


Presents a picture of the Kenyan publishing scene [in the mid-1990s]: the long battle of Kenyan indigenous publishers trying to get a fair share of the textbook markets, the prospects for the future for private enterprise publishing, and the transition of a former multinational company,
Heinemann Kenya, into an independent, wholly African-owned firm, [now East African Educational Publishers].

A comprehensive discussion of the origins and development, successes and failures, and opportunities and challenges of the Kenyan book industry, which spans from the time of Kenya’s independence to the present day [1992]. Begins by discussing the state of the industry at independence, the coming of foreign publishers, the creation of new institutions and the advent of local publishers. Continues with an analysis of the present state of affairs [early 1990s] of all areas of the book sector, concluding that the percentage of books imported is still too high, and recommending strategies for reversing this trend.

Begins with a survey of the available literature on publishing in Kenya and follows with a historical overview of the printed word in Kenya. Describes the objectives of the East African Literature Bureau when it was set up in 1948 and the arrival of multinational publishers OUP and Longman. Examines the changes which took place in publishing after independence in 1963 and the proliferation of multinational publishing houses in Kenya at that time. Gives a detailed analysis of titles which were in demand during the 1970s and 1980s. Notes the subsequent drop in publishing output by indigenous Kenyan publishers, and asks why the industry has not grown in any sustainable fashion since the mid-1970s. Examines the climate for Kenyan publishers in the late 1980s, and issues such as the status of children’s books, language policy, and libraries. The author concludes that the future prospects are good as “the level of literacy is growing gradually and Kenyans are slowly being inculcated into book-reading and book buying.”

Henry Chakava describes his role in the development of Heinemann Educational Books (East Africa) Ltd., later to become Heinemann Kenya between 1977-1987 [and now East African Educational Publishers], discussing his personal publishing style and strategies in some detail and gives a brief survey of publishing in Kenya. Relates his own involvement in publishing popular fiction and describes his experimentation (supported by statistics) with publishing creative writing, and in the translation of books into African languages.

An interview with David Waweru, CEO of WordAlive Publishers, http://wordalivepublishers.com/, an independent Christian publishing house that he founded in Nairobi in 2001 to focus on providing inspirational titles for African readers. In the interview Waweru, a former chair of the Kenya Publishers Association http://kenyapublishers.org/ offers his insights on the inspiration, resilience and patience necessary to succeed as a publisher in Africa, and his vision regarding the future development of the East African book markets. He also talks about a successful collaborative effort that recognized the challenges of distribution in Africa and the fact that no African Christian publisher can currently invest enough to successfully engage in niche publishing on their own, or to distribute books effectively throughout Africa. “So three publishers representing specific regions of the continent came together to create a virtual imprint, HippoBooks … and incorporated a Western publisher, Zondervan, to handle distribution in North America. This collaborative effort strengthens the lists of individual members by creating key resources that they might struggle to develop on their own and that can be sources of sustainable cash flow. It also guarantees wide distribution across the continent and abroad.” David Waweru does not hold much promise for digital products and says “e-books have not taken off in Kenya. Most people can’t afford the e-reader and they don’t have the credit card they need to pay for the books. About 99% of all the e-books we have sold so far were bought by people from overseas.”


A 2016 interview with David Waweru, the then Chairman of the Kenya Publishers Association http://www.kenyapublishers.org/. For years, Kenyan publishers have fought successfully to keep books VAT-free, before the government finally imposed the 16% levy in September 2013. Three years later, the country’s publishing and bookselling industries – of which educational books represent 85% – have been decimated by the move, according to the Kenyan Publishers Association. Waweru says that VAT on books has sent legitimate sales plummeting and simultaneously driven piracy up so far that it is now “the bigger economy than the legitimate publishing industry”. He also says that there is evidence that some rogue booksellers are selling pirated books to schools at lower, VAT-free prices. Meantime, recently announced plans to reform and centralize the nation’s textbook distribution system is beset by accountability issues. The Kenyan bookselling business is unregulated, he says, “money going to schools has led to corruption and some head teachers colluding with rogue booksellers who end up not actually supplying the books, although money still changes hands.” The long-term consequences will be very serious: “If you look at the national exam results of the last two years, it shows that in public schools there has been a decline each year in performance. Significantly, the worst performed subject is English language and the worst performed paper is English composition, and it’s all pointing towards the fact that pupils don’t have access to books and aren’t reading.”

Financed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation [https://www.daghammarskjold.se/](https://www.daghammarskjold.se/) this is a major and in-depth study of the problems and obstacles encountered [as at the mid-1990s] by the Kenyan publishing industry in the manufacture, distribution, and marketing of their books. The first four of seven chapters provide the historical background and present an overview of publishing in Kenya. Subsequent chapters deal with education, culture and publishing, the special problems of the book industries, and a concluding chapter contains a number of recommendations how some of the problems of the industry might be tackled, and which will need to be addressed by the government, NGOs and donor agencies, book industry professionals, and the general public. The volume also contains a substantial amount of statistical and other data collected during the preparation of the study, and a series of appendixes list major publishers and active booksellers in Kenya.


[22/05/21]

Second-hand book stalls and pavement booksellers that primarily sell books published in the US and the UK (reportedly bought through traders who import them in bulk, although their sources are not revealed), nowadays dot many corners in downtown Nairobi. These stalls, known as Inama, or ‘bend over’ bookshops in Swahili, have been flourishing since 2013 when the Nairobi City County government started licensing newspaper vendors to sell old books. Reading advocates argue that the stalls help to promote a reading culture in Nairobi, but local publishers are concerned that their new books can’t compete with the cheap second-hand books on sale by street vendors, and that it can have an adverse effect on sales of locally published books.


[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf) [27/10/21]

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.
http://allafrica.com/stories/201803290502.html  (Posted 28 March 2018) [22/05/21]
The new textbook policy recently [2016] introduced in Kenya has failed according to Wilson Sossion, Secretary-General of the Kenya National Union of Teachers. Writing in an opinion piece reproduced from the *Daily Nation*, he alleges that according to recent reports “some 33 million textbooks procured by the government for public schools have multiple errors, and misleading facts are quite alarming but not surprising.” The Kenya National Union of Teachers had warned, he says, that a centralised public procurement system for school textbooks has never worked, and is fraught with challenges. “It does not make sense for the government to select textbooks and impose them on teachers, who actually know and understand what kind of instructional materials their learners really need.” Although the decision to select and purchase textbooks and distribute them to schools was aimed at locking out cartels and middlemen who collude with some head teachers in fraudulent activities regarding textbook procurement, the new policy has turned out to be counter-productive.

Waweru, David *Book Talk: Microscope on Kenyan Book Publishing.*
A response to an article by Zukiswa Wanner that appeared in the *Daily Nation* on 10 January 2015 http://mobile.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/It-is-time-to-place-the-blame-where-it-squarely-belongs/-/1950774/2584196/-/format/xhtml/-/565ixwz/-/index.html and which was highly critical about Kenyan publishers. David Waweru, former Chairperson of the Kenya Publishers Association http://www.kenyapublishers.org/, says that despite “the scorching criticism I read about the alleged ineptitude of Kenyan publishers, none of the critics has dared invest in book publishing”, and asks why is it that investors and entrepreneur are not willing to venture into the book publishing business? “Publishing is an extremely tough business to sustain especially in the context of not having a very well-developed reading culture, and where average profits are, at best, small and the returns slow.” He then addresses some of the alleged shortcomings of which publishers are accused, such as long delays in responding to manuscript submissions, editorial sloppiness, inadequate promotion and marketing, as well as low royalty terms and poor royalty accounting.

*Note:* See also another response to the Wanner article, by John Mwazemba, which can be found at http://mwazemba.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/stop-blame-game-publishers-and-writers.html.

**Lesotho**

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000069523 [08/11/21]
An (now inevitably very dated) mission report to assist the Government of Lesotho in the establishment of a National Council for Book Development; to advise the government on the objectives and functioning of such a Council, to assist in the drafting of the Council’s constitution and advise on its staff and budget; and to assist in the preparation of a detailed work plan of the Council as well as its administrative and management plan.

One in a series of overview articles in a special issue of ISBN Review focusing on the book sector in various countries of Southern Africa, and which report (for the most part) about the state of libraries, publishing and the retail book trade; current book and copyright legislation, national book policies, programmes to promote the reading habit, laws and legislation covering the book sector and copyright, activities of library and book trade professional bodies, book trade organization, training for the book industries, the use of ISBNs, and more. This particular article also provides an interesting account of the historical development of publishing in Lesotho, which started as early as 1833 with the arrival of the first missionaries from France.


A brief account of Lesotho's publishing history and recent developments. Surveys the activities of church-owned printers and publishers, multinational companies, academic publishers, government agencies, and the activities of the Lesotho Publishers Association. Concludes that “the indigenous publishing industry is still feeble”.


Lineo Segoete, Programming Director at Ba re e ne re https://bareenere.com/ (the name comes from a phrase used to begin folktales in Sesotho) reports about a new initiative to promote a culture of reading and writing in Lesotho. Activities include the organization of an annual literary festival and writing workshop, a national spelling bee competition, production of a poetry video series, an innovative Sesotho dictionary project, and publication of an anthology of short stories written in Basotho called Likheleke tsa puo (which translates to ‘Wordsmiths’ in English).


One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the "book chain", in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.
Liberia

Reports about the opening of a new bookstore launched by Monrovia READS, https://www.monroviareads.org/, a reading literacy NGO. The Nook Book Store, according to the founder Othniel Forte, “attempts to fill a major gap in the provision of Liberian literature. There are several places to get books from, but nowhere, in this entire country, gathers only Liberian books.”

Reports about a revival of indigenous publishing in Liberia, and a flourishing literary climate in the country, encouraged through initiatives such as Monrovia READS, sponsored by Forte Publishing https://www.facebook.com/fortepublication/, which describes itself as “an indie press dedicated to the identification, production and promotion of African creative literary talents.” Most of its writers and poets are first time-authors and emerging voices. Forte offers a full range of publishing services from manuscript development, copy editing, formatting, through to finished copies of the books, as well as sales and marketing.

Clark, Prue Once a Refugee, She’s Opened one of Liberia’s Few Bookstores, where Children can Read about Themselves (Posted 30 January 2016) https://theworld.org/stories/2016-01-30/once-refugee-shes-opened-liberias-only-bookstore-where-children-can-read-about [28/11/21/]
One Moore Bookstore, a small shopfront on a busy street in downtown Monrovia, represents many firsts. Though there are bookshops in Liberia that sell textbooks, this is the first selling books purely for reading pleasure. And its owners publish some of the only books aimed at Liberian children. “In this poor West African nation wrecked by war, poverty and most recently Ebola, reading is not something people generally do for pleasure. Kids read when required in school, but Liberia still has one of the world’s highest rates of illiteracy. That will all change if the owner of One Moore Bookstore has her way. Wayétu Moore, 30, is a Brooklyn-based author who fled Liberia with her family when she was 5. She opened this book store here last year. And she’s been publishing books for Liberian children since 2011.”

Malawi

One in a series of overview articles in a special issue of ISBN Review focusing on the book sector in various countries of Southern Africa. This short article assesses state of publishing in
Malawi [as at 1996], and the problems and prospects of the local book industries and the retail book trade.

One in a series of overview articles in a special issue of *ISBN Review* focusing on the book sector in various countries of Southern Africa. This paper concentrates on bookselling and the retail book trade in Malawi, but also includes a fairly full historical account of the development of book trade in the country, and reviews the major factors which hinder the growth of indigenous publishing and bookselling enterprises.

Examines the factors that have hindered the development of a viable indigenous publishing industry; it highlights some of the problems faced by publishers in Southern Africa in general, and in Malawi in particular, and offers a number of possible solutions to these problems.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/10/21]
One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1978.4.2.87 ¶
Reviews the establishment of printing presses in Malawi and examines the policies of some of the country’s publishing houses and book distribution agencies. Offers hope that the pattern of cultural evolution since independence will encourage a healthy future for the printing and publishing industry in Malawi. Now dated, but remains useful for a detailed historical account of the development of printing and publishing in the country.
Mauritius


A comprehensive, although now very dated overview of libraries and publishing in Mauritius [in the 1980s] covers the National Library, public, academic, special and school libraries and gives a brief history of printing and publishing from 1773 onwards. The problems caused by an abundance of imported books are discussed, with an appraisal of the achievements of Editions de l’Océan Indien. Concludes that Mauritius suffered from the same publishing constraints as other developing nations.

Namibia


An overview of publishing and the retail book trade in Namibia; includes some historical background, an outline of the post-independence reform of the country’s educational system, and reports about the activities of the Association of Namibian Publishers and the Namibia Book Development Council. Now very dated.


https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/08/21]

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.


Some observations on the current [2015] publishing scene in Namibia, which is still heavily dominated by educational and school book publishing. However, some general books from small independent publishers are selling well despite Namibia’s small reading population, with books about animals, children’s books and young adult fiction doing particularly well, as do titles that have a tourist appeal, or have created worldwide demand in the international markets.
Nigeria

See also ➔ British and multinational publishers in Africa
➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for Women
➔ Publisher histories and profiles

Adesanoye, Festus A., and Ayo Ojeniyi, eds. Issues in Book Publishing in Nigeria. Essays in Honour of Aigboje Higo at 70. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria), 2005. 291 pp. https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/issues-in-book-publishing-in-nigeria ¶ This collection of essays was published to honour the late Chief Aigboje Higo (1932-2014) on his 70th birthday. Higo, by many considered to be the doyen of Nigerian book publishing, was a founding father and two-time president of the Nigerian Publishers Association https://nigerianpublishers.com/, and for many years Managing Director and later Chairman of Heinemann Educational Publishers (Nigeria) plc. The 15 contributions that are brought together in this Festschrift include essays by many prominent members of the African book professions, including Bodunde Bankole, Henry Chakava, Ayo Odeniyi, the late Victor Nwankwo, as well as the late Keith Sambrook, a former director of Heinemann’s in the UK, whose chapter recounts the story of his visit to Nigeria in 1964 when he and the late Alan Hill (then Chair of Heinemann’s) met up with Aig Higo and asked him to join HEB and take charge of their business in Nigeria and West Africa. There are also papers on the economics of publishing, training for book industry personnel, and Bodunde Bankole presents an interesting account of the history and development of the Nigerian Publishers Association and its collaboration with international book trade organizations to provide more visibility for Nigerian book publishing output. Niyi Osundare, the distinguished Nigeria poet and critic, who contributes the preface to the book, describes Aig Higo as: “the ultimate publisher...a poet and writer himself, a literary insider who understands the intimate meaning of words...a deeply rooted cosmopolitan who these past fifty years has cultivated a mind full of ideas...with the protean wisdom of a village elder and the purposive panache of a corporate manager.”

A flawed index apart, this is a valuable source of information on the development of publishing and the book trade in Nigeria, and also provides useful overviews of current publishing practise in the country [as at 2005].

Adomako, Tina Interview: Celebrated Publisher Bibi Bakare-Yusuf Discusses African Literature https://www.theafricancourier.de/culture/interview-celebrated-publisher-bibi-bakare-yusuf-discusses-african-literature/ (Posted 24 September 2019) [04/06/21] Bibi Bakare-Yusuf is co-founder and publishing director of one of Africa’s leading independent publishing houses, Cassava Republic Press https://cassavarepublic.biz/. In this interview she talks about the challenges facing African literature, bringing African writing to an African audience, female authors, the need for more writing and publishing in African languages, and the market African literature in local languages: “All the things we’ve learnt from colonial times and the colonial experience need to be expressed differently. If we continue to write only in colonial languages, it almost fossilises our own languages. They stay
put and don’t move on. … we need to address the matter of our own languages in order to survive into the next century.”

*Note:* see also Cassava Republic Press to Start African Language Imprint with $20,000 African Publishing Innovation Fund Grant

Abdulkareem, Fareeda *Nigeria has Produced Some of the World’s Best Authors—So Why is its Reading Culture so Poor?*

Nigeria has a rich literary history and which includes some of the world’s most respected authors. However, despite that rich history and the current growth and interest, the author asserts that “the reality on the ground is that demand for literary fiction in Nigeria is low. … It’s unclear if it’s about people not wanting to read for leisure, or in fact not having access to fiction. Books have become increasingly expensive in the country as bookshops have shuttered, and with an adult literacy rate of 51%, it’s not surprising that some supporters of literature in the country are concerned about how novelists might fare once their books are published.” Quoting Wale Adetula, the founder of The Naked Convos, http://thenakedconvos.com/ one of Nigeria’s popular youth-oriented blogs, is one of those people, who conducted an online poll surveying over a thousand users of his site on their reading habits, and found that many said they only read one book a year. On the other hand, Karo Oforofuo of OkadaBooks https://okadabooks.com/ believes Nigerian reading culture “is getting better by the day, given the computer age and advent of e-books. … Nigeria has a limited number of bookshops, and printing books domestically is a difficult and expensive process. E-books are easier to distribute, as people only need the app to download as many books as they want”, Oforofuo says.

*Note:* Posted on the Facebook Book Publishing in Africa group on 22 May 2018

This is what she said:

“If reading culture is so poor, how come more and more people are setting up publishing companies and book initiatives? If reading culture is so poor, how come literary festivals and events are springing up all over the country? How come there are more online spaces devoted to selling and promoting books now then there were 5 years ago? If reading culture is so poor, how have we [Cassava Republic] been able to sell over 15,000 copies of a novel that is bought by the general public and not a single educational institution? If reading culture is so poor, how has it been possible for diverse retail outlets continue to contact us to supply them with works of fiction? This is a tired story and getting rather tedious. The reality says differently. People are no more reading in Nigeria than they are in the US or UK.”

Adesola, Ademola “‘No University in Nigeria is Standard’ Prof. Niyi Osundare.” [Niyi Osundare interviewed by Adesola Ademola] (Posted 11/01/11, originally published in *The Nation on Sunday* January 2011)

A wide-ranging interview with the distinguished Nigerian writer Niyi Osundare, primarily on the standards of higher education in Nigeria today and his assessment of the state of literature and writing in in the country, but also his views on publishing, self-publishing, and the general state of the book in present day Nigeria: “The poverty of our libraries and
bookstores is affecting the competence of our writers”, he says. While “not oblivious of the gigantic challenges confronting Nigerian publishers and the effort many of them have been making”, Osundare – who was the winner of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1991, and who has published his poetry and other writing with numerous indigenous Nigerian publishers – is critical of the book industry, particularly on the issue of marketing and distribution. “Most Nigerian publishers believe that if they publish the books, the best place for the books to stay is their warehouse. And if you want to read you have to come there to buy the books, no matter where you are in the country. Many of the established publishers have depots in different parts of the country, but these have done little to make books available to readers nationwide.” He goes on to say “I think the Nigerian publishers’ mentality has been conditioned by textbook publishing, particularly textbooks published for primary and higher schools. You don’t need to promote those books because there is already a captive readership.”

Osundare also voices a measure of reservations about the now flourishing self-publishing scene in the country. While sympathizing with budding Nigerian writers that are keen to break into print and have their work published, “… the problem is many of these books have not gone through the normal institutional processes: submission of manuscript, acceptance, the consideration of the manuscript by an in-house editorial group, which would decide whether this manuscript is worth considering at all, and whether to send it to outside assessors. The assessors are usually experts and veterans whose judgement and recommendation are considered valid and impartial. By the time the manuscript passes through all those stages, and it’s made to respond to different kinds of suggestions and recommendations by the different assessors, it would have appreciated and improved considerably.” However, that kind of process has been short-circuited by self-publishing: “So what you have today is the cash-and-carry or carry-go syndrome. Submit a book on Friday and about Saturday the following week the book is in your hand. And you become an author. Genuine authors, authors who stay long in the literary tradition are hardly ever made that way. Book publishing takes a long time. It also takes a long time to become an author, especially an enduring author. The situation in Nigeria today is that most of our books are self-published and therefore have not been able to go through the processes I mentioned.”

Another version also at https://publishingperspectives.com/2017/04/nigeria-reported-publishing-crisis/ [04/06/21]
Booksellers’ persistent failure to pay publishers for books supplied is threatening to cripple the book business in Nigeria, the author says. Publishers accuse them of failing to remit amounts due even though they have actually sold books supplied to them. Booksellers and distributors, in turn, cite poor sales figures, difficult trading conditions, and the rising cost of running their business as the reasons for their poor credit record. Meanwhile authors continue to put pressure on publishers to pay royalties in a timely fashion even if publishers have failed to receive payment, and with some of them facing severe cash flow problems as a result. Some publishers have reportedly written off huge amounts of bad debts, and publishers say that, in practice, they can only pay royalties based on the money they have received, and not for what
they supplied. The result, the author says, has led not only to a climate of mistrust among the
different players in the book industry, but also between publishers and their authors. Some
publishers are now increasingly turning to alternative models for distribution and retail sales.

Ali, Richard *Publishing in Nigeria – The Parrésia Way*
https://theafricanstreetwriter.wordpress.com/2012/12/31/publishing-in-nigeria-the-parresia-
way-by-richard-ali/ [17/06/21]
Richard Ali is CEO of Parrésia Publishers in Nigeria http://www.parresiapublishers.com/,
which set up two imprints in 2011, Parrésia Books and Origami Books. Parrésia Books is a
traditional publishing model for genre fiction whereby the publisher acquires rights and pays
royalties, with the company taking up all the production and risk. The second imprint,
Origami, is designed around self-publishing, but with an emphasis on high quality content,
high editorial standards, and production methods. The company also provides a marketing
option where Origami books can be distributed and marketed together with books published
under the Parrésia imprint for a limited period. Richard Ali also offers some of his thoughts
on the Nigerian publishing landscape, described as “perhaps the most challenging in the
world”, a publishing climate in which only the hardiest can survive, and which usually means
the same old iconic names such as Longmans or Macmillan. Indigenous publishers, he asserts,
“can only begin to have a real say in how we are represented to the world when we ourselves
have a market, an indigenous market that we ourselves control”, and goes on to say “with
over a 150 million [in Nigeria], I don’t see why we cannot have a market of 15 million people
for indigenous books. Say a market of 250 million all over Africa—and I’m not talking of
textbooks here. I mean creative writing, fiction, memoirs, poetry.”

Apeji, E. Adeche “*Readers without Books. A Nigerian Case Study.*” *Logos. The Journal of
Based on a survey of Nigerian publishing output undertaken during 1998, the author (who is
head of the Library and Informatics Centre at the Nigerian Educational Research and
Development Council/NERDC) alleges that the Nigerian publishing industry, notably six
multinational companies, concentrate almost entirely on the safe textbook markets, and that
they fail to cater for the general interest market. He states “Nigeria is not the only country
where publishing is dominated by the textbook, but it is unique in the size of its literate
population and the timidity of its publishers.” The authors call for a national book policy
“which would require that all publishers in Nigeria devote no less than 30% of their resources
to general interest titles, both in English and in the local languages.” He is also critical of the
Nigerian government’s lack of commitment to the issue of book provision, leaving “a yawning
gap between public goals and private endeavours.” (For a response to this article, by Victor
Nwankwo, see ➔ record below.)

https://doi.org/10.1515/libr.1998.48.2.88 ¶
Based on data collected by means of a questionnaire, the author reviews the activities of
indigenous, non-indigenous, and multinational publishing companies in Nigeria, and
assesses the part they have played, and the impact they have made, over the years. Also
explores the role of publishing in the education of Nigeria’s citizens and probes into the challenges of the book industries in the years ahead.


Reviews the historical background to the development of the Nigerian printing and book industries, and sees the early efforts of Christian missionaries as laying the foundation for “today’s thriving book industries in Nigeria”. Examines the government’s involvement in publishing, the role of the multinationals, university press publishing, the activities of Franklin Book Programs in the 1960s, together with a brief note about indigenous initiatives.


A profile of Cassava Republic Press https://cassavarepublicpress.biz/, founded in 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria, by Bibi Bakare-Yusuf and Jeremy Weate, and whose mission “is to change the way we all think about African writing.” The author of this profile says that, after shaking up the Nigerian literary scene, Cassava Republic “has now come to London: defying the odds to become the first African publisher to establish a subsidiary outside of the continent.” While this statement is not entirely factually correct, Cassava Republic setting up offices in the UK in 2016 (and now also with a presence in the US) certainly does represent a radical reversal of the one-way relationship UK publishing has historically had with Africa, and they have been the trailblazer to bring about this welcome change. Asked whether she would recommend other Nigerian or African publishers to expand to London, Bakare-Yusuf says “Yes. Only if they can do better and with even more irreverence and audacity than we are. And if they cannot be daring, then they shouldn’t bother because they will only get lost in the sea of whiteness!”


The author believes publishing in Nigeria, and particularly book marketing, leaves a great deal to be desired, and that the heavy concentration on textbook stifles the publication of creative writing. “The uppermost desire in most Nigerian publishers’ minds is how to win as much a portion of the school book market as possible through the adoption process of the Federal and State Ministries of Education.” This in turn contributes to “the sluggish development of readership, low intellectual awakening and poverty, among other factors; limits the spread of books and reading at the lower socio-income level, while the entertainment media take the leisure time of the average and the rich.” In her conclusion the author states “the Nigerian publishing industry, in spite of having been severely affected by declining readership and unstable economy, shows development in the area of technological transfer which has led to the production of more appealing books; but not enough has been done in developing know-how in book marketing. Books should be promoted with the same vigour that beverages and household goods are promoted.”

The general infrastructural development in Nigeria, especially as it relates to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), is hampered by many issues, ranging from the government’s ineptitude to handling the energy sector and the consequent costs of running businesses in Nigeria, high government taxes, high cost of equipment, as well as an absence of a capable maintenance culture. However, the author believes that the problems are not insurmountable, and sets out a number of recommendations what key players in the industry should know, and do. The paper also examines some of the recent technological developments as it relates to the industry, including issues such as bandwidth, the growing popularity of smartphones, much increased use of social media, and more and more authors going down the self-publishing route. The author argues that key players in the industry must learn to fully embrace ICT in developing the book industry.


An interesting MA thesis that examines the state of fiction publishing and bookselling in Nigeria (as at 2006). Its main objective was to establish the patterns of consumption of fiction literature by Nigerians, and at the same time investigate whether book imports of this genre have had an adverse effect on local production by indigenous publishers. The methodology adopted was a combination of both primary and secondary methods of research, using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The lack of information about fiction publishing in Nigeria led to the need to conduct primary research using questionnaires and interviews with publishers and booksellers, in order to ascertain industry consensus on publishing and selling of both locally published fiction and foreign imports. The research findings did not support the initial perception that book imports may have impaired the publishing of the genre by indigenous publishers. The findings of the investigation, as well as the literature review, also demonstrated that the publishing industry in Nigeria has been plagued with a number of economic, political and socio-cultural problems, which have hindered its progress generally, and in this case had diminished the publishing of fiction.

However, “fiction book imports in Nigeria have neither impaired nor fostered the publishing of the genre. The lethargic state of fiction publishing is as a result of independent factors that have generally plagued the industry.” The main problem with fiction publishing in Nigeria, the author asserts, “is the chasm that exists between two distinct camps within the industry. The first camp consists of publishers and the industries that support them, e.g. printers. The second camp is the booksellers and consumers. The former do not appear to be in tune with the tastes, interests and expectations of their consumers; that is why they have been unable to adequately captivate them. Publishers do not seem to know who their readers/potential readers are. They don’t know where they are and how to reach them.” Additionally, the author argues, “a successful publishing industry cannot thrive in an unstable and turbulent
economic or political environment. ... the emerging trend of fiction publishing in Nigeria hinges on the stable environment as created by the recent return of its government to a democratic system of government, and all the economic reforms that have been implemented since that time." The author concludes with a range of specific recommendations, including consolidation of industry efforts, and the need for research on consumer reading patterns, that would help to boost the publishing of fiction in Nigeria.

Iddamsetty, Anshuman **Vanguard: Meet the Nigerian Publisher Heating Up African Romance Novels.**
Bibi Bakare-Yusuf is the publishing director of Cassava Republic Press and its romance-novel imprint Ankara Press https://www.ankarapress.com/, that seeks to bring “African romance fiction into the bedrooms, offices and hearts of women the world over.” Ankara Press, Bakare-Yusuf says, “puts African or black women at the centre of the narrative and African men as a love object”; and talks about her background of growing up in “a household of very strong, powerful entrepreneurial women who expected higher education and higher achievement for their children. So it was in that household that I had a sense of agency and power.” She reveals what got her started, first, to set up a publishing business, and her subsequent motivation to launch the romance fiction imprint and get it off the ground.

“I find it troubling” she says, “that people have this expectation that a man will provide. And I’m aware that one of the most powerful propaganda machines for indoctrinating women into passivity and to thinking like this is Hollywood rom-coms and the romance industry. So, given that it’s one of the largest genres in publishing, I better help to reengineer people’s minds by providing a romance that is doing something slightly different! Even if it’s conforming to the rules of boy-meets-girl or girl-meets-boy, it is to reconfigure that rule so that the woman is not waiting. The man is not the one constantly pursuing and also feel...because he’s pursuing, then he then thinks he can possess. And so Ankara Press is the direct opposite of that.”

International Publishers Association **Book Piracy in Nigeria [Interview with Lawrence Aladesuyi]**
Nigeria’s rich literary heritage has produced great writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri and Chimamanda Adichie. Yet its creative economy is crippled by chronic and rampant piracy—it is estimated that illegal sales account for 75% of the book market. This is an interview with Lawrence Aladesuyi, Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Publishers Association about what can be done to fight back. IPA: What are the main forms which book piracy takes in Nigeria? Lawrence Aladesuyi who says there are many and varied form of piracy. “Firstly, we have local pirates who get hold of any-fast selling book and take it to a willin printer to produce illegal copies. The pirate could be a printer himself, a bookseller or anyone who knows about books. We also have high tech reproductions entering Nigeria from abroad. Pirates are printing the works overseas, particularly in the Far East and shipping to Nigeria for sale. Other forms of piracy include translations without the copyright owner’s
permission, illegal e-book versions, unauthorized photocopying of academic materials and the abuse of publication rights. … Piracy is now more international and more sophisticated than ever. The big pirates print overseas then import the books to be sold in Nigeria: only the small pirates print locally. Former drug barons and money launderers have moved into book piracy from oversea countries because it is low risk. Advances in printing technology have meant that for everyone, publishers included, it can be very difficult to distinguish between pirated and original copies. Book pirates now re-plan and re-size pirated books to suit their purpose!“ He also offers a range of suggestions what should be done to combat it, and the most effective the curb this very serious threat to the Nigerian book industries.

Examine the crisis in the book trade in Nigeria today [as at 1987] caused by a severe shortage of books and reading materials and constant increases in book prices. Discusses the situation in the industry prior to the economic crisis and the irony implicit in the situation where Nigerian authors published overseas cannot be read by Nigerians in Nigeria. Provides an overall picture of the book publishing industry in Nigeria, including printing, distribution, and the activities of both multinational publishers and indigenous publishers. Examines some of the major problems and constraints, and sets out a range of proposals intended “to foster the growth of a viable publishing industry in Nigeria through local production of books on a scale that will match present and future needs.”

Olofinlua, Temitayo Can Publishing Survive Social Media?
According to Socialbakers, which provides Facebook statistics and metrics by country http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/, there are now nearly 5.5 million Nigerians on Facebook. As social media continues to soar in that country, publishers say they are increasingly using it to connect with an expanded audience of readers, while writers are using social media to market their work and seeking feedback. Some publishers also report that they receive more submissions as a result of a social media presence, and social media platforms such as Naija Stories – a Nigerian online writing community and showcase for new writers http://www.naijastories.com/ – are beginning to complement traditional publishing and have reportedly achieved remarkable success. However, some publishers caution that an increase in writers using social media has not resulted in an increase in writing quality, and that easy access to social media does not necessarily create good writers. Others are sceptical about social media’s effectiveness in boosting sales, and question whether its dominance in Nigeria will affect long-form writing styles.

https://www.degruyter.com/journal/key/abpr/12/2/html ¶
A sharp rebuke to Apeji’s “Readers without Books. A Nigerian Case Study” (see ➔ record above), by the [then] Managing Director of Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, one of Nigeria’s major private and indigenously-owned publishing firm. Nwankwo says “the trouble with the piece lies in the things the author failed to say”: that the result is a distorted picture of the publishing industry in Nigeria, and that the article is seriously flawed because its analysis is based on the publishing activities of six former British multinationals, but ignores the publishing activities of numerous medium-sized publishers or general book publishing companies which hardly publish any textbooks at all. Nwankwo asserts that Apeji also failed to address “the crucial role of the conditions in which Nigerian publishers valiantly operate, to properly locate the reasons for the paucity of general reading material”; and that an attempt should perhaps be made to find the reasons for the book shortages and the government’s role in this unfortunate state of affairs.

Note: a further rejoinder to this debate, by Dr. Apeji, appeared in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ column in Logos 13, no. 1 (2002): 58-59, in which he concludes “the point which I hope I have made sufficiently clear is that publishers who are too timid to develop and conquer the vast Nigerian book market must not be allowed to use blackmail and subterfuge to frustrate the government’s intervention in policies. The government, I insist, has a responsibility towards its citizens.”

https://doi.org/10.1163/1878-4712-11112083 ¶ [01/06/21]

Drawing on existing literature, as well as interviews carried out in 2015 with leading figures in the book industry, Emma Shercliff gives an overview of publishing and the book market in Nigeria in particular and the publishing landscape in West Africa in general, including some historical background. Issues and problems facing publishers across the West African region are described – large scale piracy and intellectual property theft prominent among them – and the challenges and opportunities for the future are outlined. The author also discusses the retail sector and book distribution. Although this is a sector that is relatively well developed, “physical distribution of books remains problematic and expensive, and many booksellers do not pay on time.” There are many bookshops in Nigeria, but most are small outlets, and Nigeria has a very large informal retail sector and a vibrant used-book market, with sales by book hawkers, roadside stalls, and pushcarts. Digital publishing, the author says, has thus far made little impact in Nigeria. “Pilot projects such as those developed by Worldreader and Nokia are interesting but—as yet—of limited impact.” Beyond a number of innovative pilot projects the demand for e-books and digital materials remains muted. However, Nigerian writers are increasingly embracing digital, and there are an enormous number of self-published authors, publishing in both print and digital formats.

In her conclusion Shercliff states: “In Nigeria, publishers face an extremely demanding operating environment, but the rewards are great when these obstacles can be overcome. Although the vast majority of turnover in the publishing field is generated by educational houses, some of the younger trade publishers have demonstrated great creativity and agility and are starting to make waves in the wider literary world. When assessing the publishing landscape in Africa, scholars have too often failed to recognize the importance of the informal publishing industry and of non-English publishing activities, have defined literacy and readership too narrowly, and have failed to mention structural issues such as obstacles within publishing companies which still present difficulties for women in the industry today.”
As part of a PhD project, the author was interviewing Managing Directors and senior staff at publishing companies, asking about the key issues currently facing their businesses. Here she dwells on the contrasts in structure and scale of the large educational publishing houses with Nigerian contemporary fiction publishers such as Farafina, Cassava Republic and Parrésia, a new generation of African publishers which face significant challenges of limited capacity and reach, but their lean structures also mean “that they are amongst the most nimble, creative and experimental publishers operating anywhere in the world.” Many of the differences between these two different faces of African publishing were highlighted by a project the author was involved in coordinating for Ankara Press http://www.ankarapress.com/. Shercliff and Ankara Publisher Bibi Bakare-Yusuf asked seven well-known African literary authors to write a short romance story (between 300-1000 words), which would be translated and recorded in different African languages, collated into a pdf anthology and released on the Ankara Press website in digital format in February 2015. Shercliffe says “creating a literary product, in digital format, for a predominantly African audience allows a publisher a freedom that would be impossible for the more traditional, large educational publishers”, and explores the reason why she believes that to be the case.

Shercliff, Emma The Valentine’s Day Anthology: A Snapshot of the Possibilities and Challenges of African Publishing.
http://africainwords.com/2015/03/05/the-valentines-day-anthology-a-snapshot-of-the-possibilities-and-challenges-of-african-publishing/ (Posted 05 March, 2015) [01/06/21]
Another version at http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/05/the-possibilities-and-challenges-of-digital-african-publishing/

Reports about Ankara Press, a new digital imprint of Nigeria’s Cassava Republic Press http://www.cassavarepublic.biz/ that aims to deliver “romances that reflect the complexity of modern African lives.” The new series was launched on 15 December 2014 with six brand-new romance novels written by African women, see http://www.ankarapress.com/. The books can be downloaded from the website at a special introductory offer price of ₦500 ($2.70). Ankara Press is described as a new imprint “bringing African romance fiction into the bedrooms, offices and hearts of women the world over. Our mission is to publish a new kind of romance, in which the thrill of fantasy is alive but realised in a healthier and more grounded way. ... We want our books to reflect the realities of African women’s lives in ways that challenge boundaries and go beyond conventional expectations.” Ankara Press is publishing all six titles initially as e-books, downloadable to computers, e-readers and mobile devices – thus removing the reader still further from the traditional relationship with a print book. Emma Shercliff says “by launching as a digital imprint, issues of distribution and print piracy are obviated and a global audience becomes a reality, as the stories are available from the day of launch, across the globe, in multiple currencies. Whether the reality of sales can live up to the hype remains to be seen, but Ankara Press’s ambitious initiative may indeed introduce a new generation of African readers to a new kind of romance.”


Eghosa Imasuen is CEO of Kachifo Ltd/Farafina Publishers http://kachifo.com/home/, one of Nigeria’s leading independent publishers. In 2014 Farafina published the three-volume memoirs of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, which was quasi-banned (because of the author’s alleged contempt of a court order), with most copies of the book seized and thus the publisher unable to meet demand. In this insightful interview he talks about the controversy surrounding the publication of the memoirs, as well as offering his perspective on the Nigerian publishing scene and his career as a writer and editor. Publishing in Nigeria today is a perilous business he says: “I only had a view of this, barely, because I was a backseat driver, one of those authors who always chided the publisher for not enough publicity, do more, do more. But now that I have taken the wheel, at the firm that published my first two novels, no less, I see things a bit more clearly. It is a difficult business. Both for the pocket and soul. The pirates dictate how you price your books. You are in competition with yourself. Cost of finance is high in Nigeria. There are issues with power and noisy generators that affect productivity in the editorial department.” Other issues include debilitating import duties on books printed abroad, a single tariff line for ‘School and Scientific Printed Books’ being subject to 20% in import duty plus another 30% in a punitive levy; a poorly-conceived strategy, primarily designed by the government to force Nigerian publishers to only use printers domiciled in Nigeria rather than abroad. After vigorous protests and lobbying by the Nigerian book industries, a shame-faced government eventually overturned the decision in January of 2015, when the tariff line was reverted back to zero.
In looking ahead to the future development of the Nigerian book industry, Imasuen says “skills that were lost during the 80s are slowly being regained. There are several new houses now developing the institutional memory needed for survival of the publishing industry in the long term. But it is a system of high attrition. Many of us, the new house, will die, and lessons will be learnt from our demise. The issues are daunting. One major one is piracy, where by just having one successful title, you receive the most painful kind of praise: your book gets pirated.”

Umesi, Afoma Managing Editor of Farafina Books, Enajite Efemuaye Talks Writing and Publishing in Nigeria. 
https://afomaumesi.com/writing-publishing-nigeria-enajite-efemuaye-interview/ (Posted 18 January 2019) [04/06/21]
Farafina Books, the literary imprint of publishing house Kachifo Limited https://www.kachifo.com/ is home to books by Nigerian authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Lesley Nneka Arimah, and Ben Okri, amongst others. In this interesting conversation with their Managing Editor, Enajite Efemuaye, she talks about her job, how she got there, her work in training editors, and about book publishing in Nigeria. What would she do, if she could, to bring change in the book industries? “Publishing is a business first and foremost”, she says, “we worry about the bottom line like other businesses. We face the same challenges with power and poor infrastructure and government policies and corruption. That we work with books does not put us in a celestial plane. Very little about the publishing industry in Nigeria is unique to it when you look at it as a business. If I could change anything, I’d make it easier to do business in Nigeria. I’d fix the educational system. Build libraries in every local government. Make sure people have enough to eat so buying books stops being a frivolous luxury for many.”

She also offers some sound advice for authors about building their careers: authors “should stop folding their arms and expecting to be spoon-fed success. There is so much talent that won’t lead anywhere because the people who house them don’t think self-development is important. They believe in ‘inspiration’ and the ‘muse.’ So, I’ll say, read. Read a lot more than you’re writing. Read good writing. Read classic and contemporary literature. Read romance and memoirs. … Research on your own. Find out how the publishing process works. Keep your eyes peeled for opportunities. Network. … Attend literary events, book readings and launches, festivals and so on.”

As the author points out, there have been several studies on the Nigerian book history, yet none has so far dealt with the role of self-publishing in print culture. This very interesting article therefore fills a gap in scholarship on Nigerian print culture, and offers some fresh insights into the world of self-publishing in Nigeria. The author provides a brief history of the book industry in Nigeria, highlighting the links between self-publishing and activism under the various military regimes, and surveying the range and scope of self-published texts in circulation during the period under review. He traces the ways in which self-publishing emerged in Nigeria, its networks and their impact on public readership, to demonstrate how
self-publishing challenges “the communications circuit model [as] theorized by Robert Darnton.” Self-publishing, he argues “subverts the traditional model of book production by creating a viable alternative through which literary writers could have their works published and mobilize themselves against military tyranny.”

In his conclusion Uche Umezurike states: “Self-publishing houses emerged as a progeny of circumstance in Nigeria, partly in response to the reluctance of mainstream publishers to publish trade books and partly to provide a rhetorical space for writers to engage the political moment of their time. In a situation where mainstream publishers must devote most of their resources to publishing textbooks for primary and secondary education, it is expected that an alternative system of book production will arise, even when constrained by capital and logistics. The lacuna this situation engendered has encouraged some Nigerians to explore self-publishing. Against this background, self-publishing has broadened the publishing terrain, particularly in literary book production and readership expansion in Nigeria. It has also developed networks that have influenced various aspects of national life and public discourse. Self-publishing is no longer an alternative, but the norm for aspiring writers eager to see their manuscripts in print. Its contributions to the growth of Nigeria’s print culture remain undeniable.”

Weate, Jeremy Situation is Critical.
https://chimurengachronic.co.za/situation-is-critical/ (Posted 25 February 2015) [02/09/21]
Jeremy Weate is co-founder of Cassava Republic Press http://www.cassavarepublic.biz/ in Abuja, Nigeria. This is his candid take on the current state of African writing [as at 2015], the context in which African writing takes place today, and how Africa and African writing gets published. “The first thing to say is that almost all African creative writing that gains any level of worldly significance, no matter how ephemeral, is published by a Western publishing company. Even when a writer is first published on the continent, their success is ultimately measured in terms of how effectively their work gets a foot in the Occidental door. … African publishers are not even minnows swimming in the shark tank in comparison. They leave little or no imprint in the minds of readers and writers. African writers often view African publishers as printers to make their books available in their home country. Demands that would not be made of Western publishers are insisted upon.” African writers’ stories are exported raw, “with value-addition the work of a network of agents and editors over the ocean. It is only when the finished products are imported back onto the continent that they can be valued and bought. Until then, the African writer is a raw commodity, bought wholesale, sold retail only later. African readers are complicit in the trade – what I call a ‘tokunbo logic’ is in play: only if the goods come from abroad can they have value. University lecturers ask if the book has won international awards, not awards granted on the continent. Local awards confer no value. Even when a book is published in both the West and in Africa, the media will often stick slavishly to Western publication dates, rather than local launch schedules.”

Weate says that since the middle of the 20th century, the successful African writer’s career trajectory has been defined by the migration from ‘margin’ to centre. “The writer says goodbye to Lagos or Nairobi and takes the metaphorical steamer to London, Paris or New York. Success could hardly have been defined in any other terms. Even if only 1,000 copies of
the book are sold and the remainder are quietly pulped, it doesn’t matter: a corporate publisher has published, and perhaps a Hollywood studio has acquired the rights to a film that will almost certainly never be made.” He argues that African writers should realise that there is a price to pay for a suburban existence in a sedated part of the world. “To engage with the world in writing, it is seldom enough to read of a world from afar. Even the most meticulous research will miss out on the subterranean processes that are continuously at work in a society; the gaps and tensions in speech and behaviour that point to unmet desires and a world in transition. It is the work of the writer to bring these silences to voice; it is an almost impossible task when the only source of information is internet news sites, visitors from home and the occasional trip back to the motherland.”

However, African publishers also need to become more than what they are doing now; “we need to collaborate, across our differences. We need to rave about our authors, and introduce them directly into each other’s markets, without recourse to a European detour. We need to help build a publishing infrastructure, which innovates and adapts to the opportunities the continent provides. African publishers also need to spell out the reality of working on the continent and what is at stake.” But, Weate concludes, African publishers can only do this with support of and respect from writers. “For as long as writers view African based publishers as dogsbody printers whose editorial opinion they consider as secondary to their Euro-American publisher, or people they can commandeers to consider their manuscript two months before it is due out in the Western market; publishers would rather work more actively with writers who understand the ideological imperative and the struggle for symbolic legitimacy at stake in the ownership of the means of production. We need to define what we cannot do alone and lobby government for support.”

Weate, Jeremy Case Study - Cassava Republic Press.
[Information for Change workshop 2011, Lagos, Nigeria, 11th May 2011]
http://www.informationforchange.org/presentations/cs-cassava-republic-ificio2011-weate.pptx (web page down as at February 2022)

Jeremy Weate is the co-founder of Cassava Republic Press www.cassavarepublic.biz, based in Abuja, Nigeria, one of the most enterprising and most innovative among the crop of independent African publishers that have emerged in recent years, producing high quality but affordable books for Africa, with a focus on new talent and reconfiguring African literature. It publishes fiction, non-fiction and children’s books, as well as a number of scholarly titles; an academic journal is in the pipeline, as is ‘Ankara Press’ an easy-read romance series that also aims to challenge stereotypes, launching late in 2011. As they state on their website, Cassava Republic Press “is obsessed with changing the way we think about African fiction. We think that contemporary African writing should be rooted in African experience in all its diversity, whether set in filthy-yet-sexy megacities such as Lagos, in little-known rural communities, in the recent past or indeed the near future. We also think the time has come to build a new body of African writing that links writers across different times and spaces, following the marvellous example of the African Writers Series in the past. … We’re keen to ensure that history is understood as a set of questions forever to be addressed, rather simply as facts and dates. We work hard to ensure that our children’s books are beautifully made, inspiring the young ones among us to develop a love of books from an early age.”
Rwanda

See also ➔ Publisher histories and profiles


Textbooks are a crucial part of any child’s learning. A large body of research has proved this many times and in many very different contexts. But, the author says, there’s an elephant in the room when it comes to textbooks in African countries’ classrooms: language. Rwanda is one of many African countries that has adopted a language instruction policy which sees children learning in local or mother tongue languages for the first three years of primary school. They then transition in upper primary and secondary school into a dominant, so-called ‘international’ language. This might be English, French or Portuguese. In Rwanda, it has been English since 2008. “Evidence from across the continent suggests that at this transition point, many learners have not developed basic literacy and numeracy skills. And, significantly, they have not acquired anywhere near enough of the language they are about to learn in to be able to engage in learning effectively. … The arguments for mother-tongue based education are compelling. But it’s important to consider strategies for supporting learners within existing policy priorities. Using appropriate learning and teaching materials – such as textbooks – could be one such strategy. It’s not enough to just hand out textbooks in every classroom. The books need to tick two boxes: learners must be able to read them and teachers must feel enabled to teach with them.” Milligan asserts that existing textbooks tend not to take these concerns into consideration. The language may be too difficult and the sentence structures too complex. She reports about a recent initiative in Rwanda that has sought to address this through the development of ‘language supportive’ textbooks for primary 4 learners who are around 11 years old. These were specifically designed in collaboration with local publishers, editors and writers.


Local publishers in Rwanda have protested over a decision by the Ministry of Education, through its Rwanda Education Board (REB), to start producing textbooks to use in pre-primary, primary and secondary education in the country, instead of relying on books produced independent private sector publishers. Stephen Mugisha, who is the chairman of the Rwanda Publishers and Booksellers Union http://kimulijoachim.wixsite.com/rwandapublishers, is quoted as saying "Publishers were supposed to write and sell the books to REB after its deep evaluation as a regulator of content, but now who will evaluate the content to ensure quality control? … The decision also goes against the government agenda of empowering the private sector as the drivers of the economy. The nascent industry of local publishers now faces an eminent extinction."
Sierra Leone

A (now very dated) UNESCO mission report whose purpose was to assist the Sierra Leone Ministry of Education in the review of existing facilities for the preparation, production, printing and distribution of textbooks in Sierra Leone (particularly those for primary schools); identify any inherent weaknesses and recommend appropriate solutions; and to assist the setting up of a National Book Development Council, and preparing its administrative and management plan in order for it to become operational.

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

An account of the publishing situation in Sierra Leone in the mid-1970s. Contends that “in ideal circumstances, the majority of the books used at all stages in education in Africa should be produced in Africa”, but laments the fact that such an ideal scenario is unfortunately still
a long way off. Identifies the major problems and constraints of the book industries, and offers a set of recommendations on the way forward, and the kind of initiatives that are needed.

Also at (‘Request full-text PDF’)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240441822_Book_publishing_in_Sierra_Leone
[02/12/21]
Books remain a vital necessity for the socio-economic advancement of society, but the fact that Sierra Leone continues to import over 90% of its book needs is a matter of grave concern. Most academic, technical and reference books continue to be imported, as local publishers do not have the capability to publish them. This article is an attempt to offer fresh insights on the challenges and constraints of book publishing in a small African country.

Sierra Leone has been a book-importing country for a long time, book needs have largely been met by publishers in the North, and this factor has contributed significantly to the slow growth of indigenous publishing companies. The author provides some background about the development of publishing in the country and the significant role played by a number of bookselling organizations in a once flourishing retail trade some years ago. The author points out that at the present time little publishing goes on outside the government or public-sector publishing unit, which is concentrating mainly on school textbooks and supplementary readers. This is done to the virtual exclusion of private-sector publishers, and whose activities are in any event severely restricted by market size. The author calls for a national book policy with a strong mandate for private-sector publishing, increased support for local private-sector publishing, commercial publishing partnerships (North-South or South-South), and with an emphasis on private/public sector partnerships.

There are numerous problems hindering the growth of Sierra Leonean literature, most notably the lack of a publishing house that caters for creative writing, and the lack of alternative outlets such as literary journals or magazines. Another problem facing literary output in the country is the total lack of support thus far from the government for literary activities of any kind; and once flourishing bookshops in Freetown have closed their doors a long time ago. However, the author sees some promise in the publishing programme of the Adult Education Association, who have published a range folk tales and some plays; the recent launch of the Sierra Leone Writers Series by Osman Mallam Sankoh, the online journal Mabayla, and the activities of Sierra Leone Pen.

An informative overview of the state of the book in Sierra Leone [as at 2006], which presents a sad picture of neglect. As the author rightly points out, in the 1960s and 70s Sierra Leone had many flourishing bookshops and well stocked libraries – at Fourah Bay College and elsewhere – and there were also some indigenous publishing activities. Today [2006] the shelves of once burgeoning bookshops are empty, or the bookshops have closed a long time ago. Fourah Bay College Library presents a picture of abandonment, facing almost perennial power failures, its reading halls are deserted, and book and journals acquisitions stopped after 1987, with this library, and public library services in the country, now depending mostly on book donations from abroad.

Turay, Sallieu State of Publishing in Sierra Leone. [02/12/21]

A paper presented to the Sabre Foundation’s ‘Dialogue of Partners-II’ meeting held in Dar es Salaam in September 2004. Presents a brief review of publishing in anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa, and thereafter examines the nature of publishing in Sierra Leone, and the challenges that face the book industry in that country. The current state is described as a worrying situation, as “writing, publishing, book distribution and the reading environment has reached an alarming state”—induced by poverty, chaos, coups and countercoups, and ten years of a barbarous civil war. Other reasons are lack of access to capital, the very high cost of printing, frequent power cuts, and a dearth of bookshops and other retail outlets. While the present situation is gloomy, there have been two promising new initiatives — Sierra Leone PEN https://pen-international.org/centres/sierra-leone-centre and the Sierra Leone Book Trust http://www.sabre.org/sierraleone/index.html — that are working together to try to reverse the negative trend.

South Africa

See also ➔ Book history and book culture
➔ Copyright and legal deposit
➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for Women
➔ Publisher histories and profiles

Attwell, Arthur Paperight and Beyond: Learning from Disappointment. [27/08/21]
http://story.paperight.com/2015/01/paperight-and-beyond-learning-from-disappointment/
(Posted 29 January 2015)

Arthur Attwell explains the reason why his Paperight venture failed and had to be terminated. Launched in 2012, this was a Web-based system that promised it could turn any copy shop, school, or NGO with a printer to become a kind of print-on-demand bookstore. Paperight enabled and supported a network of such independent print-on-demand outlets. Any business could register with them to get book content to print for walk-in customers. Many books were free to download, while for others the publisher/copyright holder charged a rights
fee, a small proportion of which was retained by Paperight as a commission fee, with the rest passed on to the publishers.

Here he sets out the main reasons why Paperight was not ultimately successful:
(1) “While many publishers joined us, almost none let us sell their most popular, high-value titles. They asked us to test with their scraps and wastes everyone’s time and energy.”
(2) “Most copy shops were not active partners, which is not surprising when we had so few high-value titles for them to promote. Many also gave their customers poor service (we double-checked ourselves spending hours and days in stores).”
(3) “Our target market – potential readers and students with poor backgrounds – have grown up without books. They don’t attach much value to reading. Certainly not enough to buy books before food and clothing. Despite our disappointment, buried in those revenue stats is a promising story: we made far more as a publisher than as a distributor. We had created a hundred simple, low-priced books of our own: collections of past grade-12 exam papers. That one small collection of high-value, low-priced titles made as much as all our other sales combined. And that’s after those past-papers were free for the first seven months.”

Describes the activities of Book Dash https://bookdash.org/ a new start-up launched in South Africa in 2014 that focuses on creating and giving away free, high-quality books to needy children. The books are created by volunteers, all creative professionals, who participate in twelve-hour book-making marathons. Some are from book publishing, but most are from other industries: animators, artists, copy writers, journalists and designers. Everything is open-licensed (Creative Commons Attribution), so that anyone can translate, print and distribute the books freely. Arthur Attwell says “the aim is to slash the cost of high-quality children’s books for literacy organizations to the cost of printing alone. When printing as few as 5000 copies, unit costs dip under a dollar for bookshop-quality editions. This week, Book Dash launched a crowd-funding campaign to print 15000 of these books for children, in various languages.” He adds a little dig at South African publishers, most of whom he says “rely on government spending on textbooks, which is currently under severe threat. At the same time, most of their senior staff were around twenty years ago, and know how quickly time passes. Either way, it’s clear that, for most South Africans, local publishing hasn’t changed much since democracy, and that non-publishers may do a better job of fixing that.”

Arthur Attwell says “right now, in South Africa, the textbook-publishing industry faces a real threat to its future, because – faced with constant non-delivery of books – government is desperate to change the way it buys them. Other countries face similar challenges. Government officials often cite the ‘high price of books’ as a key issue. Whether you buy the state’s argument or not (I don’t, though I get why they’re fed up), the system is going to change, and publishers can either lead the change or be changed.” However, to have any real effect, he believes that there must be a fundamental change in the mainstream textbook
business model: “instead of selling copies, we must sell licences. Specifically, we must sell licences with no limitations on the number of downstream copies.” He proposes a licensing system which, instead of selling copies of finished textbooks (in paper or as rights-managed ebooks), a publisher sells a single, flat-fee licence to an institution. That licence then lets the institution produce and distribute as many copies as they like for their beneficiaries, in print and digitally, for as long as they like. “Under a licence-based system, instead, central government would buy a licence from each publisher in return for a flat fee. Each publisher hands over a set of open digital files watermarked (in document metadata and on visible pages) with plain-language details of the licence.”


“The significant technological advances in reading and content provision technologies since the 1978 Copyright Act in South Africa have not been considered in the expanding exemptions to Copyright nationally. The 2017 version of the amended Copyright Act was sent back to Parliament in South Africa in June of 2020, leaving the provisions for print-disabled readers proposed by the Marrakesh Treaty unimplemented, furthering marginalisation of print disabled readers in SA. A born digital workflow is proposed to facilitate the ‘mainstreaming’ of accessible format materials, and facilitate the implementation of the treaty with minimal disruption to the local publishing industry.” [Not examined, from the abstract]


Publishing in South Africa is relatively healthy compared to elsewhere in the continent, but is dominated by a number of major publishing conglomerates and multinationals. Print runs remain low except for the publication of textbooks. The two main sectors of publishing are textbooks and imported trade books. The major obstacles the industry faces are linked to a poor distribution network as well as the lack of access to adequate financial resources, and a readership characterized by the plurality of official languages and an educational gap left over from the repressive apartheid era. Digital publishing, albeit not yet thriving, would appear to be a promising opportunity to deal with both production costs and distribution, and may provide a pathway towards the democratization of knowledge and reading. However, despite its great potential, digital publishing faces a number of problems: “In South Africa, the Internet connection can be slow and defective, which does not encourage readers to consume digital content. Moreover, the majority of the population cannot afford tablets and Kindles. … The offer of African e-books is still very limited, and a further challenge will be how to make it visible instead of losing it amidst the plethora of giant online sellers such as Amazon and the iBookstore.” Additionally, the author states, the cost of e-readers and bandwidth constraints make the downloading of books difficult in some areas, and this makes e-book and e-reader penetration lower in South Africa than in many other markets in Africa and elsewhere.
https://doi.org/10.1163/095796509X12777334632825 ¶ [14/06/21]

In an earlier article published in *Logos* in 2002 the author reported on the transition that the South African book publishing industry had to make from functioning in a colonial and apartheid context to operating in a fledging democracy. It described specific expectations that industry spokespeople articulated during the early 1990s. This article is an update of the picture described in the early 1990s, and takes stock of developments in the South African book publishing industry after its contraction during the early years of post-apartheid. It briefly sketches its survival mode during the period 1998-2003 and the prosperous era of 2004-2007. The main focus is on the current [2009] situation with specific reference to indicators of growth/decline: consumers, product and authorship, revenue, supply chain, ownership and employment. It concludes that the industry did grow in terms of the quantity of titles produced and in revenue, but “is still lacking in its vision of a multicultural/-lingual celebration of home-grown books, diversification on all levels, and policy procedures that could enhance an underdeveloped market.”

Gambade, Emilie *Lovedale: A Printing Press that Tells the Stories of Black Writers, Literature, History and so Much More.*  

*Lovedale,* also known as *Lovedale Missionary Institute,* was/is a mission station and educational institute in South Africa. Founded almost 20 decades ago, just north of Alice in the Eastern Cape, the influence of the *Lovedale Press* on South Africa’s political, cultural and intellectual life throughout the years has been prodigious. It has been in the forefront in the development of indigenous language publishing in South Africa, and it has survived a war, apartheid, and repeated threats of closing it down. Although it is currently [2021] still active in a limited way, the press is once more on the verge of closing down. **Note:** see also *Lovedale, a National Treasure of a Press, Faces Closure* by Bonile Dahm  

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-12-06-local-publishers-alarmed-at-governments-publishing-ambitions/ (Posted 06 December 2018) [01/06/21]

Small independent publishers in South Africa, already surviving by small margins, look set to be squeezed even further as they come up against what they fear will be unfair competition in the form of government involvement in publishing. Billed as a partnership initiative with the National Library of South Africa, the country’s Department of Arts and Culture has confirmed that it is set to increase its publishing output through its publishing unit by the end of the 2018/2019 financial year. According to Zimasa Velaphi, Director of Communications and Marketing for the department, its current publishing activities will be expanded from “disseminating classic texts that have been out of print, [to be] combined with a focus on texts looking at the library’s specialist role and nurturing new authors who would not otherwise have been able to publish, as part of the transformation and redress agenda.”
This is not as innocuous as it sounds though, and Mpuka Radinku, Executive Director of the Publishers’ Association of South Africa https://publishsa.co.za/ is quoted as saying: “From a publisher’s point of view government’s entrance as a bigger publisher is certainly a threat. It will have a negative impact on small publishers and many will be put out of business because they will find it difficult to compete. Government should be facilitating the country’s creative and cultural development agenda, not being a player and a referee at the same time,” Instead the department’s priority should be developing a national book policy, a process that was started in 2004 in collaboration with the South African Book Development Council, but had petered out by 2009. Other publishers argue that the department is going down the wrong path in becoming both purchaser and provider in publishing and procuring books, while the South African Book Development Council’s Elitha van der Sandt says they have had to adopt a wait-and-see approach in guessing exactly what the department intends to do: “We trust that the department is still planning to consult the book sector in this regard, especially the many small and independent publishers who currently promote new voices and voices in languages other than English, and who operate under very challenging conditions.”


Book theft in South Africa in on the increase and has recently been under the spotlight. South African publisher Jacana http://www.jacana.co.za/ ran a ‘Hot Reads campaign’ featuring their titles that are most frequently shoplifted from South African bookshops. The list is dominated by titles on African political history and biography, including Biko, with some self-help titles thrown in. In her take on book thieves and a reading culture Isabel Hofmeyr says “in keeping with radical political cultures across the world, readers have turned these books into common property. They have created a particular reading subculture in South Africa that joins a long legacy of inventive and insouciant modes of reading.”

Impey, Bridget The In’s and Out’s of South Africa’s Publishing Industry. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qV8dmZhJLwg (Video, 6:49 mins, posted 29 January 2017) [08/06/21]

According to insights from the Entertainment & Media Outlook compiled by PWC, the South African book market, comprising of consumer, educational and professional book revenues, is only experiencing minimal growth. In this short interview Bridget Impey, Publishing Director at Jacana Media https://jacana.co.za/ offers her views on the current prospects of the South African book industries and its challenges, discussing issues such as the cost factors, the processes that go into the making of a book, the high prices of books, and offers some advice for new authors thinking of submitting work for evaluation.

A thought-provoking talk given by Bridget Impey of Jacana Media https://jacana.co.za/ at a meeting of the International Alliance of Independent Publishers https://www.alliance-editeurs.org/?lang=en held in Cape Town in September 2014. On the outside, Impey says, “we are much like any other country. Bestsellers are the books published for people who don’t usually buy books. And in South Africa we have a lot of those, people that don’t buy books that is. But not that many bestsellers. It is becoming readily accepted that South Africans do not read books. They read newspapers and magazines – more than two-thirds of South Africans regularly read print media, according to the South African Book Development Council – but they are not so-called committed readers: only 1%, or around 500,000 of South Africans regularly buy books and only 14% are regular book readers, figures far below the estimated literacy rate of 88.7%. And perhaps the most telling statistic here is that only 5% of parents read to their children.” Books on the bestseller lists “are frequently the books that are not challenging. It’s harder to make the books that matter, the books that change things, that challenge us and which more properly reflect and expose the state of this state, thus revealing the state of the book. And one of the factors that militate against this kind of publishing is that it isn’t always going to break even, let alone make a profit.”

In the second part of her presentation Impey addresses the threats, or severe restrictions, to freedom of information, freedom of expression, and freedom to publish — faced by authors, artists, journalists, the media and publishers in South Africa. “The current methods of intimidation have been the extensive threat of defamation lawsuits. And it is an effective deterrent. ‘Discretion is the better part of valour’ is not a game changing war cry, but publishers regularly opt for the safer route, mindful that a court challenge issued by the state is likely to set one back a million rand before even setting foot in a court room. And that’s without the collateral damage of time and effort tied up in the business of defending oneself. And which independent publisher can afford those kinds of costs?”

Formerly with David Philip Publishers for many years, Impey illustrates her overview of the state of publishing in South Africa by using the story of the provocative cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro. First published by David Philip in 1996, this was a controversial collection of political cartoons called The Madiba Years. Shapiro was subsequently sued by (then) President Zuma for defamation, but later formally withdrawn by Zuma in October 2012. Impey describes Shapiro as “our national canary, lowered into the depths to tests the levels of democracy and free speech”. He was awarded the International Publishers Association’s Freedom to Publish Prize in 2012.

An extensive account of publishing in South Africa [in the late 1980s] which argues that “the havoc of the past has made reconstruction essential and part of that reconstruction must involve publishing in all its aspects.” Begins with a short history of publishing in South Africa, describing the mission presses, the settler presses and the situation after 1948. Explores the make-up of readership and writers in South Africa and describes the organization of the publishing industry, textbook publishing for primary and secondary schools, academic
publishing, the book market for children, the role of booksellers and libraries, the printing infrastructure, and marketing and distribution.

A wide-ranging interview with Brian Wafawarowa, a former Chair of the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) https://publishsa.co.za/. The economic base of the African book industry is quite precarious and erratic at the moment, he says, mainly due to over-reliance on school textbooks. Whereas there is a vast and growing youth population and a huge need for education, and while the book sector has much greater potential for growth than has been realised, “there are fears in South Africa and in a number of other African countries that new copyright policies, ‘one textbook’ policies in education procurement, and state publishing, will set the industry back and reduce output and employment in the sector significantly.” Meantime it is regrettable, he says, “that after years of notable advocacy and capacity building, the African Publishers Network (APNET) and the Pan African Booksellers Association (PABA) went through a major lull and could not carry out their important work. The African book sector will only be viable when it reduces its dependence on textbooks and state procurement, to include general books that are aimed at a reading public. For that to be realised we need larger book economies that go beyond national borders along common social interests, fiction, general folklore and common languages. However, there are many issues that have to be overcome at a continental and regional level.”

One other, major issue of great concern is that education authorities in many African countries today are thinking of changing copyright and procurement laws to enhance access to textbooks: “For example the Africa Group on the WIPO Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) are pushing together for copyright reform that would create greater access to education materials for education, libraries and archives. South Africa has gone ahead and created a Bill that seeks among other things to achieve this. In the publishing area, both South Africa and Rwanda are close to state publishing while other countries like Cameroon and Kenya are implementing one textbook policies. The problem is that additional exceptions which weaken copyright protection for greater access to education undermine the base of the African education publishing sector. The argument is often that these exceptions are only for education. Yet, with education accounting in many cases for more than 90% of the book sector, there is very little left outside education. On the other hand, state publishing and one textbook policies will also negatively affect the education publishing sector. State publishing has the potential to wipe out education publishing while one textbook policies will certainly reduce the commercial space for education publishers. Although this is aimed at education books, it will have ripple effects for the whole publishing sector. Developments in both copyright and textbook procurement pose a serious challenge to the viability of the African education publishing sector and the continent’s ability to produce suitable education materials for local education.”
Kliphuis, Warren *Before we Debate Changes to Sex Education, Let’s Ask Why the State is Writing its own Textbooks.*
One of the many challenges that schools face in South Africa is the shortage of textbooks, and there are several reasons for this. The South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) has now announced plans to write and publish its own school textbooks, reportedly to save costs, and combat such shortages in schools. This might sound like a noble plan, Warren Kliphuis argues, “but the unintended consequences will undermine teachers and have a knock-on effect on the economy.” He sets out the likely consequences of this new policy, and suggests a more sustainable way of achieving universal textbook coverage. “Instead of pursuing a state publishing programme, the DBE should divert its energy towards updating the curriculum, calling for new textbooks to be developed, issuing a new textbook catalogue, and implementing a national procurement process that still allows for teacher choice. Universal access to textbooks is a fundamental right, but state publishing is not the answer.”

Kliphuis, Warren *If We Want to Decolonise Education, Start by Publishing Textbooks Locally.*
Warren Kliphuis, chairperson of the Publishers Association of South Africa’s Education Sector http://www.publishsa.co.za/, says “Public schools in South Africa are only allowed to use their budgets to buy textbooks that are screened and approved by the National Department of Education. All of the approved textbooks are placed on a national catalogue, which is circulated to schools each year. The last time there was an opportunity for companies to submit core textbooks for screening was in 2013. Data suggests that more than 70% of the textbooks purchased by public schools are from a handful of companies with overseas ownership. This leaves very little opportunity for local companies to compete for state resources. The Ministerial Task Team recently released a report on promoting diversity in textbooks. The task team sampled the best-selling and third best-selling textbooks in a range of subjects. The report shows that 75% of the textbooks came from just two companies: Both are internationally owned.” While these companies deserve a place in the market, “it would be naïve to think that what these companies were producing was not, in some way, influenced by their international structures. … it is therefore unfortunate that the international firms enjoy a dominant position in the market and that some of the profits they generate eventually trickle back to the countries from which they originate.”

http://theconversation.com/why-nonfiction-books-dominate-bestseller-lists-in-south-africa-115717?fbclid=IwAR0i3n7_yNzA8rMWg2hkr-o-aczfueFO1dFAY3C_NYL8-uOos8maSXPBWm8 (Posted 24 April 2019) [04/06/21]
Beth le Roux, Associate Professor, Publishing, at the University of Pretoria, reveals the reasons why nonfiction titles tend to head bestseller lists in South Africa. Books in South Africa don’t often make headline news, she says. “But a controversial subject, protests and disruptions at
a book launch, and threats of book burning are sufficient to get South Africans talking about the place of books in society once again.” This is what has happened with investigative journalist Pieter-Louis Myburgh’s latest book *Gangster State*, which has stirred up passionate reactions, both for and against its contents. “Clearly, this kind of book touches a certain chord in South African society. A quick glance through the top-selling books in the past few years shows that non-fiction, and particularly political non-fiction dealing with very topical events, is the most popular genre. … With one corruption scandal following another, trust in the authorities is low. But citizens still seek authoritative overviews and answers - in the nonfiction titles that line our shelves.” Le Roux thinks there is little reason to predict that the trend will change. “However, if the threats mount, then we may see authors and publishers shifting to less controversial topics. For now, it’s great to see books in the news again.”

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**Le Roux, Elizabeth** *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa. Between Complicity and Resistance.* Leiden: Brill, 2015. 237 pp. (print or e-book) [http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/books/9789004293489](http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/books/9789004293489) ¶ [04/06/21]

Examines scholarly publishing history, academic freedom and knowledge production in South Africa during the apartheid era. Using archival materials, comprehensive bibliographies, and political sociology theory, this study analyses the origins, publishing lists and philosophies of the university presses. The university presses are often associated with anti-apartheid publishing and the promotion of academic freedom, but this work reveals both greater complicity and complexity. Elizabeth le Roux demonstrates that the university presses cannot be considered oppositional – because they did not resist censorship and because they operated within the constraints of the higher education system – but their publishing strategies became more liberal over time.” [Not examined, publisher’s blurb]

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In South Africa the local audience for books is still typically marked by class, race and language; the dominant construction of the South African book-buying audience is comfortably middle-class, predominantly white and English-speaking (albeit not first-language English-speaking). The political economy of publishing in South Africa thus means that this audience is repeatedly targeted by trade publishers when selecting, commissioning and publishing books. This article analyses both the visual and the textual elements in a book marketing campaign, ‘Homebru’, run annually since 2002 by the South African bookselling chain Exclusive Books and which is intended to celebrate the best of South African fiction and non-fiction. Le Roux argues that although the campaign gives the appearance of reflecting South African realities, its discourse of uniqueness and reflection “conceals the careful construction of a certain reality.” The 2012 campaign, titled ‘Unique perspectives on South Africa’, had a deliberate emphasis on the environment and landscape of the country. The marketing poster featured a photograph of a South African township, “but its realism masks the fact that this is certainly not the milieu of the average local book buyer.” The article examines the changing imagining of South African identity and space, as constructed over the past ten years in the Homebru campaign, and the marketing materials and their messages,
both textual and visual, “are analysed for insights into their discursive framing of the spatial reality of South Africa and, indeed, South Africans.”


Arthur Attwell, founder of the Paperight project https://paperight.com/, launched in 2011 with the support of Shuttleworth Foundation funding, didn’t work out and closed in March of 2015. It was conceived as a for-profit social enterprise that aimed, put simply, to turn any organization in South Africa with a printer and access to the Internet into a print-on-demand bookstore. Paperight’s positioning as a kind of rights clearinghouse also meant they were able to bypass the costs of professional printing and distribution, pay the copy shops for their efforts, and protect the profit margins of publishers and license holders.

So, what went wrong? In explaining the reasons why Paperight failed, Attwell says “the publishers we really needed on board were those putting out higher education texts. To make a profit, we needed high-value books with big margins sold at the copy shops. Novels and nonfiction have low price points, and we would never get the margins we needed to make money. We wanted educational textbooks - but it was the one kind of publisher we couldn’t persuade. Another issue lay in the quality of the books. Even those publishers keen on the idea were only prepared to hand over the rights to poor quality, unknown releases, not bestsellers. Bad books don’t sell, no matter what format.” Moreover, he explains, “despite a lot of kind words and well wishes, Paperight endured a collective silence that dragged on for months at a time. Some publishers didn’t respond; others worried they would be seen working with ‘pirate’ photocopying industry, despite the fact Paperight was designed to help combat the problem. … Even the universities proved problematic. While students were keen to cut their costs on textbooks, Paperight’s ideas fell on deaf ears where the higher echelons of university administration were concerned.”

Note: see also the ‘Paperight story’ at https://story.paperight.com/.

https://www.scribd.com/document/359298371/South-African-Book-Fair-Keynote-Address#from_embed (Complete text of address) [04/06/21]

In this eloquent address Zakes Mda – the award-winning South African novelist, playwright, and poet – describes the state of the book and the culture of reading in South Africa today, and also offers some astute observations about the new digital environment, social media, pulp fiction, and informal reading circles and book clubs. Reading in all languages must be respected and, he says, “it saddens me that today literature in indigenous African languages is so marginalized that we can only conceive of a culture of reading in English. This is not because books in indigenous languages do not exist. Every year new books are published in most of the languages of South Africa, in addition to the classics in languages such as isiXhosa, Sesotho and isiZulu that have had a literary tradition dating from the 1800s. The problem lies with book distribution rather than the book publishing sector. You may go to any of our major
bookstores chains today, say Exclusive Books or CNA, and ask for the latest Sesotho novel by Nhlanhla Maake, a Setswana novel by Sabata-Mpho Mokae or an isiXhosa novel by Ncedile Saule, and the likelihood is that you will not find it in stock. It is a Catch 22 situation because the bookstores will tell you they don’t stock such novels because no one buys them, but the readers will tell you they don’t buy them because they are not in stock. This is a cumulative result of the marginalization of indigenous languages in South Africa today in all spheres of life.”

He is critical of the sharp decline in editorial standards in publishing in South Africa. For example celebrity books bring a lot of money to publishers and some want to churn them out of the convener belt without proper editing, disrespecting new and young readers because they think they have no discernment. “Poor editing is the bane of South African books generally, even so-called quality fiction and non-fiction by reputed publishers … Publishers in South Africa are letting reader and writer down, and disrespecting them. Such shoddiness will be the death of the book.” Zakes Mda ends his address by emphasizing that cultures reproduce themselves: “A reading culture once cultivated produces more readers and more readers produce more writers, who then in turn produce more readers. It all begins with a seed.”

https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2014.970815

South Africa’s publishing history has gone through major changes especially during the past few decades, and during the period of transition from apartheid to democracy. These upheavals have had a significant effect on South African writers as well as the works they produced in the past, and still produce today. These changes have also had an effect on the languages, readers, publishers and book market in South Africa. The author finds that South African authors have adapted to their changing circumstances of their contexts, and that their writing is representative of this. While English-language books have always had a strong readership market, and Afrikaans has surged in popularity, African languages remain poorly represented. Author profiles have changed and the themes of their writings have changed from resistance to reconciliation literature. Today, a greater number of publications on political disaster and crime are appearing, while books detailing South Africa’s history remain popular with readers. Authors are also attempting to write ‘lighter’ material, such as romance, adventure and crime fiction. While there are more women writers on the scene than before, there is still a paucity of black women writers. South Africa’s publishing industry continues to grow. The education market is still the largest, but the trade market is growing in terms of the number of authors and the themes they touch on. “While the country is producing internationally recognised authors, South Africa’s official languages are not all receiving exposure in the trade sector, where the market is dominated by English and Afrikaans. The trade sector, and the publishing industry as a whole, have come along in leaps and bounds, yet certain issues and problems remain unchanged or have even, regrettably, showed little to no progression.”
http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/yt/n14/03.pdf [08/06/21]
Also at https://www.academia.edu/21814274/Political_economy_of_History_textbook_publishing_during_apartheid_1948-1994_Towards_further_historical_enquiry_into_commercial_imperatives [08/06/21]
The provision of textbooks in apartheid South Africa (1948-1994), a source of much controversy and media interest in recent years, is placed in historical perspective, with particular reference to the production of history textbooks. During apartheid bureaucratic structures and commercial imperatives gave rise to a conformist ethos that stifled innovation. The textbook approval and adoption processes led publishers into adopting strategies to ensure approval for and approval of their textbooks. To avoid friction with education departments, editors urged self-restraint on their writers and instructed them in how to write officially approvable manuscripts. Textbook approval and adoption processes at that time clearly indicate that the education departments during apartheid assumed and ensured a monopoly in textbook approval, as well as adoption policies and processes. Most manuscripts were approved on condition that specific changes were made. There was little opportunity for publishers or authors to challenge the departments’ instructions for amendments.

In his conclusion the author states: “The use of honorary authors, in-house screening before submission, and the selection of co-operative or ‘colluding’ authors were among the strategies publishers and editors developed. Consistently rigid and tight timeframes not only stifled the development of textbooks of quality, but compelled writers to engage in de facto plagiarism of textbooks that had successful records in the selection and approval processes; the publishers acquiesced in and encouraged such practices. Combined with these constraints, the de facto price caps on the textbooks gave rise to an additional commercial concern for textbook publishers and one that complicated the educational concerns of the pupils and teachers. The nature and extent of these constraints engendered an ethos that encouraged and rewarded conformity rather than innovation amongst publishers and authors.”

https://pensouthafrica.co.za/books-that-matter-david-philip-publishers-during-the-apartheid-years-by-marie-philip/
Excerpts from the book (freely accessible) can be found at
http://www.ehlingmedia.com/blog/?p=4256

David Philip Publishers were among a crop of small independent publishing houses (Ravan Press, Scotaville Publishers, Ad Donker, Seriti sa Sechaba, and Taurus also among them) that were in the forefront of oppositional publishing in South Africa during the 1970s and 80s, courageously challenging apartheid ideology, actively promoting the struggle for a just, democratic and non-racial society, and publishing a great deal of socially committed writing despite having to operate under a repressive regime that, until the end of apartheid in 1994,
faced them with threats of banning, harassment, or arrest. David Philip died in 2009 and this book is both an affectionate memoir by his wife Marie and at the same time offers a hugely insightful account of publishing under apartheid. It is not, says Marie Philip, a full history of David Philip Publishers, but is “a record of a special partnership and a remarkable team through some very stressful years in South Africa, a team that managed somehow to work through most crises with laughter.”

Before the founding of his own publishing house, David Philip worked for 17 years with the South African branch of Oxford University Press, initially as an educational publishing assistant and later as editorial manager. He resigned in 1971 upon being told that he must stop publishing general books with historical and political content, and was expected to publish almost exclusively school textbooks and primary school readers. Marie Philip says “there was no question that those liberal and academic values that he believed OUP had stood for were coming more and more under threat under the repressive environment developing under the National Party government.” OUP South Africa’s general and scholarly list was subsequently terminated, with the branch primarily focusing on the profitable area of ‘Bantu education’ instead (enforced, unequal and racially separated educational facilities for black South Africans—a shameful chapter in the history of Oxford University Press.

In August of 1971 David Philip and his wife decided to set up their own independent publishing company, David Philip Publishers, with the intention (and which later became the DPP motto) to publish “books that matter for Southern Africa”, using David Philip’s OUP pension as publishing capital. Thereafter followed almost two decades of what is appropriately described on the rear cover blurb as “the lows and highs of a small, cheerful, underfunded but vibrant ‘oppositional’ publishing company from the year 1971 through to the birth of the new South Africa”, narrating the abundant challenges they faced with boldness, courage and creative energy, with the 1985-89 period easily the toughest and most stressful years. A postscript chapter describes the development of the David Philip imprint from 1995 to 1999. An appendix includes a complete list by year of David Philip publications from August 1971 to December 1999, which include the titles of two winners of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1990 and in 1992, and the many distinguished and internationally-known authors that have been published under the DPP imprint, Guy Butler, Jack Cope, Menàn du Plessis, Nadine Gordimer, Stephen Gray, Bessie Head, Alan Paton, Richard Rive, Albie Sachs, Sipho Sepamla, Sindiwe Magona, Mongane Wally Serote, and Yvonne Vera, among them. The book also contains colour illustrations of the book covers of all titles published by David Philip between 1971 and 1999, as well as archival photographs of David Philip authors, staff, co-publishers, and their many friends and colleagues.


The South African publishing industry supports institutions of higher learning by partnering to produce graduates as an output. Publishers are learning companies that employ higher education educators, language experts and subject matter experts. In this position paper
(supported by a number of case studies) the Publishers’ Association of South Africa (PASA) https://www.publishsa.co.za/ argues that the South African higher education publishing industry ensures that inclusive education elements are brought into learning, teaching and support materials. “Higher educational products contain language support, academic literacy skills, case studies and links to industry. Our case studies and research show that students who make use of textbooks, as opposed to uncurated content (like readers and course packs) show increased pass rates as well as achieving higher marks in the higher education system. Publishers therefore support and work with higher education institutions to produce university and university of technology graduates and to facilitate the new pedagogies that are becoming more available in higher education through the technology-enabled learning.” Importantly, PASA asserts, publishers also invest in distribution networks (both for physical stock and electronic products) and infrastructure that facilitates the accessibility of materials to students. “As such, publishers support and develop students for whom curated content is essential to their programme, and lecturers in their role as educator, especially in the undergraduate environment. The activities of publishers create communities of practice and maintain the standards of materials development through the consultation, academic collaboration and review practices that are encouraged and maintained by publishers.”

The Position paper concludes, “in a world where content is becoming freely available and ubiquitous, the power of the academy is being reduced. For this reason, institutions of higher learning need to increase their proficiency in teaching and learning. The development and investment in curated course content, alongside the provision of appropriate lecturer support and technology-enabled learning, offer an important partnership role for publishers to take alongside South African higher education.”


By the late 1960s state oppression in South Africa, including the proscription of activists associated with the liberation movements, and censorship of writing critical of the government by a highly efficient censorship bureaucracy, had silenced many black writers. One such writer whose work was automatically kept from South African readers was Alex La Guma. He was put under house arrest, and nothing he said or wrote was allowed to be quoted. This article charts part of the complicated publication history of Alex la Guma’s books, first in Nigeria (Mbari, 1962), East Germany (Seven Seas Books, 1964), London (Heinemann, from 1967 to 1979), and elsewhere.


Puts book publishing in the world and in South Africa in a historical perspective. It traces the emergence of publishing in this century and then examines the state of the industry in various fields of specialization. The major challenges in the industry [as at 2011], and political and economic change, are spelled out, and the future of the industry is discussed, including the likely effect of the ‘Electronic Revolution’. The author states that the book industry is under threat and that technological and political changes are leading to permanent structural change. More and more work that
was traditionally done within publishing houses (editing, typesetting, proof-reading, design and illustration) is being outsourced, partly because publishers cannot afford large overheads, and partly because it has become easy to do so because of the large number of freelancers, fed by retrenchments. “The much hoped-for rebirth in publishing that was to take place after liberation has simply not happened. Library funds have been cut to the bone, making it difficult for most of the population to become book readers. African language publishing has languished. Despite the fact that the constitution guarantees rights for eleven languages, English is the language overwhelmingly favoured in education, and therefore in books. Bookshops remain few and far between, mainly limited to wealthy White suburbs. However, the industry is a fairly sophisticated one. It is not going to disappear, but will continue to make a contribution to the education and entertainment of the South African people.”

Note: see also record below.

van Zyl, Hannes **Book Publishing in South Africa II: Afrikaans Publishers.**

In *MyFundi. The South African Encyclopedia* [no date]

http://myfundi.co.za/e/Book_publishing_in_South_Africa_II:_Afrikaans_publishers [22/08/21]

Certainties in the world of the Afrikaans book have been overturned during the past years [as at 2011]. The consequences of never-ending changes such as the transition to new political authority, increased integration with the rest of the world, and the digital revolution are uncertain. Difficult adjustments await the Afrikaans publishers, but among the shifting certainties, there are also new opportunities. “The excellent variety and good quality of new titles, as well as the literary awards during the first month of the new century, contradict the indications of an industry under pressure. …The Afrikaans book is not isolated: it is on bookshelves next to other books and in shops. The question about the future of the book forms part of a bigger apprehensiveness for Afrikaans while the benefits and pleasures of reading are also surrounded by illiteracy, poverty and an unpredictable disease.” The author believes it is vital that the Afrikaans book industry develops the means to supply an ample number of books to general readers. He asserts that “the tenable position, from the publisher’s point of view, is to do not only what can be done, but also what should be done. Excessive boasting about what Afrikaans has already achieved, should be avoided. Language and literature should not be thought of as possessions. Rumors of set-backs should not deter the publishing industry. There still is lots of joy in the Afrikaans book and enough that can be done.”

Wanner, Zukiswa **Writing’s on the Wall for Parochial SA Publishers.**

https://mg.co.za/article/2017-09-27-00-writings-on-the-wall-for-parochial-sa-publishers (Posted 27 September 2017) [04/06/21]

As a writer published in South Africa, Zukiswa Wanner says, “I work in an insane industry. … Twenty-seven years after Nelson Mandela walked out of prison, the South African publishing industry’s articles of faith still remain that middle-class white women are the biggest readers and buyers of books, and that nonfiction sells more than fiction.” She argues that “part of the disconnect between writers and white publishers has been very much ingrained in this fallacious belief that a certain demographic of people does not read. And now that same demographic is not only reading but buying books. Publishers continue to fail their writers in not recognising this.” It is a mistake, she says, for the publishing industry to say that only a certain demographic is not reading. “Not buying books is not the same as not reading.” Wanner also claims that the publishing industry has failed to interact with black
bookstore owners. “The insanity will continue. Traditional mainstream publishers may not die by refusing to adapt, but they shall be comatose for a very long time” she proclaims.

Wilkinson, Kate **Do Only 14% of South Africans Read Books?**
https://africacheck.org/reports/14-south-africans-read-books/ (Posted 08 September 2017) [04/06/21]

South Africa’s basic education minister, Angie Motshekga, often berates the lack of a book reading culture among South Africans. “Do you know that reading statistics show that only 14% of South Africans are readers of books?” the minister said in a video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3qeEX_bfX4&feature=youtu.be&t=16 promoting a reading event held in 2016. But is the situation as dire as she suggests? Citing stats from a study of grade 4 pupils, reading studies published by the South African Book Development Council, time use surveys (which defined reading to include the reading of books, magazines and newspapers, both in print and online), and other research on book reading in South Africa, the author suggests that this does not support the basic education minister’s claim: “When reading of books is isolated from other types of reading, 25% of respondents reported reading books” in a 2016 study, although “just over 16 million adults in South Africa (58%) reported living in a household with no books. The remaining 42% of people lived in households with more than one book.”

**Tanzania**
See also ➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for women ➔ Publisher histories and profiles

Abrams, Dennis **Tanzania’s Ban on Privately Published Textbooks Triggers Controversy.**
http://publishingperspectives.com/2016/12/tanzania-bans-private-textbook-publishing/ [14/06/21]

According to reports in Tanzanian newspapers, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa has reportedly banned private companies from publishing textbooks, as one of the measures to ensure provision of quality education in the country. “Our aim is to ensure there are specific books for specific subjects and each student must use his/her own book during class sessions,” he said. The Prime Minister stated that some people have been publishing textbooks without adhering to requisite standards, leading to complaints of poor quality and errors. Speaking at a meeting of Arusha City Council’s teachers, he is reported to have said that the government has instructed the Tanzania Education Authority (TEA) to henceforth “supervise the publishing” of all textbooks. The controversial decision has apparently come as a shock and as a complete surprise to Tanzania’s book publishers. The Executive Secretary of the Publishers Association of Tanzania, Benito Mtulo, has expressed concern about the government’s decision, which was apparently made without consultation with the members of the book industries. Some reactions by local publishers, as well as section of education stakeholders – while acknowledging that quality is seriously wanting in some available textbooks – would indicate that there is considerable apprehension that the directive will seek to eliminate all private sector publishing in the educational field.
Bgoya, Walter Strengthening Tanzanian Publishing (TZAP). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLvIGLZIA3o (Video, 4:06mins) [08/06/21]
One in a series of short videos from the Elsevier Foundation’s-supported Strengthening Tanzanian Publishing (TZAP) project, setting out the challenges and opportunities for academic publishing in Tanzania. In this video the project coordinators talk with Walter Bgoya of Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, about how the project could enhance reading and publishing culture in Tanzania. Bgoya says: “we have this idea that only with western standards is science possible. This is not correct. I think science is possible wherever people are looking for solutions to their problems.” To strengthen Tanzania’s scholarly culture, he sees a need to first develop a reading culture: “Books have not been accessible. People have not been introduced to reading when they are young, so that is a habit that has to develop.” One of the outcomes of the TZAP project was to establish a consortium of academic publishers that brings them together in order that they can pool their resource (although this does not appear to have materialized). Bgoya says “there are now 20 universities in Tanzania and many more are coming. Every university wants to do two, three journals, [but] the resources don’t really permit. I think it would be much better if several universities came together and produced one journal at a time together.”

Looks at the publishing industry in Tanzania [in the early 1990s] and explains the sluggish development despite state commitment to universal adult and primary education. The author links the underdevelopment of the printing and publishing industries with East Africa’s colonial history when the main marketplace for East Africa was in Kenya. He examines the roles of multilateral agencies and international donor organizations in supporting Tanzania’s education and the impact which this had on publishing. Demonstrates why friendly donor organizations have tended to create and nurture a dependency on aid and how this has hindered the development of indigenous publishing. Also discusses the issue of language, and the activities of multinational publishing companies.

One of a series of national monographs published by UNESCO on the state of the book and reading in a number of countries [as at the mid-1980s], published in order to provide book professionals and the interested public, with detailed surveys of matters relating to authorship, publishing, material production and distribution of books and reading. This monograph was prepared by the [then] General Manager of Tanzania Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, and focuses on the difficulty experienced in obtaining accurate data for the publishing industry. Also discusses the need for professional training in publishing, and examines the legal and institutional framework, with special emphasis on the need for a Book Development Council that could assist in developing a flourishing book industry.

An overview of publishing in Tanzania [in the early 1990s] beginning with a historical review, discussing the question of indigenous languages, and the problems created by the former rule of two separate colonial powers. Reviews the pioneering efforts of mission presses, the activities of the British colonial presses and the newspaper press, and thereafter examines the history and development of indigenous publishing in Tanzania against the backdrop of social, economic and political struggles towards independence and self-determination. Also examines the role of libraries, distribution, printing capacity in the country, and the advent of popular publishing. The author states that “the publishing industry needs to free itself from the shackles of short-term profits and become the spokesman for the ordinary member of the public.”

Duiine, Meike Launch of the Consortium of Academic Publishers in Tanzania. [24/07/21]

A short report about the proposed Consortium of Academic Publishers in Tanzania that aimed to provide platform for Tanzanian researchers, journal editors and publishers to share knowledge and expertise to increase the quality of Tanzania’s research output. Supported by the International Network for Scientific Publications (INASP), VSO, and the Elsevier Foundation, this was a welcome initiative [in 2014], but unfortunately there is no evidence that this Consortium ever took off the ground, or was very short-lived.

Geuza, Zamda R., and Kate Wallis "Reading Dar es Salaam’s (Female-led) Book Clubs as Paravirtual Networks." *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies* (Published online 10 June 2021)

This insightful article focuses on three Dar es Salaam-based book clubs, all founded by women post-2016 – Taswira Book Club, Umoja Book Club and Leaders Read Book Club – and examines how they are positioned through their relationships with booksellers, digital technology and each other. The authors argue that book clubs should be viewed “as paravirtual networks through which vibrant reading communities are being built in Tanzania” and considers how these reading communities interact with digital technology, book buying and publishing. Documenting the variety of ways in which digital technology supports and sustains these new literary communities, even while physical meetings continue to be important, the article describes how these book clubs are able to open up new forms of social space and female-led communal participation around books. While booksellers in Tanzania are working closely with these book clubs, “the study revealed a disconnect between these book clubs and Tanzania-based publishers.” In their conclusion the authors propose that new modes of literary activism can be opened up by publishers and book clubs working more closely together.
Geuza, Zamda Ramadhani *Walk the Talk: A Preliminary Study on Publishers and the Creation of the New Reading Markets.*
https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/ecas2019/paper/49871 [14/06/21]

A paper presented at the 8th European Conference on African Studies, held in Edinburgh, June 11-14, 2019. The study examines “the changing patterns of [the] Tanzanian book market in creation of the new identity and space by the publishers in the 21st century for the new reading market.” Text and visual materials are analysed to understand these changing pattern’s influence of “the new market” in Tanzania. It investigates how publishers have managed “to survive in the market through consumption and reception of new books framed to evoke interest through creating new reading patterns” examining text and visual materials in which the new market exists.


A study commissioned by the Education Division of the Swedish donor organization Sida to evaluate a pilot project for publishing (PPP) in Tanzania that run from 1993-2000, following the country’s abolition of its state monopoly in textbook production and the launch of a new curriculum for primary schools. The PPP was started as an instrument for implementing the new policy and helping to strengthen the textbook sub-sector. Its main aim was to ensure a smooth transition from a state monopoly to a market system in textbook publishing and distribution by local commercial publishers and booksellers. Market forces and consumer preferences were seen as more efficient in stimulating the development of new and better textbooks. The new textbook policy was complemented by adding new qualitative goals. There should be variation in the supply of textbooks, rather than the supply of standardized materials to the schools. The evaluators studied the conceptual model of PPP, its impact, cost efficiencies achieved, and sustainability; and concluded that textbook publishing in Tanzania today is a sustainable activity, much strengthened by the PPP.


Presents an overview of the factors and issues involved leading to the creation of an effective national book policy for Tanzania. Provides essential background information about textbook provision in the country, and sets out developments since December 1991, when the government launched a new textbook policy whose main objective was to liberalize, privatize and commercialize the production and distribution of textbooks. Examines the rationale of the new textbook policy, how it will be operated and what it should try to achieve, and the need for the creation of a favourable environment that will enable commercialized textbook provision to function effectively. Thereafter looks at the present situation [1997], the need for a national book policy, the appropriate institutions required to oversee and implement that policy, and what should be the essential components in a national book policy.
In 2014 the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) government in Tanzania decided to discontinue the market-based system for textbook provision that was established in the early 1990s and revert to full state control. Drawing on the theory of political settlements and the literature on Tanzania’s industrial politics, this article “examines the political economy of textbook provision in this country in order to generate new insights into the relations between the educational, political, and economic spheres.” The author demonstrates how donor ideology and practices, while subjecting textbooks to generic market principles, also promoted the interests of the major Western publishing corporations. She argues that the distribution of power within the state, and the ambiguous relations between the CCM ruling elites, bureaucrats, and the capitalist class, prevented the consolidation of an effective textbook policy geared towards supporting the local publishing industry. Finally, the article explores elites’ diverse corrupt practices to capture public funding for textbooks at the national and local levels. Under Tanzania’s country-specific political settlement, “the textbook sector, far from primarily serving educational goals, has indeed been reduced to a vast site of primitive accumulation.”


“The declining of reading culture among students of tertiary and higher learning and Institute of Adult Education (IAE) students in particular is alarming and threatening the realisation of a well-educated and learning society, the education vision of Tanzania Development Vision (TDV) 2025. Overreliance on lecturers’ and tutors notes, reading for examination, poor tendency of individual reading, and total dislike of reading beyond the examination scope are among the major manifestation of the declining reading culture at the IAE. Claims are made by the IAE stakeholders as to the reason for this awful academic and 21st century culture among the students which include but not limited to unavailability of reading materials, limited infrastructure, and [an] education system and academic tradition that focuses more on summative evaluation and certification or examination passing. If not addressed, it may escalate and jeopardise the hopes of creating [a] learning society in Tanzania.” [Not examined, publisher’s blurb]


One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book
professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

Saiwaad, Abdullah Interventions in Book Provision: Suffocating Education and the Local Book Industry the Case of Tanzania. 
http://www.ucwia.or.ug/book%20industry%20suffocation.pdf (Full text, pdf) [04/06/21] 
http://www.ucwia.or.ug/IBBY%20Uganda%20Saiwaad%20Presentation.pdf (PowerPoint presentation)

A substantial paper presented at the 4th IBBY Africa Region conference, Rethinking Contemporary Literature for Children and Young People in Africa, Kampala, 22-24 August 2017, which presents a gloomy picture of publishing and the book trade in Tanzania. In Tanzania, the author says, “it is evident that the book sector has not been developing at a pace commensurate with the growth of the population and the other economic sectors in the country.” After a period of relative growth and prosperity for the private sector from 1993 to 2013, publishing and the book trade is now once again in sharp decline. The reasons for this are many and cut across socio-political and economic factors. But above all it is government action through detrimental policy measures – including language, education and textbook policies – that have been instrumental in retarding the growth of the book sector. In earlier years government action, through positive and enabling policy measures, had been the key to a revival of the sector. These recurring changes in government policies have once more contributed to the curtailing of the book trade in Tanzania. Educational and textbook policies that have previously failed are once again introduced as ‘new’ policies a few years later, only to fail yet again.

Saiwaad states that there has been government interference at almost every level of the ‘book chain’ and textbook provision, for example in the area of authorship of textbooks: “Many politicians believe the best authors of textbooks are teachers. Indeed, many of them are. But not all good teachers are good authors! Interference in the book chain arises of the belief that all teachers can write. Therefore without any tests whatsoever, a group of teachers is selected, given the syllabus, pens and paper and requested to write a book for say class three. A certain specific time is given and usually an unrealistic time frame. The end product, which to them is a manuscript for a textbook, would be thrown out of the window without hesitation by any editor worth the name. Interference in authorship is also supported by some development partners. They support a project which would never have been supported by authors in their own countries.”

Direct intervention in textbook provision policy has been detrimental to the development of a healthy and dynamic indigenous book industry, the author argues: “Politicians and government bureaucrats fail to understand that publishing is a process. They believe that they can separate the work of the editor, designer and illustrator and still produce good quality books. Experience is irrelevant. In 2013, on the excuse that teachers are confused due the abundance of textbooks, the Ministry of Education of Tanzania, ordered that all books will be authored and published by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE).” Meantime the retail
book trade has also been adversely affected; there have been serious deficiencies in the distribution of textbook via TIE, and the number of active booksellers, and bookshops generally, has dropped sharply. Adequate funds to purchase new books for refreshing library collections which are part of the Tanzania Library Services Board are rarely made available, and the public library network is thus heavily dependent on book donations, most of them from overseas. A national book policy is still not in place, although the country’s Book Development Council (BAMVITA) managed to draft a national book policy. However, “it is still gathering dust in the Ministry of Education offices in Dar es Salaam. The Council has remained just in name. There is a serious need for book industry stakeholders to wake up and put their industry in order.”

An interesting contribution on the debate relating to the shift from orality to literacy, and the publication of oral history. While developing a series of locally-written histories from the Mara Region of Tanzania, the author discovered that transforming oral tradition into written form is ultimately political. The change from an oral to a written knowledge base diminishes the power of community elders and puts it into the public domain, where literate people are at an advantage, and where community security may be vulnerable at the same time. The author describes how he found out that the oral traditions that he was collecting were not some antiquated and benign relics of the past to be preserved in dusty archives, but could in fact serve as powerful political tools for negotiating present-day relationships and authority. He also describes how he proceeds in publishing this collection of politically-charged written histories.

Uganda
See also ➔ Publisher histories and profiles
➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for women

http://www.praxismagonline.com/moran-publishers/ (Posted 24 March 2016) [15/08/21]
Crystal Rutangye, who is shortly to set up her own publishing company, reflects on the publishing situation in Uganda, and issues of marketing, editorial capacity, production quality, the challenges of distribution, the publisher’s role in promoting new and upcoming writers, and publishing in African languages. “The book publishing industry in Uganda is still dominated by the academic [i.e. educational] book sector”, she says, and production quality is still often poor: “A lot needs to be done to improve the quality of African books, beginning with professionalizing certain sectors of the book publishing chain. … Publishers (and self-published authors) need to be ready to pay for excellent-quality editing; including paying for more and specialised editors to work on one book, and more umbrella bodies need to train editors and advocate for the professionalization of the field.”
Speaking about new distribution platforms and the emergence of e-books, she states “common challenges with distributing e-books include the expensive Internet bundles in the country, poor technology-based infrastructure nation-wide, and general lack of understanding of the dynamics involved in selling, buying and reading e-books. Less than ten percent of Uganda’s major book publishers and distributors deal in e-books.” And talking about publishing in indigenous languages and overcoming language barriers, Crystal Rutangye says “I honestly cannot think of a way this barrier can be broken across Africa. It is a struggle even in Uganda where there are over 50 ethnic languages.” While there is a measure of demand for books written in local languages, “there is a limit to the number of books in local languages that can be sold to particular communities; they cannot sell in other communities. The local language authors are essentially writing for a smaller group of people. Local language books are good for primary education, but for the whole publishing industry, it is currently more profitable to write [and publish] in languages that a larger group of people can identify with in Uganda, that would include the official languages: English and Kiswahili.”


A comprehensive overview of publishing in Uganda [as at 2011], primarily the textbook sector and publishing of educational materials, describing the industry’s nature and history, and the challenges and opportunities of publishing in the country. It also discusses a number of alternative publishing and licensing models, especially the PALM Africa project that seeks to create new publishing models and methodologies as a means of broadening access to educational materials and overcoming the shortage of learning materials. In addition to extensive analysis of the publishing sector in Uganda, the author also provides a brief historical perspective of the publishing industry in Africa generally, tracing its historical development, examining its current state, and identifying some of the many obstacles facing it.


A further continuation of the previous two entries (see ➔ records above). Analyses current [2004] trends and developments in publishing in Uganda, including an examination of the role of government in publishing, manuscript development, issues as they relate to publishing in local languages, marketing and the distribution of Ugandan publishing output, the role of book trade associations, and the constraints and challenges of publishing in the country.


A history of the book and publishing in Uganda up to the period of the country’s independence. Provides a historical background, describes early publishing activities by Christian missionaries, educational and school book publishing by British multinational publishers, and publishing in African languages by the East African Literature Bureau. Also
examines the role of local churches in the evolution of books in Uganda. Concludes with a look at book marketing and distribution at that time.

Note: see also ➔ record below for an article about the subsequent 1962-1988 period.


The continuation of the ➔ preceding entry. An account “on that aspect of development in which Uganda has been a cripple, i.e. the book industry during the post-independence period.” Reviews the founding of the state-supported Uganda Publishing House in a (short-lived) partnership with Macmillan and the emergence of small independent publishers. Examines the reasons why some indigenous publishing initiatives failed. Also looks at the development of creative writing and readership, book distribution and the retail trade, and finds that indigenous publishers’ promotion and book marketing leaves a great deal to be desired.


The 2017 Uganda International Writers Conference, organized by the African Writers Trust in Kampala, had ‘Contemporary Publishing Trends in Africa’ as its focal theme. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, the co-founder of Cassava Republic Press in Nigeria https://www.cassavarepublic.biz/, presented the keynote address: The Current State of African Publishing: Dare we Hope? This short report includes some extracts from her address, and statements by other speakers.


A wide-ranging conversation with Charles Batambuze, Executive Director of the Uganda Reproduction Rights Organization (URRO), and also the Executive Secretary of the National Book Trust of Uganda (NABOTU), talking about the diverse activities of these two organizations – including issues such as copyright and copyright management, legal deposit legislation, and more – as well as commenting on the current state of publishing and book development in Uganda. A new area of activity is digital copyright management, which is a big challenge for Uganda, Batambuze says: “First of all in terms of legislation, there is a need to make our copyright law versatile by making adequate legal provisions for the digital environment. Government is currently working on the ratification of several international copyright treaties and later their domestication into law. Without the ratifications, it is difficult for Uganda content producers to benefit from digital markets, evolve adequate digital copyright management systems, and benefit from reciprocal protection.”

A very positive development in the country is that educational policy, especially regarding the use of local languages in education, “has opened up immense publishing opportunities in 32 local languages, and most recently the teaching of Kiswahili at all levels of education, will add to this already positive momentum. … The rebirth of a real industry of books in national languages is already happening in countries in Africa that have adopted education policies
that use and teach in African languages. It is the best thing to have happened in my view, to the development of African languages and the attendant literatures. In Uganda for example, the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has supported the development of orthographies for 32 African languages. This means that Ugandans are now writing books and doing text translations in those languages. These efforts are finally reshaping the publishing industry from the elitist mould to a more inclusive industry serving all language groups in Uganda.”


James Tumusiime, founder of Fountain Publishers https://www.fountainpublishers.co.ug/ in Kampala – one of Africa’s leading publishing houses - offers a close history and analysis of publishing in Uganda, describing his efforts to strengthen local publishing capacity in the country and the numerous obstacles and challenges he faced in setting up his own indigenous publishing house in 1988, in a country in which at that time the textbook markets were monopolised by well-entrenched UK multinationals. Although significant progress has been made in establishing an autonomous publishing industry, multiple challenges remain. These range from a poor reading culture, the government’s “flip-flopping policies” as it relates to the book sector and textbook policies, an uncertain investment climate, a weak book chain, and the absence of high quality printing facilities.

However, there have been positive developments too. For example, locally-based publishers have moved beyond the traditional bookshops to seek outlets to get their books to the reading public. Most of the major supermarkets nowadays have book sections on different topics, including textbooks, and more and more places for selling books are opening. And with the expansion of the East African Community, when Burundi and Rwanda came on board and with the latter switching to an English curriculum, the East African publishing industry received a significant boost. Nonetheless, unclear government book policies makes it very difficult to predict the future success of the book industries, and this calls for a more favourable and transparent business environment, Tumusiime says, and for clarity of guidelines: “Publishing houses, the public and government agencies are all partners in this endeavour and must contribute in the debate on how to improve the sector. However, governments must provide the leading role by improving budgetary allocations to the improvement of school books supplies; and the research initiative climate that can ensure creativity among writers, [and] sensitize the public on the significance of literature and a good reading culture.”


James Tumusiime is a former civil servant in the government of Uganda, a cultural entrepreneur, celebrated cartoonist, journalist, broadcaster, founder of the New Vision newspaper in 1986, Chairman and Managing Director of Fountain Publishers
https://www.fountainpublishers.co.ug/ in Kampala. This quirkily titled book makes for an entertaining read. It is essentially a narrative about the plight that faces Africa’s identity in culture, literary and historical production and, at the same time, “a critique of the African’s attitude towards indigenous craftsmanship, knowledge and culture” in the post-independence era, in which the author questions African politicians’ and government policy makers for their persistent lukewarm support for the cultural industries. He seeks to establish “how far we have moved in an effort to create a nation of people who value books, write books, read books and by books – from being recipients of foreign narrated stories about our country and continent, to the producers of our own knowledge and knowledge systems.”

For those with an interest in the development of indigenous African publishing, chapter 7: ‘Between the Cathedral and the Stock Market’, will be of special interest. Here Tumusiime describes his efforts in strengthening local publishing capacity in the country, and the numerous obstacles and challenges he faced in setting up his own indigenous publishing house in 1988, in a country in which at that time the textbook markets were monopolised by well-entrenched UK multinationals. He soon became to realize that “multinationals had influenced their way right to the top and it would be very difficult to dislodge them.” Getting some of his company’s textbooks included as recommended texts by the Ministry of Education, and an opening into the supply of school books, was going to be a prolonged battle.

However, dogged persistence finally paid dividends: a USAID-sponsored tripartite conference held in 1993, bringing together the different stakeholders, laid the ground for the promulgation of a national textbook policy, and in turn a mechanism for Uganda’s children to have access to appropriate and affordable books; putting in place a more transparent system in the vetting of the textbooks selected, as well as using a participatory approach in choosing the books – with local teachers, authors and illustrators actively involved in the development of the books – and at the same time creating a level playing field for both national and international publishers.

Today Fountain Publishers is one of Africa’s leading publishing houses. Not that this means the publishing industry in Uganda is home and dry, and Tumusiime ends the chapter on a pessimistic note: “The industry remains a mystery to the people who matter in decision-making in the country and the Africa region in general.” The main source of revenue, for publishers across the continent, has to come from educational and textbook sales, and the government school system. Tumusiime says “as publishers we are often interested in doing more for the country–providing information, entertainment, triggering or advancing knowledge and a reading culture in general. Working with governments that are often indifferent and do not treat publishing as a serious partner in the development of the country is demoralising. Most of the time the publisher teeters on the brink of failure. Sometimes frustration wears one down. The thought that government considers the custodian of the national literary heritage as inconsequential to the country’s development agenda is disheartening.”

An account of the development of Uganda’s publishing industry in the post-independence years, the current trends, and the prospects for the future. “Uganda’s publishing industry is in a transition from a gloomy past to a guardedly optimistic future. It is guarded in a sense that the threats to a stable growth of the industry are always looming in the background.” These threats include, the author states, “an insensitive government bureaucracy that at times has little regard for wider concerns of developing a healthy and sustainable book industry beyond just buying books for the immediate period”, together with an absence of a regional trade in books due to numerous barriers, lack of a sound library network in the country, “half-hearted efforts to invest in bookshops by the business community because of lack of a consistent market”, as well as “lack of co-ordinated programmes between government agencies, civil society and donor agencies in dealing with literacy promotion and the development of libraries and resource centres.” However, the author concludes that, given a number of optimistic signs, and these obstacles notwithstanding, “the future of publishing is brighter than its past.”

Zambia


The author argues that the publication of literary works in Zambia has been held captive by the challenges facing the book industry, in particular the country’s economic crisis. These economic challenges have led to high costs in publishing, and inevitably the cost of purchasing books has also been high. Zambian publishers are largely depended on government procurement for their book sales, primarily purchasing textbooks. Some publishers have depended on sales of textbooks in order to generate funds to publish literary works, but this overdependence on government procurement has left publishers financially vulnerable. The diminished publishing opportunities for writers of literary works have driven some writers into self-publishing as an alternative. However, this option has not answered the problem, in part because it relates more to quantity rather than quality of publications. Some interventions by writers’ and book trade associations, the Curriculum Development Centre, and a number of writing awards, have provided a measure of stimulation. A change in government policies, however, could go a long way towards stimulating the growth of the industry and exposing unknown writing talent.


In 1991 the newly-elected government of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) proclaimed the liberalization of the production and supply of educational materials in Zambia, thus opening the gates for other educational publishers and suppliers to enter an arena which hitherto had been the exclusive preserve of the Zambia Educational Publishing House (ZEPH). During the years following liberalization Zambia subsequently witnessed the emergence of a number of privately-owned book publishers, as well as booksellers. The government, in its declared commitment to placing all business in the hands of the private
sector, made two failed attempts, in 1996 and 1997, to privatise ZEPH, and it later retracted its plans for privatising ZEPH. This was seen to go against the original spirit and principle of true liberalization and ensuring an even playing field as ZEPH may well continue to have an edge over other educational book publishers and suppliers. Nonetheless, the author believes that “the future of book publishing in Zambia appears set for a major leap forward.”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08d33e5274a31e00016e6/Book_Chain_rev.pdf [27/10/21]

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.


Provides a historical background to publishing in Zambia and reviews past state participation in publishing and international development assistance. Lack of competition from private sector companies contributed greatly to the decline of the book industry in the period up to 1991. However, a move by the government to embark on a policy of liberalization for the production and supply of educational materials as from 1992 has now created an enabling environment for the emergence of several new private sector publishing initiatives. Reviews aspects of competition, tendering and procurement systems, the market potential, the performance of private firms compared with parastatals, and the moves towards the establishment of a national book policy and a national book development council. Whereas privatization in publishing has now levelled the playing field, some problems remain however, particularly aspects of textbook development, bookselling, an equitable procurement system, together with other impediments such as lack of capital in an economy suffering from high inflation, and a lack of publishing expertise.


Reviews the dismal of state publishing in Zambia in the late 1970s: bookshops with almost empty shelves, a dearth of commercial magazines and scholarly periodicals, and an ineffective government-owned publishing house. Comments on the high costs and low quality of printing, and expresses the hope that the situation will show improvement with the expected
upturn of the Zambian economy and the planned establishment of a national book development council.


http://www.bellagiopublishingnetwork.com/series/readings.htm (Table of contents only)
[05/08/21]

An update to the previous article (see ➔ record above), by the former Head of the Geography department at the University of Zambia, which finds that the expected upturn in the Zambian economy did not materialize, a national book development council failed to take off, and that consequently the state of publishing and the book trade continues to be in decline. Analyses book publishing output over a period of years and compares this with that of other countries in the region. Examines the activities of the state-owned publishing house, commercial publishers, scholarly publishing, magazines and serials, and looks at issues such as book distribution, book prices, and the state of libraries in the country. The author recommends the establishment of an effective trade association and applauds the achievement and vitality of Multimedia Zambia and a number of small private sector publishers, whilst encouraging more collaboration within the Southern African region and strengthening of an intra-African book trade.

Zimbabwe
See also ➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing for and by Women
➔ Publisher histories and profiles

https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1980.6.3-4.229 ¶ [18/06/21]

Charts the history of book publishing in Zimbabwe from the first book to be published in colonial days in 1897, through to the emergence of commercial book publishing in the 1960s. Includes information on commercial and independent publishers [as at 1980], book imports, book clubs, literary societies, the retail book trade, and library services, and assesses the prospects for publishing in Zimbabwe in the future.

https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1990.16.4.235 ¶ [18/06/21]

Describes publishing in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 [to 1990], focusing on literary publishing in English. Part one provides an overview of publishing in the country, examining issues such as ownership of publishing houses, book distribution, the activities of book trade associations, as well as analyzing the major constraints faced by the book industries. Part two
is a survey of publishing of creative writing since the 1980s. It concluded at the time that Zimbabwean publishing “is exciting, problematic, fraught and stimulating.”


Book piracy is threatening the continued success of literary endeavour in Zimbabwe, and this paper addresses the rampant infringement of intellectual property rights in the country and as it relates to the literary and publishing sector. The author identifies the various forms of book piracy in Zimbabwe, their causes and impact. Her findings reveal that unlawful reprography and abuse of publication rights are the main forms of book piracy in Zimbabwe, and that the main causes of book piracy are book scarcity, poverty, and ignorance of the copyright laws. She suggests ways in which the higher education sector could contribute to the reduction of book piracy and urges all stakeholders to work towards protecting intellectual property. “Although it might not be possible to purge piracy, combined stakeholder efforts will benefit holders of copyrights and the literary industry as a whole. The ways in which the higher and tertiary education sector can contribute to reducing piracy include awareness, advocacy and enforcement of copyright laws; revitalization of libraries as well as practising curriculum inclusiveness.”


Another version also at: https://www.academia.edu/33927678/The_Crisis_of_Creativity_and_Creativity_in_the_Crisis_what_is_the_point_of_books_in_Zimbabwe [14/06/21]

Diana Jeater offers some thought-provoking observations about books and reading in Zimbabwe and the future role of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF), which in the late 1990s and early 2000s was the premier book fair for all book deals within Africa, not only between Southern African publishers and the rest of the world, but also between publishers within Africa itself, but which has been in sharp decline in recent years. In 2011 the theme of the Book Fair was ‘Books for Africa’s Development’, and the author reports about an event at the Book Café in Harare that debated the past and future of the ZIBF, and ended up discussing the question, “what is the point of books in contemporary Zimbabwe?” But how do books actually contribute to development, and what nowadays is the purpose of a book fair in Zimbabwe? Despite the high literacy rates, people no longer seem to love books in Zimbabwe. The crisis of books is seen everywhere in the country. Bookshops are hard to find, “and when you do find them, they disappoint.” While the avid, often social, reading of newspapers, along with the urban ubiquity of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, maintain a text-oriented and literate culture, book reading is in decline and “at every turn, an instrumentalist attitude to books and reading predominates.” The author says “it seems that an educational system that encourages conformity in learning, combined with an economy now largely dominated by NGO interventions, has reduced books to tools in learning. At the Book Café, Murray McCartney made an impassioned plea for a re-valuing of creativity and the contribution that literature makes to the imagination. There were important questions implicit in his words. Without a culture of creativity, where will writers and
publishers find a new vision for the ZIBF? How will Zimbabweans come up with creative solutions to climb out of the economic pit of the past decade? But no-one in the gathering picked up his call.”

An insightful interview with Irene Staunton, Managing Director of Weaver Press https://weaverpresszimbabwe.com/ in Zimbabwe, and formerly publishing director at Baobab Books in Harare, where she developed an award-winning African fiction and non-fiction list, as well as publishing children’s books. Here she talks about the challenges of publishing from Zimbabwe, by Zimbabweans, in the current [2006] difficult conditions, and the development of a reading culture. Staunton states: “It is hugely important for a society and for the development of that society to have access to its fiction. If it is not published, it is lost. Even if it does not sell, a good book provides a singular record. If it is good enough, it will last. It will be there for posterity to show us what people lived through and how they felt about it at the time.”

Kubuitsile, Lauri Thoughts from Botswana. amaBooks, A Zimbabwean Publisher. https://thoughtsfrombotswana.blogspot.co.uk/2017/09/amabooks-zimbabwean-publisher.html (Posted 08 September 2017) [04/06/21]
Another version also in https://publishingperspectives.com/2017/09/zimbabwe-amabooks-fiction-bulawayo/
A conversation with Jane Morris, one of the founders of amaBooks http://www.amabooksbyo.com/, a small independent imprint located in Zimbabwe’s second city of Bulawayo, publishing a wide range of contemporary Zimbabwean writing. Jane Morris answers questions about current book trade conditions in the country, the assistance amaBooks offers to new writers keen to break into print, the prospects of an intra-African book trade, the decline of Zimbabwe’s literary community, what she see as the biggest challenges to publishers on the continent, and what have been the most significant successes for amaBooks. But how does one measure success? “For me, one success, despite all the stressful times, has been the joy that amaBooks has brought into our lives, being greeted in the streets of Bulawayo with ‘Hey amaBooks’. Getting good reviews from readers and critics is one of the things we value most. We love what we do and it is heartening when others enjoy the books we have brought out.”

One in a series of useful (albeit now dated) country surveys and overviews – each prepared by a book professional from the country concerned – that review the state of the book, and the major players in the “book chain”, in English-speaking African countries. Each country survey covers printing, book publishing, bookselling and distribution, library services, professional associations, book promotional bodies and book promotional events, training for the book
professions, as well as examining some of the major issues as they relate to book development, such as languages, literacy, writers and writing, the reading habit, and national book policies. For each country this is supported by an annotated directory of government ministries, professional associations, book publishers, booksellers and distributors, printers, major libraries, and training institutions, with full address and contact details.

Zimbabwe currently boasts of one of the highest literacy levels in Africa. Paradoxically, such an encouraging state of affairs is not paralleled with a high reading culture. Instead, the high levels of literacy are undone by a very low reading culture. This paper offers an exploration of the possible underlying causes of the current unsatisfactory situation, as well as possible intervention strategies. The authors used interviews and semi-structured questionnaires to extract information from selected teachers, learners, parents, readers, publishers and bookshop managers. They found that the reasons of the paradox included an emphasis on passing examinations, the high costs of living and the equally high costs of publishing and/or printing books, the English vs. indigenous language ambivalence and the marginalisation of the latter. The authors suggest a number of possible intervention strategies and policies to address the current state of affairs in order to enhance the country’s reading culture.

An interesting account of the establishment of the Zimbabwe Publishing House (ZPH) and its first two and a half years of existence, breaking “many rules of publishing”. The article describes the development of the initial list, the difficulties that had to be overcome, and the lessons learned during the process. The late David Martin, together with Phyllis Johnson, were the co-founders of ZPH, which was one of Zimbabwe’s most dynamic publishers in the 1980s.

Mushava, Stanley Zimbabwe to Reintroduce Literature Bureau to Promote Indigenous Languages. https://thisisafrica.me/literature-bureau-promote-indigenous-languages/ (Posted 26 June 2018) [06/06/21]
Before being shut down by the government in 1999, the Zimbabwe Literature Bureau (formerly Rhodesia Literature Bureau) existed for decades as the only platform for writers to publish novels in Shona and Ndebele. The Bureau also played a significant role in nurturing budding African writers, and its closure was seen as a major blow to the development and preservation of literature written in indigenous languages. Since its closure many prominent literary figures have called for the revival of the Bureau in order to produce literary content in the 11 previously marginalised minority Zimbabwean languages. The government is now adding the indigenous languages to the curriculum, with Kalanga, Nambya, Tonga, Venda and Xangani being taught in schools, but the lack of books in these languages could significantly affect the learning process. Zimbabwe’s Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Professor Paul Mavhima, has now embraced the suggestion for the revival of the
Literature Bureau, or a functional equivalent. The government plans to initiate the revival of the Bureau under a new name and “with a more progressive mandate”, to embrace all Zimbabwean languages, including English.


Gives an overview of the establishment and development of Mambo Press, founded by Swiss missionaries in 1958 and originally started under the name the Catholic Mission Press. During pre-independence days Mambo Press had a long and honourable record of opposition to the regimes of the time. In 1985 it had over 300 titles in print and is still today one of Zimbabwe’s largest publishers, with a strong list of titles in English, Shona and Ndebele.

**Reading Zimbabwe**
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2099710239/reading-zimbabwe [18/06/21]
Describes the activities of Reading Zimbabwe http://readingzimbabwe.com/ and the creation of a digital archive and repository of books written and published about Zimbabwe. This kickstarter project “was born out of a curiosity for a deeper understanding of the nature and extent of knowledge production, dissemination and use around the subject of ‘Zimbabwe.’” Reading Zimbabwe, founded in 2016 by Tinashe Mushakavanhu and Nontsikelelo Mutiti, is largely a virtual project, an interactive digital library, and its “ultimate aim is to build a physical People’s Library to complement poorly resourced libraries in Zimbabwe.” The repository currently (December 2017) contains references to 1,538 books, written by 957 authors, and published in 114 cities by 397 publishers. The database can be searched by authors, by broad subject areas, as well as other search options such as ‘Decade’, ‘Continent’, or ‘Motif’. While still in a development stage, this is already an immensely rich database and its creation amounts to an astonishing labour of love. See also a short video presentation about the project at https://vimeo.com/239058388.

**Note:** not to be confused with Zimbabwe Reads https://zimbabwereads.org/, an organization that supports the reading culture in the country by distributing and donating reading materials, promoting reading activities; and works with local publishers, authors, and cultural associations to support children’s books and publications in Zimbabwe’s indigenous languages.


Founded by Irene Staunton and Murray McCartney, Weaver Press http://weaverpresszimbabwe.com/ is a dynamic independent publishing house formed to publish books from and about Zimbabwe. Its growing fiction list now features over 120 Zimbabwean short story writers, and its novelists include several international prize-winners who were first published by Weaver Press. Its non-fiction list focuses on political and social history, the environment, media issues, and women and children’s rights. The company was established in 1998, just prior to a major economic downturn and years of political challenges, hyperinflation, as well as rapidly declining public library services, most of them now without any funds for book acquisitions. Between the 1980s and the 90s substantial amounts of donor funding was received in the country to stimulate creativity and support initiatives in the book sector and indigenous publishing, one of them the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, which
gained wide international attention and provided a vibrant focus for the whole book industry. However, “most of these hubs of activity have now closed or diminished to a shadow of their former selves. When donor support was withdrawn for various reasons, neither local associations nor government were able to provide the requisite financial backing.”

This article describes the challenges of a small independent publisher struggling to survive, much less prosper, in a harsh economic climate and operating in hugely difficult trading conditions. Its greatest challenge today remains the absence of a vibrant book-buying public, with reading primarily for examination purposes. Meantime years of economic hardship have taken their toll at both secondary and tertiary levels, and photocopying is rife. Irene Staunton says that small general publishers everywhere will need to take stock and consider whether and how they still have relevance. If they continue to rely on book sales alone they may not survive. New opportunities have now opened up with the advent of the e-book, and that it is possible that the e-book will provide a bridge to reach new readers, Staunton says: “However, if there is no substantive tradition of reading or buying books, with the exception of small professional elites, can we expect that people will buy a short story to read on their cellphones, even if it costs no more than a dollar?” She continues, “it will be a long time before every child in Zimbabwe has access to a computer or an e-reader, so physical books will remain important for the foreseeable future. The challenge for us and the education system as a whole is to ensure that students read beyond the curriculum and continue reading into adulthood.”

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/africa-bibliography/article/publishing-in-zimbabwe/32DACD2C022A040F4643040F502B83BD (freely accessible) [12/06/21]

This wide-ranging article examined the state of publishing in Zimbabwe in the mid-1980s, particularly developments since independence in 1980. It includes a statistical analysis of book publishing output based on listings in the [then] *Rhodesia National Bibliography*, and identifies particular areas of publishing and the trends which characterize them. Covers the period of transition prior to independence, creative writing, educational publishing, together with a discussion of the environment in which publishers operate in Zimbabwe, and the major problems and constraints.

Unfortunately, the Zimbabwe government’s general approach to books has not been supportive. “Zimbabwe is one of the few countries which have not signed the Unesco ‘Florence agreement’. Imported books are subject not only to customs duties but also to the 20 per cent import surcharge levied on all imported goods. Internally, books are also subject to a 12% per cent sales tax. Taking into account also the general fall in the value of the Zimbabwe dollar against the major currencies, and increases in freight charges and imported materials, prices of books in the shops are generally unreasonably high.... Price control is also having a negative effect on local publishing, since it is necessary for publishers to anticipate increases in input costs at least five years ahead, and as a result, new books may be priced more expensively than they would be otherwise. ... The lack of library development is another hindrance to the development of strong local publishing. A network of public libraries can be a valuable market for publishers and can increase the viability of printing certain titles.”
In his concluding paragraph Stringer states “Tariff barriers on the free flow of information must be reduced, as must the high sales taxes charged on books; inputs into the local printing industry — paper, film, plates, inks, etc. — must be made more readily available; price control regulations in the publishing industry need to be reviewed. If the general environment can be improved, publishing in Zimbabwe has great potential and Zimbabwe can become a major publishing force within the southern African region.” Sadly, more than thirty years after this article was written, this ‘potential’ has not been realized; and the environment for the entire book sector in Zimbabwe has even become even more unfavourable, and has actually gone from bad to worse.

https://doi.org/10.2959/logo.1992.3.1.54

Examines differing views on writing, the price of books, and reading habits, gleaned from interviews with Zimbabweans during the 6th Zimbabwe International Book Fair.

TOPIC-SPECIFIC STUDIES

Author-publisher relationship/Publishing of African writers and African literature
See also ➔ Book history and book culture
➔ British and multinational publishers in Africa
➔ Publisher histories and profiles

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/the-african-writers-handbook

Dapo Adeniyi, [then] editor of the Nigerian literary and cultural magazine the Glendora Review and its Glendora Books Supplement (1997-2001), offers some good advice to “suspicious, angst-ridden authors-in-waiting” – many of whom have been going through the painful experience of rejection – in their dealings with editors at publishing houses. Adeniyi believes most writers are in too much of a rush to get into print, and he reminds them that many great works in the canon of modern African writing “existed in different versions for years before they were eventually published.”


The celebrated Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah is the author of, among others, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Fragments, Why Are We So Blest, The Healers and Two Thousand Seasons, most of them first published by Heinemann in the UK in their African Writers Series/AWS
(and some in separate US editions), and subsequently reprinted on several occasions, or sublicensed for reprints by Heinemann branches and affiliates in Africa. Armah has reportedly had a long-standing feud with Heinemann, but it is not until recently, as a chapter in this new essay collection, that he has set out the reasons for the dispute and provides some documentary evidence. He is highly critical of the African Writers Series, and blatantly accuses Heinemann of fraud — “Heinemann stole my royalties.” Armah reproduces extensive correspondence he has had with Heinemann and their agents, and from which it looks as though much of the dispute centers on the issue of royalties payable on the basis of published price, as opposed to royalties based on net receipts, a frequently contentious issue in author-publisher relations. It does seem clear from the evidence and correspondence presented here that Heinemann, at the very least, acted rather unprofessionally.

However, Armah’s accusations also raise a lot of questions, which are not answered here. For example, if Armah had such a low opinion of the “slyly named” African Writers Series – and that the series, and its publisher, “did its worst to stunt the growth of African talent” – why then did he agree for his books to be published in the series in the first place? And if he was so aggrieved with Heinemann, why then did he not take up his grievances with fellow writer and AWS Series Editor, Chinua Achebe? This account tells only one side of the story, but whatever the truth of the matter, it is a very sad tale and it is unfortunate to say the least that an African writer of such distinction should have such a low esteem of his publishers—or indeed, judging by other passages about “foreign publishers” elsewhere in this collection, of publishers anywhere.


Using Achebe’s publishing records and correspondence (held at the University of Reading Publishing Archives https://www.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/collections/archives/sc-publishers.aspx and the Random House Group Archive) this perceptive study examines the publishing process of Anthills of the Savannah (1987) in terms of relationships, negotiation, publicity and prizes. The shortlisting of the novel for the Booker Prize was a symbolic event, the full implications of which became clearer with time. Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the publication of the novel, the article discusses the circumstances and conditions that led to its remarkable success. More specifically, the author aims to highlight the significant, albeit often overlooked, role of publishers in directing the literary experience of Achebe.

In his conclusion Bejjit says: “In examining the various publishing records of several African writers who were published in the AWS, one cannot fail to realize the privileged status bestowed on Achebe – one which no other African writer had ever achieved at HEB. Arguably, such a treatment was not solely dictated by the financial returns that HEB were making out of Achebe’s books, but also by the personal relationship Achebe had built with his publishers, a relationship which Achebe often evoked with a sense of pride and admiration. The long-term relationship between Achebe and Heinemann is extraordinary. Heinemann remained Achebe’s main publishers for over 40 years.” He served as a model for other African writers “who not only emulated him, but also sought to be published by the same publishers.”
From its launch in 1962, the Heinemann ‘African Writers Series’ (AWS) enabled the dissemination of African literature worldwide and contributed to the creation of a critical sensitivity among readers and critics alike to its distinct qualities and values. The works varied from creative to biographical writings and echoed the rich multilingual and multicultural African voices then in the making. This quite fascinating account seeks to shed light on various aspects of publishing the AWS, offering an insight of the rise and development of the series and the crisis that eventually befell it, in the light of the economic recession, foreign exchange restrictions in African countries, declining markets including a general downturn of the UK markets, well as new ownership of the company.

In his conclusion Bejjit states: “In examining the archives of the AWS, one cannot fail to notice a disparity between the way the series was run during its first two decades and that in the 1990s. Besides the fact that there were too many discrepant visions and approaches in directing the series, Heinemann ILT lacked cohesive and strong management. Added to this was the growing rivalry between Heinemann ILT in the UK and Heinemann, Inc. in the US. The latter, as the main customer and market, exercised considerable control over the publishing programme and strategy of the former. In Britain, Heinemann ILT’s staff felt the need to resist being stripped out of the management of the AWS. ... Nigel Kelly, then publishing director of the international division of Harcourt Education Ltd, explained that their decision to stop publishing new AWS titles owed to the fact that recent ones had not sold as they had hoped, and so they had decided not to pursue new titles and to focus their attention on promoting the backlist. Such a plan, he maintained, would benefit their existing authors by giving the titles already published more impetus. However, the acquisition of Heinemann International Publishers by the US-based Harcourt Educational Books, and the subsequent restructuring of the company, put an end to the series. Heinemann International closed with a loss of 30 jobs, including that of its managing director.”

Examine the role played by this Kenyan writer in the remarkable success of the African Writers Series (AWS) in promoting African literature internationally when African creative writing still had little exposure beyond national borders. Ngugi (later to become known as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o) was the first writer from East Africa to be published in the series. Drawing on the extensive archives of the Heinemann African Writers Series housed at the University of Reading Library Special Collections, Bejjit explores Ngugi’s relationship with his editors at Heinemann Educational Books (HEB), citing from correspondence relating to the publication of his first three novels and a volume of short stories, a relationship which although initially amicable and productive later became somewhat strained. This came as a result of Ngugi’s desire to publish the short stories locally with the East African Publishing House. Ngugi, in addition to wanting to retain US rights, was also not prepared to sign a contract clause giving Heinemann’s ‘first refusal’
(i.e. given the opportunity to read and consider for publication) of his next two full-length works. This caused a measure of alarm and bitterness at Heinemann’s, especially as they had been fairly generous with royalty payments and advances for his previous books. Bejjit argues that Ngugi’s involvement with Heinemann contributed to his political and intellectual radicalisation and his “ideological transitions”, and that his letters to HEB editors “offer clear testimonies of his shifting political attitudes.”

no. 5 [2008], Part II http://www.african-writing.com/five/jamescurrey2.htm
This insightful three-part series of interviews with James Currey (in the freely accessible online forum African Writing Online) provide insights into the growth of the Heinemann African Writers Series (AWS). The interviews were conducted in Oxford in 2005 by Nourdin Bejjit as part of the Literature Department’s larger AHRC-funded project on the Colonial and Postcolonial History of the Book http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/Literature/cphb/index.html.
His project investigates the involvement of Heinemann Educational Books in publishing African literature – and its African Writers Series more specifically – using the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o as a case study.

One of several insightful accounts in this collection in which veteran Kenyan publisher Henry Chakava describes what it meant to collaborate with Ngũgĩ from the perspective of his publishers, and his interaction with these two publishers: James Currey (when with Heinemann’s in the UK, and its African Writers Series), and with Henry Chakava (former Managing Director of the Heinemann Nairobi office; now East African Educational Publishers Ltd). Chakava writes that the years of 1976 to 1982 were to turn out to be the most crucial in his relationship with Ngũgĩ. “Working together on Petals of Blood had deepened our friendship and built a strong mutual understanding and trust.” Some of Ngũgĩ’s ideas “began to shape my publishing philosophy and priorities”, prompting him to commission a textbook on oral literature. Another of Ngũgĩ-inspired ideas was the publishing of children’s books in African languages, although unfortunately these books did not succeed “partly because the Kenya curriculum did not recognize African languages, and hardly any books at that level could be sold as trade books. … this was an idea ahead of its time.” Chakava also writes about the risks of publishing Ngũgĩ’s plays in Gĩkũyũ in the early 1980s – including threats to his own life – his “bosses in London discreetly suggesting they wouldn’t mind if I refused to publish the books.” Chakava pays tribute to Ngũgĩ as a prolific and versatile writer, comfortable in any genre, “a man who writes in simple accessible language for the ordinary reader. … He is a person committed to his cause, and has worked tirelessly, consistently, and fearlessly to highlight the plight of the downtrodden in all his writings, especially peasants, workers, women, and the poor in general.”


Henry Chakava, the Kenyan publisher of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, describes the “pleasurable and enriching experience” of working with, and publishing the writing of one of Africa’s most distinguished writers—an experience which was “very rewarding both intellectually and commercially.” He recounts, for example, the discussions and debates they had concerning Ngugi’s strong commitment to writing and publishing in Gikuyu rather than in English, and the challenges of promoting and distributing Ngugi’s books internationally. Also tells the story of the difficult years of Ngugi’s detention by the Kenyan government, and the period immediately following his release, when the author and Ngugi spent much time together. Henry Chakava, who took personal risks in publishing Ngugi—and whose company (Heinemann Educational Books East Africa Ltd., later Heinemann Kenya, now East African Educational Publishers) suffered because of its association with Ngugi’s books—describes Ngugi as “one of the few writers who believe that publishers are honest and decent people.”


Looks back at the achievements of the now defunct Heinemann African Writers Series (AWS), widely considered to be a canonical and influential series of African literature, which developed into the single most important avenue for literary creativity on the continent. The author is a former Series Submissions Editor at Heinemann. She sets out some of the background to the establishment of the series by the late Alan Hill and its growth over the years, and the different genres of writing that were published in the series. It also examines some of the wider issues of cultural and literary production, and some of the criticism the series has been subjected to. The author states that “work produced in an African cultural context and published in European publishing houses means that decisions about the control and the most acceptable forms of representation of Africans is fraught with tension.”


James Currey was the editor in charge of the African Writers Series (AWS) at Heinemann Educational Books from 1967 to 1984. Together with his colleagues Henry Chakava in Kenya, Aig Higo in Nigeria, and Keith Sambrook in London they published the first 270 titles in the series. This fascinating and highly entertaining book tells the story of how they did it, and
how publishing relationships were developed and nurtured with a very large number of African writers, including some of the continent’s now foremost writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Nuruddin Farah, Alex la Guma, Bessie Head, Dennis Brutus, Dambudzo Marechera, and many more.

The focus is on the first 25 years of the series, from 1962 to 1988. James Currey was able to draw on the African Writers Series files, which Heinemann has deposited with the University of Reading library in their renowned publishing archives, and which is linked with its Centre for the History of Authorship, Writing and Publishing. The book was co-published with no less than five African publishing houses in East, West, and Southern Africa, which must be something of a record.

Rich in anecdotal material on many of Africa’s best-known writers, the book offers a narrative of how the now famous series came together. It “provides evidence of the ways in which estimation by a publisher of the work of writers grows and, sadly on occasion, diminishes”, and gives examples of “how the views of publishers and their advisers emerge as they consider a new manuscript, and then coalesce and change as they assess further work by the same author”. The book is interspersed with archival photographs and portraits of African writers by George Hallett, whose photographs were used on many of the books’ covers.

Much of the content consists of extracts from correspondence between James Currey and the numerous writers who were published in the series, as well as correspondence with literary agents, copy editors, and correspondence with Currey’s colleagues at the [then] Heinemann offices in Kenya and Nigeria, together with extracts from readers’ reports. The book opens with a chapter entitled ‘Publishing and selling the African Writers Series’ and a timeline of the main dates of the series, from its founding by the late Alan Hill and Van Milne in 1962 through to 2003, when Heinemann management announced that no new titles would be added and the Heinemann International Division was disbanded, although some of the most popular titles are still kept in print. (The complete series is now also available in digital format published by Chadwyck-Healey, the specialist humanities imprint of Pro-Quest CSA.)

Subsequent chapters vividly capture the drama and energy of the whole enterprise: the publishing risks involved, dealing with writers’ egos and temperaments, their financial needs, their perceptions about publication rights issues, their sometimes unrealistic expectations of sales and royalty earnings; and they tell of encounters with some larger than life characters such as Taban lo Liyong, who had such high expectations of the profits that could be earned from his writings that he planned to build a palace from the proceeds, called ‘Royalty House’! Or they recount the sometimes strained relationship with a number of authors, such as Dambudzo Marechera, the Zimbabwean writer and enfant terrible of African literature who died in 1987 and who has now attained something close to cult status, with several websites and blogs devoted to him. The chapter ‘Publishing Dambudzo Marechera’ includes the funny and rather grotesque correspondence between Marechera and Currey (acting as his reluctant guardian at the time, while Marechera stayed in the UK in the late Seventies), written from such diverse settings as a Cardiff prison cell or from a tent set up in Port Meadow in Oxford along the banks of the Thames. The chapter describes how Currey was trying to cope with
Marechera’s tantrums, his nomadic lifestyle, his knack for creating havoc at various literary events, and his eccentric behaviour: for example by turning up at the Heinemann offices in Mayfair unannounced dressed up in a variety of disguises, trying to borrow small sums of money or attempting to squeeze yet more royalty advances out of his publisher.

Another particularly fascinating chapter is ‘Publishing Bessie Head’, particularly as it relates to the issue of trust between a publisher and their authors, and authors and their agents. Bessie Head had a history of quarrels with a whole sequence of publishers and agents, but the extracts from Currey’s correspondence shows with how much sensitivity and tact dealings with her were handled, demonstrating an enormous amount of goodwill on the part of the publisher, but also applying firmness when firmness was called for.

The book includes a complete list of all titles published in the AWS from 1962 to 2003 by year of publication.


James Currey recounts the development of Heinemann’s African Writers Series (AWS), between Heinemann Educational Books in London and the (then) HEB branches in Nairobi and Ibadan, and the input and fruitful collaboration with its regional editors, Henry Chakava in Nairobi and Aig Higo in Ibadan. In Kenya this not only included publication of African literature, but also included children’s titles, books in Kenyan languages, and politically sensitive material. Currey says “My publishing relationship with Henry Chakava has been of central importance to me.” Chakava later became the founder and chairman East African Educational Publishers (EAEP).


During the period of decolonisation in Africa, the CIA covertly subsidised a number of African authors, editors and publishers as part of its anti-communist propaganda strategy. This meticulously documented study seeks “to unravel the hidden networks and associations underpinning African literary publishing in the 1960s.” It evaluates the success of the CIA in secretly infiltrating and influencing African literary magazines and publishing firms, and examines the extent to which new circuits of cultural and literary power emerged. It contains four chapters:
1: African Literary Publishing during Decolonisation
2: Wole Soyinka, the Transcription Centre, and the CIA
3: Nat Nakasa, The Classic and the Cultural Cold War
4: ‘The Displaced Outsider’: The Publishing Networks of Bessie Head

This insightful article examines Bessie Head’s (1937-1986) often turbulent relationships with her publishers and literary agents in London and New York, focusing on the publication of *A Question of Power* published in 1974. It traces her business negotiations carried out from Serowe, in Botswana, and the difficulties she faced in getting the manuscript accepted before it was eventually taken on by Heinemann Educational Books, Davis-Poynter, as well as Pantheon Books in the US. Based on new archival records, the article analyses the impact of the publishers’ interventions in the text and paratexts of the novel, and it assesses her contracts with these publishers and her difficulties in obtaining royalties or other remuneration. While her publishers and biographer have attributed her battles with the literary establishment to her volatile nature or to mental illness, the article draws attention instead to the difficulties that Head faced in forging a literary career. Additionally, it aims to assess the “largely untested hypothesis, that the literary establishment has relegated African women writers in general, and Head specifically, to a second-rate position.”

In her conclusion the author says that *A Question of Power* went on to become one of Bessie Head’s most acclaimed novels. It was translated into French and Spanish and went into several new paperback editions, including in the Penguin Modern Classics series in 1991, as well as a Longman edition for the US market, and in the newly established Penguin African Writers series in October 2011. The book continues to sell well in the Heinemann African Writers Series, now owned by Pearson. “For Head, however, the process of publication was one of frustration and disappointment that persisted until her death.” That she “was ultimately consigned to a subordinate position is demonstrated by the rejection of the novel by the most prestigious publishers in London and New York, which left her in a weaker negotiating position with lower-status imprints. It was also evident in the way that her life story obscured the work itself, both in terms of the marketing of the book and its critical reception. Yet her diminished power and influence were most apparent in her persistent difficulties in securing royalty payments from the novel. The conflicts that took place between Bessie Head and her publishers – previously dismissed as symptomatic of her ‘volatile nature’ and her mental illness – provide an insight into the hidden power structures and endemic inequalities in the Anglo-American ‘writing world’.”


Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali (b. 1940) is a South African poet who has written in both his mother tongue of isiZulu as well as in English, and is best known for the poetry collections *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* and *Fireflames*. The first anthology, published in 1971 and containing a foreword by Nadine Gordimer, enjoyed remarkable success, albeit also subject of several controversies, notably by critics overseas. Published by Johannesburg-based Renoster Books, an imprint created and led by Lionel Abrahams, over 16,000 copies were sold in the first year, as the book ran through six impressions. A US edition (Third Press, New York) appeared in

Based mainly on oral histories and new archival research, this is a captivating investigation how Mtshali’s various publishers shaped his literary identity and positioned him in the international literary marketplace. The study also reveals disputes between OUP and Joseph Okpaku’s Third Press in New York (also maintaining offices in Lagos) about the question of territorial rights, disagreements over the editing of the poetry, and conflict over the book’s design and format, as well as production standards. The Third Press went ahead with the production of *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* in its own preferred format and design, although Mtshali has claimed (in a 2014 personal interview cited in the article) that he never signed a contract with Third Press nor received any monies or royalties from them. The OUP edition was published in 1972 in its Three Crown Series, which was situated within OUP’s African educational programme. Davis says “although Mtshali’s book was at the centre of various conflicts between the publishers, the author was far removed from these matters, and was entirely unaware of the games relating to neo-colonial trade agreements, postcolonial politics and cold-war publishing in Africa that were evidently played out by his publishers.” Mtshali claims to have received little income from his OUP royalties, and his international publishing history, Davis says, throws into question the assumption that a highly prestigious or highly ‘consecrated’ international publisher automatically accords acclaim to the postcolonial writer. Mtshali was caught up in “OUP’s fraught and contradictory publishing policies in Africa. The decision to publish his poetry in the mass-market Three Crowns series, with its low production standards, low unit prices, and its main market to African schools, meant that Mtshali accumulated little in the way of either symbolic capital or economic capital from this publication.”

The most recent edition of *Sounds* published by Jacana Media in 2012 was intended to relaunch Mtshali’s work for a new generation of South Africans, and at the same time was targeting the educational markets. However, Jacana’s “valiant attempt” to relaunch Mtshali as a classic has reportedly had limited success to date, despite its availability in an affordable paperback as well as in a Kindle edition. Sales have been disappointing and the publishers have thus far failed to get the book adopted by government educational establishments. This, Davis concludes, “was ultimately a conservative and nostalgic publishing venture, which relied on the same publicity devices as his original publication forty years earlier, and appears predominantly to have reached the same audience.” Each of Mtshali’s publishers, in various geographical and historical contexts, “played different and sometimes conflicting games, each operating by different rules and for different ‘stakes’, relating to race and culture in South Africa during apartheid; neo-colonialism in British publishing; cold war cultural politics in
America; and most recently, to cultural and linguistic tensions in post-apartheid South Africa.”

Note: An interview with Mtshali, recorded in 2014, can be found at http://htmlgiant.com/author-spotlight/sounds-of-a-cowhide-drum-an-interview-with-mbuyiseni-oswald-mtshali/

https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2011.616349 ¶ [05/06/21]

Examines the impact of Wole Soyinka’s “adoption” of Oxford University Press (OUP) as his first international publisher. Formerly one of the main producers of school books for “native education” in Africa, OUP in the immediate post-independence period continued to operate under colonial modes of publishing. This penetrative study considers how OUP dealt with the political critique of Soyinka’s early plays, several of which were regarded in performance as radical and subversive in their critical engagement with Nigerian politics and history. Using previously unexamined archival sources, “it concentrates on the negotiations surrounding each stage of the publishing process. It assesses how Soyinka’s texts were filtered through OUP’s publishing apparatus and how the paratextual elements created by the publisher – within the book and beyond – influenced the reception of his works. The article concludes that the publisher’s interventions had a profound impact on the construction of the literary identity of Soyinka, and on the creation of his persona as ‘Africa’s own William Shakespeare’”.

http://brittlepaper.com/2016/02/interview-laura/ (Posted 08 February 2016) [05/06/21]

An interview with Laura Murphy, who is the series editor of Ohio University Press’s ‘Modern African Writers Series’ https://www.ohioswallow.com/series/Modern+African+Writing, consisting of novels, memoirs, and other literary works that aim to showcase the most talented writers of the African continent. The series also features works of significant historical and literary value translated into English for the first time. In this interview Murphy offers some interesting observations on how global trends intersect with African writing, and also talks about their collaboration with African publishing houses to get their books to a global audience. Asked whether there are parallels with Heinemann’s famous African Writers Series (AWS) and Ohio’s new series, Murphy says “we are certainly similar to AWS in our goal of bringing new voices to print. Our approach is a bit updated, and we hope to publish a new generation of writers who may depart from their fathers’ conventions (as good children should) to chart out new territory.”

Ohio University Press is partnering with African publishers Kwani? http://kwani.org/ and Farafina/Kachifo http://kachifo.com/home/ to simultaneously publish books that will be available in the US and in West and East Africa, sharing submissions and agreeing on titles, and market the books together. “We are committed to publishing books that matter, that breathe air into conversations, that represent fresh and critical perspectives. We do that best when we’re collaborating with folks who are in the mix – writing, reading, publishing in Africa.” While thrilled to be able to get authors access to audiences both in the US and in
Africa, “what we don’t want is to compete with these exciting presses for authors, or for authors to have to choose whether they get exposure on the continent or in the US. That should be an unnecessary choice.”


A contribution to the debate on a conducive environment for authorship by the distinguished Nigerian writer Cyprian Ekwensi (1921-2007), who states that “Nigeria has a world bank of ideas and remedies until it comes to implementation” and that an awareness of professional authorship doesn’t exist, much less an enabling atmosphere. He is also critical of cavalier attitudes to copyright and the rights of authors in Nigeria, both by individuals and by the government; and examines author-publisher relations and urges publishers to become more export-oriented. Concludes that “a conducive atmosphere is a product of several factors working together or at times independently” and that “above all else, political stability remains the most conducive atmosphere of all.”

http://newafricanmagazine.com/africa-writes-next-generation-state-play/ [08/06/21]

A round-up of the current [2016] state of play in African literature publishing, and the emergence of a new generation of digital publishers and writers across the continent. Although there have been some exiting developments, “the modern conundrum for African writers remains because the primary consumer market for writers remains the West, or more broadly speaking, it is international, rather than on the continent.” However, the picture may change soon, the author says, and which might well make it more profitable to be a successful writer on the continent than in the West: “the size of markets like Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya dwarves the publishing markets in the UK and elsewhere, if the challenges of distribution can be met.” The author also suggests that “publishers in Africa are increasingly waking up to the possibility of African literature in indigenous African languages being a huge market opportunity for them.” Moreover, and importantly, African writers are increasingly putting their support behind African publishers by publishing first on the continent. There is a genuine revolution happening in African publishing, Fatunla says, “it is driven by increased digital access across the continent, both in the form of blogs, and publishers, who are making it easier for new African voices to emerge that have no need to be linked to the market demands of the West.”

However, if African writers want to replace the West with Africa as their primary audience, there is still a lot of work to be done. Meantime, what everyone is trying to figure out is “whether Africa can resolutely become its own source of validation and the main market for its own literature. The obstacles still remain formidable, but increasingly African writers and publishers have the tools and are ready to do the work, and the economics and demographics of the continent are on side.”

A wide-ranging interview with James Currey of James Currey Publishers and the co-founder, together with Chinua Achebe, of Heinemann’s renowned African Writers Series (AWS), published here as Episode 13 of the Orders Beyond Borders blog hosted by the WZP/Berlin Social Science Centre https://www.wzb.eu/en. Currey talks about his background and his publishing career, the creation of the AWS series and its development over the years, encounters with authors, the challenges of publishing under the James Currey imprint in the years ahead, and more.


This book is about the problems and obstacles that African writers encounter in their attempt to get published [as at 2001]. It is an interesting, informed, and well-documented study that combines writers’ own testimony (based on responses to questionnaires) and factual investigation in order to explore the problem of the “ordeal” of the African writer. The author deals with some of the issues which confront African writers today, including issues of readership and which language to employ, the question of literacy and audience, and the inadequate number of publishing houses on the continent—as well as other obstacles such as censorship, imprisonment, exile, and worse. Several of the chapters shed new light on the publishing history, and author-publisher relations, of some African writers, both with publishers in the countries in the North as well as with African publishers, and the book includes a chapter on “African Writers and the Quest for Publication”, examining the careers of a number of African writers. An overview of “African Publishers, African Publishing” is provided in chapter four. It includes a discussion of the sometimes not very happy relations between African writers and African publishers, and also looks at the obstacles African publishing houses face, and how they treat their authors. The book concludes with a set of recommendations setting out what Charles Larson believes can be done to improve the plight of the African writer, and particularly the next generation of African writers. He also proposes the establishment of a pan-African publishing house, funded by people and institutions both from Africa and the West, with an unpaid advisory board predominantly from the African continent: “crucial to the entire proposal is the belief that Africans should be in control of the publication of their own writers and that the degree of dependence on the West (both financial and editorial) be determined by Africans themselves.”


Miriam Tlali, the South African novelist, is perhaps best known as the first black woman to publish a novel in English inside South Africa, while Ravan Press was a liberal oppositional publishing house in the 1970s and 1980s. Its selection of authors was usually based on political or ideological grounds as well as the quality of their writing and, as a result, Ravan was the target of state harassment and subjected to censorship. Tlali’s first novel, Muriel at Metropolitan, completed in 1968, was turned down by several publishers but was eventually published by Ravan Press in 1979, albeit only after extensive editing and cuts by Ravan, in
order to pull it into publishable shape. Tlali’s account of her relationship with Ravan has often been described in very negative terms. However, her accounts, the author says, were inconsistent and changed over time, and are not supported by other evidence. Based on archival sources and interviews, this insightful article examines the relationship between Tlali and Ravan Press, “raising questions of the politics and power dynamics of literary publishing in the apartheid period”; and it also raises questions about the methods used to write literary history.

In her conclusion, and commenting about the changing accounts of the relationship between Tlali and Ravan Press, Le Roux asserts “while Tlali emphasises her powerlessness and lack of influence, and the lack of room for negotiation or compromise in the editing process, the evidence shows that she intervened in decisions at the proofreading stage and around the cover. While Ravan may have been paternalistic, their efforts to publish and distribute her work were sincere—and effective. At the same time, the editing process was clearly unpleasant for Tlali, and affected her increasingly over time. Existing accounts of the publishing history of *Muriel* depict Ravan as being at best cautious, and at worst exploitative and engaged in censoring their own authors. This does not fit with other accounts of Ravan and deserves further explication. The narrative of a greedy white publisher and a young black author with no agency is compelling but ultimately unhelpful, as is the continuing insistence that white editors cannot edit black authors without compromising their voices.”


A quite fascinating account of Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola’s quest for a publisher and his subsequent rise to literary fame, first for his story “The Wild Hunter in the Bush of Ghost”, and thereafter for The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in Deads Town. This was originally submitted to Lutterworth Press of the United Society for Christian Literature, who felt they were unable to publish it themselves but passed on the manuscript to Thomas Nelson & Sons (who rejected it outright), and eventually to Richard de la Mare of Faber and Faber. Faber published it in 1952, and a US edition was published by Grove Press in 1953. Drawing on archives held by Faber and Faber, the article reproduces extracts from the extensive correspondence between Tutuola and his publisher, relating both to the publication of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* as well as other titles that followed and were published by Faber. There is also correspondence between Faber and Faber and their external readers who were asked to assess the manuscripts. It is evident from all this correspondence that Faber – contrary to some unsubstantiated allegations which appeared in the Nigerian press in 1978 which claimed that Tutuola was cheated by his publishers – always acted with justness and generosity in all their dealings with Tutuola.

Explores how Caribbean and prominent West African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Amos Tutuola came to be published (and their writing to some extent shaped) in London in leading series published by Faber and Faber, OUP’s Three Crowns imprint, and Heinemann’s African Writers Series. The author takes account of recent debates in the discipline of book history, especially issues that deal with social, cultural, and economic questions of authorship, publishing histories, canon formation, and the production, distribution and reception of texts in the literary market place. Based on an examination of readers reports in publishers’ archives, correspondence with authors, sales figures, and other archival material shedding light on editorial selection processes and decisions, the book aims to provide an in-depth exploration of post-war publishing contexts and the dissemination of texts from London. Low argues that these now well-established writers helped “imagine” their respective national communities, yet their intellectual labour became part of an elite transnational literary circuit and, correspondingly, they “were transformed into textual commodities by the economic, social, cultural, and institutional transactions that were part of an expanding print capitalism.”

Explores the interesting correspondence between Amos Tutuola and his publisher in the UK (Faber and Faber), in order to assess the value Faber placed on the manuscript, and to explore the part they played in the shaping and presentation of Tutuola’s book. In particular, the paper seeks to investigate the interface between the manuscript’s alleged importance as an anthropological artifice and/or as a literary product. The author examines aspects of Faber’s decisions in terms of manuscript editing and their attempts to preserve Tutuola’s original style and prose, the book’s cover design, how they handled publicity for the book, and its critical reception. Dylan Thomas, writing in The Observer, gave it a highly laudatory review, calling it a “brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story”. English and American critics alike hailed it as a remarkable success. The article also includes some discussion of the publishing situation of Anglophone African writing in the late 1950’s and early 1960s, when publishing outlets for African writers were largely confined to a small number of independent British publishers, who had begun to show an interest in African writing, aiming to bring it to a wider metropolitan public.

A detailed and informative description of the history and success of the African Writers Series published by Heinemann and begun by Alan Hill. The series (now discontinued) began with four titles in 1962 and eventually published over two hundred titles. Examines the kind of books published and the evolution of African writing, which can clearly be seen through these books. Adewale Maja-Pearce was for a time series editor of the AWS in the early 1990s.

Another version “Why I Chose an African Publisher Over a Western One” also in
https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/apr/20/why-i-chose-an-african-
publisher-over-a-western-one

Sarah Maniyika sets out the reasons behind her decision to publish her second book with an
African publisher rather than one from the West. She published her first novel In Dependence
with Legend Press in London in 2008. Like many debut authors, she granted world rights to
her publisher, who subsequently sold African rights to a Nigerian publisher (and Weaver
Press in Zimbabwe also published an edition in 2015.) “I hadn’t realized that African
publishers are almost always at the very end of rights negotiations. They must buy, rather
than sell, the rights to books, even those that are marketed to the rest of the world as ‘African’
stories. I have long bemoaned the fact that Africa has a history of not owning the rights of
production or distribution, but I never fully realized the extent to which this was also the case
in publishing.” In publishing her latest work with an African imprint, she says “I am betting
on my Nigerian publisher because they’ve proven themselves over time to be savvy and
diligent custodians of my work whose proficiency and attention to detail put many of their
British and U.S. counterparts to shame. This is an important point to make in a world where
many people assume that things are always better done in the West than in Africa.” By a
happy coincidence she completed her second book, Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun,
in the year that her Nigerian publisher, Cassava Republic Press
http://www.cassavarepublic.biz/ decided to open a UK branch. Thus her work will now be
published in Nigeria first and shortly thereafter in Britain.

Matsengarwodi, Derick “What this Generation Wants”: African Authors Publishing
Direct to the Web’ https://africanarguments.org/2021/04/what-this-generation-wants-
african-authors-publishing-direct-to-the-web/ (Posted 01 April 2021) [07/10/21]
Southern African writers are publishing books through Facebook and Whatsapp “that speak
directly to readers’ lives. But is this the future, or just a fad? This new phenomenon began
around five years as more and more writers in the region – particularly in Botswana, Namibia,
South Africa and Zimbabwe – began trying to by-pass traditional publishers. Across countries
in Southern Africa, a trend has emerged of readers turning to books by local authors, that are
then uploaded directly to Facebook pages, Whatsapp groups or shared online as pdfs. “The
genres span everything from fantasy to crime and self-help. They are often in local languages
and some even use emoji to depict action. Many readers find them not only more affordable
and accessible, but more relatable.” Others, however, are more sceptical about the impact of
such online publishing and see it more as a passing phase. Quoting Bridget Impey, publishing
director at South African publisher Jacana Media, who says: “As publishers, we don’t see
online publishers affecting us, but the competition is from self-publishing authors. It is hard
to measure the impact of online authors.” Impey also pointed out that publishing online
brings with it its own financial risks such as piracy, which can make it less lucrative for
writers.

Mulgrew, Nick An Open Letter About our Submissions Period.
http://uhlangapress.co.za/blog/2017/5/2/an-open-letter-about-our-open-submissions-period
(Posted 10 May 2017) [31/10/17]
uHlanga http://uhlangapress.co.za/ is a small poetry press based in Cape Town committed to
publishing new, experimental and classic works of Southern African poetry. Early in 2017 it
hosted its first-ever open submissions period for original manuscripts of poetry in South African languages. It received far more submissions than expected, with 119 poets sending in eligible work. In this informative posting, Nick Mulgrew shares some insights into what they learnt from the submissions period, offering some advice to new writers, as well as for many of the writers who weren’t successful with their submissions. While the high volume of submissions seemed encouraging for the health of poetry writing in South Africa, analysing the submissions presented a more complicated picture. The vast majority of submissions were made in English, or predominantly in English. Although submissions were open in certain African languages, very few submissions in Zulu and Xhosa (and none in Sotho) were sent in. A small amount of submissions in Afrikaans, or predominantly in Afrikaans, were also received.


The distinguished Nigerian playwright, scholar, and actor Femi Osofisan has published extensively in Nigeria, with no fewer than 13 Nigerian publishers. Here he explains, with good humour, “this wayward and erratic shift” of allegiances, and why it was that virtually every year he had to turn to a different publisher for his work, besieged as he was by aspiring publishers looking for new work “and promising the whole heaven in remuneration.” Promises, as time passed, that would collapse—and “I would turn away, ready to be plucked by the next sweet-tongued adventurer.” It was not a happy experience for the most part, royalties were laughably meagre and infrequent—“with the annual money from all the books together I could not replace one of the tyres for my car!”—production standards very poor, there was virtually no marketing or promotion, and, worst, the books could not be found on the shelves of either bookshops or other retail outlets. An attempt at distributing the books himself was something less than successful in business terms—as most of the time he ended up giving out the books for free! However, despite these frustrating times, Osofisan feels compelled to continue to publish at home (although now also publishing elsewhere). And there is a glimmer of hope, the experience thus far with publisher no. 13 (Mosuro Publishers, Ibadan) looks promising, and who, Osofisan reports, has already paid him his royalty entitlements for the entire print run, before even the first copy was sold (to which a publisher might well retort that his does not amount to good publishing practice!)


The award-winning Nigerian poet recounts his experiences with placing poetry with various publishers, a genre that “provokes goose pimples in publishing circles”, and for which the standard initial reaction from publishers is “poetry doesn’t sell”. Osundare published his poetry with no less than eight publishers, both UK-based and Nigerian publishers. While some Nigerian publishers and editors were very supportive, when it came to royalty accounting the experience was not a happy one. Four of them never submitted statements or paid any royalties, and “not one of all my Nigerian publishers has declared how many copies of my books they have been selling outside Nigeria, and how much has accrued from sales.”
Oxford Africa Initiative An Interview with James Currey.
http://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/news/interview-with-james-currey/ (Posted 22 March 2017) [08/06/21]
James Currey, co-founder of James Currey Publishers, has been called ‘The Godfather of African Literature’. His publishing house, founded in 1984, has produced a very large number of academic books about Africa and African studies. Prior to setting up his own publishing firm he, together with Chinua Achebe, was the editor in charge of the African Writers Series (AWS) at Heinemann Educational Books from 1967 to 1984. In this interview he speaks not only about his publishing work, but also his life before, around and outside publishing. For a fuller account of Currey’s association with the AWS series, read his fascinating and highly entertaining account Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series & the Launch of African Literature, in which he tells the story of how they did it, and how publishing relationships were developed and nurtured with a very large number of African authors, including some of the continent’s now foremost writers.
Note: for a review of Africa Writes Back see https://www.academia.edu/2643961/James_Currey_Africa_Writes_Back_The_African_Writers_Series_and_the_Launch_of_African_Literature

Oxford Africa Initiative Interview with Nana Ayebia Clarke MBE.
http://www.afox.ox.ac.uk/news/interview-with-nana-ayebia-clarke-mbe/ (Video 1:25mins, posted 01 August 2017) [08/06/21]
In this video recording Ghanaian born publisher Nana Ayebia Clarke speaks about her work and career in publishing, first as the acquisitions editor of Heinemann’s African & Caribbean Writers series for 12 years (through to 2003, when the Heinemann management announced that no new titles would be added to the series and the Heinemann International Division was disbanded), thereafter with her own publishing firm Ayebia Clarke Publishers, co-founded with her husband David, and which has published and promoted many prominent African writers. She also speaks about the development of her list at Ayebia Clarke, her authors, and offers her thoughts on the publishing industry in Africa today.

A moving account of the publishing history of Miriam Tlali’s (largely autobiographical) first novel, originally entitled Between Two Worlds, which examines the life of a black woman working in a white-owned business in Johannesburg. Although completed in 1969 – and after being turned down by several major South African publishers – it was only finally published by Ravan Press in 1975. It appeared with the title Muriel at Metropolitan and it had to be published in expurgated form in order to circumvent the draconian censorship laws at the time. Miriam Tlali was the first black woman writer to publish a novel in English inside [then apartheid] South Africa. A second novel, Amandla, followed in 1980 and enjoyed considerable success before being banned by the government.

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/the-african-writers-handbook

The late Yvonne Vera (1964-2005), the renowned Zimbabwean novelist, narrates her career as a writer, and the happy and productive relationship with her [then] editor and publisher at Baobab Books, Irene Staunton—an ideal writer-publisher bonding, rarely experienced by African writers.

Also at (freely accessible)
https://www.academia.edu/1462155/African_Publishers_Mostly_Liars_and_Cheats
[22/10/21]
https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/the-african-writers-handbook


Some years ago (in 1997) the Nigerian writer Onwuchweka Jemie, writing in the Guardian (Nigeria) newspaper, lumped all African publishers together as “mostly liars and cheats”, and since that time there have been a variety of other unflattering comments by African writers critical and distrustful about their publishers, accusing them of being exploitative, and not being open enough in their relations with authors. In this deliberatively provocative article Zell argues that, although authors' pronouncements of this nature must always be taken with a good dose of scepticism, some African publishers do have a case to answer; and that those publishers should learn that protecting authors’ interests, and openness with authors, will pay dividends in the long term and will lead to much improved relationships and author loyalty.

Book assistance and donation programmes

Abrams, Dennis Books for Africa Reports its Largest Year in Shipped Copies.
(Posted 02 August 2017) [26/07/21]
Books for Africa https://www.booksforafrica.org/, the book charity based in St. Paul, Minnesota, has announced that in a record-breaking year, more than 3.1 million educational, library, and law books have been shipped to 18 African countries, a 26-percent increase over last year. Top recipients were Ethiopia: 462,000 books, Nigeria: 319,000, Kenya: 308,000 books, Ghana: 242,000. Executive director Patrick Plonski is also quoted as saying: “Despite the 39
million books [delivered so far], we still have a lot of work to do to end the book famine on
the continent.” In a comment posted about this story [which for some reason has now been
removed by Publishing Perspectives], Holger Ehling (formerly with the Frankfurt Book Fair)
wrote: “This is very bad news indeed. Every single book shipped into Africa undermines
efforts to create a sustainable African publishing industry. Every single book shipped into
Africa and donated to libraries is a book not produced by African publishers and printers, not
written by African authors, not sold and distributed by African booksellers. This is not a way
to end the book famine in Africa. It is a surefire way to make it last.” Plonski responds by
saying “I agree with your [Ehling’s] assessment that ultimately the solution to the shortage of
books in Africa is enhanced published [sic] and book development in Africa. Regrettfully, that
may not happen until enhanced economic development allows for more robust public sector
financing allowing for more local book purchases by ministries of education.”

Patrick Plonski is talking about a situation he calls ‘ultimately’, but says nothing about the
presence. What he and Books for Africa do not apparently wish to address are the negative
consequences today, of overseas book aid organizations shipping tens of millions of free books
annually to African libraries and schools. These negative consequences – as pointed out by
various independent commentators in recent articles (see ➔ some of the articles in this
section) – relate to the weakening of the viability and prosperity of African publishers through
limiting their reach into their own markets for which they are publishing. Supplies of donated
books from overseas can significantly suppress demand for locally published books because
many African governments rely on overseas book charities to fill book shelves in schools and
libraries, and which has created a huge culture of dependence on overseas book donation
programmes. Meantime many high quality, culturally relevant books published locally may
remain stacked in African publishers’ warehouses while huge quantities of externally donated
books are distributed to libraries because they are free.

Anderson, Porter Book Aid International’s Year: 867,567 Books to 19 Countries. (Posted 13
January 2021)
19-countries-in-2020-covid19/
A report about Book Aid International’s https://bookaid.org/ activities in 2020, during which
one of the most challenging effects of the pandemic’s outbreaks was a shutdown of Book Aid’s
warehousing facility for two months. Despite that and other constraints, Book Aid reports that
“it delivered 867,567 new books to schools, libraries, universities, hospitals, and refugee
camps in 19 countries, all donated by book publishers in the United Kingdom.” Donations in
2020 included 431,000 children’s books, as well as 88,000 teen and YA fiction. In addition,
there were 75,000 medical texts.

(Posted 14 August 2020)
https://publishingperspectives.com/2020/08/uk-book-aid-international-more-than-1-million-
books-in-2019-covid19/
A report about Book Aid International’s https://bookaid.org/ programme activities in 2020,
which focused on the on the COVID-19 pandemic’s effects on school children in some of its
most challenged markets. “In many cases, the most important effort is to get books into homes
at times when lockdown conditions prevent normal reading programs in schools” the report says. Book Aid International estimates that its efforts last year reached in some way as many as 19.5 million people, sending 1.2 million books to readers in 26 countries. “Publishers donate books for use particularly in cash-strapped educational settings, and it becomes Book Aid’s urgent mission, then, to get those books into some of the farthest flung areas of need in a timely and effective way.”

Book Aid International Inspiring Readers. Bringing a World of Reading into the Classroom.
‘Inspiring Readers’ launched by Book Aid International (BAI) https://www.booksforafrica.org/ in 2016 seeks to benefit 250,000 African primary school children. By providing Book Box Libraries to primary schools, and training for teachers in bringing the books to life in the classroom, it hopes to improve the reading opportunities of a quarter of a million children in Africa. ‘Inspiring Readers’ is currently underway in Kenya, Cameroon and Malawi, and BAI hopes to expand to other African countries soon. Over the next four years 310 primary schools will each receive a Book Box Library packed full of brand new, carefully selected books. BAI reports that each school will receive 1,250 new books, including locally published titles, and teachers from each school will have the opportunity to attend training with their local library to help them make the most of the books it sends, and bring them to life in the classroom. BAI says “Inspiring Readers not only brings books into schools but encourages children to use their local library. We use public and community libraries with Children’s Corners as hubs for schools in the surrounding area, giving children access to larger book collections, vibrant library spaces and the passion and expertise of their local librarians. The programme will be closely monitored throughout and we will continue to support the schools involved.”

Note: for a range of short articles reporting about Book Aid International activities in Africa see https://bookaid.org/latest/.

Chebon, Philemon Traditional Librarianship and the Changing Roles of Information Professionals: From Issuing to Donating Books.
A PowerPoint presentation contributed to the 16th Association of Parliaments Libraries of the Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA) conference in Nairobi in April 2015. It sets out the challenges facing African libraries, funding for libraries and their place in national development plans, and also discusses the issue of book donation programmes. In his recommendations for future book donation activities and practices, the author says, among other recommendations, that donations should be limited to high-quality, recently-published materials, should be coordinated by individuals or groups with first-hand knowledge of the receiving communities, should identify the needs of the beneficiaries in order to match books with end users, and that there should be provision of funds to permit local purchases of books. Additionally there should be legislation to guide the donation of books and “use of standardized formats to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the programmes in order to ensure consistency in reporting.”

An American librarian, while spending some time in Malawi on a Fulbright scholarship award, had opportunities to visit all types of libraries in that country: academic, school, and community based. During her visits, she found that many of the books in collections were donations shipped by book aid organizations, but did not fit the scope of any of the collections and were discards from libraries overseas. “While the gifts signify a lovely spirit of generosity and willingness to help, it takes a considerable amount of resources to ship them, such as the staff time to get them ready for shipping, the physical resources (boxes, labels), and, of course, the shipping itself. Whether they come by land, sea or air, books are heavy and expensive to transport.” As the headmaster in one of the schools she visited aptly put it, “It’s nice they send the stuff, but we don’t want other people’s rubbish.” Flaherty goes on to suggest: “Don’t put anything in a box to send overseas that has been withdrawn because it can’t withstand circulation and don’t put anything in a box to send overseas because it is outdated. When the need for generosity arises, we should consider working directly with individual libraries in a deliberate and measured way to send new or lightly used items by using wish lists, or sending a donation so they can procure for themselves what they deem as appropriate. Rather than using funds and resources to ship old books around the globe to foist upon under-resourced libraries, we should be supporting local and regional authors and publishers through organizations such as the African Books Collective (ABC), a great resource for procuring books by local and regional authors.”


“Book donations from North to South are based on international solidarity mechanisms that are at times built on a gloomy picture of developing countries”, the authors of this study say. “Every year, French structures send the Southern Francophonie a considerable amount of books donated by individuals, and associations of French libraries (following ‘weeding, operations’). These efforts could benefit from taking into account the entire book donation structure, promoting enhanced coherence between reading support policies and cultural industry development support policies. Besides unfair competition to African publishers and booksellers, mass book donations, when not adapted to readers’ needs, can have adverse consequences … The objective of this paper is therefore to shed light on and analyse some current book donation practices in order to propose practical recommendations and tools towards ‘new’ book donation practices; to present to the IFLA’s assembly a first draft of the Book Donation Charter reviewed by book professionals from the South – a text that could serve as a reference in terms of book donations for the next few years.”


Fiona Leonard offers some interesting thoughts here about the potential negative effects of book donation programmes on the local African book industries: “Filling a library in Ghana
with books from overseas may have benefits for readers, but it’s a disaster for the local publishing industry. Imagine the challenges of trying to sell a book in a country with over 50% illiteracy. Take out the people who can’t afford to buy your book, who aren’t interested in your book, or who would rather buy something from overseas, and you’re going to be struggling to be commercially viable. Now add to that mix a deluge of books from overseas – including those donated by well-meaning international organizations – and things are looking grim.” In some countries in Africa a need may well remain to bring in books from the outside, “but we should be looking into communities first to see what’s there, to see what can be nurtured and grown, before we start reaching overseas.”


https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2020.1792872  ¶ [01/06/21]


The publishing industry in Africa is often described in terms of ‘booklessness’, ‘hunger’ or ‘famine’, notably by the major book donation organizations, “who actively perpetuate the discourse of famine, and set themselves up as the solutions to it.” But does this language of scarcity reflect the realities of book production and consumption? In this timely and penetrating analysis, Elizabeth le Roux – Associate Professor of Publishing Studies in the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria, and co-editor of Book History – examines the concept of ‘book famine’ as a central frame of discourse on African books, using a survey of existing documentation. Two ways of responding to book famine – provision and production – are identified, and the shortcomings of book aid (provision) are contrasted with strengthening local publishing industries (production). Le Roux argues effectively that the concept has become a cliché that is no longer relevant; that the famine analogy is perpetuated by a book aid industry that works counter to structural solutions based on local book development, and that African publishing, while variable, is in fact responding to local needs.

http://www.lubuto.org/october-2016 [01/06/21]

Well-intentioned though they might be, large-scale book donation programmes may not always be the most effective solution to meet book needs in Africa. Individually tailored and recipient request-led schemes, specially curated shelf-ready library collections, or other forms of support, such as financial support for shipping costs, or assisting libraries and schools with the purchase of books by local authors and publishers to the greatest extent possible, may well be more appropriate. Some of these smaller projects and initiatives have demonstrated a rather more enlightened approach to the whole area of ‘book giving’ than the big book aid players, who rarely seem to be overly concerned about the state of the African book industries, much less supporting them. One of these smaller organizations is Lubuto Library Partners http://www.lubuto.org/ that works in partnership with other NGOs and community-based organizations to build libraries and library networks in Zambia. Supporting African publishers is part of their mission, and this is what they had to say in their October 2016 newsletter, in which they describe some ways how Lubuto has recently supported local and
regional publishers: “Libraries thrive when publishers thrive. Whether they produce paper books or e-books, a robust publishing industry is necessary for the educational and intellectual life of a society. The progress of African publishers and booksellers has been impeded in recent years by well–meaning external book donation programs from wealthy areas.”

Lubuto also stresses the importance of librarians evaluating donated materials by the same criteria as materials being purchased for library collections, and that a strengthened local publishing industry supports literary expression and consumption. “A good and effective library always pays close attention to developing a balanced and appropriate collection; it can’t be ‘given’ to them from an external source. Beyond the library perspective, the development of local publishing inspires local people to become authors and illustrators and greatly increases access to affordable books among children and youth.”

A sharply critical view of book donation programmes, notably those that are US based. There are still a number of book donation companies who are still using the old model of donating large containers of unsorted books, the author says, making the process a lot cheaper for the organisations involved in such donations. “Although not made obvious on their websites, these organisations are also charging either the local organisations receiving the books or another entity funding the donation for the shipment and handling fees.” It is clear, Lucas argues, “that the old donating structures still widely used today are out-dated and not useful, and highlight how countries in Africa are still greatly misunderstood and misrepresented by powers in the West. These organisations and the discourse around donating books to Africa undermine the rich wealth of literature coming from the continent, as well as the authors and publishers producing it. These contemporary African books are doing work in representing the African experience in robust, authentic and contemporary ways that resist reductionist stereotypes of the continent. It may be time that Africa starts donating their books to the West.”

Discusses the lack of locally published material in African languages in book donation programmes. “Giving books and other reading materials to those who do not otherwise have access to them is seen as a good thing, and it generally is, apart donation practices that have been widely criticized as ‘book dumping’. However, there is also an inherent asymmetry in the kind of reading material generally going from the West to Africa, in that most of it is in Europhone languages, with little or none in the first languages of the children and communities who receive them. And this linguistic imbalance, aside from sometimes being a factor in unusability of materials (when people can’t read the language in which they are written), certainly carries with it unintended messages about the lower value of first languages and local cultures relative to those of the donated materials.”

A paper presented at the African Studies Association’s 53rd annual meeting in San Francisco in November 2010 (and subsequently made accessible online on the Books for Africa website https://www.booksforafrica.org/). The author is the Executive Director of the major US book donation organization Books for Africa, and the purpose of his analysis “was to determine if usage of donated English-language text and library books had a positive effect upon literacy in Africa.” He discusses projects that provide books and educational materials for school and community library use in Africa, and assesses the impacts of such projects on literacy objectives established by the UN Millennium Development Goals. Best practices, cost-effectiveness, literacy benchmarks, and funding mechanisms are also discussed. Case studies from Tanzania and Liberia are analysed, as well as findings from projects in some of the 43 other African countries served by programmes of this type. Finally, the author makes a number of recommendations for the future success and good practice of book donation projects in Africa. Plonski concludes that, provided that proper conditions are established, “donated books provided from Western sources did improve literacy rates and learning in a number of locations studied. Additionally, it was found that a perception of benefit exists in many of the schools and communities served through these book donation programs”; and that the implications of his analysis are “that book donation programs of the type used in this analysis do positively impact economic development in the developing world. In short, books promote literacy, which promotes education, which promotes rural and urban economic development.”

There are, however, some quite contentious views in this paper: For example, in support of his argument in favour of English-language donated books Plonski states: “To systematically use local tribal languages for school instruction in Africa would require the preparation of educational materials in some 800 languages (Gordon, 2005), hence the use of English and other world languages for government, commerce, and education across Africa. The costs of producing books and other educational materials in local languages at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels may be cost-prohibitive, even when theoretically possible (World Bank, 2002). Additionally, strong evidence exists that the people of Africa want Western-language textbooks.” Moreover, the author makes no mention at all, in the case studies or elsewhere, about the activities of African publishers; nor is there any discussion of the potential negative consequences of overseas book donation programmes on the local publishing industries.

Priestley, Carol *Book and Publishing Assistance Programmes. A Review and Inventory.*  
First published in 1993, and with a new introductory essay providing an overview of significant developments since publication of the first edition, this is a survey, now inevitably considerably dated, of the various agencies and assistance programmes that are involved with publishing and book development in Africa and in other parts of the developing world.
Profiling over 50 organizations, it provides extensive information about each organization’s activities, together with full contact information. In addition to the inventory section, a general review of book assistance programmes (reprinted from the first edition) looks at the context of support, the donor response, the factors affecting donor assistance, and priorities for donor support for long-term, sustainable indigenous publishing.

Examines the book needs of Africa, and evaluates the impact of donor-supported publishing and book development programmes in Africa. Argues that “if donor support is to lead to long-term sustainable publishing, it has to assist the selling of books as well as the making of them.”

A survey, now inevitably very dated, of past and current assistance programmes for book and library development in Africa [as at the mid-1990s], describing the objectives and activities of the various schemes. Also provides an update of a number of new initiatives that have been started since 1992.

“This is the story of a group of highly imaginative, eager young students from Cape Coast, Ghana without access to any books that were specifically written for them and how they did something about it”. John Schaidler of The Zongo Story Project http://www.zongostoryproject.com/ precedes his article with this observation: “Children’s literacy and children’s library programs in Anglophone West Africa are fraught with numerous problems. One of the most pervasive and enduring challenges is the persistent lack of access to high quality, culturally appropriate books and other learning materials. Ironically, a popular and widely enacted solution inadvertently helps to perpetuate the very same problem it seeks to end. By constantly framing and addressing the lack of books as a crisis, in-country and international stakeholders and key decision makers conclude that any books are better than no books, unconsciously laying the foundation for a cycle of dependence on foreign book aid. For nearly half a century, UK and US based book donation programs have been a bedrock strategy for raising literacy rates in English speaking African countries. Donor organizations breathlessly proclaim, ‘Send a book, change a life,’ and the public happily obliges, packing up second-hand copies of everything from Diary of a Wimpy Kid to Dan Brown’s The Da Vinci Code and sending them thousands of miles to ‘help feed hungry minds’ in ‘book-starved’ Africa. Setting aside for a moment the utter lack of agency and victimhood
that such language implies, the ubiquity of donated, repurposed or simply discarded books from the US and UK continues to impact or even define virtually every educational program in West Africa despite a growing body of evidence that details negative impacts.”

http://www.igi-global.com/book/donations-to-libraries/103068 [01/06/21]
Provides a broad historical look at book donation programmes, and an overview of donation activity, “intended to be a picture of international cooperation through donations as far as possible seen from the donor side”, and including government agencies, religious organizations, NGOs and charities. In his conclusion Paul Sturges states: “Donations are in principle welcomed by libraries in any part of the world, rich or poor, but some donations are more welcome than others and more welcome by some types of library than others. Unfortunately, in practice the majority of donations are more of a problem than a benefit: they cost money to deal with and can be an embarrassment by expanding the collection rather than improving it.” Sturges also argues that “donations can distort the balance of collections rather than enhancing the information potential of the library and this is unacceptable. Some donor organisations understand this and organise themselves to respond to need rather than impose their own ‘kindness’.” However, “the real onus is on the potential recipients of donations to work out what they truly need and make this very clear in their dealings with potential donors.”

Zacharias, Dani Worldreader on Book Donations in the Digital Age.
Dani Zacharias of the Worldreader organization https://www.worldreader.org/ argues that in improving the efficiency of book donations perhaps the most salient difference between physical and electronic book donations is that of increased efficiency and reduced cost. She points out that e-readers and tablets weigh about as much as a single book, yet represent access to countless books. E-books “require only that the intended user have a device before the rest is simplified”, but concedes that it would be incorrect to suggest that getting devices equipped with reading applications, or promoting reading applications to owners of low-cost mobiles, is simple. However, she contends, “it is much easier, cheaper and simpler than bringing paper libraries large enough to be useful to the same number of people…. The schools and libraries in charge of the devices need only wi-fi to double or triple their current collection of books.”

Zell Hans M., and Raphaël Thierry “Book Donation Programmes for Africa: Time for a Reappraisal? Two Perspectives.”
Also at (freely accessible)
Part I: Book Donation Programmes in English-speaking Africa, by Hans M. Zell
https://www.academia.edu/13165497/Book_Donation_Programmes_for_Africa_Time_for_a_Reappraisal_Part_I [19/05/21]

Pre-print online version (freely accessible) at https://www.academia.edu/13166294/Le_don_de_livre_mais_%C3%A0_quel_prix_et_en_%C3%A9change_de_quoi_Book_donation_programmes_for_Africa_part_2_ (In French, with an abstract in English) [19/05/21]

Summary version of the study, with extracts from its conclusions, also at https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/book-donation-programmes-revisited/ [19/05/21]

This wide-ranging two-part investigation (in English and French) attempts to shed more light on current book donation practices, and provides an overview and profiles of the work of the principal book aid organizations active in sub-Saharan Africa; describing how they differ in their approach and strategies, donation philosophy, selection policies, their methods of shipping and local distribution, the quantities of books they are shipping annually, as well as their processes of monitoring and evaluation. The study seeks to provide a balanced account, presenting a variety of viewpoints about both the benefits and the potential negative consequences of book aid. In particular, it seeks to find out how many African-published books are included in current donation schemes. As part of a review of the recent literature on the topic, the authors examine the ongoing debate between the proponents of book donation schemes, and those who disapprove of the programmes; who maintain that they are not meeting the needs of the recipients and the target countries for the most part, and have an adverse impact on the local publishing industries and the book trade. The study also questions why large-scale book donation programmes should continue to be necessary today, after millions of books have been shipped and donated to African libraries, schools and other recipients every year over the last three decades or more. It examines the status and role of chronically under-resourced African libraries and, in the absence of adequate government support, their continuing dependence on book donation programmes and other external assistance.


Book fairs and book promotional events

Jama, Musse Jama “Transitioning from Oral to a Written Culture: The Impact of Hargeysa International Book Fair.” Africa e Mediterraneo 89 (December 2018), 43-47.

A great deal more than just a book fair, the now well established Hargeysa International Book Fair (HIBF) http://www.hargeysabookfair.com/hibf2019/, first held in 2008, engages in transforming society in Somaliland through sharing of knowledge and democratic values, and seeking to stimulate literary production in a country with only a relatively recent writing tradition. This article focuses on the various stages of transitions Somali society has gone through in relation to arts and culture, and describes the Book Fair organizer’s efforts over the last fifteen years to assist its society transition from an oral to a written culture. It sets out the
background, and the historical contexts and conditions in which the HIBF was started and operated, followed by an analysis of the state of Somali literature and the transformation it is currently witnessing. HIBF “has been a manifestation of the need of institutional enablers rooted in the African context, instead of simulating the West where literature production is in sync with the commercial side of art production.” Knowledge sharing and exchanging visions is part of the ethos of Hargeysa International Book Fair, and such an undertaking, Jama Musse Jama says, “also brings together far-flung societies of different languages and cultures, thus fostering the essential principles of peaceful co-existence and mutual cooperation.”

Phyllis Johnson, with her late husband David Martin, were the co-founders of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 1983 (and also the joint founders to the Zimbabwe Publishing House). In a paper presented at the 2013 fair, Johnson here recounts the origin and development of the fair over the years, which was conceived through a series of encounters, comments, and suggestions “leading to a vision that spread and gained momentum”, and attracted a very substantial number visitors and exhibitors: writers, book professionals from all over Africa and elsewhere, as well the general public, who responded very enthusiastically to the Fair. Each year the Fair was accompanied by a series of workshops. or ‘Indaba’s’, for writers and others. The Zimbabwe International Book Fair had its ups and downs over a period and, Johnson says, “it is a miracle that it has survived.” .Sadly, the fair has been in decline over the last ten years at least, and has been a shadow of its former self, as recorded by Roger Stringer (a past ZIBF Trustee) in this short account and chronology http://www.hararenews.co.zw/2013/10/the-decline-of-the-zimbabwe-international-book-fair/. All of the African book and writing professions, as well as the international book community, hope that it will eventually be restored to its former glory.

Reports in some detail about the 8th Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF) held in August 1993, with a brief review of past fairs, and describing current problems, funding and sponsorship, and choice of venues. Focuses on the role and significance of ZIBF as an African book fair and sets out the considerable achievements to date of the fair.

Charts the growth of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF), and the remarkable success it has achieved over a short period of time. Reflects on its growing importance as a trading venue and as a point of access for exhibitors to wider African markets.

The editors of *Bookmark* offer some reflections on the South African Book Fair, which has had a somewhat chequered history. It was first held annually as the Cape Town Book Fair from 2006 to 2010, hosted by the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) in collaboration with the Frankfurt Book Fair, and held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CITCC). It was conceived as a major international book trade gathering to rival Frankfurt and London, and as a leading venue for rights trading and negotiations. While attendance figures were very high, the prospects of selling rights to international publishers failed to materialize for the most part.

Exactly what could have been, will never be known, the authors say: “When Kindle and the financial crisis hit, the book trade worldwide and locally faced calamitous decline in the face of e-book mania and the disappearance of middle-class spending power. The high costs of exhibiting at the fair, coupled with waning international interest, gradually turned the event into an annual headache for publishers. The original vision now relegated to being a pipe dream, the trade struggled to define the nature of the fair as it veered more and more towards a public event, with less and less reason for exhibitors to participate.” After five years, the PASA–Frankfurt partnership was dissolved, and a hiatus was announced for 2011. In 2012 and 2014, the fair returned to the CITCC as the South African Book Fair, this time with PASA as sole owners. However, faced with a continued decline in numbers, PASA decided to alternate the fair between Cape Town and Johannesburg. Following a somewhat rocky period of uncertainty (and no fair in 2013 and 2016) ownership of the fair was eventually transferred to the South African Book Development Council to host the fair as from 2017. Finally, in September 2019, the SA Book Fair “found its home in the hearts of Johannesburg’s readers and writers. Symbolically positioned at Constitution Hill, it managed to cross the divide between old and new, and offer the public something authentic. Importantly, it also laid the groundwork for resurrecting the vision of its founders: a trade portal into the burgeoning African book market.”

**Book marketing and promotion/African books in the global market place**

Africa in Words Q&A “We are Happiest When we are Representing Publishers Who Want their Books to be Read” in Conversation with Justin Cox, African Books Collective. [21/05/21]

An insightful conversation with Justin Cox CEO of African Books Collective (ABC) https://www.africanbookscollective.com/, the worldwide marketing and distribution organization for books from Africa that is celebrated its 30th year of trading in 2020. Talking
about the current prospects for African published books, and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on African publishers, Cox says “I think the demand for content from Africa will remain strong. In the academic space, I think conversations will need to be held between academia and publishers about access to content, particularly now libraries are being pushed to drop print acquisitions wherever possible. Potentially this could result in an increased reach for ABC and the books it distributes. I am sure the collective will continue to expand into new market places around the world through vendor partners and directly. COVID-19 I think will give rise to a lot of organisations reviewing their spending, particularly around travel and face-to-face meetings. The resources saved while travel is off the agenda can be used for potentially more impactful projects and investments to assist ABC more efficiently carry out its work. I think even after things open up, we will certainly be doing things differently, and probably better.”

African Books Collective – A Timeline
https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/african-books-collective-timeline/ [22/05/21]
The Oxford, UK-based African Books Collective was 30 years old in 2020. It has been an eventful few decades, ABC says, “and so we felt it was time to share a flavour of how the vision of a few passionate publishers, on the continent and beyond, led to the phenomenon that is African Books Collective. … Join us for a trip down memory lane at pivotal moments in our history – looking at the key debates we were engaged in during those times – arriving at where we are today. Click through to in-depth articles and photos from some of the Collective’s members.” The Collective now numbers 150 African publishers from 22 countries.

https://www.readafricanbooks.com/interviews/henry-chakava/ [29/08/21]
A profile of veteran Kenyan publisher Henry Chakava, former Chairman of East African Educational Publishers and a founder member of the Oxford-based African Books Collective (ABC), as well a member of ABC’s Council of Management for many years. In this interview he offers his thoughts and reflections about the early years of ABC, the opportunities if presented for African publishers to showcase their books in all parts of the world; the early challenges it faced, and the changes seen in the African cultural landscape since the birth of ABC. He also talks about the changes in the African knowledge production landscape, and the move to a new digital publishing environment. Chakva says “The terrain is clearly set for a vibrant future, especially in Kenya. Most publishers are embracing new publishing technologies very fast, new players are getting onto the scene, and partnerships with international players are also becoming a reality.” ABC can only get better”, he says: “First, advancements in modern technology have tremendously eased the ABC model of operations … ABC has been able to contain operational costs and hence consistently increase profitability, due to this futuristic mind-set that looks at the laptop as an office in itself, as opposed to having a physical office. This will continue to define its operations.”

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/publishing-in-africa

https://doi.org/10.2959/logo.1997.8.3.159 ¶

A major article from the 1990s that looks at the challenges of book distribution in Africa at that time. Presents an overview of book promotion and marketing strategies available to the African book industry, and examines “the extent to which these marketing possibilities are being exploited by the African publisher today.” Finds that marketing and promotion by many African publishers is frequently feeble; there is lack of advance information about new books, unattractive and ineffective promotion material, and that some African publishers fail to make use of the many opportunities that exist for free publicity and listings of their books in the major bibliographic services. The author is also critical of the sometimes sub-standard production quality of African-published books, sloppy editing and proofreading, poor binding and finishing; or books which lack proper title pages and essential copyright data, have no ISBNs, and which show evidence of “lack of proper quality controls and discipline at all levels of the African book publishing chain.” Also considers the role of book development councils and national publishers associations, and makes a number of recommendations how to tackle the problems of book marketing and distribution in Africa. Concludes that although marketing and distribution comes at the end of the publishing process it will determine “success or failure of any publishing house”.

Cox, Justin African Books Collective: 30 Years of Providing Visibility for African Books in the Global Market Place
https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2020-0004 ¶

Pre-print version (freely accessible) 

Another version (freely accessible) at https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/30-years-of-providing-visibility-for-african-books-in-the-global-market-place/ [21/05/21]

Founded in 1989 the African Books Collective (ABC), is a worldwide marketing and distribution organization for books from Africa. Owned and governed by a group of African publishers, it celebrated its 30th year of trading in 2020. Its participants are over 170 autonomous and independent African publishers who share a common ethos of publishing from within African cultures, asserting Africa’s voice within Africa and internationally. As Cox says in this guest essay, ABC is an example of an African owned and governed organization that has successfully transitioned from a donor-dependent NGO to a self-sustaining and independent social enterprise.

Mary Jay provides an informative account of the raison d’être that led to the establishment of the not-for-profit, African-owned African Books Collective Ltd (ABC) http://www.africanbookscollective.com/, its mission, governance, and finance, and its evolution and wide range of activities over the years since it first started trading from Oxford in 1989. Initially supported by a number of donor agencies for a number of years, a major remodelling of ABC took place in 2007, when it became self-financing, and moved to a largely digital model at the same time. In 2015 it celebrated its 25th year of trading, and currently acts as a worldwide marketing and distribution outlet for 2,500 print titles and e-books (scholarly, literature, and children’s books) from over 150 African publishers in 24 countries. These twenty-five years have not all been plain sailing, “it took endurance to build up to the self-sufficiency of the last eight years, with times of financial strain, and anxiety as to ABC being able to pay its way month to month”, but it remains committed to its ethos to strengthen African publishing through collective action and to increase the visibility and accessibility of the wealth of African scholarship and culture. Internationalising the African books remains a huge challenge, Jay says: “The needs remain to engage with Northern scholars, to counter negative perceptions, and to stand on an equal footing with publishers worldwide. Problems may still be faced by indigenous publishers in Africa with enduring unconducive policies; but they are not constrained in internationalising their books. The digital age has greatly enhanced the opportunities, and that remains ABC’s mission.”


Established in 1989, the Oxford-based African Books Collective (ABC) is a unique organization: it is owned and governed by independent African publishers and was founded by a group of these publishers in order to take control of their own overseas marketing and distribution. Its mission is cultural, to strengthen African indigenous publishing, and to give Africa a voice in discourse about African books and publishing, and about African issues generally through the books published. After 23 years in being, ABC handles exclusive distribution of over 2,000 titles from 136 publishers in 24 African countries [as at 2012], marketing to customers worldwide. It has transformed itself from a donor-supported organization to a wholly financially independent social enterprise. This is a very full account of its mission and diverse activities over the years, and its strategic planning to achieve self-sustainability. As Mary Jay states, “the history of ABC, including its harnessing of digital technologies to become independent, is a success story, although many challenges remain to increase demand for the wealth of African scholarship and literature.”

**Book prizes and awards**

The Caine Prize for African Writing was founded in 1999 and, over the years, has achieved a good measure of success in bringing a new generation of African writers to the world stage. Its most unique aspect is that it focuses on the short story. While not an African book prize such as the (sadly now discontinued) Noma Award for Publishing in Africa
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noma_Award_for_Publishing_in_Africa#:~:text=The%20Noma%20Award%20for%20Publishing%20in%20Africa%22. the Caine Prize aims to support local publishing where it can, particularly by co-publishing an annual anthology with African publishing partners. It also developed co-publishing agreements with a number of African publishers, and aims to increase the number of publishing partners with whom it works across the continent. As with most literary awards, there are critics of the Caine Prize and there have been arguments for changing its remit; or for it to be replaced by an Africa-based prize. In this article, Lizzy Attree, the (former) Caine Prize Administrator, assesses the development of the Caine Prize thus far and sets out her vision for its next five years, “while attempting to address the conundrums that a British-based award for African literature presents.” As well as encouraging writers living in Africa, another hope she has for the Caine Prize is that more shortlisted stories are originally published in Africa, rather than, as is often the case, in Europe or in the United States.


Established in 2004 by Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG), the Nigeria Prize for Literature is in its sixteenth year of administration. “Currently valued at $100,000, its material reward is phenomenal in the Nigerian economy, with the exchange rate outrageously in favour of the dollar. Even more crucially, the prize has risen in its symbolic value from its initial focus on revamping the quality of publishing in the country to become arguably the most powerful cultural institution for validating a Nigerian/African view on artistic excellence. Examining primarily archival documents relating to the prize from its inauguration, I appraise the processes of its articulation and substantiation of its vision of “excellence and craftsmanship” in Nigerian literature as well as its procedures of acquiring, accumulating, and bestowing prestige and remark on public reception of these as well as its relative international anonymity.” (Not examined, from the abstract)


The late Mariama Bâ was the first recipient of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1980, for her novel Une si longue letter (published by Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Dakar, in 1979), which is now considered a classical statement on the female condition in Africa. This is an interview conducted with her in Dakar before she travelled to Germany to receive the prize at a special award ceremony held during the 1980 Frankfurt Book Fair.

The late Abiola Irele (1936-2017, a former Chair of the Noma Award jury, recounts the first four years of existence of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa and suggests that the award has become the major book prize in Africa, and one of the most significant in international publishing. Describes the award as a recognition of the effort that has gone into the development of publishing in Africa, and the need to give these efforts encouragement.


Reports about the 25th Noma Award competition and provides some background about this prestigious book prize, including the jury process and information about the sponsors of the award, Kodansha Publishers in Japan. Also offers some statistical analysis of past Noma Award competitions as they relate to languages of submission, countries and publishers who have had award winners, categories of winning titles, and gender.


The former Secretary of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa describes the work of administering Africa’s premier book prize, focusing on the 1996 competition, won by the Côte d’Ivoire writer Kitia Touré for his novel Destins Paralleles (Nouvelles Editions Africaines Côte d’Ivoire, 1995), and the presentation of the Award to the winner during the Ghana International Book Fair.


A detailed history of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa, established in 1979, by the former Chair of the Noma Award during its first ten years. It describes the contribution of the award to publishing in Africa and shows how it can be a measure of activity and achievement. Points out that as far as scholarly books are concerned, it is not just the subject matter that is considered but that special consideration is also given to books whose methods of investigation are particularly suitable to the subject in an African setting.


This is an interesting and well-documented analysis of African book prizes/literary awards, ‘Western’/international prizes like the Nobel https://www.nobelprize.org/ and national and Africa-wide prizes – some of which, like the Caine Prize for African Writing http://www.caineprize.com/ have been surrounded by a measure of controversy – the way they operate, eligibility criteria and rules of entry, past winners, amount of prize money, submission process, who selects, etc, together with links to websites. Quoting Nigerian writer
Chuma Nwokolo, Nderitu says “what we need are not awards but ‘education’ and ‘publishing structures’ that can nurture and promote the many writing talents we have on the continent.” Prizes “are wonderful things. They are gifts. They are not compulsory and they help the winners, but if you look at the volume of writing in a good writing country, you find out that prizes are like lotteries.” Nonetheless, he concludes, “for the most part, African scribes don’t have a problem with the existence of award schemes, as long as they are relevant, transparent and fairly judged.” What is a bit surprising is that there is no mention at all of the Noma Award https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noma_Award_for_Publishing_in_Africa, which ran from 1980 to 2009, and which was both a publishing as well as a book prize, including works of literature. (See also ➔ other articles about the Noma Award in this section).

The Noma Award was significant because the principal aim of the award was to be the encouragement of publication in Africa of works by African writers and scholars. The Noma Award thus built a unique relationship with African books and has drawn attention to the scope and vitality of African publishing, and the intellectual vigour and enterprise of African publishers, often in the midst of adversity. For a period of 30 years exposure was given to a wide spectrum of African writing and scholarship, which has provided visibility for a great variety of indigenous African publishing output.


Niyi Osundare, one of Africa’s foremost poets – and winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1986 and the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1991 – bemoans the fact that “apart from the omnibus Noma Award which has come to be through the generosity and vision of a Japanese publisher, there [is] no single continental literary prize of substantial worth in Africa.” He goes on to say that “this crucial lack must be laid at the door of a monster other than our perennial poverty”, and asserts that “Africa's failure to institute her own literary prizes was due to a monumental lack of vision by African rulers.” He concludes that foreign prizes and their attendant recognition “have played a valuable diplomatic role in the lives and struggles of African literary ambassadors”, and that there is nothing wrong with foreign prizes as long as the recognition provided is healthy, genuine and unpatronizing.


This Wikipedia entry gives brief details of the Noma Award, which was an annual $10,000 prize for outstanding African writers and scholars who published in Africa. Includes a complete list of past winners, and the award-winning titles, from 1980 to 2009, when the award ceased

The former Secretary of the Noma Award for Publishing looks back at the accomplishments of the Award since its inception in 1979. He sets out the background that led to the establishment of the Award, the vision of the Award’s sponsor the late Shoichi Noma, the categories in which books may be submitted for the prize, and the working methods of the Noma Award jury and secretariat, which is assisted by a pool of a large number assessors and subject authorities from throughout the world. Also reflects on the Noma Award’s relationship with African books, the exposure that has been given over the years to a wide spectrum of African writing and scholarship, and the success it has achieved in its main mission to promote publishing in Africa. Three appendixes include a complete list of winners from 1980-1995; an analysis of Award winners by nationality, gender, language of publication, and categories; and a Noma Award publisher’s ‘League Table’.


Bookselling and book distribution
See also ➔ Book industry statistics and data ➔ Book marketing and promotion/African books in the global market place

Note: for short articles, news items, and reports about the retail book trade in South Africa, see Bookmark Magazine, the official magazine of the SA Booksellers Association at https://www.sabooksellers.com/bookmark/.

The author uses his own experience (as the former Managing Director of the University of Ife Bookshop, now Obafemi Awolowo University Bookshop) to highlight the fact that although vast sums of money are spent on education in Africa, the level of literacy in the continent does not reflect this. Discusses the problems of bookselling, the role of university booksellers, difficulties in obtaining overseas credit facilities, the publisher-bookseller relationship, and trade within Africa. Concludes with a range of suggestions and recommendations for the retail trade sector in Africa. Now inevitably very dated, but this remains a useful account of the challenges of the retail book trade in Africa in the 1970s.

Describes the activities of the different types of booksellers in Ghana, the problems they face, and the library’s role as a partner with booksellers to enhance the book trade in Ghana. The author suggests a number of ways in which libraries can help in promoting the book trade in the country, and proposes a series of measures that would help to strengthen the retail sector, and booksellers’ relations with both libraries and publishers.

The author argues forcefully that, while pinpointing distribution as a major weakness in book provision, in practice, policymakers, donors, and publishers negate the role of booksellers. Brickhill says that bookselling is in crisis all over Africa: “it is disorganized, barely viable, grossly undercapitalized and for the most part an unrewarding commercial undertaking.” He points out that booksellers have been excluded in all state-monopoly systems of book supply, and that there is a tendency in commercial textbook systems to exclude booksellers from the educational market. Moreover, alternatives to bookshop distribution “are mooted without considering whether existing bookshops and their distribution systems might not serve the purpose. One hears everything from donkey carts moving books to vegetable sellers selling books, seriously discussed, while bookshops struggle for survival and are ignored. Non-conventional book distribution is required and desirable as a supplement, not an alternative, to the bookshop and its range of extension services.” The author also contends that many African publishers fail to have a proper appreciation of the role and services provided by booksellers, and the special problems they face. Publishers who do not work with booksellers do so at their peril: “every limitation of bookselling in Africa is a step towards the impoverishment of African publishers and authors and their further dependency on donor support. Ultimately, the booksellers’ problems will come to haunt even the most successful publishers.”


Surveys the state of the retail book trade in African countries [as at 1994] drawing attention to the inadequacies of the distribution network and the weakness of the bookselling sector as an essential component in the “book chain” as a whole. Argues that booksellers’ associations need strengthening as the institutional base for development of book distribution.


Prominent Ghanaian publisher Woeli Dekutsey provides an insightful history of the retail book trade in Ghana, past government involvement in bookselling and book distribution, and reports about a new trend in bookselling in Ghana initiated by the informal sector. The author finds that traditional or conventional booksellers are a rather sleepy lot and are on their way out, pushed out by a new generation of more enterprising, more aggressive, and truly street-wise pavement booksellers, itinerant book peddlers, and market stall book traders.


Reports about a proposal being developed in South Africa to set up a number of ‘people’s book centres’, which will be located within libraries and will work within the communities served by those libraries. They will promote book owning through the concept of book clubs, and will also be encouraged to develop the commercial side of the business by selling
textbooks into local schools. The proposal is not aimed at replicating traditional retail bookstores.

https://www.amazon.com/ACCESS-USE-INFORMATION-BOOKTRADE-ENTREPRENEURS/dp/3639251202

Based on a 2008 PhD dissertation (Moi University, Eldoret), this study examines the challenges Kenyan booksellers and “book trade entrepreneurs” face in their day-to-day decision making relating to stocking, selling, marketing and distribution of books. It also discusses their information needs and information use, and aims to provide some insight on the critical role of bibliographic service providers, the role of stakeholders such as education agencies, and the importance of information systems in managing functions such as stock control, and monitoring human resource and financial management.

Also published in *The Publisher* [Ibadan, Nigeria] no. 1 (August 2000)  
A hard-hitting examination – by one of Nigeria’s best-known booksellers – of publisher-bookseller relationships, especially the situation prevailing in Nigeria [as at 2000]. The author is critical of many publishers’ failings in several areas: wrong or inadequate assignment of ISBNs; a lack of catalogues and other bibliographic tools from most publishers; lack of quality control in the production process resulting in poor quality or shoddily-produced books which booksellers find difficult to sell both within the country, much less elsewhere; cumbersome or amateurish orders processing and invoicing procedures; and publishers not availing themselves of analytical information such as dues analysis. Mosuro is also critical of publishers failing to pass on “realistic” trade discounts to booksellers (“fixed arbitrarily, for the entire retail trade, at a publishers’ forum”), or publishers bypassing booksellers altogether by selling direct to government ministries. Mosuro argues that “lack of appreciable returns have stifled the growth of bookselling and served as a disincentive for newcomers”, but concludes that despite this situation there is now emerging a second generation of booksellers who “are educated, well-exposed and result-driven. They are applying modern principles of management to bookselling. We need many more of them. They are at par, if not ahead of many of the publishers in their embrace of technology in running the business. The future of bookselling in Nigeria is well paved.”

Looks at the challenges of promoting books for the general reader, and asserts “the engine of book development is the creation of the book market and book consumers of African books.” Also reviews an innovative book marketing scheme in Zimbabwe pioneered by Harare bookseller Grassroots Books.
Itinerant booksellers, or book hawks, play a significant but frequently not very visible role in the book trade in Ghana, and in many other developing countries. They are the mobile and roadside booksellers who carry their offerings to the doorsteps of their consumers. Because of the low status of the topic, it is perhaps still a neglected area of study relating to the book trade and book distribution in African countries. Thus the purpose of this paper “is to explore views of publishers, book buyers and the itinerant booksellers themselves to ascertain their role and importance to the book trade and book development generally in Ghana.” It highlights the contributions of such travelling booksellers to book distribution in Ghana, and the authors make a case both for and against itinerant bookselling in Ghana. The paper deals with some of issues relating to the poor quality and content of some of the reading materials peddled by itinerant booksellers, and discusses their impact on the book trade. “Activities of itinerant booksellers have both positive and negative impact on the book trade in Ghana. Some people see their effort as highly commendable in the book industry and that they should be encouraged. They offer invaluable services especially to self-publishers and small-scale publishers. They promote new authors and small-scale publishers. Their activities reduce unemployment especially among school dropouts. Again they sell books to supplement the existing titles to meet the local book demand. Itinerant booksellers make books accessible to the reading public especially people in the rural and economically disadvantaged communities.” In contrast, some mainstream publishers and booksellers see itinerant book hawks as a serious threat to the industry, “their major complaint is that they flood the market with substandard books, which raises a lot of concern about professionalism in the industry”, and that most of the book sold by these traders are pirated books.

However, the authors argue effectively, that “it is important to accept the vital role of the book hawks in the book distribution and sales business in a largely rural society such as Ghana where problems of accessibility, due to poor roads, poverty, illiteracy, and a host of others, deprive many from gaining access to books. There should be a way of encouraging itinerant booksellers to channel their efforts to the welfare and maximum promotion of books”, and as such they need to be encouraged and assisted by book industry players and by publishing and book trade professional organizations, who could help them to upgrade their skills and expertise in the book trade.


Ronke Orimalade, a leading Nigerian bookseller, probes into some of the issues “which have more or less paralyzed bookselling in Nigeria”, and which includes marginalization of booksellers and the retail sector by the Nigerian government at both Federal and State levels, as well as poor relations between publishers and booksellers, marred by accusations and
counter accusations, with each group citing long lists of grievances and lack of collaboration. She reports about the activities of a Joint Action Committee established by both parties, designed to improve publisher-bookseller relations, but whose decisions and action plans are yet to be implemented. Other problems identified are the lack of a strong professional association for booksellers, no code of conduct for business practices, lack of training, and the absence of a national book development council.


Also published in French as Améliorer les systèmes de distribution du livre en Afrique.

This study, now inevitably somewhat dated, is one of the most comprehensive surveys of textbook distribution in sub-Saharan Africa. It offers a detailed analysis of the key policy issues affecting book distribution in Africa today. The study was organized and co-ordinated by International Book Development Ltd. in London, and Danaé-Sciences, a Paris-based consultancy company specialising in editorial support, training and written communication. It draws on a series of major case studies carried out in Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda, together with mini case studies from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania and Togo, undertaken by book practitioners in these countries, most from the private sector. All of the case studies cover some common elements, including, for example, information on the national education system (including basic education statistics), and a discussion of the main players and mechanisms in the book distribution chain; they also review regional trade in books, and most case studies comment upon the impact of funding, agency investment, and government policies affecting national book development. In addition to the case studies, a useful feature is the inclusion of a fold-out chart “Critical issues on upgrading book distribution in Africa – A decision tree for policy-makers”, which shows the key options that policy makers need to consider in developing a national framework for textbook delivery. An extensive glossary of common terms and acronyms used in education, development and the book trade, completes the volume. The survey concludes “there is already a policy change underway among a number of governments and funding agencies in their approaches toward national textbook distribution. This change is more apparent in Anglophone than in Francophone countries and is by no means universal even in Anglophone countries. But the reaction against the inefficiencies, the lack of a service culture and the typically high cost operations of state centralist policies is now almost ten years old.” It also notes that times are changing, and that senior government officials in many countries now openly acknowledge and welcome the increasing involvement of the private sector in educational book provision activity.

Zurbrugg, Tony “A Perspective on the Trade in Books from and About Africa in Anglophone Europe.” In Africa Bibliography. Works on Africa Published During 2002, edited by
A useful (albeit now dated) survey of bookshops in “Anglophone Europe” (a term the author identifies as “broadly non-Latin western Europe”), who hold some kind of stocks of books on Africa, principally in the UK, but also covering the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark. There is especially good coverage of bookshops in London, which includes full addresses, telephone numbers, and a short description of stocks held and/or areas of specialization. Also covers some “off the High Street” distributors, library suppliers and online booksellers.

British and multinational publishers in Africa
See also ➔ Book history and book culture
➔ Author-publisher relationship/Publishing of African writers and African literature

Looks at “the invasion of the multinationals” [in the late 1990s] into African publishing, bookselling and the media, and warns that as Africa emerges as a lucrative market, the giants of the international publishing industry will invest in the region, similarly as they have done so elsewhere, e.g. in Singapore. He states that “in a perverse way, African’s current economic difficulties may help indigenous publishers in emerging markets, since the multinationals are not poised for market penetration in countries facing severe economic problems.” The author offers a number of possible strategies and initiatives that might strengthen emerging local book industries, thus ensuring that they will not be swept away with the tide of the multinationals.

Also at (freely accessible)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324713369_A_Colonial_Affair_Heinemann_Educational_Books_and_the_African_Market [01/06/21]
Attempts to provide historical explanations for the role which Heinemann Educational Books in Nigeria played in the emergence of an African literature in English, and at the same time seeks to shed light on the late Alan Hill as the architect of HEB and his publishing projects in the African continent. “Whereas the reluctance of British companies to publish for Africa was in a large measure determined, albeit indirectly, by contemporary colonial policies and interests, the open, wholehearted encouragement of African writings in the 1960s and 1970s suggests a radical shift in the attitudes of British publishers. This shift arguably occurred at a time when the entire publishing industry in England witnessed a profound readjustment following the war years. Yet, more importantly, the full-scale ‘decolonization’ process in
Africa, as in the rest of the empire, forced British publishers, such as HEB, to adopt new strategies to keep their businesses going in Africa.”

Note: see also this obituary of Alan Hill at https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-alan-hill-1469005.html


Kenyan publisher Henry Chakava recounts his experience of working with British publishers – the high points and the low points – since he joined the book business in 1972. “I can call myself a modest expert on African/British relations, but I am not sure I understand them or that they understand me.”


Traces the history and activities of Longmans and its “book empire” in various parts of Africa, the nature of the books that dominated its publishing strategy, and how it succeeded in becoming, over long periods, perhaps the most profitable publisher on the continent. In South Africa it also reveals the role played by Longmans in the publishing of textbooks for ‘Bantu Education’ from 1953 to 1982, the racially segregated and unequal system of education under apartheid laws, but which created a large and highly profitable market for the major South African and British publishers operating in the country at that time. Davis says “Longmans was complicit in, and a significant beneficiary of, apartheid education, whilst elsewhere, in the independent states of post-colonial East and West Africa, the company prided itself on the ‘indigenisation’ of its branches and the publication of African authors.” Longmans’ supremacy in the most lucrative sector of African publishing “contributed significantly to the company’s profitability, whilst also contributing to the construction and perpetuation of British cultural dominance on the continent.” Caroline Davis’s investigation was hampered by Longmans’ apparent failure to keep anything like a complete archival record of its economic interests, investments and profits in Africa, with only fragmentary traces remaining of its commercial programme and activities, which “suggests that the company has more consciously drawn a veil over its modus operandi across the continent in the twentieth century; Longmans’ African book empire is a hidden, albeit once economically vital, aspect of the company’s history.”


“This history of Oxford University Press (OUP) in South Africa draws on archival records and oral testimonies. It first considers OUP’s rationale and vision for its work in pre-war South Africa. This is followed by a discussion of the development of the branch’s anti-apartheid general and academic lists alongside its educational list from the late 1940s to the 1960s, reflecting on the dilemmas and contradictions entailed in this dual policy. It then reviews the
radical change of management approach towards South Africa in 1970 and the ensuing crisis in the branch and conflicts in London and Oxford, as the branch’s liberal position was sacrificed in order to maintain its commercial position in the country. The article contends that OUP in the UK as well as Cape Town increasingly depended on profits from the publication of Bantu Education approved texts, which led to an avoidance of the publication of ‘controversial’ or anti-apartheid texts. It reviews how OUP represented its work in South Africa in narratives and histories of publishing that veiled the company’s commercial interests while emphasising its cultural and educational mission.”  

https://muse.jhu.edu/article/188558 

In 1962, the Rex Collings, then an editor at Oxford University Press “discovered” the early plays of Wole Soyinka, and immediately attempted to persuade his manager that these plays should be included in the ‘Three Crowns series’, a collection of books about Africa published in London for both the UK and international markets. After encountering initial opposition, Collings wrote an emphatic response arguing that for the publication of original African literature by OUP hinged on its political expedience. He emphasized the importance of embedding “high culture” in the African publishing programme for the purpose of prestige and public relations, and predicted that the ‘Three Crowns series’ might serve an important function in compensating for the more commercial activities of the press. This argument was evidently persuasive, and he was given permission to begin commissioning African writing for the series, initially with the publication of Soyinka’s plays A Dance in the Forest and The Lion and the Jewel, published in 1963, followed by Three Short Plays in 1964, and The Road in 1965. (Later Collings, who died in 1996, was to set up his own publishing company, Rex Collings Ltd., and became the publisher of Soyinka’s prison notes The Man Died, and his autobiographical Aké. The Years of Childhood.) This is a very interesting account for those researching aspects of the history of publishing in former colonial countries.


Multinational publishing companies of Western Europe and North America with business interests in the countries of the developing world, are generally regarded by the indigenous publishers with “at best reserve, at least suspicion, and at worst dislike.” This paper probes into the “uneasy relationship” between the multinational publishing houses and indigenous publishers. It seeks to redefine publishing along linguistic rather than nationalistic lines, and discusses building publishing industries from virtually nothing, using India as a case study. The author examines the important factors of copyright and language, reviews the changes in publishing structures in the West, and the lessons that can be learnt from the past. He concludes with an analysis of common ground, and how aid agencies can help. Graham argues that there is reciprocity of need: “The key to progress is to see the development of
publishing everywhere as a common cause in which all publishers are involved, and from which all will ultimately benefit.”


The late Alan Hill (1912-1993) was the founder and Chairman of Heinemann Educational Books. Here he describes the beginning of the African Writers Series which followed the huge success of the publication of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart.* He refutes the charge of “cultural imperialism” and gives a brief history of the role of multinational companies in Africa over the previous thirty years, and recounts the problems and obstacles that African writers still encounter in their attempt to get published. It is an interesting, informed, and well-documented study that combines writers’ own testimony (based on responses to questionnaires) and factual investigation in order to explore the problem of the “ordeal” of the African writer. He deals with some of the issues which confront African writers today [in the 1990s], including issues of readership and which language to employ, the question of literacy and audience, and the inadequate number of publishing houses on the continent—as well as other obstacles such as censorship, imprisonment, exile, and worse. Several of the chapters shed new light on the publishing history, and author-publisher relations of some African writers – both with publishers in the countries in the North as well as with African publishers – and the book includes a chapter on “African Writers and the Quest for Publication”, examining the careers of a number of African writers.

An overview of “African Publishers, African Publishing” is provided in chapter four. It includes a discussion of the sometimes not very happy relations between African writers and African publishers, and also looks at the obstacles African publishing houses face, and how they treat their authors. The book concludes with a set of recommendations setting out what he believes can be done to improve the plight of the African writer, and particularly the next generation of African writers. Hill also proposes the establishment of a pan-African publishing house, funded by people and institutions both from Africa and the West, with an unpaid advisory board predominantly from the African continent: “crucial to the entire proposal is the belief that Africans should be in control of the publication of their own writers and that the degree of dependence on the West (both financial and editorial) be determined by Africans themselves.”


The autobiography of the late Alan Hill who was associated with Heinemann Educational Book for many years, from its inception to the point where it was one of the two educational publishing giants in the Commonwealth, with branches world-wide, including several in Africa. Alan Hill’s work in Africa was particularly valuable in making African writers known throughout the world through the Heinemann ‘African Writers Series’. The book contains a foreword by the late Chinua Achebe, the distinguished Nigerian writer.
While published almost 50 years ago and now very dated, this critical examination of the partnership between the Macmillan Company and the Tanzania Publishing House (TPH) remains of interest as it was widely quoted at the time. Gives details of the agreements and arrangements between TPH and Macmillan and asserts that this “partnership” was “partly in order to create the veneer of a national publishing house.” The author also provides examples of how Macmillan “made easy money”, vigorously criticizes the management’s poor attempts at publishing of creative writing and the lack of training opportunities offered to Tanzanians. Concludes by observing that TPH faces a “major challenge of building a strong self-reliant publishing house that combines professional efficiency and financial integrity with a comprehensive and creative editorial programme.”

Children’s book publishing
See also ➔ Publishing in African languages
➔ Reading culture and reading promotion
➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing by and for women
➔ Publisher histories and profiles

Note: Publishing for children and young adults is an important component in book development in Africa, and there is a substantial body of literature on this topic. Dedicated publishers of children’s books are increasingly emerging in several African countries. The records below – for the most part published over the last twenty years, and most currently accessible online – are a small selection of articles, studies, and reports. For a wider selection of records consult the Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Bibliography (PB&RSSA, 2008), and the subsequent five annual literature reviews published for the period 2014-2019 (see ➔ the section on References resources, bibliographies, and library collections above). Also the bibliographies published by Nancy Schmidt, see ➔ records below.

Multiple award-winning Ghanaian children’s author Meshack Asare – winner of the 1982 Noma Award for Publishing in Africa for The Brassman’s Secret – was the recipient of $25,000 NSK Neustadt Prize for Children’s Literature in 2014. Given in alternating years in conjunction with the Neustadt International Prize for Literature, the biennial NSK prize recognizes great accomplishments in the world of children’s storytelling. Asare is first African writer to take this prize. This is an interview with him, in which he talks about the award, his career, and children’s books publishing and storytelling in Africa. In describing the current state of children’s literature and publishing in Africa, he says “I am happy that in Ghana and throughout Africa, children’s literature now stands fully recognized by the publishing industry, education and the public. Children’s literature is not merely extension to some adult project, and publishers who are dedicated publishers of children’s books are emerging in various African countries. It will still be quite a while before we attain the levels of sophistication and flair of Europe, America or Asia, but there is no shortage of talent and determination.”

South African children’s book publishing is gaining more and more international attention, sales of locally published children’s book are steadily increasing, and several new imprints showcasing new South African children’s authors and illustrators have emerged. However, while the children’s book market may be vibrant, it is highly price sensitive, with high printing costs and low print runs, and books are still considered a luxury for a very large proportion of South Africans who have limited access to books. Meantime South Africa remains traditionally an educational market, and that market is now under threat. The proposed single textbook policy which the Department of Education is trying to force through, against strong opposition, could throw the publishing industry into turmoil.


Founded by Arthur Attwell, the not-for-profit Book Dash organization http://bookdash.org/ brings together creative professionals – writers, illustrators, designers, editors – who volunteer to create high-quality children’s books that anyone can freely download, translate, print and distribute. Most of the work is done on a ‘Book Dash day’, when small teams work for over twelve straight hours, each producing a new book. In this interview with members of the Book Dash team they talk about their vision, their work, how they operate, and how they match writers with designers and illustrators to create these book-making teams. Note: see also the Book Dash Manual at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oQB_9MFuthF2X9szm04aMRNMS_dtLgbkqmzko0zyh/edit

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children’s Literature. [Special issues on African children’s literature] Basel: International Board on Books for Young People/Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Bookbird, the journal of the International Board on Books for Young People https://www.ibby.org/ has devoted two special issues to articles on various aspects of children’s literature and writing for children in Africa. They are both interesting and varied issues, which are now freely accessible online. Bookbird. Special issue: Children’s Literature and Africa 42, no. 3 (2004) https://www.ibby.org/subnavigation/archives/flipbook?tx_archive_archivelist%5Baction%5D=show&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bcontroller%5D=Publication&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bpublication%5D=82&cHash=39bb1a12a0eba6e55ae73a5f72dcf51e [05/09/21]

Bookbird: Special issue: African Children’s Literature 36, no. 1 (1998) https://www.ibby.org/subnavigation/archives/flipbook?tx_archive_archivelist%5Baction%5D=show&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bcontroller%5D=Publication&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bpublication%5D=103&cHash=b5f85e6d8f428a94262bb32602d89842

Henry Chakava recounts his experience of publishing children’s books as head of East African Educational Publishers in Nairobi, including publishing of children’s books by prominent African writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Chinua Achebe, and a series of readers both in English and in various Kenyan languages. He explains the reasons why some books in mother tongue languages were not a commercial success, until they were incorporated into the curriculum to strengthen the teaching of English in primary schools, and were given a series image and a standard design. Chakava also describes the changes in the company’s policies and focus for their children’s book programmes over the years.


Finds that, unlike in other parts of the world, the publication of indigenous comic books in English-speaking Africa is still not widespread and explains some of the reasons why this is so. The author believes that the comic genre has a potentially large but as yet largely unexploited market, and that comics can in fact provide effective learning tools for educating the public about serious issues affecting their everyday life.


This is a sensitive and comprehensive overview of English-language fiction, written by Nigerian authors for Nigerian youth between the ages of 11 and 19 years, and published over the last twenty-five years by both indigenous Nigerian publishers and multinationals. Virginia Dike documents the body of fiction literature written for Nigerian young people, tracing its history from the beginnings in the 1960s, through its blossoming in the 1980s, to the present day. The article examines the different series, their target audience, and the characteristics of the novels in terms of societal realities and the personal concerns and challenges facing youth. The author finds that “novels for young people address issues in current Nigerian life, but relatively few touch on the immediate concerns of youth in any meaningful way”. While a few timely themes are touched on, the treatment is not usually in depth, nor are issues approached from a young person’s point of view. “Since developing one’s identify and values are primary tasks of adolescence, a little more introspection and facing of immediate hard realities seems called for.” The author offers a number of suggestions on the way forward, and the steps that can and should be taken to develop fiction that will more fully meet the varied and complex needs of today’s Nigerian youth. She also urges publishers to adopt more aggressive marketing strategies, “rather than to assume no one wants to read fiction in Nigeria.”
Deborah Ahenkorah is the co-founder and executive director of Golden Baobab, the pan-African social enterprise that is behind the Golden Baobab Prizes for African children’s literature http://www.goldenbaobab.org/. Based in Accra, it aims to create awareness about the need for more African literature for children, and to draw attention to the still insufficient supply of culturally sensitive books for African children. Golden Baobab’s vision, Ahenkorah says, is “to ensure that young Africans have access to books they can relate to and that represent them. It leaves young people feeling empowered and gives them a sense of place in the world.” A number of outreach initiatives aim to nurture talented African writers and illustrators through programmes and workshops, and providing creative and technical resources to improve their craft. A sister company, African Bureau for Children’s Stories, publishes award-winning African stories for children and supports the careers of children’s writers and illustrators in Africa.


A paper originally presented to the Workshop on Children’s Literature in Africa and the Third World held at the 4th Zimbabwe International Book Fair in Harare in August 1987. The prominent Nigerian novelist discusses why writing for adolescents and teenagers has not been a priority with African writers and goes on to address wider issues of publishing for children in Africa.


Reviews the patterns and themes of Nigerian children’s literature for the periods of 1960 to 1978 on the one hand, and Nigerian children’s fiction since 1979 on the other. The author concludes “Nigerian children’s literature has tried to express the changing needs of society. Many of the writers see themselves as social critics. Their main purpose in writing is to make their society a better one.”


The idea for this helpful handbook was inspired by two workshops for writers of children’s books held in Tanzania and Uganda in January-February 2000. The workshops were organized by the National Book Development Council of Tanzania and the Book Development Council of Uganda), under the UNESCO/DANIDA Basic Learning Materials Initiative, with the aim of assisting the countries to enliven their publishing industries by promoting local writing and the production of attractive children’s books. The Handbook draws on some of the lessons learned in the Tanzania and Uganda workshops. It does not pretend to provide a detailed and comprehensive guide, but aims to present some basic
principles that should be taken into account when writing for children. There is also a useful checklist of ‘dos and don’ts’ for writers of picture story books to make sure nothing vitally important has been left out, and some stories that were written during the workshop for writers are also included.

Getachew, Eyuel Ethiopia: Children’s Literature Too Laborious for Author (Posted 15 April 2018) https://addisfortune.net/articles/childrens-literature-too-laborious-for-authors/ [27/10/21]
Even though there are writers dedicated to writing books for children, even if there are exciting stories to be told to them, and even if parents desperately need to shape their children through stories, authors are finding the process of publishing too unbearable, the author reports. There are many obstacles to publishing books, and children’s books are no exception. Lack of incentives and poor financial rewards for writers, inadequate government support, minimal engagement by donors, and copyright issues are some of the challenges that authors mention. Publishing takes two forms. Some choose to self-publish, in which case they are free to set the price for their books, but will have to negotiate discounts with distributors, which can be very high. Children’s books “are still considered as a luxury by the authorities and not given the due they deserve”.

A special issue of Matatu on the writing and publishing for children in Africa today [as at 1997]. Contains 14 articles on the topic, and one on Caribbean children’s literature, by contributors from Africa and from Europe. Some of the papers were first presented at an international conference on African children’s literature held in Umeå, Sweden, in March 1992.

Using a range of South-African published children’s books as examples, this article charts the growth of South African children’s literature (in English) from the repressive apartheid days to democracy in 1994, describing “the excitements and problems of the present and future situation.” Today South Africa is the leading publisher of youth literature in sub-Saharan Africa: “We have a children’s literature that is truly South African, that is of international quality, that is relevant to South African readers. We have, at last, emerging black writers describing what is right and wrong in the New South Africa. Thanks to research published by Biblionef http://biblionefsa.org.za/ we know that we have well over 200 children’s books available in at least four of our local languages, and nearly 40% of them available in all eleven mother-tongue languages.” He adds a word of caution though, and says the books selected for use in state schools have to conform to the specifications of the Education Department. “Our Education Department is moving towards greater centralisation on the editing, printing and publishing of books. In other words, greater state control. We can only hope that the brave authors, illustrators and publishers who continue to create our excellent South African uncontrolled books stay alive.”
https://www.ibby.org/subnavigation/archives/flipbook?tx_archive_archivelist%5Baction%5D=show&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bcontroller%5D=Publication&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bpublication%5D=88&cHash=391fdc94f8b1149f40bb3003cbf2aab

Sees the activities of the International Board on Books for Young People/IBBY https://www.ibby.org/ and the provision and publication of children’s books in Africa as interlinked, but not closely enough for their full potential to be realized. Argues that, if IBBY wants to extend its activities into Africa and offer something of benefit to the continent, then greater awareness of the situation in Africa could bring tangible improvement.


The author reports that the good news is that South African children’s literature is alive and well, producing around 200 quality books every year [as at 1998], but that the bad news is that nobody is buying them. “There are young readers ready and waiting. South Africans are becoming steadily more aware of the value of good indigenous children’s literature. Some day, soon we hope, the education authorities will find the money to buy the books.”

https://www.ibby.org/subnavigation/archives/flipbook?tx_archive_archivelist%5Baction%5D=show&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bcontroller%5D=Publication&tx_archive_archivelist%5Bpublication%5D=103&cHash=b5f85e6d8f428a94262bb32602d89842 [05/09/21]

A critical examination whether publishers and authors are satisfying the reading needs of children (largely in South Africa), and asks whether there is a conflict between what children want to read and what publishers think they should read. The author argues that children do not approve of any books “that have a sniff of being educationally approved.”

http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/4539/1/ILOGHO%20published.pdf [05/09/11]

Examines the role of picture books (including comic books) in the cultivation of a reading culture among Nigerian children, in which the author emphasises the importance of an early introduction of children to reading using picture books. She argues that picture/picture-story books can assist children develop socially, personally, intellectually, and culturally, and examines the factors that militate against the use of picture books as part of the promotion of a reading culture in Nigeria, among them the lack of appropriate government policies, the high cost of publishing, ignorance on the part of parents about the value of picture books, and a lack of an enabling environment for publishers to publish quality picture books.

Published on the occasion of the 29th IBBY Congress held in Cape Town in 2004 – and envisaged as source of information for quality African published children’s books for teachers, researchers, parents and for all those interested in children’s literature – this is a virtual exhibition of 84 children’s books from Africa, for Africa. It covers picture books for small children, children’s fiction, folktales, and fiction for young adults, and includes books in English, French, Afrikaans, and in several African languages. The virtual exhibition displays the cover of each book, one or two extracts from the book (as small images that can also be viewed in enlarged size) together with a review and commentary about its contents. Additionally, there are informative profiles of African children’s book authors, illustrators, and publishing houses whose books are included (the latter with full contact and email addresses, and with links to Websites where available). This is a splendid resource.

Johnson, Hannah. **Bringing African Authors to a Worldwide Audience.**

Wanting to see more African characters in children’s book, both in Africa and from international publishers Sarah Odedina of Pushkin Press in the UK https://www.pushkinpress.com/pushkin-childrens/ and Deborah Ahenkorah of African Bureau Stories in Ghana https://www.africanbureau.com/, and founder of the Golden Baobab Prize http://www.goldenbaobab.org/, have formed a new partnership to build international recognition for African children’s book authors. “Our mission,” Odedina says, “is to reach as many writers working in the field of children’s literature on the [African] continent as possible and to find ways of helping some of those writers find worldwide publication.” Ahenkorah’s children’s book publishing company will publish the selected titles in the African market. While, through Odedina, Pushkin Press plans to publish some of the titles in the UK, and the pair is also reaching out to their network of industry contacts to find additional US and UK publishers for their chosen African titles.

Note: for another report about this new partnership see also Hannah Johnson, **Reflecting a Diverse Reality in Children’s Books: New African Literature Partnership**


An interesting collection of essays that provide a great deal of insight into the depth, complexity, richness and diversity of African children’s books. The contributors examine the major issues relating to African children’s literature from several directions and from a variety of angles. The essays take either a postcolonial or revisionist approach to the study of colonial children’s literature, or examine the books published since independence in various African countries, and covering North, East, West and Southern Africa. Additionally, three of the essays focus on books written by Western authors for Western readers, and which analyze colonial bias, stereotyping, or blatant racism in some of these books, although one of the articles, by Jean Perrot, is in fact a spirited rebuttal in defence of Jean de Brunhoff’s much-maligned Babar books. There are a total of twelve essays in this collection, by both
contributors from North America and from Africa, the latter including Osayimwense Osa, Mbara Ngom, and Kenyan author and publisher Asenath Bo Le Odaga.

The children’s book market in Kenya has enormous potential, the author believes, but is currently being hampered by various challenges, including government regulation and poor distribution. Regulation comes in the form of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), a state corporation, whose core mandate is to develop school curricula (below university level) and has the authority to vet both the school textbooks as well as support materials that are read in schools. Publishers as also still reeling from a recent 16% VAT tax levy slapped on all educational materials - including books - that the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA) had vehemently opposed. Not only does this raise the cost of books but is also seen as a “tax on knowledge.” However, government intervention at various levels, however, is not the only obstacle to expanding the children’s literature market. The lack of trained and skilled editors, and well as accomplished children’s book illustrators, is seen is one of the most acute shortages facing the publishing industry. This affects Kenya’s ability to consistently produce high quality children’s books, which do not only satisfy the demands of school teachers, but are also found attractive and exciting by Kenya’s school children and foster a lively reading habit.

Flora Nwapa, one of the foremost Nigerian writers, and its first woman publisher (as head of Tana Press), died in November 1993. This article is an account of her personal experience of writing for children, which also discusses the problems of printing and publishing costs, illustrators, distribution and how to select subjects upon which to write.

It may be mistake on the part of parents and teachers to treat children equally on the subject of what they want to read. “Everybody reads for a purpose. Like it happens to everyone, children have their likes and dislikes when it comes to what to read. Not only that, but also there are other factors that affect a child’s choice of which book to read. Consequently, parents and guardians who engage in family reading sessions ought to be particular about this before they choose a particular book for children to read.” The author examines the parent’s role, factors in choosing books, age and gender, and the current environment conducive to reading. He concludes: “For parents to be of significant help, they ought to be knowledgeable of the preferences of their wards on the subject of reading and help them build a culture of reading beyond their biases. One of the surest tools of achieving this is engaging in family reading, where participants exhibit their interests and preferences.”
For generations”, the author says, “the people of Black Africa have told stories in their numerous and multitudinous indigenous tongues to children and young people and to adults as well, in their social, informal, or formal gatherings. Storytelling is not a new art for them but one as old as the African continent itself. From mythic narratives that tell of the creation of the world to simple proverbs that relate human wisdom, the oral tradition held, and in many African countries it still holds the position of a literature at once esoteric and popular, didactic and diverting … These are usually some of the first stories heard by African children in their homes and in their communities. These narratives were handed down principally by word of mouth from one generation to the next.” [Not examined, from the abstract]


A revised and updated version of a keynote address delivered by Osayimwense Osa at the 3rd Conference on South African Children’s Literature, 17-20 September 2007, North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa.

In this colourful, lively analysis of selected African literature for young people, Osayimwense Osa focuses on Anglophone countries – Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and South Africa – and primarily on the novel, a popular genre in contemporary adolescent literature in Anglophone Africa. The study “seeks to illuminate African cultural assumptions, especially those about love and marriage and other aspects of social conduct that non-Africans may find strange. Using the novels of Cyprian Ekwenisi, Buchi Emecheta, and other lesser-known authors, Osa discusses young adult love, marriage customs, the restraints placed on women, and the catastrophic effects of polygamy; how wealth and greed can lead to immorality and crime among young people; how idealism and activism among young people can be corrupted; and the responsibilities of youth during civil war and war's devastating consequences.”


African children’s books “remain unparalleled in their ability to nurture the imagination and to provide relevant instruction and delight to the African child” the author says. However, little research has been undertaken on this topic, its nature, form and source of materials.
This paper provides a selected checklist of words in African children’s literature “as used by “Aardema, Appiah, Arnott, Asare, Kimenye, Meniru, Mollel, Odaga and Onadipe.”

Published in 1989, this article examined some major trends in the Africanization of children’s literature in the post-colonial era, specifically exploring the changes that occurred in the 1980s. Nancy Schmidt predicted that “… Africanization will continue to be more specifically related to the different paths of nation-building…”, and that “important innovations in African children’s literature are happening”, and which has indeed proven to be the case.

[https://www.amazon.co.uk/Childrens-Books-Africa-Their-Authors/dp/084190166X](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Childrens-Books-Africa-Their-Authors/dp/084190166X) ¶
While now clearly very dated, this was the first comprehensive annotated bibliography that listed and critically evaluated over 800 children’s books published about and in Africa. Nancy Schmidt, formerly Africana Librarian at Indiana University Libraries, played a pioneering role in bringing African-published children’s books to the attention of libraries and the international book community in the countries of the North. A supplement to this bibliography was published in 1979, see ➔ record below.

[https://www.amazon.com/Supplement-Childrens-Africa-Their-Authors/dp/0841904332](https://www.amazon.com/Supplement-Childrens-Africa-Their-Authors/dp/0841904332) ¶
A supplement to the above, that lists a further 501 titles, many published in Africa.

[https://doi.org/10.1163/18757421-90000218](https://doi.org/10.1163/18757421-90000218) ¶
Examines the children’s picture book scene in Africa and finds “it is not an inspiring one”. Argues that the paucity of outstanding picture-story books is largely due to a dearth of good authors, very few trained children’s book illustrators (and poor remuneration for children’s book illustrators where they do exist), the prohibitive costs of publishing in four colours, and that there is “a general lack of awareness of the importance in illustrations in children’s books.” The author calls for more systematic training of children’s book illustrators, and also the setting up of an association to bring together book illustrators in Africa.

Concentrates on the positive and often innovative activities which have taken place in Africa between 1982-1987 in the area of children’s book publishing, particularly grassroots...
publishing, the retail trade, library development, literacy and reading promotion campaigns, writing and illustration. Also deals with publishing in African languages, distribution, co-publishing and the role of book fairs in promoting children’s books.

https://doi.org/10.1163/18757421-90000220 ¶
Provides an overview of Namibian juvenile literature – published for children and youth in Namibia, books with a Namibian theme, or published outside Namibia (mostly in Germany and South Africa) – which has a long history of almost 100 years, dating from the German colonial era to the present post-apartheid period. From a socio-linguistic point of view, the authors finds that the colonial era has had a profound influence on the language reality in present day Namibia, and although the German-speaking community in Namibia today constitutes less than two per cent of the total population, German culture has remained a dominant factor. The author analyses some of the contents of the colonial and Germanocentric literature, and their often stereotype or racist depictions of African life and culture, and then goes on to review the emergence of modern Namibian juvenile literature of today [in the late 1990’s], including material in African languages, and publishing output from local publishing houses.

https://doi.org/10.1163/18757421-90000224 ¶
The growth of children’s literature in Nigeria, since the nation’s independence in 1960 has been impressive, and the past three decades [1960-1990] have witnessed an upsurge in the production of children’s literature written by Nigerians, “and many of these books naturally reflect the African environment and draw from the rich traditions of folklore, riddles and proverbs.” However, the author contends that “that sexism abounds in Nigerian children’s literature. This paper therefore calls for the reorientation of Nigerian creative artists of children’s books to provide a means for the total self-development of all Nigerian youth through the imaginative pro-duction of realistic fiction where the reader’s range of life experiences is not limited according to gender, race or socio-economic status.”

Wafawarowa, Brian “Publishing and Distributing Children’s Books in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges.”
A paper presented to the 2006 Congress of the International Board of Books for Young People https://www.ibby.org/. It provides a brief but succinct overview of the state of children’s book publishing in Africa, highlighting the opportunities and challenges of this sector, including aspects of production capacity, distribution, the editorial skills needed to develop a children’s list, competition with international titles, as well as stiff competition from the electronic entertainment industries, the preferred media of most teenagers. The author offers a number of possible solutions how current obstacles might be overcome.

Walter, Scott CODE and the Children’s Book Project. 25 Years Later - An Enduring Part of Tanzania’s Literacy Landscape.
In 2016 the Children’s Book Project for Tanzania [website not accessible as at September 2019] celebrated its 25th year of operations. Supported by the Canadian organization CODE, its principal mission was to develop and promote children’s literacy, and a vibrant culture of reading and writing, through producing and distributing affordable locally produced books; making quality reading materials available and accessible, empowering teachers with appropriate sensitization skills and teaching methodologies, as well as engaging in policy advocacy and promoting stakeholder partnerships. As Scott Walter recalls: “Over time and with much consultation, a plan was crafted that would produce a sustainable supply of relevant, high-quality children’s books in the Swahili language. Publishing would be recognized as an entrepreneurial activity with the publisher as architect of the book, responsible for a process that starts with research and financing and ends with selling a finished product so the cycle can begin anew. From writers to booksellers, we would support every link in the ‘book-chain’ to create and sustain an entrepreneurial publishing sector.”


Amabhuku, the Zulu word for books, was an inspired title for the exhibition of sub-Saharan African children’s book illustrations at the 1999 Bologna book fair. This is a short report about the fair which focused on Africa in that year, and also featured a major exhibition of the work of sub-Saharan African children’s book illustrators. Looking at the books, Wiggans says, gave rise to some uncomfortable questions. “How many of the selected illustrations were published in Africa? According to the catalogue, only 60 per cent (one third of these came from South Africa). A quarter were published in Europe and the USA, and the rest were unpublished. And where were the African artists who had found success living now? Nearly a third had left Africa for Europe and the United States.”

Williams, Mark Hakuna Matata! African Authors Need to Create a Canon of African Children’s Literature that is Indeed their Own. But that can be Achieved Without Inverted Racism and Denigrating the Works of other Cultures.

Mark Williams offers his thoughts on (1) the report – and subsequent debate about ‘cultural appropriation’ – that the Disney Corporation had trademarked the African/Kiswahili phrase ‘Hakuna matata!’ (or ‘No worries!’ translated to English), in its hugely popular animated cartoon take on the African continent in the Lion King film series; and (2) Nigerian author digital entrepreneur Okechukwu Ofili’s claim that “Western fairy tales are messing with the minds of black children”, and his call on parents and publishers to re-consider the types of stories they present to young black children (see ➔ https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/books/nigerian-author-okechukwu-ofili-western-fairy-tales-are-messing-with-the-minds-of-black-children-1.786977).
Cultural appropriation, Williams says, “while not new, is a rising theme in a modern world that is connected in a way impossible to imagine even ten years ago, and with it comes an acceleration in examples of perceived and actual cultural appropriation as well as examples of extreme reactions to this appropriation. … In the interconnected world of the 2010s and beyond, authors and publishers all around the world will face accusations of exploitation as we try to appeal to a global marketplace, and indignant voices will be raised against perceived wrongs. Parties on both sides need to show respect and consideration for ‘foreign’ cultures, but also to take a step back from knee-jerk reactions to perceived grievances. … The real challenge is to enable and encourage African authors and publishers to create a canon of African children’s literature that is indeed their own. But that can be achieved without inverted racism and denigrating the works of other cultures.”

Note: see also this contribution to the debate: Should Anyone Really Own the Phrase ‘Hakuna Matata’? by Njoki Ngumi https://qz.com/africa/1521971/disneys-hakuna-matata-trademark-as-beyonce-lion-king-due/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=africa-weekly-brief

The theme of the 1998 Zimbabwe International Book Fair was ‘Books and Children’, and children were the main focus in all the deliberations and activities, from policy debates to storytelling. This is a collection of 56 papers, report-backs and discussions that were presented at the Indaba. The papers are grouped in five parts; those from the plenary sessions; Policy; Children’s Literature; Scholarship and Research; and Access and Technology.

Copyright and legal deposit/Authors’ rights

http://www.udadisi.org/2010/08/freely-available-online-new-book-on.html (freely accessible, full text) [15/06/21]
The emergence of the Internet and digital media has dramatically changed the way people access, produce and share information and knowledge. Yet people in Africa face challenges in accessing scholarly publications in print format, and journals and learning materials in general. The authors believe that the heart of these challenges, and solutions to them, is copyright, the branch of intellectual property rights that covers written and related works. This important study is a result of an international and interdisciplinary research project known as the African Copyright and Access to Knowledge (ACA2K) project, a network of researchers committed to probing the relationship between copyright and learning materials access in eight African countries: Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda. It aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the legal and practical constraints posed by copyright for access to learning materials in Africa, and identifies the relevant lessons, best policies and best practices that would broaden and deepen...
this access. The book contains chapters outlining the research results in each of the eight ACA2K study countries. A concluding chapter provides comparative analysis across the countries, and outlines possible solutions and best practices that can be adopted by African stakeholders who seek access-friendly copyright environments.


The author is Executive Director of the Ghana Book Development Council https://www.gbdc.gov.gh/, and this article “discusses some theoretical underpinnings of copyright law, focusing on the Copyright Act, 2005 (Act 960) of Ghana, the Copyright Designs and Patents Act (CDPA) 1988 of the United Kingdom (UK) and how these underpinnings have been applied by courts in various jurisdictions.” It deals with issues such as the requirement of ‘Originality’, ‘Expression of Ideas’, ‘Fixation’, ‘Rights’, ‘Duration’ and ‘Infringement’ of copyright protection, ‘Fair use’, and more.

In her conclusion the author states: “Copyright laws help in developing the book industry through the protection of literary works, of which both printed and electronic books form an integral part. Having a proper understanding of the copyright laws and an appropriate enforcement regime will help grow the domestic book industry. Writers will readily make their work available for publishing knowing that their copyright will be protected, and that they can expect economic rewards for their hard work. The copyright law balances these rights with public interest and makes the published work accessible to the public for use in various circumstances, with or without authorisation or compensation to the copyright holder. Ultimately this balance helps in the acquisition of knowledge, advancement of education and the local book industry.”


Copyright protection in Ghana started in 1914 and since that time there have been several reviews of its legislation, the last one in 2005. The country’s Copyright law, Act 690, the author states, “by and large complies with the minimum requirements of international copyright treaties, although there are still challenges with copyright protection in Ghana.” Copyright education and awareness are key elements in strengthening copyright protection “from policymakers to rights holders, to users, to enforcement agencies, the general public, adults, the youth and even children. Appreciating the value of copyright goes a long way in strengthening copyright protection.” Rights holders must know their rights and what the copyright system offers them. … Users and the general public must be sensitized or educated on the dos and don’ts of the copyright system. … Systematic and continuous copyright education and effective enforcement are crucial for strengthening copyright protection.”

Czerniewicz, Laura Student Practices in Copyright Culture: Accessing Learning Resources. Learning Media and Technology
The focus of this paper is on South African students’ learning resource access practices, particularly those generally considered piracy practices. The paper explores how students report they access learning resources at a research-intensive university in South Africa; whether and how students download and share learning resources (especially books and papers); whether these resources are understood to be legal or illegal; what their attitudes are, as well as the general and practical understandings that enable their access to resources. The author’s findings suggest a blurring between the legal and the illegal and indicate the normalcy of piracy practices, with nuanced distinctions and understandings manifest. “The findings of this paper have implications for pedagogy, for student engagement with texts, for plagiarism and attribution and for academic and digital literacies. They also suggest that higher education needs to look closely at the need to change publishing models and entrepreneurial content models so that they are cheaper and easy to use. … From a variety of perspectives in higher education, it is clear that piracy practices are quite simply part of the new order.”


On 12-13 June 2019 heads of copyright offices from more than 40 African nations met in Nairobi, Kenya, at the WIPO https://www.wipo.int/portal/en/index.html Regional Seminar for the African Group on Libraries, Archives, Museums and Educational & Research Institutions in the Field of Copyright, to discuss copyright limitations and exceptions for libraries, archives, and education in the African region. The clear consensus that emerged from the two-day seminar, this EIFL https://www.eifl.net/ report says, “was a recognition that copyright exceptions in Africa are wholly inadequate, especially for online uses, and that there is a real need for reform. … Libraries rely on exceptions to allow everyday uses of copyright-protected materials, for example, to provide a researcher with a copy of a journal article, to make an accessible format copy for a blind student, or to make a preservation copy. However, too many countries have no provisions allowing libraries to carry out even basic activities, and where they do exist, they are often not adapted for the digital age and they do not permit cross-border cooperation.” That is why, EIFL states, they are “advocating for international action at WIPO so that libraries everywhere benefit from robust exceptions to properly carry out their missions, and that no country or region is left behind in the global digital age.”

Note: for more on this meeting see also Report of the WIPO meeting: https://www.eifl.net/sites/default/files/resources/nairobi-regional-seminar-note.pdf
Meeting documents are at: https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/details.jsp?meeting_id=52670

Gray, Eve Half a Century of Copyright History and South Africa’s New Copyright Amendment Bill.
A fierce debate is currently going on in South Africa about the controversial Copyright Amendment Bill 2017 with, on the side of change, future-oriented and digital savvy copyright lawyers, academics, librarians, some publishers and other creative industries. On the opposing side, for the most part, are the major commercial publishers and its trade association, reproduction rights societies, academic authors, writers, as well South African university presses. The topic has been the subject of many angry and agitated dialogues. What this argument has done, Eve Gray says, “is generate a substantial diversion from what this fair use provision will really mean in the South African context, rather than the a-historical accounts that see these provisions as a potential for massive piracy. The heart of my argument depends upon a historical account of how fair use appeared in this landscape and a review of how these issues are playing out in reality in other markets relevant to our context.”

As someone who has been involved in discussions about the need for change in the South African publishing industry, the author says, and “in its now outdated copyright landscape for more than 20 years. … From my perspective, this change is vital, in order to align better with an increasingly digital world and in response to the radical changes that are happening in publishing and its broader context in the creative industries.” Gray argues that “fair use has proved a contentious issue with various commentators – I think because of a misunderstanding of its scope. This needs to be dealt with in the historical context, not least because developments in US legislation in the early 21st century circumscribed its role.”

In a concluding paragraph Gray states: “Reclaiming fair use plays a particular and powerful role in the broader range of activities that evidence the poor fit between today’s copyright policy and today’s creative practices. In a world where the public domain has shrunk drastically, it creates a highly valuable contextually defined, ‘floating’ public domain. The assertion of fair use is part of a larger project of reclaiming the full meaning of copyright policy – not merely protection for owners, but the nurturing of creativity, learning, expression. … a crucial part of constructing a saner copyright policy.”


Eve Gray offers her thoughts on the complex matter of the Copyright Amendment Bill of 2017 currently undergoing the consultative process in South Africa, and which proposes overturning the longstanding prohibition against parallel importation (essentially a product imported from another country without the permission of the intellectual property owner, or the free trade in books across borders) provided for in the present South African legislation, an action, Gray says, “that could undo more than a century of colonially-based market manipulation.” She examines what this could mean in relation to the publishing industry – especially in Africa – and the international trade in books, and the implications in terms of the pricing of books, and greater accessibility to affordable publications for students and general readers. In student debates, for example, the questions that is often raised is why textbooks
are very much cheaper in some countries than in South Africa, and why South African students are not able to buy these books in South Africa at these cheaper prices.

Gray explains some of the intricacies of ‘parallel importation’, and which might be described as a kind of protectionist holdover, which is still conventional commercial practice across international markets. In the case of books, it refers to the granting of ‘territorial rights’ by one publisher to its own subsidiary, or to another publisher in a different country, in order to allow for differential pricing related to affordability in that particular market. (These rights are not in fact part of copyright law, but simply part of an international co-edition agreement by one publisher who approaches one or more overseas partners with a view to licensing the work to them, i.e. territorial licensing.) This means that, e.g. books made in one country under licence from a copyright holder, cannot be sold by booksellers, publishers or other individuals in a second country if that country has parallel import restrictions in its legislation, as is the case with most ex-British colonies. As result of restrictions on parallel importation, purchasers of the book in South Africa or in another African country will not be able to buy the much cheaper Indian edition of a UK or US textbook licensed, and selling at a much cheaper sales price in India.

In looking at the potential impact of these practices on publishing across Africa, Gray says “in Africa the market for books has been fragmented by decades of territorial licensing between African publishers and British and US publishers in order to get international market reach for the African publisher. If an African publisher has a title with potential in the wider market, it will most often be licensed to a UK or US publisher, who would claim ‘rest of the world’ rights, while other African countries would have to buy this UK ‘world’ edition rather than the original African edition. And so, in the 1990s, for example, the African Literature department at a local university often found itself having to license photocopies of prescribed novels by African authors, as they were simply not readily available in South Africa, or only on special order at unaffordable prices, because British publishers were often reluctant to bother with distribution in as small a market as South Africa, and also because the international edition was simply too expensive.” Another discretionary practice was a British ‘charitable’ scheme for the provision of heavily discounted books into African markets, the Educational Low-Priced Book Scheme (ELBS). As a charitable initiative, these books were bought at wholesale prices from British publishers and sold in some African countries at very heavily discounted prices. This effectively undermined regional publishing, as publishers in many African countries were unable to compete with the low pricing levels.

In her concluding paragraph Eve Gray says: “Overall, it looks as though abolition of PIRs would be of benefit, rather than harming the book trade and its customers. In Africa, I would argue, it would almost certainly increase trade and broaden the reach of African books and other copyright goods across the continent. A detailed study of this tangled web is well overdue.”

Note: for another perspective on parallel importation, from a legal point of view, see http://www.internationallawoffice.com/Newsletters/Intellectual-Property/South-Africa/KISCH-IP/Is-parallel-importation-lawful
A press statement from the International Publishers Association (IPA) expressing its concern about South Africa’s Copyright Amendment Bill, and the introduction of its ‘fair use’ component. It states, inter alia: “When South Africa announced its intention to review and modernize its copyright law, the original purpose was to benefit South African performers and authors who were not receiving fair remuneration for their own intellectual property creations. Unfortunately, the Copyright Amendment Bill strays far afield from this intended purpose. The Bill introduces a broad fair use clause, alongside extended general exceptions and new exceptions for educational institutions, libraries, archives, museums and galleries, thereby weakening the position of South African authors and publishers. It also contains other features not meeting international best practice. The IPA notes with concern that these new provisions are to large extent not supported by statements of underlying policy or by the kind of impact assessment necessary to gauge the potential harm that will result from the Bill becoming law.” It goes on to say: “The IPA opposes the introduction of a ‘fair use’ clause that captures more permitted purposes than the ‘fair use’ clauses in other jurisdictions, which, coupled with a clause that overrides all contracts, broad co-extensive general exceptions, and new exceptions for educational institutions, libraries, archives, museums and galleries, will allow reproduction and making available of entire works without the consent of or remuneration to the rights holder. This will lead to authors and publishers suffering loss of income and in turn in a reduction in the quality of content available to the South African public, especially in the field of education.”

Note: for more comments and statements about this debate see also

Statement of the South African Booksellers Association on the Copyright Amendment Bill

Malcolm, Jeremy South African Copyright Review is Overdue, Pioneering, and in Parts Completely Absurd.
https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2015/08/south-african-copyright-review-overdue-pioneering-and-parts-completely-absurd (Posted 14 August 2015) [01/06/21]

South Africa has taken steps to securing better access to knowledge for South Africans through measures set out in a draft Copyright Amendment Bill, which was released for public comment on 27 July 2015. While many observers believe the reform of South Africa’s Copyright Act is long overdue, and in this regard there are many aspects of the Bill that will be warmly welcomed (and see also http://www.eifl.net/news/eifl-hopeful-south-africas-copyright-amendment-bill and http://ip-unit.org/2015/conference-looks-at-public-interest-in-south-africas-draft-copyright-bill/), there is also concern that there are some serious flaws in the present draft, which need to be addressed. Some of these reservations about the bill are set out in this article, foremost among them: (i) the extension of perpetual copyright in works that are managed as part of an orphan works regime (i.e. where the copyright owner is either unknown or cannot be located), (ii) the so called “moral right to receive royalty payments” to the extent that this could threaten creators’ freedom to license their works for free use, (iii) the
requirement to seek permission of the rights holder before availing of certain copyright exceptions, and (iv) the duty imposed upon libraries to add DRM to DRM-free works.

Concerns have been raised in the South African media by some opponents of the Copyright Amendment Bill that Section 12B(1)(a) will promote plagiarism. They have suggested that researchers’ works will not be cited, and that the important role that citations play in academic scholarship will be undermined. This viewpoint, the author argues “is myopic and incorrect.” Acknowledgement of sources, she says, is not dependent on or determined by a provision in the copyright law. “Whether the copyright law prescribes it or not, proper acknowledgement is an internationally accepted obligation and practice in academic and related institutions. Researchers, educators, students, as well as authors and publishers, who use extracts from a third party’s work, whether for educational, research, commercial or other purposes, are obliged to appropriately acknowledge the source. Acknowledgement is required whether the work is published or unpublished, protected by copyright or out of copyright, or licensed under a Creative Commons or similar open licence.”

Fair use provisions will facilitate better access to information and resource-sharing, along with other benefits like allowing accessible formats for persons with disabilities, the author says. However, she concedes that there has also been fierce opposition to these provisions. Groups that object to the proposed changes and bodies include authors and publishers (see e.g. the PEN Afrikaans statement below), as well as the International Publishers Association (see press statement in this section), who would prefer to maintain what is known as ‘fair dealing’ as the status quo, the legal doctrine that allows for an express, finite (closed) list of uses of copyright material without permission from the copyright holder. It is substantially more restrictive in application than ‘fair use’. The author sets out the multiple arguments that have been levelled against fair use in South Africa and other parts of the world, including the argument that the country will be importing a ‘foreign’ copyright regime into its national legislation. However, Nicholson argues that “South Africa is part of the global community. It cannot ignore legislative developments in other countries, particularly those that will bring them in line with global best practice.”

Presents a broad overview of South Africa’s transformation from a print-orientated legal deposit system to a system that now has to cater for print, multi-media and e-publications and highlighting the challenges and successes along the way. The author provides a brief historical timeline of the legal deposit system in South Africa, drawing attention to some of the transformation that has taken place in this regard since South Africa became a democracy in
http://library.ifla.org/1248/1/138-nicholson-en.pdf [01/06/21]
Provides a historical overview of developments in South African copyright law, and the challenges faced by the educational sector and libraries to address access to knowledge issues, particularly in a country in transformation. The author tracks important initiatives by the educational sector and libraries since 1998, to address access to information needs of libraries, archives, persons with sensory disabilities, educators and researchers. After successfully challenging Government proposals to amend the Copyright Regulations (1998) and the Copyright Act (2000), the two sectors have continued to lobby for more balanced copyright laws, but to date the Department of Trade and Industry has not unfortunately delivered in this regard. The author highlights the library and higher educational sectors’ initiatives and interactions with the Department of Trade and Industry in an attempt to expedite the process, and to modernise the copyright legislation in the context of international treaties, WIPO’s Development Agenda, IFLA’s proposals at WIPO, and access to knowledge initiatives. The outcome and implications of proposed amendments to the copyright law are also discussed. Nicholson hopes that the paper will provide some guidelines for other developing countries on how to change their copyright laws to address access to knowledge and transformation issues in a digital world. In her conclusion she states “it is important that copyright laws in South Africa and the rest of Africa reflect a fair balance between the rights of copyright owners and the just demands of information users to access, use and re-use copyright works for the purpose of research, innovation, creativity, development, transformation and access to knowledge for all.”

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/coming-of-age-1 ¶ Discusses copyright law, and the different forms of copyright protection, in the East African region. Infringement of copyright and piracy, the author notes, has become a major problem in East Africa, especially in the light of improved Internet speeds, affordable connectivity, and the proliferation of mobiles. For effective copyright protection to be realised, it is important to
have an appropriate institutional framework, she says, and provides an overview of the work of the different copyright boards and offices active in the countries of East Africa, including the activities of reprographic reproduction rights organizations that collect royalties on behalf of the rights holders. Copyright protection faces many challenges in the region; infringement of copyright and related rights continues to plague the book and creative industries “and needs to be tackled from a policy and practical perspective” the author says, in order to create a sound policy framework both at the national and regional level. It is also crucial, Ouma argues, to embrace technology “and look for ways in which we can have the balance between the rights of the author and access by users without prejudicing the interests of the rights holder.” Moreover, education and awareness creation are necessary, “and should start at an early age so that people can grow to appreciate copyright and related rights as an important aspect of our daily lives and a major contributor to the economy.”

Also at (freely accessible) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303764753_Copyright_Africa_How_intellectual_property_media_and_markets_transform_immaterial_cultural_goods
This volume is a significant contribution to a frequently misunderstood field: the study of intellectual property regimes in ‘the real world’, and the historical development of intellectual property rights in Africa and their local realizations in what is now an increasingly mobile and globalized world. The volume brings together detailed ethnographically and historically informed studies of a wide range of contexts of immaterial culture in sub-Saharan Africa, showing how (post)colonialism, commercialization, new technologies and new legal frameworks, amongst other factors, have affected them. Drawing on case studies from Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Senegal and South Africa – from an interdisciplinary team of legal experts, anthropologists and literary scholars – these investigations aim to demonstrate how local actors use IP and how international property legislation actually plays out on the ground; and “what happens to intangible cultural goods when they are confronted with large-scale commodification and distribution through media technologies, and defined by globalized and divergent judicial systems, institutions and cultural norms.” The studies open up a complex picture of the intricate interconnections among pirates, artists, communities, governments and international organizations. As the editors argue, “it is only when local actors embrace technologies and regulations in a specific historical situation that these become influential forces for change. The question raised is not whether international IP norms conform to African practices, nor whether media impose a Western style, but rather what local actors do with these regulations, and how both local and Western practices and technologies impact on each other and co-exist.”

The African Copyright and Access to Knowledge (ACA2K) project is a pan-African research network of academics and researchers from law, economics and the information sciences. Research conducted by the project was designed to investigate the extent to which copyright is fulfilling its objective of facilitating access to knowledge and learning materials in eight African countries, examining the copyright environment in these countries. This paper is a comparative review of some of the key findings from the study, covering the present status of copyright laws and protection, and copyright compliance, limitations and restrictions. The authors found that “national copyright frameworks in the study countries are not geared for maximal access to learning materials, and are in need of urgent attention”, and that “a substantial gap exists between copyright law and copyright practice in each country studied.” The authors conclude “evidence from the ACA2K project suggests that the copyright environments in the study countries can and must be improved by reforms that will render the copyright regimes more suitable to local developing country realities. Without such reform, equitable and non-infringing access to learning materials will remain an elusive goal in these countries.”

The publishing industry in South Africa will experience significant negative consequences should the proposed exceptions of the 2017 Copyright Amendment Bill be introduced, according to the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) http://www.publishsa.co.za/. The association presented arguments in this regard to Parliament, based on an economic impact assessment by PwC on the detrimental effect certain provisions of the bill could have on the publishing industry, and as set out in PASA’s July 2017 submission document http://www.publishsa.co.za/file/1501661689hnf-pwcreportonthecopyrightbill2017.pdf. An overwhelming majority of 89% of the publishers surveyed in the assessment reportedly believe the promulgation of the bill, as currently worded, will impact negatively on their operations. In many cases the response to these negative impacts would require significant restructuring, retrenchments and, in some cases even business closure, PASA state. The report found that the proposed amendments would result in declining revenue from sales of educational publications, a sharp reduction in licensing income via collective management organizations, as well as an erosion of the incentive for the creation of educational works.

PwC was engaged by PASA to conduct an objective and independent assessment of the impact of the provisions relating to ‘fair use’ and exceptions for educational and academic activities, and PASA is especially concerned about the potential negative impact the bill could have on educational publishing, if it is passed in its current form. According to PASA Chair Brian Wafawarowa, educational publishing forms about 60% of all publishing in South Africa: "As the licensing model changes and textbooks are starting to be phased out and replaced by digital tools, one should not confuse the issue of copyright with that of funding," he stated at a recent media briefing. "The burden of affordability cannot be shifted onto the copyright holders. Copyright is also an incentive to create and publish. There is a lot of unauthorised usage, but we are reluctant to prosecute universities and schools. Some people even ‘hijack’ businesses and sell (copyrighted) material to schools."
Note: see also (i) the earlier 2015 submission document http://www.publishsa.co.za/file/1494421942pjp-pasasubmissiontodti-copyrightamendmentbill2015.pdf, and (ii) South Africa Copyright Amendment Bill 2017 see ➔ record below.

South Africa Copyright Amendment Bill 2017
South Africa has released a revised version of the 2017 Copyright Amendment Bill, introduced into the National Assembly on 16 May 2017 in terms of Section 75 of the Constitution. The Copyright Amendment Bill, which was first published for comment in July 2015, has been both commended and criticised by stakeholders and experts in the field. Below are links to a range of submissions and comments on the Bill.
http://libguides.wits.ac.za/ld.php?content_id=33607968
http://infojustice.org/archives/38242
https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2017-08-04-fears-of-fair-use-law-being-used-to-rip-off-rights-holders-are-unfounded/

https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2019/6283 [04/06/21]
More on the controversial South African Copyright Amendment Bill, and the issue of free and ‘fair use’. The author argues that “the real question is: who pays for someone else to consume for ‘free’? The issue for the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors’ Association for South Africa (Anfasa) http://www.anfasa.org.za/ relates to sections of the Bill that sanction free use ‘for education’. This applies to Clause 12(d) that permits educational institutions to engage in product substitution. Substitution involves assemblages of previously published extracts for course packs without permission or compensation to the authors and publishers of those works. As copyright lawyer Andre Myburgh observed (see ➔ entry above), the author says this section will also allow for wholesale cut and paste of content from copyright works into assignments, portfolios, theses or dissertations, thus promoting plagiarism. Moreover, Myburgh observed that such compilations could be used for personal use, and also ‘library deposit or posting on an institutional repository’. … “For researchers whose value is often measured via the currency of citation, the Bill now enables reproduction to be done without permission with the author’s name only having to be stated, worryingly, ‘as far as is practicable’. Citations will, under these circumstances, lose their meaning for South African based academic authors. Universities that internally disburse research funds based on citation metrics may need to revisit their policies.” The Bill will affect research budgeting and performance management, the author says, “and will imbalance the value chain as authors will themselves now pay for publishing, rather than readers – a cost that is currently absorbed by libraries and spread across global readerships.”
Digital and e-book publishing

*Note:* this section is primarily confined to articles and books, etc. published over the past ten years, since 2011.

Anderson, Porter  
**Akoss Ofori-Mensah: The Pandemic’s Impact on African Publishers.**  
https://publishingperspectives.com/2020/10/ghana-akoss-ofori-mensah-africa-publishing-innovation-fund-covid19/ [22/05/21]

Akoss Ofori-Mensah, the Ghanaian founder of Sub-Saharan Publishers  
https://subsaharanpublishers.com/ sets out the Pandemic’s impact on African Publishers, and describes the importance of the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund  
https://www.apinnovation.fund/ to assist the continent’s book trade through these very difficult and hugely uncertain times. The $800,000 fund provided by Dubai Cares  
https://www.dubaicares.ae/ supports literacy, book access, indigenous publishing, and library restoration in Africa, and is administered by the International Publishers Association (IPA). The IPA Africa Publishing Innovation Committee is responsible for selecting which applicants will receive grants under the Fund. It is made up of senior publishing leaders from African countries, including Ofori-Mensah, who takes stock here of the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic on publishers on the continent: Practically all publishers in Africa are hurting, she reports, but unlike solutions suggested by some others – who evangelise the benefits of digital and advocate digital solutions – “digital formats are not the helpful alternative for consumers and publishers.” Publishers who produce e-books are few in Ghana, she says, “and few people have the necessary reading devices. The Ghana Library Authority has set up e-reading facilities in their libraries but these are available only in the regional capitals. Reading and learning online are possible for young people who have the necessary devices—tablets, phones, etc. But in some rural areas in Ghana, there’s no electricity, so the question of e-learning doesn’t even arise.”

**Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi**  
**Keynote Speech: Technology and the Future of the Book.**  

This is the transcript of a keynote speech delivered at an Information for Change workshop held in Lagos, Nigeria, on 11 May 2011. Ten years later, although now perhaps a little bit dated here and there, it remains a seminal address not only about the challenges and the opportunities, but also about the realities and the many constraints and caveats of digital publishing in an African environment. Bakare-Yusuf, who is Co-Founder of Cassava Republic Press  
https://cassavarepublic.biz/about-us-4/?v=79cba1185463 in Nigeria, states, that there is a need for a revolution in the education sector, both in Nigeria and across the continent. “There’s a huge need for content and information to be served to students who lack access to good quality teachers and teaching materials. Technology would seem to provide a potential answer.” But the Internet infrastructure is still precarious and “the question remains as to whether technology-enabled solutions can significantly address the yawning knowledge-gap. While technology can revolutionise the practice of citizenship (as we saw to a limited extent in the recent elections in Nigeria) and lead to a demand for full participation/awareness of rights, we have to be careful not to turn to technology into a form of fetish, or a set of magic bullets that can cut through sedimented practice and outmoded ways of being.”

Bakare-Yusuf goes on to say “here on the continent, for all the excitable talk of an emerging African middle class, the reality is that the majority of Africans are still not online and if anything at all, ‘Amazon’
remains a large river in South America. E-commerce (and e-books) are a middle-distance dream.” She believes that the need for printed books will remain the key issue for years to come as the rising consumer class expands. “Unlike the West where there is a glut in book and knowledge production, we simply don’t have enough books providing quality information about our society today and in the distant past. In contrast to their Western and Asian counterparts, many African children grow up without ever having seen, let alone owned, beautiful, well-illustrated books which inspire them to a life of reading, beauty, learning and curiosity for the world.” Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, says “as publishers, we must get better at tapping into the oral culture which structures society in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent. While there may sometimes be a lack of enthusiasm for reading, there is never anything other than joy in the all too human practice of telling and listening to stories. We need to find a way to marry text with voice to bring back the power of storytelling. Digital technology allows us to do so and we must embrace it fully even if Internet infrastructure remains a challenge.”

Through technology, she concludes, publishers can increasingly deliver rich content using a variety of media. “We can talk also about e-books and the possibility in terms of sales and better access etc. However, I am sceptical about the immediate opportunities here in Africa. Nonetheless, digital allows us to challenge the notion of the narcissistic authorial voice or the cult of the ‘genius’ that is at the heart of book production with its obsession over the individual celebrated author which masks the collective efforts that is involved in any act of creation. However, with digitalisation and socialising media, especially where online text, art, music, film are combined, a dynamic and collaborative way of creation and learning becomes available. In societies like ours where we have mis-educated and under-educated individuals whom we allow to transmit their own mis-education to future generations, interactively produced and inherently participative content can reduce that and offer teachers and learners a new way of learning and ultimately enable a re-discovery of the joy of the ‘book’. There is much work to be done.”


Published by the Worldreader organization https://www.worldreader.org/, this very useful report and round-up of the current [2017] state of the publishing landscape in Africa seeks to demonstrate that publishers in African countries have started to experience the advantages of digital: “Publishers in the three focus countries (Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria) have started to realize small but increasingly significant revenue streams and other advantages of digital, like learning from data and reaching broader and more diverse audiences across borders. This reflection on the current state of digital publishing marks a baseline for future growth and collaboration with our global network of publishers.” In order to better understand the publishing ecosystem and potential for digital in three of Worldreader’s partner countries, a survey was sent to 65 publishers across three countries, with a range of questions that aimed to outline the digital publishing landscape, from a publisher’s production costs in print to perceived barriers and opportunities for digital growth. When analysing the results of the survey, the report says, “there were themes that existed across all three markets, like reduced production costs and shortened timelines through digital. Digital is making it cheaper and easier to create and produce content. Other themes were large educational publishers maintaining a stronghold on the market, and economies of scale for production of physical
books making it prohibitive for smaller trade publishers to enter the market. However, publishers are beginning to embrace digital to strip away the need for minimal print runs, thus diversifying the types of books brought to market that would not have been possible before. Publishers across the board see the potential for digital books. All respondents identified new markets and a wider audience as the greatest reward for going digital, but publishers also identified reaching these new audiences as digital’s greatest challenge.” In its conclusion the report states: “Digital changes are coming, and coming at scale. Those publishers who are ahead of the curve and ready to support the digitizing market will be a guiding force through this transition and can help guide local e-book policies and drive their local book supply chains into the future.”


This is the third in a series of biennial CODESRIA conferences on electronic publishing and dissemination in Africa, and the challenges – and practical experiences – of putting African journals online, as well as reporting about a variety of new initiatives in digital publishing on the continent. The above link provides access to over 20 papers presented.


Institutional repositories are an increasingly significant component in the provision of academic publication and information resources. They are being developed throughout the world as a consequence of the availability of scholarly resources in digital formats, and in response to open access policies and mandates. To gain a better sense of the existing institutional repository landscape in Africa, the International African Institute (IAI) first collated and published on its website an inventory of all known institutional repositories in 24 African countries http://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/repositories.html (there are no known depositories in 27 other African countries.) It thereafter conducted a survey among a selected number of repositories listed on the IAI website, approaching more than 50 institutions (mainly university libraries), with questionnaires in English, French and Portuguese. A total of 18 institutions and universities responded to the survey, whose responses are analysed in this report. Following a general analysis of the results, this includes a description of the range of activities of each repository, such as details of collections, size of holdings, disciplines covered, hosting and software used, copyright policies employed, and open access policies, together with full contact details, links to websites and OAI-PMH (Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting).

In a concluding comment the authors set out the inevitable limitations of this initial study, for example that it has not addressed at any meaningful level the ‘demand’ (e.g. from researchers) for repositories, nor the scale or quality of the materials contained therein, nor their formats
or user-friendliness. At an operational level, questions remain about restrictions on access, fears of plagiarism and concerns about copyright. Authors may be concerned about being able to publish materials placed in repositories elsewhere in journals or books. “The authors of this study fully acknowledge these complexities. But repositories as sites for storing research materials, in particular university theses, in Africa as elsewhere, will be with us for the future and therefore will impact on researchers’ publication and dissemination strategies and be used increasingly as research tools. Those interested in Africa’s changing research, publishing, institutional and library landscapes need to take note.”


“Nigerian book publishers need to do more in the digital space, as a revolution is about to happen”, the author proclaims. Publishers in Nigeria are reluctant to make their books available in digital formats because they fear content will be pirated. But publishers are shortsighted, he says, and “have been the most conservative and sceptical” of the Internet’s potential, the new digital environment, and e-book platforms. He concedes, however, ”the big question that should bother anybody who reads books in Nigeria is this: how do you reconcile the Internet’s free model with the need to pay authors and publishers enough money, the need to incentivise the creators of books to create more books?” Although the author believes that “commercial print books will stick around, at least to the middle of this century”, digital books will gain more ground. “And no one should be scared – not in Nigeria anyway. We do not have the gargantuan print-focused publishing infrastructure of Europe and North America, so we have a better chance of creating the publishing space of the future. Our past is weak, and we have fewer debts to settle.” Solomon Elusoji is co-founder at Wanmilion http://www.wanmilion.com/, a start-up seeking creative ways to get more people to read more books.

https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/download/pdf/24/1.0058254/1 [15/06/21]
Also at https://pkp.sfu.ca/files/AfricanWorkshops.pdf [15/06/21]

This substantial and wide-ranging thesis investigates current [as at 2011] publishing practices among scholarly journals in Africa, while exploring the potential contribution of online publishing systems to aid those practices. It examines “how current systems, largely involving traditional publishing methods, offer Africans limited opportunities and incremental gains in taking advantage of faster and wider dissemination of digital systems for scholarly communication.” Issues about authorship, readership, editorial and peer review, as well as the level of science resources in African academic libraries, are also discussed. The author assembled data from 286 key actors (journal editors, potential journal editors, librarians, IT administrators, faculty and postgraduate students) from sub-Saharan Africa during a twelve months period in 2007–09. Drawing on this data set, the study documents and analyses the availability of journals and other information resources accessible to the African research community through digital technologies, and examines current constraints in ICT infrastructure, training, and support inhibiting the utilization of ICT in advancing African
scholarly publishing output. A range of recommendations and proposals are put forward “for tapping into the full potential of these technologies in strengthening research capacity, improving the quality of research, reducing Africa’s isolation from the global scholarly community, and ultimately narrowing the information divide.” Among these proposals, set out in a detailed appendix, is a “Proposal for [a] Center for Study of Online Scholarly Publishing Africa” which “seeks support to develop a sustainable Center at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana “that will be responsible for the training and development of highly skilled human capacity with Africa’s academic research community that will facilitate and strengthen the production, circulation, and utilization of knowledge in Africa and beyond through new publishing models.”


Digital technologies, such as e-books, are predicted to have a profound effect on publishing, but are yet to have a serious impact on the South African book industry [as at 2014]. Research conducted in the Department of Information Science at the University of Pretoria considered the implications of digitisation and digital publishing for the trade book publishing industry in South Africa by evaluating the current state of the industry using the context and predictive value of disruptive technology theory. The authors note that as long as digital publishing remains a niche market, the costs involved do not justify overturning publishers’ existing business models entirely, and the technical costs of setting up a digital publishing system might currently outweigh the potential sales of e-books. Moreover, a traditional publishing company’s change to an electronic publisher demands a huge reorganisation effort and a great deal of investment: “Publishers are only likely to invest enthusiastically in e-books once the market grows to a significant size and scope. However, disruptive technology theory provides us with many cautionary tales of businesses that did not invest in new technology for these very reasons. When the tipping point is reached and the digital publishing market becomes profitable, traditional publishers that did not invest in digital technologies will face the risk of being left behind. The recommendations formulated from disruptive technology theory can provide a useful ‘how-to’ guide for publishers implementing and managing digital publishing in their business processes.”


“Digital technologies such as e-books are predicted to have a profound effect on publishing, but they are yet to have a serious impact on the industry. This paper considers the implications of digitization and digital publishing for the trade book publishing industry in South Africa. Through surveys and interviews with South African trade publishers, a picture was developed of the current state of digital publishing. This state is evaluated using the context and predictive value of disruptive technology theory. In this case, digital technology is seen as a disruptive technology in the traditional print publishing environment. As the paper shows, the problems that publishers are experiencing are characteristic of industries faced...
with disruptive technology. The principles of disruptive technology can therefore be applied to develop recommendations and suggest strategies for publishers planning to venture into digital publishing. Although the focus of the research was on South African trade publishers, the results and recommendations that emerged from the research can be applied to different sectors of publishing as well as to the wider international publishing industry.” [Not examined, abstract]


Discusses collections of inspirational poetry published on the Nigerian online platform and app OkadaBooks https://okadabooks.com/ that lets users upload and access e-books for free or at a low cost. “Nigerian inspirational poetry can be seen as a hybrid poetic form that borrows from motivational speaking, self-help and religious pamphlet literature. The collections are marketed to readers as works of literature that through their literary qualities and poetic language can inspire the reader to create a better future for him- or herself.” [Not examined, from the abstract].


Examines the extent of production of digital book titles, deployment of e-promotion, and how they correlate with schools, libraries, bookshops, and consumer and author readiness, with a view to enhancing publishers’ understanding of and participation in e-publishing. The study found that 2014 digital titles (mainly textbooks and scholarly content) were issued in four formats by 33 out of 109 firms surveyed. Authors and consumers were perceived to be more digital-ready than libraries, schools and bookshops. There was a significant relationship between the issuance of digital titles and author, consumer, and library readiness.


This interesting PhD thesis by Nigerian writer Anietie Isong investigates the influence of new media technologies on African literature. It explores how these new technologies have shaped the way Africans write, publish, and read literature. It aims to demonstrate how the new media have added value to writers and readers of African literature and, at the same time, has altered the landscape of African publishing. A total of 30 African writers and 300 readers completed a survey questionnaire designed to elicit responses on how new media has influenced African literature. These responses were based on a 17-item questionnaire, details of which are included in the appendices.

The author’s literature review and analysis of the data demonstrated that the new technologies have had a large impact on the production, consumption, and circulation of African literature, and also revealed that mobile phones play a major role in the production and consumption of literary works in Africa: “Writers use mobile devices to produce new
works, and readers participating in this survey were found to be frequent users of mobile phone devices for reading, with the majority saying that they read multiple genres — essays, novels, short stories, and poems. It was also revealed that readers prefer e-reading devices to paper books because they are easy to carry, while writers have divided opinions on the matter of their preference. Several authors are in support of traditional, paper books, while others admit that both e-readers and print books are necessary for the distribution of African literature.” The study also showed that cost remains a major issue for both writers and readers, and impacts their interactions with literature. “While writers want to be paid to publish, the Internet (especially its ‘Web 2.0’ form) tends to make works available freely. Readers seldom buy content online, and prefer to read for free. Therefore, publishers wishing to cater for the needs of African readers must greatly consider the effect of cost.”


In this perceptive interview Matthieu Joulin is in conversation with Justin Cox, CEO of the African Books Collective Ltd (ABC), http://www.africanbookscollective.com/ who talks about the background that led to the establishment of ABC, how it works, its business model, and his views about the challenges and opportunities offered by digital technologies in the distribution of books produced by African publishers. E-books and digital content are now a major part of ABC’s operations. The biggest proportion of sales in this area is made to those who specialise in providing content to libraries on subscription, as collections and/or one-off perpetual sales. Cox says that they have attracted 100+ partners in this area and “as a consequence of this work, African-published books have, in terms of availability, ‘gone mainstream’ in markets outside Africa: they are no longer an ‘exotic product’ stored on library shelves and are as easily available as any book published anywhere else.” Digital books, he says, “increase the discoverability of a title much more than a print book can. And though the readers we talk to overwhelmingly prefer print they have, more than likely, discovered the book digitally first, perhaps by searching for the title specifically, or searching for something related to that book’s content. This has expanded the market for these books considerably.”

Journo, Aurélie “Literary Networks and Digital Media in Contemporary African Literatures” E-rea [En ligne], https://journals.openedition.org/erea/12822 (Posted 19/01/21) [04/11/21]

The aim of this paper is to engage with digital media and online spaces – blogs, social media – in relation to contemporary literary practices in Africa in order “to present a range of issues surrounding what has often been presented as a ‘revolution’ or a technological turn, the impact of which, in the history of the book, would be comparable to Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press. “The rhetoric of revolution leads us to question the impact of the emergence and development of new media on all aspects of the production of literature: from the way literature is created, to the form(s) it inhabits and the ways it is attributed value, circulated, consumed and read. Faced with a crisis in publishing, digital publishing is often presented as a potential solution, a cheaper way to produce and circulate books that might exist alongside print while others predict digital books will replace printed books altogether. On the African continent, a growing number of initiatives promoting e-books in both the educational and
literary markets, despite remaining concerns about accessibility, points to a relative consensus among African publishers that digital and print will go hand in hand in the foreseeable future. However, though Zell contends the most important is to get books to the readers through any media — print, e-books, smartphone apps — he still presents new technologies and social media as having played an important role in “a diminishing reading culture in many countries in Africa”. This ambivalence or tension between the digital as a competitor to print and reading on the one hand, and as a new form and platform that might on the contrary revive reading and writing on the other hand, is palpable.

In her concluding remarks the author states: “Literary production online is ever-shifting and ever-evolving, with new platforms invested for literary creation and the circulation of texts. With the global pandemic for example, digital spaces have been invested by festivals and many events were held online, allowing for different audiences to come together. If digital spaces offer keys for new forms of collective, popular engagement with literary production and participate in questioning traditional notions of ‘authorship’ and the reduction of literature to the ‘book, they cannot be dissociated from the more traditional circuits of literature that still play a major role, financially and in the ways literary value is attributed.”

Kulesz, Octavio Digital Publishing in Developing Countries. Paris: International Alliance of Independent Publishers, 2011. 156 pp. [Also available in French and Spanish versions] Online: http://alliance-lab.org/etude/wp-content/uploads/digital_publishing.pdf (15.5MB) (Also available for download on EPUB and MOBI) An important, albeit now a little bit dated study [2011], published both in print and online formats by the Alliance International des éditeurs indépendants https://www.alliance-editeurs.org/?lang=fr in association with the Prince Claus Fund, on the prospects of digital publishing in developing countries. It is written by Octavio Kulesz, an Argentine philosopher, formerly a traditional publisher now turned digital publisher. It covers Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 40-56), the Arab world, and Russia. However, coverage of the situation (and the survey undertaken) in Africa is restricted to a number of francophone African countries and South Africa, for which it provides an overview and assessment of the current picture, the development of reading devices, experiences with CD ROM and print-on-demand, the emergence of African online stores, digital repositories; and the mobile phone network as a possible platform for new experiments in digital publishing, for example using the cellular network to publish and distribute works of fiction. The author also looks at the challenges and opportunities ahead, and the possible trends. Although coverage of the situation in Africa is somewhat limited, this remains a valuable report, and there are also some interesting observations in the conclusions and the proposed action plan, albeit with many caveats.

An appraisal of Worldreader’s https://www.worldreader.org/ digital reading programme (2010–present), which aims to provide school children and their families in 53 countries with
access to culturally and linguistically relevant digital books, by supplying schools (e.g. through its iREAD programme in Ghana) and libraries (e.g. through its LEAP programme in Kenya) with low-cost e-readers and tablets that are loaded with digital books and other digital teaching and learning materials. Worldreader aims to improve literacy skills by helping to create a culture of reading in places with very limited access to reading materials. Outside school contexts, the organization has also developed Worldreader Mobile, a suite of free mobile reading apps with access to its digital library content, which are built for a variety of platforms, from Android to mobile web browsers. Worldreader seeks to pursue an integrated approach that combines context-appropriate technology, digital access to over 37,000 book titles in 43 languages, together with teacher and librarian support, and community engagement. This Brookings Institution study provides further background about Worldreader’s operation and activities, costs and operating budgets, reviewing its impact and evidence of success, the key drivers behind scaling impact, planning for long-term financial sustainability, and “Lessons learned”.

The advancement of ICT, especially the rapid spread of the Internet, which makes information more widely available to more people, has brought about significant changes to the publishing industry, including the rise of electronic information sources such as e-journals and e-books. The research presented in this meticulously documented dissertation aims to shed light on the use and adoption of e-books at the University of Namibia. The results of the study revealed a high awareness about e-books by students, as well as frequent general use of e-books. The study, the author reports, also observed positive attitudes towards e-books by students, “as they indicated a preference for e-books over printed books and reported using e-books mainly for course work and research purposes.” However, “in identifying factors that hinder the use of e-books, aspects such as slow Internet connections, lack of knowledge (including the awareness and skills required to utilise e-books), limited and/or lack of relevant e-books titles, preference for print, eye strain and difficulty reading on screen, as well as limited computers and lack of e-readers, were identified as major deterrents for the use of e-books.”

One of the presentations made at an IFLA /MLAS Seminar ’E-books in Libraries: A Global Question of Survival?’, organized in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in London on 21 February 2013. Based on the findings of an online survey conducted among a number of African libraries, this presentation aims to provide an overview of the e-book market in Africa [as at 2013], identifying some of the factors that impact on the growth of this market on the continent, its current trends and patterns, and offering some projections on the future likely growth of the e-book market. The presentation includes charts showing the proportion of library budgets spent on e-books in 37 libraries in Africa, and the size of e-book collections held, which, with the possible exception of South Africa, are shown to be still very modest. The author states that the African e-book market is
not growing quickly enough, and this for several reasons, including the challenges of Internet connectivity, still relatively high e-book prices because of fluctuating exchange rates, high prices of e-readers and, from the point of view of publishers, fear of piracy, lack of an effective legal framework for digital rights management, and fear of the unknown to experiment with new formats and platforms in what is already a highly volatile market for most publishers. However, if these obstacles can be overcome the author believes “e-books have the potential of spreading reading to more people and new groups of readers that libraries would otherwise find hard to reach.”

Although now a little bit dated, offers some helpful thoughts and recommendations from the resource-rich IP Kenya blog https://ipkenya.wordpress.com/ relating to copyright and intellectual property and, more specifically, to the issues and challenges – and the finer points – of digital rights/licensing agreements between authors and publishers, and how to avoid the pitfalls.

Polzin, Alexander Worldreader: Mobile Publishing and Reading South of the Sahara.
http://publishingperspectives.com/2014/12/worldreader-mobile-publishing-reading-south-sahara/ (Posted 08 December 2014) [02/09/21]
Alexander Polzin, who leads Worldreader’s https://www.worldreader.org/ African content acquisition, digital production and localization projects, says that despite numerous challenges, people in emerging African markets are engaged in mobile reading, and are reading more: “mobile heralds a potentially massive opportunity for all publishers to increase their readership.” The mobile, he says, can have an immense value “as a mechanism to promote literatures between different African countries and cultures where a lack of books is often cited as a primary impediment to developing a mainstream reading culture.” However, challenges and stumbling blocks remain, and paying for books still isn’t yet easy enough. “Payment gateways remain fragmented intercontinentally and the revenue-split commanded by telcos works against offering a realistic mass market price.”

Founded by Nigerian entrepreneur Okechukwu Ofili in 2013, Okadabooks https://www.okadabooks.com/ is an e-distribution start-up that has developed a popular publishing/reading app for Android mobiles or tablets and other platforms. It takes its name from the Okada motorcycle taxis, commonly used in Nigeria and in other parts of West Africa used to overcome traffic congestion. Okadabooks says it “seeks to bypass the traffic in the Nigerian book publishing industry by making it easy to publish books, making it cheap to buy books, but more importantly making it fun to read books on mobile devices….We created the platform primarily to give up and coming authors published or unpublished an avenue to get their works distributed and monetized as early as possible…. It’s a fast, simple and fun way to read books without ever leaving your couch!” It thus seeks to harness the power of the
mobile phone to make it easier and cheaper for Nigerians to read. Available on several platforms, Okadabooks accepts credit/bank card payments from all over the world. Authors earn a 70% royalty from each sale, but a cumulative income of at least N10,000 (ca. GBP22.00) has to be accrued before earnings are remitted. Books are available in all parts of the world. At this time more than 120,000 users are registered on the platform.

In this perceptive interview Ofili talks about the Okada story, how it started and was funded, the e-technology they use, the number of books they offer and their authors, their current challenges on various fronts, the business lessons they have learnt so far, and also offers some sound advice for fresh tech entrepreneurs: He says that it is easy to get a bit of media coverage in Nigeria, and “so you may believe your idea is great, not realizing it is not. So don’t judge yourself by vanity metrics. Judge by quality and impact metrics, like traction, revenue and growth.”


An insightful interview with Nigerian publisher Gbenro Adegbola, CEO of First Veritas Educational Content Delivery Ltd http://1stveritas.com/\, a leading player in the digital publishing industry in that country, and who was also actively involved in the Opon Imo (Tablet) project of the Osun State government for senior secondary school students http://osun.gov.ng/education/opon-imo/. Adegbola talks about his background and what led him into digital publishing ventures, developing and delivering educational content, and the hurdles and challenges that had to be overcome in the process. He does not share the common view of poor professionalism in the Nigerian book industry. Instead, he says, “the problem really stems from an extremely low entry barrier to the industry, which means that many companies who do not have the right resources have found their way into industry.” While the industry has grown and has achieved almost 100% local authorship at the lower educational level, and which is a significant achievement, another problem is the lack of institutions offering degree/training programmes for prospective book industry professionals. “Publishing is a fairly tough business anywhere in the world, in the sense that there is no perfect science of determining what book will sell. That is why most Nigerian publishers have taken the line of least resistance and limited themselves to educational publishing, where the numbers [of primary school pupils] are just incredible.”

Note: for two other interviews with Gbenro Adegbola see also Gbenro Adegbola: Copyright War Will be Better Served with Public Education http://sunnewsonline.com/gbenro-adegbola-copyright-war-ill-be-better-served-with-public-education/ (Posted 27 May 2017), and Williams, Olatoun Interview with Gbenro Adegbola https://www.academia.edu/34941205/Interview_with_Gbenro_Adegbola_First_Veritas.

Matinde, Vincent Kenya: Integrating e-Books in Education.
http://www.idgconnect.com/abstract/14675/kenya-integrating-books-education (Posted 01 April 2016) [04/06/21]

Citing the late Tony Read’s World Bank study Where Have All the Textbooks Gone http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/883821468179671004/pdf/97932-PUB-Box391498B-PUBLIC.pdf some policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa see e-materials as potential replacements for printed textbooks and reading books. The Kenyan government has
now launched a digital content page for e-learning. The site, KICD Interactive Content http://kicdinteractivecontent.ac.ke/ will allow publishers to upload their e-books to be used across the board. A number of Kenyan publishers are reportedly warming up to this new and perhaps inevitable change in content demand, and believe the move by the government is a step in the right direction in as far as it provides a structure within which digital content can be made available to schools. Several local publishers have their content already available in PDF and most have converted some of this content into ePUB format, in view of its versatility when viewing on a wide range of mobile devices. However, while publishers may well be attracted by digital publishing for schools, Mary Maina, General Manager of Moran Publishers in Kenya http://moranpublishers.com/ – who already offer 200 titles in digital book formats – cautions that it is easy to be excited about a technology without evaluating the environment in which it is used. And, as emphasized in the Read study, there are many challenges, notably the considerable costs of developing digital content, cost implications of hardware and software procurement, maintenance and replacement; and overall development of e-learning has to be coupled with other developments relating to infrastructure and Internet provision.

McNulty, Niall  The Changing Role of the Publisher in the Age of Plenty. https://creativecommons.org/2016/08/03/changing-role-publisher-age-plenty/ (Posted 03 August 2016) [22/05/21] Niall McNulty is digital publishing manager at the African branch of Cambridge University Press in Cape Town http://www.cup.co.za/. In this interesting blog posting he sets out his thoughts how a traditional publishing business could engage with the open movement and the plethora of freely-available content online. McNulty says “Sub-Saharan Africa has a vibrant and diverse publishing industry, with local and international players producing content in a number of languages across various genres. Due to market conditions, however, many print books need to be sold at low-price points, e.g. full-colour, senior level textbooks are sold for less than $3 in some countries. At the same time governments and NGOs are constantly looking for ways to make content freely available as budgets for learning and teaching resource material are squeezed.” So what, then, are the opportunities and challenge for publishers when content is freely available in the new digital environment? How can a conventional commercial publisher engage with and use open resources, how does this sit alongside copyrighted content, and what other revenue streams or business models can a publisher embrace to develop sustainable businesses? McNulty then describes two existing projects, as well as outlining his thinking about a few other potential business models. In his conclusion he states “While still in the early phases of my thinking and experimentation around open business models and the relationship to education and publishing, it does seem that opportunities exist to explore new revenue streams that can embrace and re-use open content while at the same time providing sound pedagogic solutions to learners in sub-Saharan Africa that are innovative and of a high quality.”

Universities in Kenya have subscribed to a range of electronic books and electronic journals through the Kenya Libraries and Information Services Consortium (KLISC). However, the lack of an effective marketing strategy has been identified as one of the major barriers to their utilization. Here two Kenyan university librarians present the results of a survey study they conducted on the application of “a strategic approach in the marketing” or publicizing of electronic resources. The study also sought insights into academic librarians’ understanding of marketing principles and the challenges they face in carrying out “marketing activities” in order to encourage more effective use of these resources. A questionnaire was used to gather data. Respondents were recruited by email from institutions that belong to KLISC, and a total of twenty-nine members responded. The responses gathered reveal that although academic librarians are carrying out some promotional or what the authors describe as “marketing activities”, the majority of them are not applying of what could be described as a strategic marketing approach.

https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2017.1371618

It is impossible to deny that across the continent there is a rise in a variety of online platforms for publishing and consuming of literature from Africa, and there are now several digital initiatives who curate African literary content for readers. This article “explores the landscape of online literary platforms in Africa and the role they play in shaping the contemporary African literary scene. It does this by drawing on secondary sources, as well as primary interviews with key players in the field to get further insight into this rise. Having established this, the paper hones in on African languages, and how digital technologies have enabled the production of multiple languages simultaneously for readers in various African countries. Through this, the article suggests that digital platforms give importance and value to Africans when it comes to the production and consumption of African literature.” [Not examined, from the abstract]

Njau, Barbara We Do Everything Online So Why Aren’t We All Reading E-Books? 
https://trueafrica.co/lists/we-do-everything-online-so-why-are-people-still-reluctant-to-read-e-books/ (Posted 30 June 2016) [22/05/21]

Barbara Njau of digital publisher Bahati Books http://bahatibooks.com/ makes a strong pitch for the virtues of the e-book, e-readers and tablets. “Why baulk at the inevitable. Why challenge change instead of embracing it?” she asks. When you go on holiday you need space in your suitcase for more clothes and shoes, rather than “heavy novels”. Pity the poor students travelling to and from class with several books in their bags; and no trees need to be chopped down to produce books, she argues. Moreover, “the gatekeepers are gone thanks to e-books”, and “costly, hardcopy publishing has been shunned by nimble publishers”, she asserts. While not everyone will agree with this claim, she makes some entirely valid points, especially as it relates to books and reading in Africa, and the cost and availability of conventional books. It is also true that reading on e-readers, tablets and low-end mobile apps offer genuinely exciting opportunities to promote books and reading to a much wider audience than was hitherto possible, recruiting new readers, and helping to get more content to more people at a price they can afford.
Nwankwo, Victor “Print-on-Demand. An African Publisher’s Experience” [re-issue] 
http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/print-on-demand-an-african-publisher-s-experience [04/06/21]

A republished version, by African Books Collective (ABC), of the late Victor Nwankwo’s “Print-on-Demand. An African Publisher’s Experience”, with a new foreword putting it into context. (An expanded version of this paper was first published in APNET’s African Publishing Review v. 11, no. 5, 2002.) As ABC notes, “reading Victor Nwankwo’s study today, some 18 years on, it is easy to forget the huge changes that have taken place in the publishing and bookselling world such as online bookselling, digital marketing, e-books and e-Library resources. … The practical action that this study prompted paved the way for ABC’s future sustainability. Victor Nwankwo believed that donor funding for the Collective would eventually cease and that African publishers would need to find ways to stand on their own two feet, and aside from an interest in new technology this is what drove his work. When donor funding did indeed cease in 2006, ABC was fortunate to not only have the POD model to base a new operation around, but also the ‘digital revolution’ in full swing around it. Though some of the early years under this new incarnation were touch-and-go in terms of breaking even, African publishers continue to retain their own international distribution collective which will be celebrating 30 years of trading in 2020.”

Note: for an obituary of the late Victor Nwankwo see


Also at (freely accessible)

Examines the activities of Okadabooks https://okadabooks.com/, a Nigerian e-book publishing and reading platform – founded by Okechukwu Ofili in 2013 – and its impact on the Nigerian publishing industry, exploring the complex and overlapping relationships between writing online, self-publishing and e-book publishing, organizing innovative outreach programmes to foster and spread literacy. “Drawing on interviews as well as an institutional analysis of Okadabooks, the article traces the emergence and evolution of Okadabooks as a way of documenting an important and growing sector of literary publishing in Nigeria. By examining book distribution challenges in Nigeria, and exploring the ways e-book publishing offers solutions in terms of ease of publication, it shows how the platform enables writers to make money from their writing, and reach more readers. Consequently, it shows how Okadabooks is opening up spaces for homegrown Nigerian literary talent in a way that creates both cultural and economic value.” (From the abstract)

Note: See also this related article published in 2019 https://towardsdatascience.com/riding-okadabooks-aae359d9fbad

https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/26842#.W7H-hHtKipq [04/06/21]
This PhD thesis investigates the state of digital publishing in Ghana, with a focus on children’s e-books. It examines publishers’, authors’ and readers’ levels of adoption of e-books, and their motivations for, perceptions of, and challenges or barriers to going digital or otherwise. It also assesses the state of digital infrastructure and human resource capacity in Ghana to support the growing e-book sector, and identifies the knowledge and skills deficit in the industry in order to inform the development of courses that will be incorporated into the BA Publishing Studies programme at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). The thesis revealed that the level of adoption of e-book publishing among publishers and authors was still relatively low given the interest demonstrated by young readers. The thesis also identified “an awareness disconnect between publishers and their local readers: publishers perceive e-books to be for the international market and, as such, do not focus on promoting them in the local market; thus, local readers are not aware of the existence of e-books.”

A number of introductory chapters introduce the research and its context, outline the research methodology used, and offers a literature review on digital publishing and children’s e-books. Subsequent chapters describe the history and current status of publishing in Ghana; examine authors’ levels of adoption of e-book publishing, young readers’ levels of awareness of and access to the use of e-books; as well as reviewing the infrastructure and human resource capacities available in the country to support the emerging e-book sector. A final concluding chapter summarises and synthesises the main findings – as they relate to publishers, authors, young readers, infrastructure, and human resources – and sets out a range of recommendations. This is an impressive and wide-ranging thesis that will be of great value to the book professions not only in Ghana but throughout Africa, and especially for African publishers who are contemplating ‘going digital’ for at least part of their list.


Amidst all the digital euphoria [in 2011], this is an interesting perspective pleading for the continuing support of libraries in Africa by the former Head of Fundraising and Communications at Book Aid International https://bookaid.org/. Jacqui Smith argues that “African library services remain desperate for donated printed books at the same time as their Western book donors are facing a transformation within the industry. On the whole, African library services are not yet ready to provide books in electronic formats for lending, neither are their readers ready to borrow content for e-devices.” With regard to digital content and libraries, she reports that “few, if any, public or national library services in sub-Saharan Africa are delivering library resources via e-reader or mobile phone”. While the mobile phone may well have real potential to accessing digital information in sub-Saharan Africa “mobile phone ownership in rural areas remains low, and women are much less likely to own a mobile phone than men.” She accepts that once the infrastructure for accessing digital content is in place, any digitized book can theoretically be provided to any reader without the need for a shop, road or paper; and that this presents possibilities for locally produced content in local languages, and new opportunities to sell African content to Western audiences could open up. “Yet as some barriers are removed, others are created or remain: cost and economic
viability will remain an issue for content production, particularly in local languages; technical skills and the upfront investment in the tools for digital production will need to be enhanced.”

Printed materials, she concludes, “will continue to co-exist alongside digital materials at least in the medium term, and will continue to be sourced from a range of suppliers including NGOs and international and local publishers.” She cautions there are still many underlying social and infrastructural issues which mitigate against universal access to digital content in the medium term: “people in remote areas still lack access to the infrastructure for purchasing, charging and maintaining reading devices and mobile phones. They are also likely to be the poorest and therefore the least likely to have disposable income to buy books or invest in the means to read them. … whether or not access to digital content expands, libraries remain the most effective model to optimise the number of users per book, able to provide access to information for the widest range of people. From small community libraries in rural areas to large municipal libraries, libraries must remain central to providing access to books for millions of African people. Providing support to libraries, librarians, teachers and parents and other readers will enhance the experience of readers and potential readers, whether they are using an e-book or a printed book.”

Secorun, Laura *Kenya’s Tech Startups Trial Digital Classrooms in Drive for Literacy.*
With limited Internet access and regular power outages in schools, will digital education companies be able to transform learning in East Africa? Kenya is brimming with companies trying to bring education into the digital era by scanning textbooks, developing bite-sized courses for mobile phones and providing tablets to rural schools. And Kenya’s Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology is rolling out a Digital Literacy Programme, which promises to deliver 1.2m devices to all of the country’s 21,718 public primary schools by the end of 2017. However, only a third of Kenyans have access to the Internet and many schools often suffer from regular power outages, which makes it difficult to charge the devices. That is why BRCK-Education https://www.brck.com/, a Nairobi tech company, has developed the Kio Kit. This portable digital classroom includes a Wifi hotspot, a small server packed with educational content, and 40 tablets that can be charged wirelessly, and which they claim will work even in the roughest conditions in rural schools.

However, devices and gadgets alone are unlikely to bridge the digital divide in Kenya’s education. One Laptop Per Child https://laptop.org/ – a not-for-profit organization providing low-cost computers to children around the world – once had similar aspirations and was active in over 30 countries, before downsizing, the author reports. Even with public support, questions remain about how effective digital classrooms are, and empirical evidence on their academic merits is still scarce. A large-scale study by the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation concluded that computer-assisted learning had “decidedly mixed effects”, depending on the context, see http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/429341481774674870/The-Impact-of-Education-Programmes-on-Learning-and-School-Participation.pdf.

Looks back at the early development of indigenous publishing in Africa, how locally owned publishing companies were formed and how they progressed over the years, the major challenges they faced at the time, the organizations and bodies that supported the book industries, and the technology issues that began to dominate discussions about publishing in the early 21st century. Stringer says the current picture [2016] indicates that, despite the opportunities now offered by these continuously evolving technologies, many African publishers have still not fully embraced the digital age to maintain or improve their position in the publishing world. Not many publishers have websites, and of those that do, they frequently don’t work. However, there are notable exceptions, and there are now a good number of small new African publishers fully comfortable with the technologies, who “are adapting their approaches to publishing to take advantage of the opportunities that are available in the digital age.” These publishers “represent the future of African publishing, particularly in the general publishing and literary arena. They are building on the foundations laid by the now established African indigenous publishers, but are better placed to use the technologies and approaches required in the digital age.”


[18/06/21]

Michael Trucano is Global Lead for Innovation in Education, and Senior Education & Technology Policy Specialist at the World Bank. He is also the person behind the rich and informative EduTech blog, that explores the use of new technologies in education in many parts of the world, including Africa. Trucano began his career exploring the uses of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education in Ghana, Uganda and a number of other places in Africa in the late 1990s, and he has continued to stay engaged with many passionate and innovative groups and people working with ICTs in various ways to help meet a variety of challenges related to education across the continent. His many postings (a few of them now a little bit dated here and there) on digital textbook initiatives in Africa, and use of digital teaching and learning materials on the continent, have included those below:

Surveying ICT Use in Education in Africa (2015)

Calculating the Costs of Digital Textbook Initiatives in Africa (2013)


An Update on the Use of E-Readers in Africa (2012)
E-Reading in Africa (2011)

More on eBooks in Africa (2010)


Note: For more of Michael Trucano’s writing and research see also http://michaeltrucano.com/writing-and-research.

Twumasi, Kofi Asante “The Need to Embrace Electronic Book Publishing in Ghana.”
Ghana Book World, no. 6 (2021): 13-16.
https://gbdc.gov.gh/sites/default/files/Ghana%20Book%20World%20issue%206%202021%20pdf (full text, entire issue)

A short overview of e-book publishing and its prospects for the book industries in Ghana, discussing issues such as accessible devices, concerns and reservations – for example protection of copyright – the need of digital rights management, and marketing platforms for e-books. The author, who is Production Services Manager at the Ghana Book Development Council https://gbdc.gov.gh/ urges publishers that they “should embrace this new era of publishing with optimism.”


https://elpub.episciences.org/5526/pdf or https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02142285
[04/06/21]

This conference paper seeks to investigate the level of electronic publishing trends in institutions of higher learning in Kenya, and at the same time identify the opportunities and challenges faced by academic publishers in that country in the e-publishing area. The authors examine the relationship between authors’ knowledge of e-publishing platforms and publishers’ choice of e-platforms; and analyse “whether an existing work relationship between the publisher and an author influences the format of a publication”. They found that some authors had limited knowledge on particular formats and were rigid in adopting alternative formats. In their conclusions the authors state that while academics generally feel that e-publishing has a bright future, different university presses were at varying levels of e-publishing adoption. “Most authors had little or no knowledge on e-formats and relied on the choice of the publishers and/or advice. A small percentage of authors were privy to various existing e-formats and used this knowledge to engage the publishers before settling on a preferred choice. … The researchers therefore conclude that there is need to create more e-publishing awareness among academic institutions through seminars, collaborations as well as engaging staff in training opportunities through refresher courses. It is imperative for writing workshops [to be held] on [the] importance of e-publishing, types of e-books, formats, e-readers and exhibitions” in order to expose authors, staff and other stakeholders to current e-publishing technologies.
http://www.uis.unesco.org/Communication/Documents/ICT-africa.pdf [01/06/21]

This report from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) found that, despite the development of Information and communications technology (ICT) in education policies, the integration of technology in classrooms across sub-Saharan Africa remains insufficient to meet the needs of the 21st century labour market. ICT in education is widely accepted as both enabling learning and preparing students for employment in a technology-rich workplace, but in sub-Saharan Africa, barriers – including a lack of effective policies, basic infrastructure (i.e. electricity, Internet, computers and mobile devices), financing and teacher training – mean that the use of ICT in education [as at 2015] is still at an embryonic stage in most countries. The most pervasive barrier is the lack of electricity, especially in remote, rural areas. Computers are more likely to be found in urban schools, where access to electricity and the Internet enable computer-assisted instruction and online learning.


A thought-provoking article that forms a chapter in the above collection published by the American Library Association. Too many children in developing countries don’t read well, the authors say, and because people learn to read by reading, addressing the dearth of reading materials must be a priority of development agencies. Digital technology does offer the hope of filling the gap, but as the authors argue, “the cost of hardware is still a bottleneck; and more seriously, since readers need materials of high quality that are relevant to their lives, there is a need to sustain viable publishers in developing counties who can produce those materials. But the flood of digitized materials from abroad and the push for open licensing runs the risk of undermining local publishers. A sustainable way to improve literacy in developing countries should include support to those publishers.”


The text of a speech delivered at the World Book and Copyright Day 2021 celebrations in Accra, by Asare Konadu Yamoah, current president of the Ghana Publishers Association https://gpagh.org/. Much progress has been made in the last few years to make e-books accessible to screen reader users on different platforms, Konadu says, and this has opened new worlds for readers, publishers, writers, and visually impaired people. It has presented
“new opportunities for publishers by offering an alternative platform that mirror the traditional book production and distribution format. However, in Ghana, the development of e-books has not been encouraging, although a good number publishers are now considering converting their books into e-books, to be offered on various different platforms”. Innovative platforms, such as AZALIA, “that were indigenous and promised to revolutionise the e-books experience in Ghana have not been successful, not because of inefficiency, but [quality of] content.”

There are many advantages that have been listed by users in educational settings, but “all that has been said about the usefulness and convenience of the e-book comes with financial and other conditions.” In Ghana, the author argues, “we need to pay attention to the infrastructure, and must increase internet penetration and accessibility. We must incorporate the e-learning system into our curriculum, offering publishers incentives to convert and align their publishing infrastructure to the provision of e-learning materials … There is every reason for publishers to be apprehensive in venturing into the e-book market, considering the potential of having pirates encroach on their works. This requires that our legal framework must be reviewed to offer more proactive provisions (the copyright and other intellectual property laws). … The initial cost for the development of e-books and e-learning resources is quite high, and any potential loss of investment should be addressed through policy. Despite all these challenges, I would encourage publishers to look at the various opportunities that the digital revolution portends.”

Pre-print version (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/43714325/Digital_vs_Print_Resources_at_African_University_Institutions_A_Discussion_Document [18/05/21]
It is clear that both libraries and publishers in Africa will want to fully embrace the advantages and opportunities now offered by what is commonly referred to as the ‘digital revolution’. However, despite the enormous benefits of the new digital information environment, there are also a good number of caveats. While free access to many high-quality information sources and databases can be seen as a levelling of the playing field, and addresses some of the inequalities of access in the past, it also has its challenges and potential pitfalls. Academic libraries in Africa have had to adapt new technologies in order to satisfy today’s user expectations. Yet at the same time university libraries in Africa have been battling with declining budgets, and serious and chronic underfunding for over three decades now.

Amidst all the digital euphoria, and the constant proliferation of electronic information sources, a number of common myths and misconceptions have emerged, especially so among students. One misconception is that all information is available online, on the Internet, whether free or through fee-based services, and that most of the information anyone requires nowadays for study and research can be tracked down by Google searches or other search engines. But Google can’t or won’t do it all. The second misconception is that traditional print resources are now largely obsolete and need no longer be consulted in research; and visits to the library are no longer required. This is fallacious thinking on several counts. There have
been a good number of studies on reading preferences, and access and use of print vs.
electronic resources at African university institutions. Their findings tend to vary among
different disciplines, but most seem to indicate that both undergraduates and graduate
students still expect a mixture of print and electronic resources to meet their information
needs.

https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2013-0001 ¶ [05/06/21]
Also at (freely accessible)
https://www.academia.edu/2514725/Print_vs_Electronic_and_the_Digital_Revolution_in_Af
rica
There is a great deal of excitement nowadays about digital publishing on the African continent
and about e-book reading devices that may serve as a catalyst to foster a new culture of
reading. The term ‘digital revolution’ keeps popping up in dozens of articles and news stories;
it is a term that has perhaps been used rather too liberally, sometimes for projects that are
anything but revolutionary, the author says. This article, now somewhat dated, takes a critical
look at the print vs digital debate in Africa, taking stock of the current position [as at 2013] as
it relates to electronic publishing and the use of electronic reading devices in (English-
speaking) sub-Saharan Africa, and the rapidly changing publishing environment on the
continent. It describes and critically examines a number of projects and initiatives that are
concerned with digital printing and publishing, and provision of e-book reading devices. The
article also touches upon another topic that is closely associated with digital media, namely
that of the somewhat contentious area of self-publishing, and the phenomenal rise in digital
self-publishing in Africa in recent years.

Educational and school book publishing

Al Qasimi, Bodour Africa Publishing Innovation Fund (APIF): Ideas to Keep African
Children Learning and Communities Connected. Publishing Research Quarterly 37, issue 3
In 2019, an estimated 100 million African school-age children were designated ‘out-of-school’,
the highest numbers in the world, Bodour Al Qasimi says; and COVID-19 has dramatically
worsened that already bleak picture because school closures have cut off any children who
cannot access education remotely. “The situation is further complicated by longstanding
issues that have led to insufficient spending on social infrastructure, like libraries, which could
have helped students remain in school. Between urban/rural digital divides and long-
standing cracks prised wider by the virus, Africa’s abrupt shift to remote learning risks
creating a generation of children whose inability to access education leaves them far behind
or simply unschooled.”

In 2021, its second year of operation, the Africa Publishing Innovation Fund
https://www.apinnovation.fund/, an initiative led by the Geneva-based International
Publishers Association [https://www.internationalpublishers.org](https://www.internationalpublishers.org), turned its attention to the remote learning challenge in Africa. A decision was taken to sponsor locally-owned projects to keep students learning and give disadvantaged communities ways to access books and premises for community cohesion, skills development, studying and reading. “The APIF is not the solution,” the author states “but it is a sincere attempt by publishers to address some of the problems within the overarching African education emergency.”


For years in South Africa, the author says, the textbook-publishing industry has been confronted with real threats to its future, “because—faced with non-delivery of books—government is desperate to change the way it buys them. Other countries face similar challenges. Government officials often cite the ‘high price of books’ as a key issue. Whether you buy the state’s argument or not, the system is going to change, and publishers can either lead the change or be changed.” To have any real effect, he argues, the change must be a fundamental change in the mainstream textbook business model: “Instead of selling copies, we must sell licences. Specifically, we must sell licences with no limitations on the number of downstream copies. This is especially urgent and appropriate for school books, though it’ll work for universities and colleges, too. And it’s perfectly suited to a world of tablets and e-books. Best of all, it will save government money and make publishers’ jobs simpler.” In this article he describes his proposed model in some detail, but adds a caveat: “To become reality, institutional licensing for textbooks requires a special kind of alchemy: perfect timing. The state must phase in a licence system at a time that fits with curriculum change and book publishing timeframes.”


Also published in French as *Les aspects économiques de la publication de matériel éducatif en Afrique.*
Waleat February 2022]

Also at (freely accessible) [https://www.academia.edu/2978369/The_Economics_of_Publishing_Educational_Materials_in_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/2978369/The_Economics_of_Publishing_Educational_Materials_in_Africa)

Drawing on research data from 18 African countries, this important, albeit now quite dated study examines the relationship between government policy and decision makers and the educational book industries, concentrating on three main areas concerning textbook publishing in Africa: (1) the business environment, (2) the publishing industry, and (3) the critical success and failure factors related to book provision. Primary data was gathered through a series of questionnaires delivered to various organizations concerned with textbook provision, as well as follow-up through direct interviews with government officials and those representing the book professions in each country. Secondary data for the study was collected through published and unpublished sources. Individual chapters provide essential
background information about textbook publishing and thereafter analyze current market structures and publishing systems, demand and supply, the size and ownership of the publishing industry, market research, and patterns in purchasing and funding of textbooks.

A final chapter “Looking Ahead: Issues and Priorities” provides an overall picture of the major issues as they relate to textbook publishing, sets out a number of recommendations what the authors perceive to be priority targets for textbook provision, and suggests an outline for implementation strategies according to a division of responsibilities between governments and Ministries of Education on the one hand, and publishers on the other. A conclusion states that “the basic problem of publishing in Africa is financial: lack of assets, low level of equity capital and difficulties in meeting loan conditions. Lending institutions in Africa do not consider publishing bankable. And even if they did, present interest rates, which are as high as 44 per cent in some countries, would prohibit any publisher from making use of the facility.” An Appendix provides background facts on all the countries covered by the study, including educational indicators such as literacy rates, government expenditure on education, enrolment ratios, pupil/teacher ratio, and school age population projections.

https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/18667/873000WP0Textb0Box385186B000PUBLIC0.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Free access, full text) [04/08/21]  
Also at (freely accessible)  
https://www.academia.edu/58611874/Textbook_development_in_low_income_countries_a_guide_for_policy_and_practice [04/08/21]

Since 2003, over 220 million books have been distributed in primary schools in Global Partnership for Education (GPE) countries. Despite this, a few years ago, a World Bank study highlighted the fact that there simply aren’t enough textbooks for most students in Africa, and what is available is too expensive. At the secondary level, this is an even greater challenge, and this e-course aims to respond to this challenge. The main objective of the course “is to equip anyone in a position to advise, administer or design a book provision project with the necessary knowledge in order to make the appropriate input and right decisions. The focus throughout is on how to get affordable books to school children when and where needed. It is designed to be a practical resource that covers the key issues encountered in textbook provision, ranging from authorship through national publishing infrastructure to pricing, and distribution”. The course is organized in 12 modules under four sections—Understanding the Textbook Industry; Book Acquisition Strategies; Distribution Strategies; and Policy and Practice.

Crabbe, Richard E. Community of Practice Workshop: Getting the Right Books to the Kids. Book Distribution to Schools and Students [2012]  
https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2012-07-Book-Distribution_processed.pdf [10/10/21]

Although not specifically intended for publishers in Africa, this is brief but useful checklist what publishers launching a book provision programme ought to consider before proceeding with any such plans: for example its rationale (what books are needed, their grade levels, how

http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/05/14/090224b082efafa7/1_0/Rendered/PDF/Getting0textbo0availability0problem.pdf [28/08/21]

Textbooks play a key role in enhancing the quality of learning, especially in the context of low-income Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries characterized by large class-size, poorly motivated and inadequately trained teachers, and short effective school years. There are also high rates of illiteracy among parents and few reading materials at home for the student to bank on. Despite extensive investments by governments, the World Bank and other development partners, the majority of students in primary and secondary schools in SSA still lack the benefit of access to textbooks and the key reason for this shortage is affordability: textbooks are generally much more costly in SSA countries than in other developing regions. This study offers policy options that can help reduce textbook costs and increase their supply. It focuses exclusively on cost and financing barriers and does not seek to examine other issues associated with textbook provision such as logistics of textbook provision (textbook development, procurement, distribution, storage, etc.), their use in the classroom, or their impact on learning outcomes. It explores in some depth the cost and financial barriers that restrict textbook availability in schools across much of the region, as well as examining policies successfully adapted in other countries. The authors also provide a thorough assessment of the pros and cons of digital teaching and learning materials and caution against the assumption that they can immediately replace printed textbooks. In Chapter 8, Digital Teaching and Learning Materials: Opportunities, Options, and Issues, Michael Trucano says “Despite regular proclamations about the impending ‘death of the printed book’, printed textbooks — especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) — aren’t going away any time soon. New emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs) rarely fully replace existing technologies, but rather coexist with them in some way.”

Aimed at generating discussion among policy makers, development partners, publishers, and other stakeholders in Africa, this study offers a wealth of information and analysis that is both practical and relevant.


http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2017/v6i2a7 [01/06/21]

The textbook industry, the authors argue, is essentially a profit driven industry that has to meet the very specific needs of its target market. In the South African context, the state is the most powerful player in this market because it provides the regulatory frame for textbook production as well as performing a quality assurance and content vetting role. In this article they examine “discourses of entrepreneurship manifest in selected textbooks used in South African primary schools in the post-apartheid era.” While the authors acknowledge that an
attempt has been made to purge school textbooks of biased or pejorative subject matter, “the extent to which new powerful discourses have replaced apartheid ideology remains unknown”; and there is little dispute, they say, that school textbook content can communicate subliminal messages about the world. Using critical discourse analysis, the authors “reveal constituted and constitutive ideology at work in the textbooks under study. A dominant discourse that emerged was that individuals in society are responsible for their own economic sustainability despite prevailing and historic conditions of oppression and subjugation, and that entrepreneurship is a readily viable way to achieve economic emancipation because it naturally leads to wealth creation. It communicates as a subtle yet deliberate attempt by the state to displace its responsibility for the economic welfare of the individual citizen. The textbooks uncritically legitimate the values of the neoliberal market system. In this paper, we urge the development of a heightened sensitivity when teacher educators, teachers, and learners engage with such ideological persuasions.” [From the abstract]

McCallum, Kate More Damage Predicted for Educational Outcomes: The Case Against Approving Only One Textbook.
A recent proposal by South Africa’s Department of Basic Education is to do away with the national catalogue of eight textbook books per subject per grade, and to approve only one book, which is predicted to damage further South Africa’s already poor educational outcomes. Kate McCallum (a former Chair of the Publishers Association of South Africa) here makes a convincing case that the proposal to remove all choice of books by schools from a national catalogue of eight approved titles, and to have only a single approved textbook is a retrogressive step, and is likely to damage an already fragile educational system. She says that unlike many other countries, South Africa’s teaching corps is exceptionally diverse in its background, teaching ability, language ability, and content knowledge, and that a single book will not address all these differing needs.

“An education system in an open, free, fair, non-racist and democratic society must offer a diversity of materials to all learners. There is no rainbow with only one colour. A national catalogue with diversity of content, methodology and approach offers diversity and fosters innovation and creativity.” A competitive publishing environment drives quality up and prices down, whereas a single option catalogue will create monopolies, which ultimately are not likely to be cost-effective, and “it is also obvious that a single-book choice system is a winner-takes-all system, which increases the risk of corruption.”

https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/gjte/article/view/31233/35794 [01/06/21]
Some interesting views and ideas are offered in paper which describes a collaborative model for the development of locally-produced, culturally relevant educational materials in Africa and elsewhere. “Producing new high-quality materials may seem out of reach to educators who lack experience in illustration and publishing or have little access to commercial publishers. We share a model used to develop a series of books called Conservation Tales in
collaboration with university faculty, students, and scientists. The model presents a way for local educators to create books to make education more relevant and accessible for children. The model leverages skills of artists, writers, and content experts to provide a rich learning experience for readers and an affordable option for self-publishing.” (From the abstract)


Supported by a wide array of statistical analysis, this comprehensive World Bank study examines a multiplicity of issues surrounding the complexity of textbook provision in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the cost and financing barriers to universal textbook provision in the region. These include education issues – including curriculum development and review, teaching and learning materials (TLM) provision, language of instruction policies – as well authorship and publishing, bidding processes and procurement systems, distribution and storage challenges, manufacturing and cost issues, materials development and design, and more.

Recent issues raised by various attempts to embed information and communications technology (ICT) and other educational technologies within national education systems are examined in Chapter 12, “The Potential Impact of Information and Communication Technology Solutions on Textbook Provision”, which discuss e-alternatives to textbook provision, e-readers, and the use mobile or smart phone-based learning materials, and also includes a useful summary of emerging issues in this area. The author sets out some of the many fundamental questions that education systems need to address before they decide how much ICT do they want, or need to have for their education system. “It is not necessarily possible to resolve these issues prior to major investments in ICT, but at the very least these issues and questions should form an important part of the thinking that should underpin the development of national strategies. This is not happening in very many, if any, SSA countries, but until these issues are addressed and resolved it should not be assumed that ICTs will yet provide an affordable, sustainable, or effective – and certainly not a cheaper – alternative to print-based teaching and learning materials.”

The final Chapter 13, “Options in the Development of National Teaching and Learning Materials Policies”, looks at the issues of private sector vs. parastatal textbook producers, centralization vs. decentralization, language policies and literacy, monopoly vs. competitive supply, cost-reduction strategies, and presents country comparisons of five key textbook issues in ten countries, and as it relates to authorship and publishing, procurement, printing, financing, and distribution. Textbook system design, the author states, is a specialized activity requiring good research and an appreciation of the various factors that impact on affordability. “Poor distribution has been perhaps one of the major factors over the past 50 years, combined with poor usage, management, and conservation in schools; but different countries will have different strengths and weaknesses and while the basic principles can be specified, the unique system problems and solutions have to be resolved on the basis of the circumstances and needs of individual countries.”
The Global Book Alliance says it will be a transformative international mechanism to mobilize funding, raise awareness, and improve the provision and use of both textbooks and reading books. Its proposed key activities are set out in this report, which include:

(i) Becoming the go-to one-stop shop for knowledge and best practices on the effective development, procurement, distribution, and usage of all books. Advocating and instilling the importance of reading materials.

(ii) Bringing donors and diverse stakeholders together to coordinate around book chain issues and to foster long-term policy dialogue.

(iii) Helping countries make their book chains more efficient through finance, technical advice, and joint learning, in order that books actually reach students at reasonable cost and are then used by teachers and students; and

(iv) Where needed, funding reading books in mother tongue languages that correspond to languages of instruction where there is a demonstrated financial need and country commitment.

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243321 [11/06/21]

The amount a country spends on learning materials is a good indicator of its commitment to providing quality education for all. Textbooks are recognized as core for the new Sustainable
Development Goals on education, and are especially relevant to improving learning outcomes in low-income countries with large class sizes, a high proportion of unqualified teachers, and a shortage of instructional time. Yet, as this paper demonstrates, in many countries students at all levels either lack books altogether or are required to share them extensively with others. The cost of textbooks is a key barrier that prevents children from having access to the learning materials they need. This study investigates the cost of textbooks and the miniscule budget currently allocated to textbooks by many developing countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa. It considers how the innovative finance model used by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance http://www.gavi.org/, could encourage private sector investment in the textbook sector. “New GEM Report analysis shows how following this model could take US$3 off the price of each textbook, saving almost a billion dollars from the cost of textbooks in sub-Saharan Africa alone, and tripling the number of textbooks available to children around the world.” The report concludes with a number of recommendations how, by adopting the Gavi business model, this could be achieved.


This World Bank study discusses secondary textbook and school library availability in Africa, its cost and financing, and its distribution and publishing. The study’s objective was to analyse the issues and provide some options and strategies for improvement. Reforms are urgently required in the secondary school systems of most African countries in order to: (i) reduce the number of textbooks and reference books required by secondary education curricula; (ii) reduce the unit costs of textbooks; (iii) increase the target book life thus increasing cost amortization and reducing annual textbook fees/budgets; (iv) increase the financing allocated to textbook provision from either government or parents, and (v) ensure that curricula change does not make expensive materials redundant too early or too often.

The authors of the study believe that if a reliable market exists local publishing can develop to service it, even in direct competition with multinationals; and that the market does not necessarily have to be large, but that the critical factor is predictability. If publishers are confident that funding will be available, from whatever source, year after year, then local publishing will emerge to serve that market. This, it is argued, is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in Botswana where a tiny but reliable and reasonably predictable secondary school sector has five competing approved textbooks in some secondary subjects.
Journals and magazine publishing
See also ➔ Open access publishing
➔ Predatory publishing
➔ Scholarly and STM publishing

(Also available in Spanish and French versions.)
Concerns are often voiced about the perceived quality and transparency of the publication processes for Southern journals, and this, in turn, limits the perceived credibility of the research published within those journals. Established and managed by African Journals Online (AJOL) https://www.ajol.info/ and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Information (INASP) http://www.inasp.info/en/ the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) is a new framework for assessing publishing practices and standards of Southern (including African) journals. It is initially being used to assess the journals hosted on JOL platforms. As described in this guide, journals assessed against the JPPS criteria are given one of six levels: inactive title; new title; no stars; one star; two stars; and three stars. The assigned JPPS levels serve a dual purpose. For readers, they provide assurance that the journals meet an internationally recognized set of criteria at a particular level. For journal editors, the detailed feedback from the JPPS assessment helps them identify ways to improve their publishing practices and standards, with a view to achieving a higher level at the next assessment.

Gray, Eve/OpenUCT Initiative Project An Elsevier African Megajournal Proposal Re-colonizing the University in Africa?
The major international publishing giant Elsevier has recently announced a proposal to explore the potential for the development of an African “Megajournal” (and see also http://www.scidev.net/global/publishing/news/elsevier-african-open-access-journal.html). Partnering with the African Academy of Sciences, the African Centre for Technology Studies, the South African Medical Research Council, and IBM Research-Africa, it is a project that seeks to improve visibility, discoverability and accessibility of African research. While this will probably be welcomed by many, this provocative blog posting by Eve Gray raises some very pertinent questions: “Could this mean that Africa – which until recently has hardly been on the radar of the big international journal publishers – has something to offer this large and hard-nosed multinational academic journal publisher? Could this venture under the Elsevier banner provide the impact act and prestige that the continent’s research has been so sadly lacking? Or could it be simply that it could provide a blank slate for Elsevier, experimenting in the face of market uncertainty? Or, at its crudest, just a neo-colonial land-grab in the face of challenges in the markets that Elsevier dominates?”

Gray goes on to say, “it is perhaps a sad commentary on perceptions of the African continent that when a big corporation targets Africa as a new market, as Elsevier appears to be doing
with this proposal, one of the first questions that can be asked is, ‘Does this mean that Elsevier’s business model is under threat?’ Given that the European Union, for example, is aiming for mandating full Open access to research by 2020 with no embargoes, and affordably – and given also that governments like the Dutch government have been engaged at national level in hard negotiations with Elsevier to reduce subscription costs at a national level, it is quite possible that the commercial publishers are indeed worrying about the future of their current very high profit business model.” There are also serious questions to be asked, Gray says, about what it will mean for African governments to have this scale of strategic research publication (scientific, medical, technological and research networking) “placed in the hands of a profit-oriented publisher as hard-nosed as Elsevier.” Moreover, while it could be argued that OA status would protect the journal and its content from capture, “there is surely a risk in allowing a commercial company, and one with a very strong commitment to high profit levels and to the exclusionary competitive ethos of the Impact factor, to have control of the research publications of key African research councils. The research produced by these councils is of national and regional importance and its capture by a commercial company might put at risk the ability to leverage the research for public benefit.”


Reports about the work and activities of INASP http://www.inasp.info/en/, an international development organization dedicated to supporting the production, sharing and use of research and knowledge in the developing world including its Journals Online platforms http://www.inasp.info/en/work/journals-online/, a project that aims to improve the accessibility and visibility of developing-country research. By providing a cost-effective and secure platform for online journals, along with advice, resource guides and links to suitable technologies and hosting organizations, the Journals Online enable easy discoverability of the wide range of journals and research being produced in the relevant partner countries. including African Journals Online (AJOL) https://www.ajol.info/ the world’s largest and pre-eminent collection of peer-reviewed, African-published scholarly journals. Initiated by INASP in May 1998 as a pilot project, AJOL has been run as an independent South Africa-based entity since 2005, currently [October 2017] hosting 521 African-published journals, of which 221 are open access journals.

Siân Harris also reports about the launching of the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) project https://www.journalquality.info/en/, a new framework for assessing publishing practices and standards (see also preceding record above). The Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) framework provides detailed assessment criteria for the quality of publishing practices of Southern journals and is initially being used to assess the journals hosted on JOL platforms.

The Sierra Leonean scholar, the late Professor Eldred Jones (1925-2020) Founding Editor of *African Literature Today*. A Journal of Explanatory Criticism (ALT), recalls the role that journal played in the evolution and stimulation of a wave of African literary studies and criticism since the mid-20th century. The journal had its roots in a modestly produced newsletter *Bulletin of the Association for African Literature in English*, first published in 1964 by the Department of English at Fourah Bay College, the University of Sierra Leone. After that, in 1968, it became a twice-yearly (later annual) journal published by Heinemann Educational Books in the UK and Africana Publishing Company in New York, and quickly established itself as one of the leading forums for the examination of African literatures. Subsequently it was published by James Currey (now part of Boydell & Brewer), each annual issue bringing together articles under a thematic theme. Eldred and the late Marjorie Jones, together with Professor Eustace Palmer, were the editors until ALT 23. In 2003 the Nigerian scholar Professor Ernest Emenyonu took over as editor, and a total of 40 issues have been published to date. Most back issues are still available in print. Each issue continues to cover single topics or thematic collections, but also includes an extensive book review section, and is attracting contributions from literary scholars and critics from all over the world. ALT is the oldest surviving journal in the world on African literature, and has now charted the growth of African writing for over half a century.

International Network for the Availability Scientific Publications (INASP)


Journals in Africa, and in the developing world generally, face challenges in becoming known and respected in the international research landscape. Realizing the need for a mechanism to recognize the many credible journals published in the Global South that are often missed in other metrics, Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS), established and managed by African Journals Online (AJOL) [https://www.ajol.info/](https://www.ajol.info/) and INASP, provides detailed assessment criteria for the quality of publishing practices of Southern journals and is initially being used to assess the journals hosted on Journals Online (JOL) platforms. The assigned JPPS levels serve a dual purpose. For readers, they provide assurance that the journals meet an internationally recognized set of criteria at a particular level. For journal editors, the detailed feedback from the JPPS assessment helps them identify ways to improve their publishing practices and standards with a view to achieving a higher level at the next assessment.

Note: for other INASP publishing support activities, and publishing resources, also [https://www.inasp.org.uk/psi/index.html#9](https://www.inasp.org.uk/psi/index.html#9).


Little magazines have played a big role in the development of anglophone African writing, and virtually all the major authors in English-speaking Africa today got their start in local periodicals of very limited circulation.
A number of short profiles of five African literary magazines and journals “that shaped what African literature is today”, namely:

- **Black Orpheus** (Nigeria, ceased 1975),
- **Transition** (Uganda, later Ghana, and since 1991 Cambridge, Mass., USA [https://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/transition]),
- **Kwani?** (Kenya [http://www.kwani.org/publications/kwani-journal.htm]),
- **Chirumenga** (South Africa [https://www.chimurenga.co.za/]), and
- **Jalada** (Kenya, [https://jaladaafrica.org/]).

In her conclusions she states “bibliographies, whether in print, or online, are also tools to allow access to information. It is the pro-active, systemic, organized and strategic use of these tools that will determine the future of Africa’s moving closer to the centre of the global knowledge system. To be accessible in the information age, African journals must ensure they are available, visible and usable on the internet, most particularly through striving towards open access of African-published materials, such that Africans themselves can read context-specific, relevant work from their own continent. Role-players in the continent’s system of knowledge generation and dissemination hold the ultimate responsibility and moral burden to build on existing capacity through cooperation and collaboration. It is only by addressing the complex and multiple requirements at all levels that optimal use of opportunities will be attained and the African continent will be brought to prominence in the global knowledge system.”
This PhD thesis explores *Busara, Muttiiri* and *Kwani?* as magazines that are representative of some defining moments in Kenya’s literary history. Using a historical approach, the author relates literary production in Kenya to its socio-political contexts from the 1960s to 2014, discussing how early Kenyan literary magazines such as *Busara* participated in the establishment of foundational literary traditions in the country, and examining the roles that pioneer creative writers and critics played in setting the pace for later writers and critics. Additionally, the author evaluates the founding of *Muttiiri* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o in the US in 1994, and seeks to demonstrate “how the circumstances that gave birth to *Muttiiri* also precipitated the founding of *Kwani?* in 2003.” The study not only seeks to illustrate how literary journals and magazines are brooding nests for creative writers and literary critics, but “also shows how they nurture literary cultures, build bridges between generations of writers and between traditions, and even generate space, time and tempo for (new) literary trends.” The study thus positions literary journals and magazines as publishing outposts that have made a significant contribution to the evolution and development of Kenyan literature over time.

Nyamweru, Celia *Africa-based Scholars in Academic Publishing: Q&A with Celia Nyamweru.*
In an effort to address current discussions regarding Africa-based scholars in academic publishing, the editors of *African Affairs* http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/ reached out to Celia Nyamweru for input from her personal experiences, and as a former Academic Dean at Kenyatta University in Kenya where she worked for 19 years. Some of the questions posed include: How do the daily pressures and tasks required of professors in African universities affect their ability to research, write, and publish in high-ranking journals? What are the challenges that African-based scholars face in publishing articles with highly ranked African studies journals? And what can and should be done to support African-based scholars in publishing in top-ranked journals?

Also at https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B978184334783500173 ¶
Describes the current environment for African-published journals [as at 2014] across the African continent. It finds that “many journals struggle for visibility amid the highly professionalized journals environment elsewhere in the world. Equally, many of the African journals are poorly funded or are supported by their parent organization, and this has led to
a weak environment for indigenous research publishing. Against this background, the chapter describes the increase in initiatives to support indigenous publishing and increase the visibility of research undertaken in the 55 diverse countries. Recent changes have included a large increase in the number of repositories and support for authoring and editorial skills. These recent changes, including improved access to the Internet, are dramatically changing the quality of articles and journals although there still remain questions over financial and operational sustainability in this fragile environment.” [Not examined, from the abstract]

Staffrider was a significant South African literary and cultural magazine published by Ravan Press in Johannesburg from 1978 to 1993. Works by well-known South Africans were featured alongside previously unpublished authors and artists. The magazine provided a valuable publishing platform for aspiring writers, artists, photographers and community projects and offered a forum to challenge racial and cultural oppression. Staffrider’s editorial policy was based on an anti-apartheid ethos. To this end Staffrider was non-racial, populist and chose English as its language of publication rather than Afrikaans. These pages provide a short history of the magazine, as well as access to an archive of digitized versions of 37 back issues at http://www.sahistory.org.za/collection/32406.

How does our sense of cultural and literary history shift, the author asks, “if we start not from celebrity authors or landmark novels but from small magazines and the literary networks they foster?” This question motivated the discussions of a group of academics, editors and writers, who took up the long history of literary production across the African continent as part of the fifth annual Writivism Festival in Kampala, Uganda. This is the second in a new series of articles published in Africa in Words that have come out of conversations and debates between a new interdisciplinary network of researchers and literary producers examining the circulation and production of small magazines in Sub-Saharan Africa, the AHRC Research Network, ‘Small Magazines, Literary Networks and Self-Fashioning in Africa and its Diasporas”*. While these conversations are very interesting, there is not perhaps a great deal here about the practical experience of publishing, and the challenges of sustainability of African little magazines, many of which have not survived, either in print or online. However, the author does report about the experience of Igoni Barrett, former Editor of Farafina magazine published by Muhtar Bakare’s Kachifo Ltd in Nigeria, which ceased in 2009 (and plans to revive the magazine as a non-profit venture of the Farafina Trust http://farafinatrust.org/programmes/publication-and-circulation-of-magazine/ have not thus materialized.) Bukare wanted a magazine to be a cross between Vanity Fair and The New Yorker for Nigerians, and it began life online. Bakare and Barrett found, however, that it was extremely difficult to sell the print edition to a general audience in Nigeria. The Harvard and Yale libraries and the like would subscribe to a high-quality Nigerian magazine, but Bakare started the magazine in order to foster serious conversations among Nigerians. “What is clear
in Nigeria”, Barrett is reported as saying, “is that there’s a literary renaissance of sorts”, but what is less clear is how to cultivate a sustainable market for print.

*Note: see also http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=AH%2FP006930%2F1.

https://www.panafrican-med-journal.com/content/article/32/119/pdf/119.pdf [06/06/21]
The process of publishing in peer-reviewed journals remains a daunting task for researchers and academics in Africa, the authors say. With this commentary they seek to assist authors in Africa to understand the peer-review process, to appreciate the length of time it takes a manuscript to be published, and to encourage them to publish in local peer-review journals. The authors argue that the peer-review process is essential because it acts as a quality control mechanism to ensure that valid and reliable research is published. “Although peer review does not guarantee exclusive publication of reliable and valid research, it remains central in scientific activity…. Authors need to take seriously the comments from reviewers and editors, even in cases of rejection seriously and in the positive sense, in order to improve upon the quality of their work.” However, the authors state that “rejections by some journals happen not to be scientifically grounded. African authors suffer more from this flaw. This could justify why some naïve authors easily turn to publish in predatory journals.” At the same time, some journals which claim to be peer-reviewed “will publish any manuscript that is submitted within a very short time period, sometimes 24 hours, without going through the elaborate peer-review process … African authors should shy away from such journals.”

In their concluding remarks the authors state that “most of the research work that are undertaken in Africa, are meant for local audience and consumption. So, it makes much sense if such works are published in African journals for [an] African audience. It is incumbent on universities and research institutes in Africa, to make available to researchers and academics on a yearly basis, a list [of] accredited peer-review journals from Africa, and to encourage them to publish their works in these journals. By doing this, the impact factor of these journals would be raised, and they would become renown and could compete with other international peer-reviewed journals. Local content should be encouraged in academic publishing in Africa.”

https://www.sajs.co.za/article/view/4341/7308 [28/05/21]
Academic publishing in South Africa attracts a state research incentive for the universities to which the authors are affiliated. The aim of this study was twofold: (1) to examine the composition of the research value chain, and (2) to identify the effects of broken links within the chain. The methodology selected was “a lived cultural economy study, which was constructed through incorporating dialogue with editors, authors and researchers in terms the author’s own experience as a journal editor.” The prime effect, the author asserts, is to exclude journals, especially independent titles, from directly earning publishing incentives.
The behaviour of universities in attracting this variable income is discussed in terms of rent-seeking which occurs when organisations and/or individuals leverage resources from state institutions. Firstly, the author suggests, “this process commodifies research and its product, publication. Secondly, the value chain is incomplete as it is the journals that are funding publication rather than – in many cases – the research economy funding the journals. Thirdly, authors are seeking the rewards enabled by the incentive attached to measurement systems, rather than the incentive of impacting the discipline/s which they are addressing.” The paper discusses some policy and institutional matters which impact the above and the relative costs between open access and subscription models. Editors, journals and publishers are the un-or underfunded conduits that enable the transfer of massive research subsidies to universities and authors, and, in the case of journals, editors’ voluntary work is the concealed link in the value chain enabling the national research economy.

In his conclusion the author argues that “unless the journals themselves as the most crucial link in the research value chain – and not just universities – are to be funded, sections of the edifice will remain precarious and continued rent-seeking will characterise university research economies, performance management criteria and higher degree administration. The cash cow – the journal – is overburdened, under-fed and producing often sub-standard milk in the absence of sufficient feed. Structural solutions are required. These solutions include “addressing opportunistic institutional rent-seeking morality that has perversely distorted the DHET publication incentive.”

A special double issue of Transition https://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/transition in which Side A (pp. 1-171) is devoted to a celebration 50 years of Transition, one of Africa’s most influential cultural magazines and leading forum for intellectual debate, founded in 1961 by the late Rajat Neogy (1939-1995). It was originally published from Uganda, thereafter in Ghana in the mid-1970s, and later revived in 1991 as a quarterly international journal published in the US. This special issue includes articles, tributes, and reflections by Rajat Neogy, Wole Soyinka, Paul Theroux, Abiola Irele, Barbara Lapcek (Neogy’s second wife), Dayo Olopade, and many others. The other half of this rich celebratory issue is devoted to Uganda, Transition’s birthplace.

Debates about the asymmetries in global scholarly production have highlighted the problems that hound African scholarship, ranging from the political economy of publishing to epistemological bias among peer reviewers. Surprisingly little research has, however, been devoted to the views of the journal editors who play such a central role in the process of dissemination of scholarship, and setting and maintaining the boundaries of disciplines, as well as their perspectives on the imbalances of global knowledge production. This article reports on a pilot project which set out to shed some light on these views. As editors of two
peer-reviewed journals in the fields of journalism and journalism studies, the authors initially drew upon their own experience to identify common issues facing journal editors. An online questionnaire was distributed to the editors of 24 journals in the fields of communication, journalism and journalism studies. The responses received suggest that journal editors are not only conversant with a plethora of complicated and vexing problems, but have also developed a range of successful strategies for responding to them. At the same time, however, publication – or, rather, non-publication – of papers authored in the Global South remains a contentious issue that produced divergent responses.

**Licensing and rights sales/Co-publishing**

The Association of University Presses New Program Encourages Transnational Collaboration Among Scholarly Publishers  
https://aupresses.org/news/new-program-encourages-transnational-collaboration/ [21/05/21]  
Reports about the launching of the pilot programme of a welcome new initiative “that seeks to deepen transnational dialogue and collaboration among mission-driven scholarly publishers.” The AUPresses Global Partner Program  https://aupresses.org/news/new-program-encourages-transnational-collaboration/ will pair member presses with non-member presses in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, aiming not only to amplify the work of presses in the ‘Global South’, but also to expand the knowledge base of the university press community worldwide. During the programme’s pilot year, African Minds https://www.africanminds.co.za/ from South Africa will partner with Duke University Press from the United States, while Makerere University Press http://www.press.mak.ac.ug/ from Uganda will partner with Liverpool University Press from the United Kingdom.  

https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/66256/Buitendach_Selling_2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [21/09/21]  
Another version:  
https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-018-9574-3 ¶  
The reading and buying market for Afrikaans fiction is limited due to historical and economic reasons. It can thus be argued, the author says, “that in order to expand the market for South African Afrikaans trade publishers and authors’ novels, a work needs to be translated via the selling of translation rights with the assistance of the publisher or literary agents, into a language that has similar needs in terms of cultural consumption, for example book reading culture. Due to the colonial influence of the Dutch on South African culture and the development of Afrikaans, this study explores the selling of translation rights of Afrikaans
fiction to trade publishers in The Netherlands and Belgium.” Case studies of South African crime author Deon Meyer, and historical romance author Irma Joubert provide in-depth analysis of success factors, and the process and factors that influenced the selling of subsidiary rights to Dutch trade publishers. Visibility and discoverability of Afrikaans fiction on an international rights trading platform, as well as interaction amongst South African and foreign publishers were observed at the largest book rights fair, the Frankfurt Book Fair. The findings of the study aim to provide practical information and act as reference guide to role players in the publishing industry, including authors, trade publishers and literary agents. Recommendations for best practice in the selling of subsidiary rights are also included, as well as reviewing initiatives for further research, experimentation, investment and development of the selling of subsidiary rights to European trade publishers. It is also argued that awareness and training in this field, as well as revised strategies, could extend the reading and buying market of Afrikaans popular fiction authors over time.

**Frankfurt Rights** [Digital platform]
[https://www.buchmesse.de/en/digital-fair/frankfurt-rights][22/05/21]

Frankfurt Rights is a digital platform for international rights and license trade established by the Frankfurt Book Fair, designed for making contacts and sharing of information, is actively seeking African publishers to sign up. Sellers give comprehensive presentations of their company and titles and share preview materials like sample chapters at a click to potential customers. Buyers can browse the platform, make contact with sellers, and create new business. James Murua, of the James Literary Blog, [https://www.jamesmurua.com/frankfurt-rights-platform-seeks-african-publishers/][22/05/21] is coordinating the registration for this new platform for African publishers. According to Murua “the focus is on publishers for whom it is difficult to create visibility for their titles and who are also not used to this very convenient way of trading rights, licenses, and permissions. It is also an endeavour to create new links for publishers to be part of the international rights community, not just by being part of the catalogue, but also by providing training and best practices in rights trading. A final goal is to bring the whole publishing world to the platform and one day have a unified platform so that it becomes an easy-to-use tool for everyone.”

[https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/45649/132110.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y][28/08/21]

Publishing and Alternative Licensing Models in Africa (PALM Africa) was a two-country research programme conducted in South Africa and Uganda in 2010, using action research to explore the potential of open access and flexible and open intellectual property licences, with the aim of enhancing the impact of African publishing. Part One of the report starts out by surveying African publishing and the context in which it operates, including its position in global trade and civil society knowledge production. Whereas most reviews of this kind usually focus exclusively on the commercial publishing sector, an important finding of the PALM report is the unacknowledged importance of the range of publication operations carried out by a variety of ‘informal’ and non-commercial publishers, including NGOs and
research organizations, some with publishing as their mainstream operation and others for whom publication output is only part of their core operations. “The profile of Africa in global publishing cannot be evaluated without engaging with the question of the power dynamics that frame the participation of Africa and other developing countries in the knowledge economy and the knowledge society.”

The report argues that “copyright law and international IP trade treaties are built on a neo-colonial base that emerges most strongly today in the exercise of territorial rights, identified as a major barrier to A2K in Africa and to Africa’s ability to benefit from new developments in digital publishing. This is particularly damaging in that it blocks considerable potential for providing digital solutions to problems of effective African knowledge dissemination.” In Part Two, the report moves to the specific context of the PALM Africa programme, reviewing the context for publishing and knowledge dissemination in the two participating countries, South Africa and Uganda: “While South Africa, as a middle-economy country, has a fairly large publishing sector, Uganda’s publishing industry is small, operating in difficult circumstances, but asserting its importance in a more favourable national policy environment.” In Part Three, the report describes the demonstration projects that were undertaken in the two countries and the insights that were gained into developing country publishing and the contribution that flexible licences could make. Finally, the report summarises the conclusions drawn from the programme and provides recommendations for future research initiatives and development interventions.

Though now a bit dated, this remains a valuable report that contains a wealth of useful information and analysis, and will be of interest to many scholarly publishers in Africa.


Released by the International Publishers Association (IPA) https://www.internationalpublishers.org/ in October 2020, this excellent guide to best practices presents a freely accessible, comprehensive overview of how licensing works in different publishing sectors and regions. It includes chapters from international experts in K-12 education, STM publishing, as well as regional experts from Africa and Asia, and perspectives from authors and reproduction rights organizations.

South African publisher Brian Wafawarowa, a former Chair of the Publishers Association of South Africa, contributes Chapter 3: Licensing: Experiences and perspectives from Africa. https://www.international-publishers-association.org/images/aa-content/our-industry/state-of-publishing-reports/IPA-Licensing-practices-global-digital-market-Ch-3-Brian-Wafawarowa-Ok-final.pdf?5f87fc40. Wafawarowa says that in recent years licensing by African publishers has grown modestly with initiatives led by the African Publishers Network (APNET), The Global Book Alliance (GBA) and WIPO facilitating trade both between African countries and with the rest of the world. “Many examples exist of this type of licensing activity including for schools’ editions; low-price editions of higher education textbooks; local licences for scholarly research; and general publications for translation. Licensing has facilitated access to copyrighted works for African citizens for cultural, education and scholarly research
purposes, at affordable prices. It has also allowed some African publishers to expand into global markets, especially in children’s literature and folklore.” Whilst the digitization process has been slower than in more industrialized nations, mainly due to infrastructural issues, it is now gradually accelerating: “Publishers are creating a growing body of digital content to meet the needs of e-learning in schools and universities, leading to the development of a wealth of new licensing and distribution arrangements.” As challenges around infrastructure are overcome, “the next challenge is financing the digital transition and finding suitable business models to ensure a return on investment, while maintaining affordability for educational institutions.”

However, Wafawarowa reports that there has now also emerged a mistaken belief among government and education authorities that ‘digital’ should mean ‘free’, and that copyright law is in some way a barrier. There are currently moves by the South African government to amend the law to allow technology companies to package other peoples’ content with their technology for educational purposes without compensation to the authors and publishers of the original work—“to devastating effect for authors and publisher alike”, Wafawarowa says. He argues that “African publishers have managed to sustain themselves and expand their outreach through licensing with positive outcomes for their countries, especially in education. They are moving forward rapidly with developing the technological capabilities to innovate and supply digital resources and solutions: But they need the confidence that the traditional international copyright regime will continue to ensure that authors and publishers are properly compensated if they to be enabled to play their critical role in the economic and social development of the continent.”

https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-03102003 ¶
Also at (freely accessible)
[22/05/21]
Reports about a new partnership between the African Books Collective (ABC) https://www.africanbookscollective.com/ and the International African Institute https://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/ “to effect ethical co-publishing practice between Northern and African publishers.” The new initiative is designed to broker Northern scholarly publications being available to African scholars and researchers in general, and especially to those who have collaborated in the research. The initiative also seeks to recognise the realities of the paucity of North-South and South-North scholarly publishing partnerships, “whilst at the same time seeking to re-calibrate a fair place for African publishers in the world of scholarship.” As part of the project, it has also been recognised that there is a need for a definitive database of African scholarly publishers to be established, “whereby Northern publishers or authors can make contact to effect co-publications; the purpose is to direct Northern publishers or authors towards potential partners for their books.” To this end, the IAI was working to establish such a database that was published in 2021 (see ➔ Reference resources, bibliographies, and library collections International African Institute Database of African Publishers) It is searchable by country, language, types of publications (books, journals, academic/scholarly, literary), subjects published, and ISBN prefixes if relevant.
In her conclusion Jay says “Co-editions sent by PDF on equitable terms can change the desirable objective of making Northern research available in Africa; similarly, partnerships South-North can empower African scholars and publishers within the continent to make their works available in the North.”

Note: See also the IAI’s Publishing and Co-publishing Books in African Studies: Guidelines for Authors https://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/about/guidelines which “seek to assist academic authors publishing in African studies as to their options for co-publishing in the African continent.”

van Gogh, Kirsty Sub-Saharan Publishers’ Experiment with Open Licensing. http://www.earlyliteracynetwork.org/blog/sub-saharan-publishers-experiment-open-licensing (Posted 22 November 2018) [06/06/21]

Akoss Ofori-Mensah of Sub-Saharan Publishers is working with Neil Butcher & Associates to research the impact of open licensing on publishing business models by sharing books in underserved mother tongue Ghanaian languages. Sub-Saharan Publishers https://www.subsaharanpublishers.com/, founded in 1992, is an award-winning Ghanaian publishing house specializing in African children’s books, as well as publishing African literature, literature on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and scholarly books. Until now, all books published by Sub-Saharan Publishers have been fully copyright protected, but they have now decided to experiment with open licensing by digitizing three stories based on tales from Northern Ghana, Fati and the Honey Tree, Fati and the Green Snake, and Fati and the Soup Pot. The Fati books have been mounted on StoryWeaver https://storyweaver.org.in/ and will also become available on African Storybook https://www.africanstorybook.org/. The three stories are available in English and three Northern Ghanaian languages, using a CC BY licence. Print will continue to be sold by the publisher, and through its overseas distributor African Books Collective. Open licensing thus allows Sub-Saharan Publishers to have these books translated into other local languages and shared electronically, so that children elsewhere in Ghana, and in other African countries, will be able to read more culturally relevant local stories in their mother tongue.

Mass market publishing/Street literature
See also ➔ Publishing in African languages


Republished online as “Documenting Hausa Popular Literature” at http://hausa.soas.ac.uk/hausa.pdf [11/06/21]

Documents the growth of Hausa popular literature and publishing through non-conventional publishing outlets—the facilitative mechanism of writers’ groups and writers’ clubs. The author describes the nature and themes of these books (sometimes also called Kano market literature, or Soyayya Books ‘love stories’) and how they are produced, sold and distributed.
This interesting account also includes some discussion about the mushrooming Hausa video film industry.


The African Street Literature and the Future of the Literary Form http://www.engelska.uu.se/research/english-literature/african-street-literatures/ is an innovative four-year research project focusing on contemporary African literature that circulates outside the traditional infrastructures of the global book market, and offers alternative modes of publishing. The project is based at Uppsala University in Sweden, and is working in close collaboration with librarians at the Nordic Africa Institute, where a small collection of ephemeral, often self-published texts has been established (see also record below.) This article is co-authored by one of the researchers and two of the librarians, and is organized in two sections: one is written from the perspective of the researchers who collect and study the material, describing the project, setting out its scope, issues of copyright, piracy, plagiarism, and how texts have been collected. The second part is written from the perspective of the librarians, presenting some of the possibilities and the challenges involved in cataloguing the material, and the ways it differs from the rest of the Nordic Africa Institute’s extensive library collections.

Nordic Africa Institute Library African Street Literature Enters the Library.
[01/06/21]

New forms of literature are emerging in African megacities, outside the established publishing industry. The Nordic Africa Institute Library African Street Literature project aims to make such material accessible through the NAI library, and to explore how the urban context is affecting literary form. Seeking to aim to break new ground, this innovative project covers emerging literary forms such as digital and spoken word poetry, blog fiction, street theatre and graphic novels, as well as alternative ways of publishing novels and short stories. The NAI library has been instrumental from the outset in developing ways of categorising and making searchable a very diverse range of material, which also includes internet links and YouTube clips. The collection ranges from small photocopied collections of poetry to foto-novelas (illustrated novels), comic books, literary magazines and plays. The NAI’s chief librarian Åsa Lund Moberg says “collecting African street literature at the NAI library creates new opportunities for literary works to reach new readers and researchers. The process is also a bibliographical challenge that could break new ground for making different kinds of literature accessible.”

Notes: Find out what is already in this growing collection at this link: https://africalitplus.nai.uu.se/primo-explore/search?tab=in_the_nai&vid=46NAI_VU1&search_scope=NAI_Aleph_only&sortby=date&lang=en_US&query=lsr08,contains,%22African%20street%20literature%22.

Amid Religious Violence, Nigerians are Writing Steamy Romance Novels.
https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-04-06/nigerians-are-writing-steamy-romance-novels-escape-religious-violence (Posted 12 April 2016) [01/06/21]

Not far from the epicentre of religious violence in Nigeria, a romance novel industry is booming. Written in Hausa, the work of mostly female authors and written for women, the books shift between morality tales and classic pulp romance. Often written by hand in small composition books, the books are sold in crowded marketplaces, where you can buy thousands of different titles for as little as 50 Naira (US$0.15). Often serialised, a few of the stories are also transcribed and published online. They books are called littattafan soyayya, which roughly translates to ‘love literature.’ The thriving littattafan soyayya industry has recently become the subject of photographer Glenna Gordon’s Diagram of the Heart http://www.glennagordon.com/diagram-of-the-heart/ about Muslim women and romance novels in Northern Nigeria, and which was chosen as one of the New York Times Magazine’s best photo books of the year (see also http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/19/glenna-gordon-diagram-of-the-heart-open-society-foundation/?_r=0. While hugely popular, the books are also controversial. Some local governments in Northern Nigeria have censored the books and in 2007 the state governor of Kano publicly burned many books that he said were ‘pornographic’, corrupting young people, and encouraging moral indecency. Nowadays authors are compelled to register with Hisbah, the morality police in Kano, and that censorship board often removes writers’ steamier scenes.


National book policies

The Books and Learning Materials section http://www.adeanet.org/en/working-groups/books-and-learning-materials of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa and its Inter Country Quality Node on Teaching and Learning (ICQN-TL), has been focusing for a number of years on national book and reading policies formulation and implementation. With the support of USAID and its Global Book Alliance, the ADEA ICQN-TL BLM section, and in collaboration with the African Union’s (AU) Education Division, it organized a high-level book industry stakeholders’ seminar in Nairobi in June 2019 “to help build a strong and inclusive framework for National Book and Reading Policies in Africa”, and to “devise ways to sensitise African governments on the need to support the book publishing industries towards meeting the national development goals.” This document sets out the background to the seminar, the role of the Ministries of Education in book and reading
policy formulation and implementation, the aims and objectives of the meeting, and its expected outcomes.

Note: see also articles below, and these ADEA follow-up reports about the Nairobi seminar:

Kor, Buma African Publishing on the Rise for the Best!
Veteran Cameroonian publisher Buma Kor reflects on the likely impact of two “landmark” events which took place in Nairobi in June 2019: the International Publishers Association (IPA) https://www.internationalpublishers.org/ seminar on ‘Africa Rising: Realising Africa’s Potential as a Global Publishing Leader in the 21st Century’, and the High Level Regional Workshop on National Book and Reading Policies in Africa, organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), with support from USAID and in association with the Global Book Alliance, “which validated the African Union (AU) Continental Book and Reading Policies Framework.” These two events, the author says, “hopefully, will bring to an end the talk shop conferences on African publishing and book development that has been going on for nearly 40 years without significant outcomes.” The decisions now taken at the above two meetings, he asserts, “have come so long they seem unbelievable and unrealistic, given past pronouncements and declarations by government authorities; but this time, with faith and determination and the will to do it by all stakeholders, they will come to pass within our very eyes well before the end of this century.”

Nderitu, Alexander AU and ADEA Launch a Continental Framework on Book and Reading Policies for Africa.
http://alexandernderitu.blogspot.com/2019/08/au-and-adea-launch-continental.html (Posted 02 August 2019) [06/06/21]
A report by a participant at the ‘High-Level Regional Workshop on National Book and Reading Policies in Africa’, held from 17-19 June 2019 in Nairobi, organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) https://www.adeanet.org/en/working-groups/books-learning-materials in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Kenya and the African Union Commission (AUC), with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Global Book Alliance (GBA). Key issues addressed during the event included African literacy rates, the book industries, publishing in indigenous languages, and education. The main topic of discussion was the draft policy document ‘Continental Book and Reading Policy Framework’ drawn up by publishing consultant Ruth Makotsi, “which was studied in-depth in the discussion sessions with attendees being encouraged to identify inadequacies and customize it to their national needs.” Albert Nsengyumva, Executive Secretary of ADEA, “encouraged each country to enact a book-reading policy that encourages reading and creates an enabling environment for learning”, the report says. Buma Kor, a Cameroonian representative “agreed that
associations/institutions work hand-in-glove with a policy framework’, but suggested that national book councils should be co-ordinated by a continental body.” The workshop was judged to be a “significant milestone for books and reading in Africa.” We came away, Nderitu says, “with a clearer understanding of the pivotal role the book publishing industry plays in a knowledge economy, the importance of government participation, and the need for comprehensive national book and reading policies.”

Note: what is not reported here is that an earlier version of this policy document on books and reading policies was in fact published in by the African Union over ten years ago. (African Union. Draft Framework for Continental Book Policy, 27 March 2009, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.) That document set out the rationale for a book policy, its objectives and guiding principles, as well as offering a set of recommended policies relating to writing and publishing, bookselling, book printing, library development, reading promotion, and copyright. Sadly, these policies were never implemented. Will action follow on this occasion?


UNESCO https://en.unesco.org/ and other organizations have repeatedly stressed over the years that, in order to ensure that book development is integrated in overall national development planning, the establishment of national book development councils is an essential requirement to guide national book policies; to serve as an intermediary between the book professions and the government, and to provide coordination between the different players in the book sector. As the authors of this policy paper note, national book development councils (or similar bodies) exist, or have existed, in several African countries, albeit “with varying degree of success.” Several of them are currently dormant, or have shut down operations altogether. It could be argued that the main reason for this is that their funding has always been based either on government support, or dependent on continuing financial aid from donor organizations; and when the funding came to an end activities ceased. This advocacy document is a plea for their revival. In their conclusions the authors state “national book and reading policies are at the core of educational quality, literacy development, lifelong learning, and sustainable development. Africa needs to position itself to achieve the UN SDGs, and its own set of targets as stipulated in Agenda 2063 and CESA 2016-25 if it is to catch up with the rest of the world. All African countries owe it to themselves to formulate their book and reading policies and enact National Book and Reading Councils (NBRCs).”

Open access publishing

See also ➔ Journals and magazine publishing
  ➔ Scholarly and STM publishing

Funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, this is a report about a research study that examines how to use open licensing to promote quality learning resources for young children in sub-Saharan Africa (and in low-income countries elsewhere) that are relevant and interesting. Research in early reading tends to focus on traditional publishing value and supply chains, the authors say, without taking much consideration of new approaches and solutions emerging from the digitization of content and the impact of open licences. Production innovations considered here include content creation models, storybook management and storage, and printing and distribution, all of which are evolving rapidly as new technologies are developed and applied. The report also describes and assesses how major players in the early reader ecosystem impact on the production and utilization of quality resources. These include publishers, NGOs, libraries and literacy organizations, and donors. In addition, because cost models for open licensing any resource are different from commercial publishing, the report examines how open licensing and cost recovery can be effectively addressed in order to promote the long-term sustainability of local content creation, production, and utilization. Finally, the report offers a detailed set of implications for early literacy content creation and utilization in low-income countries, which should underpin the development of creative ways to deliver books to young children. The report is supplemented by a series of appendices, which seek to capture in more detail the findings of the study’s research processes.

In their conclusion the authors state: “This report has explored how digital disruption and open licensing are transforming the world of publishing, with examples of how these changes might be harnessed to find sustainable solutions to the seemingly intractable problem of supplying enough high-quality early literacy storybooks to young children in low-income countries to enable them to acquire effective literacy skills. While none of these innovations, in their own right, provides a full solution to this challenge, it is clear that they do significantly think through how to harness open licensing within the framework of viable new business models in a context where those business models are not yet well understood or fully developed. What does seem clear is that funding strategies, whether initiated by governments or donor agencies, that adopt a ‘business-as-usual’ model to early literacy storybook supply, investing solely in traditional publishing value and supply chains, will simply replicate the many well documented failures of the past. Likewise, initiatives that focus only on short-term targets like numbers of stories produced or numbers of books distributed will do nothing to solve the underlying challenges of long-term sustainability of the cultural industries in low-income countries on which sustainable literacy for all are inevitably dependent. Thus, although digital disruption and open licensing do not, by themselves, solve these supply problems, they offer exciting new opportunities that merit systematic testing and scaling in order to enable them to achieve their full potential.”

http://www.ucwia.or.ug/Elephant%20in%20the%20Room%20PPT.pdf [18/05/21]

and open licensing are disruptive, the authors state in this PowerPoint presentation; and “Africa needs a vibrant indigenous publishing industry for economic, cultural, and educational reasons. Willingness to explore, understand, and experiment with open licensing are required for future sustainability. Don’t ignore this elephant.”

In this introduction to open licensing, the authors set out the basics of Creative Commons license conditions, describe examples of picture-story books created under Creative Commons licences by publishers in India and in Africa; discuss its likely impact on early childhood publishing in Africa, and provide examples of possible business models (digital, free, print products sold, or for a fee) and review the likely cost implications. They stress the need for new business models that incorporate open licensing. In their summary, the authors say: “Publishers can benefit by engaging with how paradigms are shifting and innovate accordingly. Many new business models depend on donor funding and/or voluntarism. Some show promise: e.g. combine ‘content-as-a-service’ with other income streams. Diversification may enable specialized teams of early literacy and publishing experts to remain sustainable.” New business models are in their infancy. “[There is] urgent need for action research to find suitable, sustainable new organizational forms.”


This study investigates Kenyan scholars’ adoption of open access (OA). The authors used a questionnaire to collect data from academic researchers at selected Kenyan public universities. The findings of the study indicate that while Kenyan researchers have embraced the concept of OA, challenges such as a lack of mechanisms to guide academic researchers on where to publish, a dearth of funding mechanisms to cover article processing charges, as well as a lack of accreditation mechanisms for regional and national journals are exposing Kenyan academic researchers to unscrupulous journal publishers and predatory publishing outlets. The authors suggest that OA advocates in Kenyan universities need to devise innovative ways of raising awareness about OA, and that these universities should provide the environment, infrastructure, and capacity building needed to support OA.


Based on an extensive literature survey that aimed to identify and define business models used in open access scholarly publishing in the international context, this MIS dissertation makes a range of suggestions towards sustainable open access scholarly publishing by identifying and exploring the various factors associated with open access models in South Africa, and considering the roles of all the role players towards output of high quality research articles. The study discovered that South African scholarly publishers find the shift from a traditional subscription model to an open access model difficult, “because they are not addressing their new client segment and also not acknowledging their own expertise within the publishing cycle.” The research also indicated, the author states, “that the approach of
either subscription or open access hinders a sustainable open access publishing model, but that the publishing community should instead encourage an approach a publishing environment that allows for both of these models to exist and function. Open access should not replace the traditional model but instead, enhance it.”

http://openuct.uct.ac.za/open-access-and-african-research-publishing-21st-century (no posting date) [11/06/21]
What needs to be done to achieve an enabling policy environment and the necessary technical infrastructure and professional skills in Southern Africa to foster the effective communication and publication of African scholarship? And what benefits would accrue from more effective communication of the scholarship in the region? What would the region gain? These were some of the core questions explored by a variety of speakers at a Leadership Dialogue attended by southern African Vice-Chancellors and organized by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), at which the OpenUCT Initiative Project unit in Cape Town http://openuct.uct.ac.za/ was a joint sponsor. This blog posting draws attention to some key points on how policy change could be best achieved, and what the policy environment could look like.

Gray, Eve **Open Access and the Decolonization of the University in Africa.**
A SlideShare presentation made at the 4th Codesria Conference on Electronic Publishing and Dissemination, Dakar, 30 March–1 April 2016. Open access in Africa appears to be heading for stormy weather, Eve Gray forewarns, and that instead of decolonizing OA it is in danger of losing out to the corporate strength of the big journal publishers and their hold on academics keen for promotion. One weakness of the OA movement has always been ideological arguments about the right road, the Green or the Gold, and may have helped to bring about this situation. The weakest point has been researchers’ addiction to prestige journals and impact factors, Gray says. She draws attention to an announcement by publishing giant Elsevier that they were sponsoring the development of an open access African megajournal, in collaboration with the African Academy of Sciences, the African Centre for Technology Studies, the South African Medical Research Council, and IBM Research Africa. (See also http://www.gray-area.co.za/2016/06/23/an-elsevier-african-megajournal-proposal-re-colonizing-the-university-in-africa/) “Despite the claim by Elsevier that the policy advances sharing, it actually does the opposite. The policy requires authors to apply a ‘non-commercial and no derivative works’ license for each article deposited into a repository, greatly inhibiting the re-use value of these articles … Furthermore, the policy applies to ‘all articles previously published and those published in the future’ making it even more punitive for both authors and institutions. This may also lead to articles that are currently available being suddenly embargoed and inaccessible to readers.” And this is only one of many African-centred initiatives by the multinational publishers “who until now have denied that Africa is part of their ‘international’ world, and therefore capable of offering research impact.” Meantime, as the OA debate continues, key questions remain the same: Who
owns scientific information? How much does it cost to access it? Who should be able to access it?

Gray, Eve Open Access - The Rapidly Changing Policy Environment: Implications for Publishers and Universities. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1GPO50HZgc (Video recording, 40mins.) (Published 21 January 2013) [27/08/21]
Slideshare: https://www.slideshare.net/BioMedCentral/2-e-gray-biomedoafrica12012 [27/08/21]
A presentation made at the Open Access Africa 2012 event held at the University of Cape Town in November 2012. “Open access has moved into mainstream”, the author says, and a surge in new policies (global, regional, and government policies) as they relate to open access by organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and other international organizations, research councils, and scientific bodies, will have a significant implications for both publishers and universities in Africa. Eve Gray examines this developing scenario in some detail, and also discusses the holy grail of the ‘impact factor’, which she believes has a negative impact on African scholarly communities and scholarly publishing. She argues that the impact of African scholarly and scientific research should be primarily measured by how much difference it makes to the needs African communities, rather than by how many international citations researchers receive in their publications.

Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/4551388/Digital_Publishing_and_Open_Access_for_Social_Science_Research_Dissemination_A_Case_Study?email_work_card=title [18/09/21]
This extensive case study charts the planning and implementation of a digital publishing programme over a three-year period at the Human Sciences Research Council, a large South African social science research body. The paper places the case study in the context of research dissemination in South Africa and Africa and reviews new publishing approaches, including electronic publishing and Open Access. It then charts the three phases of the consultancy — investigation, recommendations and implementation — and, at each stage, examines successes and failures; the problems encountered; and how they were addressed. It addresses whole range challenges faced by African scholarly organisations wanting to use digital media to disseminate their research findings. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations about implementation of strategies, publishing structures, working with outsourced providers and services, and technical and organizational issues, and the evaluation of the success of publishing models.

Providing an overview of Open Access (OA) developments in African studies and anthropology journals, this paper discusses the progress of ten, mainly British, Africanist journals in extending access using some of the criteria set out in John Willinsky’s landmark
study *The Access Principle*. The paper also explores some alternative OA cooperative models that mobilise larger scale economies, but whose sustainability remains to be tested in the longer term. Stephanie Kitchen suggests that the development and aggregation of institutional repositories may offer a faster route to green OA for journal articles in both Africa and the UK, as well as making other publication types, including research theses, available online. However “book and journal publication will likely retain their place as cornerstones of the advancement of knowledge and scholarship. Although some disciplines have seen increased publications by African authors from the continent and the diaspora, exclusion and marginalization of African authors from international research, and the dearth of African editors on the leading journals, still need to be acknowledged.”

In her conclusion, the author states: “In most African countries, library funding, whether for subscriptions, OA publication charges, cooperative models, or repositories, is a major issue. It is unlikely that cooperative OA models would transfer to Africa without supporting library resources. The work of AJOL [African Journals Online] has demonstrated the fundamental resource scarcity of African journals whatever the publishing models – whether subscriptions or OA. ... Many African studies journals are already available freely or at reduced rates electronically as part of consortia arrangements in African and other low-income countries. Such access programmes will remain important and their impact should improve as Internet coverage is expanded. However, availability does not correlate with access in a straightforward way. Such schemes, along with the OA initiatives taken by the journals sampled here, do not address deeper access and knowledge production problems prevalent in historically disadvantaged communities.”

Levey, Lizbeth *An Open Knowledge Primer for OER Africa.*
https://www.academia.edu/22972044/An_Open_Knowledge_Primer_for_OER_Africa
[18/05/21]
First there were Open Educational Resources (OER) and then there was Open Access (OA). Increasingly academics and researchers are now making Open Data integral to scholarly communication. Rather than segmenting the three, many practitioners use the phrase ‘Open Knowledge’. This useful primer and compendium about open access publishing in sub-Saharan Africa is grouped into three sections: open access publishing, African university repositories and policies, and creating enabling policies for open access publishing. These sections are followed by an appendix with an annotated list of major university repositories in anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. The main section devoted to open access publishing offers a range of information about definitions, current practice, basic facts about open access and journals, publisher policies and author rights, the threat to quality posed by shoddy predatory open access publishers, and an open access “to do list”.

https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210203114558607 [18/05/21]
Reports about a new platform for open access publishing of journals, monographs and textbooks in Africa, developed by the University of Cape Town (UCT) through its library service. The platform enables the African research community to share their scholarly content, which could advance the growth and development of local research aimed at benefiting
African society. The major publishing houses “have inadvertently northernised the publishing landscape,” according to Dr Reggie Raju, the director of research and learning at UCT Libraries. These publishing houses, he says, “are driven by the fundamental principles of economics; that is, they will publish that which will be bought. It is the Global North that has the buying capacity. … There is a desperate need for the democratisation and de-northernisation of the publishing landscape—a publishing process that promotes social justice and the inclusion of African researchers and research output into mainstream research processes.”

Nordling, Linda African Scientists Get their Own Open-access Publishing Platform. https://www.nature.com/news/african-scientists-get-their-own-open-access-publishing-platform-1.23018 (Posted 15 November 2017) [18/05/21]
Reports about a new platform, called AAS Open Research, launched by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) http://aasciences.ac.ke/ in Nairobi in November 2017, that aims to promote wider visibility of research being conducted on the continent. The pioneering open access publication model (currently limited to researchers within the AAS community) is being created in collaboration with the London-based open-access publisher F1000 https://f1000research.com/, adopting the model of its F1000Research publishing platform. AAS Open Research will publish articles, research protocols, data sets and code, usually within days of submission and before peer review. F1000 staff will arrange post-publication peer review: the reviews and the names of their authors will be published alongside the papers. The papers will be indexed in abstract databases such as PubMed only after they pass review.

Note: for more details see also http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20171117095235386 and https://www.aasciences.ac.ke/updates/blogs/aas-open-blog/

http://dx.doi.org/10.1087/20150205 ¶ [01/06/21]
The promise of open access (OA) as a replacement for existing scientific information dissemination ethos and practice has been contentious, with the interests of different stakeholders – countries, publishers, and OA activists, among others – clashing on an unprecedented scale. This paper examines some of the challenges that have been triggered by the OA movement, particularly at the Africa regional level. Basically, OA is technology heavy and its economic arrangements benefit mainly the developed world. There is evidence of OA initiatives in Africa, but these initiatives, the author states, are mainly individually based, defragmented, and largely underdeveloped, and sometimes predatory. The author argues that policy-makers in Africa need to embrace OA and establish appropriate policies for regional journals and regional repositories, and for academic reward, and support this with technical investment to enable quality online publishing.

https://www.academia.edu/67126396/Building_open_access_in_Africa?email_work_card=view-paper
An extensive assessment of the different aspects of the digital divide and open access in developing countries, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, which, the authors say, “are suffering from scientific information famine.” The expectation that the Internet would facilitate scientific information flow does not seem to be attainable, “owing to the restrictive subscription fees of the high-quality sources and the beleaguer ing inequity in the access and use of the Internet and other Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources.” In their conclusion the authors state: “While the digital divide has been recognised as a threat to the expected global economy, the pattern of scientific activities tends to show that we might end up with entering a new Dark Age, unless we redesign an information-oriented democracy in the 21st century.”

Pre-print version (freely accessible)

Contemporary scholarly publishing on the African continent remains largely dominated by Western corporate academic publishers, the authors say: “Even as the notion of open access has gained popularity, a growing body of scholarship indicates that the concept is in fact re-entrenching the power of traditional academic publishers under a revised business model. This piece offers perspectives from African scholars and activists on the politics of open access, revealing different experiences of and imaginaries for open access in Africa. The piece is supplemented by data from the in-depth discussion that informed it, which is published on an open-source platform in an effort to invite readers to also lend their analytic perspectives and contribute towards iterative analysis and ongoing dialogue”

Pieterse, Hetta Unlocking our Treasure Chest: The Strategic Implications of Open Access for the University of South Africa.
https://www.academia.edu/3734628/Opening_our_treasure_chest_of_knowledge_Implications_of_open_access_for_Unisa [27/08/21]
A paper presented at a Conference on Open and Distant Learning, held in September 2012 at the University of South Africa. Earlier, in 2011, the University of South Africa announced that it is becoming an open access institution, which will make available all its study materials for free to all members of the public. Thus a “treasure chest of knowledge” has now been unlocked, and its effects and strategic potential are ground-breaking for the university. This paper offers a number of observations and practical suggestions regarding potential developments needed to utilise the open access resources of a distance education institution optimally. Suggestions are made from the perspective of electronic resource management, teaching and publishing within a global arena, with a view to global benchmarking and aligning with international trends and partners.”

The author concludes “Unisa as distance education institution within Africa has made a ground-breaking decision to move into the open access arena by offering one of its prime strategic components, its intellectual wealth, for free to members of the public. This generosity
of spirit now needs to be packaged, shared and ultimately unlocked with a view to the larger context around, and to actively make a difference to Africa’s inhabitants. It is vital for all parts of the institution to jointly develop a strategy towards engaging with this major strategic policy shift. Unisa needs to capitalise on its collection of open access materials, for it to grow to its full potential.”

Examines the new trend of the (academic) library as a publisher, from an African perspective. ‘Library publishing’ is a growing area of librarianship and is defined as a set of activities that support the creation, dissemination, and curation of scholarly, creative, and/or educational works. Libraries are using formal production processes to publish original works by scholars, researchers, and students. In the African context, the authors say, these “services must delivered for non-profit purposes and must be intended to advance the principles of social justice. The service may support a single element of the publishing process or it may be a comprehensive programme that supports the entire process. Library publishing services are as diverse as libraries would want them to be and may include a variety of media formats and its intended audiences.” Given that this is relatively new service, there are many African libraries that are still grappling with the institutional repository stage of publishing, while there is a small but growing number that are offering a more advanced service that includes, inter alia, the publishing of journals and monographs. “Some South African academic institutions, via their libraries, have stepped-up to the plate to make scholarly content freely accessible to both users and authors via a suite of diamond open access services.” The authors argue that “the library as a publisher must gain traction quickly as a mainstream service provided by the higher education libraries in South Africa”, and that “the benefits for the provision of ‘library as publisher’ service is colossal for development in the global South.”

In their conclusion the authors state: “The need for authors to have their works widely distributed and the need for students to have access to low cost textbooks are among the many layers of the ‘open access publishing onion’. At the core of the need for African academic libraries to adopt the role of publisher is the determination to support an African curriculum, a decolonized curriculum that is reflective of African imperatives.” Mainstream publishers, the authors claim, “have little or no interest in publishing such works as the markets for these are small with minimal profit or none at all.”

http://sajlis.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/1628/1468 [18/05/21]
Reports on the contribution of the openness movement to the changing mode of distributing scholarly literature. The authors argue that the University of Cape Town (UCT), a leading research university on the African continent with relatively high research output, has a social justice obligation to distribute freely its scholarly research to the widest audience possible. Contributing to this social justice obligation through the sharing of research output via open access (OA) platforms are the university’s progressive OA policy, and activities to ensure roll-
out of the policy, as well as its commitments to support article processing charges (APCs), follow the global trend with regard to OA publishing. The authors, using a case study design, report that these factors have contributed to UCT’s researchers adapting to publishing their journal articles on OA platforms. The investigation concludes that, in an era of fiscal constraints, the visibility of research is important to source funding and to meet the institution’s social justice obligation; and therefore adapting to new publishing trends is an imperative for UCT researchers.


South African higher education institutions are the largest producers of research output on the African continent. Given this status, the authors believe South African researchers have a moral duty to share their research output with the rest of the continent through a medium that minimizes challenges of access; and open scholarship is that medium. The majority of South African higher education libraries now provide an open access publishing service. However, in most of these cases this service is via engagement with the green open access route, that is through institutional repositories (IR). Some of the libraries have also piloted and adopted gold open access services, or publishing of ‘diamond’ open access journals and supporting article processing charges. Meanwhile, experimenting with publishing open monographs is a new venture. In their conclusion the authors assert that South African higher education institutions, as a collective, “have done well in embracing the open scholarship movement and in some instances are among the world leaders in the open scholarship arena. These institutions of higher education, over the last few years, have been constructing the open scholarship publishing roadmap. They have now developed the maturity and confidence to stake the claim that they are on the verge of converting the roadmap into a blueprint. Corroborating this elevated status is evidence that almost all of the South African institutions of higher education have an institutional repository, some institutions have budgets to support APCs, some of their libraries are acting as publishers, and some are even providing ‘diamond gold’ open access services.”


The Europe-led ‘Plan S’ https://www.coalition-s.org/ initiative for Open Access scientific publishing (see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan_S) has been warmly received in South Africa, with the National Research Foundation expressing ‘in principle’ support. Yet South Africa already has compliant local solutions embedded within the research funding landscape, says Professor Robin Crewe, Professor of Entomology at the University of Pretoria, where he is Senior Research Fellow and former Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship. In this interview he reports about the ongoing Open Access
debate in South Africa, the present development of Open Science policy, and how the ‘Plan S’ initiative may affect researchers in South Africa, whether or not it is endorsed by national research funders. He says “my feeling about Plan S is that it’s a plan that originated from the EU, which has been endorsed by a range of funders, and clearly it is going to have a major impact on the scholarly publishing landscape, but I don’t fully understand why people should ask whether South Africa is going to join or should join Plan S. South Africa has already committed to developing open access research publications, and through the Academy of Science developed SciELO SA http://www.scielo.org.za/, that provides a platform for journals to be published electronically whilst adhering to all the principles of Plan S.”

In his concluding comments Crewe states: “I think that Plan S is a grand plan, but the devil is in the detail, and the detail is the specific way in which funding takes place in a country like South Africa and the implications of actually drawing the benefits from open access and. I think we need to interrogate this much more carefully.”

Smith, Ina Overview of the African Open Access Landscape, with a Focus on Scholarly Publishing. https://blog.doaj.org/2019/10/11/guest-post-overview-of-the-african-open-access-landscape-with-a-focus-on-scholarly-publishing/ (Posted 11 October 2019) [06/06/21]

Reports on selected findings from the pilot African Open Science Platform landscape study, conducted by the Academy of Science of South Africa https://www.assaf.org.za/, on request of the South African Department of Science and Technology, and funded by the National Research Foundation. It offers a useful overview of the current state of the African Open Access landscape, and examines current issues such as lack of government policies, insufficient or weak infrastructure, the status of scholarly journals published in Africa, funding to conduct research, and more. In her conclusion the author states: “For Africa to address its many challenges through Open Access, policies need to be developed, research sharing should be incentivised, provision should be made for skills development, and proper infrastructure and affordable and stable connectivity should be readily available. A future federated African Open Science Platform (AOSP) in which policies, skills, incentives and infrastructure needs are addressed will not only encourage more collaboration among researchers in addressing the SDGs, but it will also benefit the many stakeholders identified as part of the research process. But only if there is commitment from African governments.”


Much research has been carried out on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) at African universities, but, the authors say, “the results are inaccessible as they remain scattered all over in researchers’ offices, yet IK” plays a significant role in Africa’s development. Universities are better placed to consolidate, preserve, disseminate and facilitate easy access to such
knowledge.” This paper “explores the role that can be played by Institutional Repositories (IRs) in fulfilling this goal. Literature was reviewed to provide a conceptual overview of the role of IRs, to establish the challenges faced by universities in enabling access to IK in institutional repositories and explore strategies that can be employed to promote their use. The findings revealed that academics have not fully embraced the IR technologies; therefore, librarians struggle to secure content for their IRs. It is recommended that rigorous awareness campaigns on open access and IRs be done by librarians to obtain stakeholder buy-in.” [Not examined, from the abstract]

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12109-021-09795-9  [03/06/21]
investigates the awareness and use of open access (OA) channels for scholarly publishing by researchers at selected universities in Kenya. A sample of 341 faculty members, from three public universities, was selected for the study. “The findings revealed that there is a considerably high level of awareness among the researchers; librarians were the main channel with regard to creating awareness; the OA channels that are more frequently used by researchers are OA journals, OA institutional repositories and OA e-books; the researchers mostly published/disseminated theses and dissertations, conference proceedings and workshop/seminar presentations through OA channels; and searching and accessing research articles, developing research proposals and formulating research problems were among the main reasons why researchers used open access channels. There are several reasons why researchers sometimes do not use OA channels for research. The study makes several recommendations for the adoption and effective use of OA channels in the selected universities and beyond.” [Not examined, from the abstract]

**Predatory publishing**

Publication through the open access model has provided unrestricted global access to the latest scientific findings to anyone who has access to the internet. Although open access publishing was originally promoted because of the ‘public good’ it promises to deliver, concerns are being raised about this mode of publishing because of the emergence of dubious practices by publishers whose primary interest is profit and not the promotion of access to scientific knowledge. Predatory open access publishing is a phenomenon widespread in developing countries, and this article summarizes the published literature on predatory open access publishing, discusses its potential impact on scholarship in Nigeria, and offers a range of suggestions how to address the problem.

In their conclusion the authors argue that genuine scholarship is threatened in Nigeria by the massive growth in the number of predatory publishers and OA journals of dubious quality. “This industry has flourished in Nigeria primarily because of the increasing demand by
academic staff who need to publish for promotion purposes. With the growing number of researchers in the country, the need to publish will continue to be high and academic institutions and other regulating agencies must take actions to educate young scientists about the need to publish in credible journals, support them with appropriate incentives, provide funding for young faculty to conduct good quality research, and assist genuine publishing organizations willing to add value to scholarly publishing in the country.”


Researchers in developing countries are more likely to publish in predatory journals, the authors say. This study “investigates the understanding that research scientists in Ghana, a developing country, have about predatory journals and their publishing practices. Using a mixed methods approach, research scientists within one cluster of research organizations in Ghana were asked about their awareness of the characteristics of predatory journals, based on their own experience as a researcher. Their publications were also examined.” In their conclusions the authors state that publishing in predatory journals is not necessarily a problem specific to researchers in developing countries, but found that research scientists in developing nations are more likely to fall prey to their tactics. The research did not explore why this happens, but did establish that most researchers in Ghana did know about predatory publishing, and “that they are familiar with some of the identified characteristics of predatory journals, but that more extensive training could benefit many of the researchers because they are still publishing in questionable journals. Researchers and consumers of research need to be able to identify predatory journals.”


Explores the much-contested politics of academic authenticity within the African research ecosystem, with particular reference to Nigeria. A penetrative study, it seeks to prove how citation indexes have become contested markers of academic authenticity. It demonstrates, the authors say, “how a fear of ‘fake’ journals is cultivated amongst African academics, with international journal citation indexes being used to adjudicate the credibility of African journals and publishers.” The article “juxtaposes an ethnographic vignette of a major publisher’s training webinar with detailed case studies of two Nigerian commercial publishing houses. Established by entrepreneurial academics in response to limited local journal capacity and the exclusions enacted by Northern editorial gatekeeping, their journals have low article processing charges and, in some cases, minimal peer-review.” One publisher was labelled as ‘predatory’ in Beall’s list, leading to its journals being removed from Scopus, https://www.elsevier.com/en-gb/solutions/scopus, the Elsevier-owned journal citation index. The other has struggled to get its journals listed in alternative journal databases, such as the Directory of Open Access Journals https://doaj.org/.
In their conclusions the authors state: “The two Nigerian publishing houses we profiled adopt different approaches to balancing quality, reputation and financial sustainability. Both are working at the periphery of a global science system dominated by large commercial publishing houses and their data infrastructures. We showed how they responded to the discourse of “predation” in different ways, one by explicitly and publicly rebuffing the label, and the other by championing capacity building, training and quality improvement. …The fragility of academic authenticity requires constant effort by African journal publishers to meet the metricised definitions of legitimacy set by the indexes. Credibility is increasingly defined by the cultures of the major scientific publishing conglomerates. The promotion policies of African universities – such as requiring large numbers of articles published in ‘reputable’ peer reviewed journals – risk undermining fragile local scholarly publishing ecosystems.”

Note: See also this special issue of the Journal of African Cultural Studies, “Fakery in Africa” vol. 33, Issue 3 (2021) https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjac20/33/3


A Powerpoint presentation made at the National Research Foundation (South Africa) Workshop on Ethics in Publishing https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spW2QCHjbO4 held on 11 April 2018. Scientific research, the author says, “is a process of human decision-making: from the initial choice of topics, research questions, methodological choices up to publication choices. In these processes scientists make choices that either conform to sound ethical principles (research integrity) or not. Examples of unethical choices manifest themselves in cases of fabrication of data, falsification of data, selective reporting of results, plagiarism, ghost authorship and various questionable practices in scholarly publishing (including predatory publishing).” This paper scrutinises the extent of predatory publishing in South Africa. It draws attention to a number of new websites/tools to identify predatory journals, as well as offering a ranking of indicators of such journals, and examining questionable editorial practices of a number of specific scholarly/scientific journals. The author provides some helpful pointers how to identify suspect publishers, and unethical and questionable practices in scholarly publishing, such as fake metrics, promises of rapid publication, flattery and bombastic phrasing when calling for papers, journal names common to many titles: e.g. ‘advanced’, ‘scientific’, ‘scholarly peer-reviewed’, ‘international’; journal subject (predatory journals tend to have a broad coverage of subjects and topics, combining fields that are more or less related, or even lacking a specific field), and journal location (an emerging strategy is to rent office addresses in the US or the UK, and include American or British in the journal name, although the business is run from another country (India, Pakistan, Nigeria, etc.) Other indicators might be questionable volumes of publication by journal editors in their own journals, or dubious volumes of publication by members of the editorial board of journals.

Mouton sets out some of the main challenges in identifying predatory journals: (i) The demarcation challenge: “Can we distinguish with acceptable levels of certainty between predatory and non-predatory journals AND between ethically acceptable and questionable editorial practices?” (ii) The quality assurance challenge: “How do the major actors
Publishing & Book Culture in Africa: A Repository of Selected Resources


A presentation that examines abuse of peer-review in predatory publishing in South Africa; sets out criteria and tell-tale signs to identify predatory journals; and analyses Jeffrey Beal and his Beall’s List of Predatory Publishers 2016 https://scholarlyoa.com/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2016/, together with an analysis of the extent of predatory publishing in South Africa. The results of their analysis of publications produced over the period 2005 to 2014, the author says, “have already raised red flags about the quality control procedures at some SA universities. … Academics at a large number of SA universities are now consistently publishing in predatory journals. At some universities, more than 25% of their journal production now appears in predatory journals. These – and other questionable publication practices – are increasingly seen to be located at a small number of universities. The potential negative impact on their scientific reputations as institutions of scientific and academic integrity are huge. It is becoming a matter of urgency for all SA universities to manage the reputational risk that these practices hold.”

Note: see also the updated version of the Beal’s list https://beallslist.net/#update), now Beall’s List of Potential Predatory Journals and Publishers.


A critical examination of so-called predatory publishing in academic circles in South Africa, which confirms that predatory publishing is not only present, but also becoming increasingly common. The study highlights the challenges and dangers that arise from predatory publishing, including how this could compromise the careers of young scholars and scientists, as well as posing a threat to peer review. The authors present a first estimate of the extent of predatory publishing amongst South African academics. This estimate is based on an analysis of all South African authored papers that qualified for subsidy over the period 2005 to 2014. The analysis showed that over 4,000 South African papers were published in 48 journals which the authors re-classified (refining Beall’s classification, http://beallslist.weebly.com/) as either being probably or possibly predatory. A breakdown of these papers by year “shows that the
greatest increase in predatory publishing has occurred since 2011.” Results are also presented of the distribution of these papers by individual universities and the scientific field.

In the final analysis, the authors state, “it is clear that predatory publishing poses a serious challenge to science in South Africa. If it continues to increase at the rate of growth seen in the past 5 years, predatory publishing may well become accepted practice in some disciplines and at some universities. Not only will it affect the very fabric of the science system (our confidence in the peer-review system), but it will also undermine the trust and confidence of the general public in science and its products.” The authors conclude with some suggestions about predatory publishing “and its pervasive consequence for our trust in science, and how this should be addressed by the major stakeholders in the South African higher education system." Opara

Naidu, Edwin, and Sharon Dell “Predatory Journals in the Firing Line.”
South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has reportedly begun clamping down on academics publishing in predatory journals, withholding at least ZAR62 million (US$4.2 million) in subsidies during the 2016-17 academic year, with further action on the cards once a study is completed, according to Mahlubi ‘Chief’ Mabizela, a senior department official. “The purpose of removing predatory journals from the indices and journal lists is to ensure that they do not get recognised and articles published in them do not get recognised for the purposes of subsidy, in the South African context. Besides, removing them is to minimise the possibility of disseminating fake or predatory journals,” he said. According to some reports, but not yet verified, some of the leading publishers are buying up some of the more lucrative predatory journal titles, which then migrate from one index (such as the IBSS list http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/outputs-accredited-journals/accredited-journals) to another, causing a great deal of confusion among academics and administrators alike.

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1087/20150205¶
Also at (freely accessible) https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1087/20150205 [09/12/21]
The promise of open access (OA) as a replacement for existing scientific information dissemination ethos and practice has been contentious, with the interests of different stakeholders – countries, publishers, and OA activists, among others – clashing on an unprecedented scale. “This paper examines some of the challenges that have been triggered by the OA movement, particularly at the Africa regional level. Basically, OA is technology heavy and its economic arrangements benefit mainly the developed world. There is evidence of OA initiatives in Africa, but these initiatives are mainly individually based, defragmented, and largely underdeveloped, and sometimes predatory.” The author argues that “policy-makers in Africa need to embrace OA and establish useful policies – for regional journals and regional repositories and for academic reward, and support this with technical investment to enable quality online publishing.”
Opara, Jackie *Nigeria’s Predator Problem.*
http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1370873 [01/06/21]
Nigeria represented the third-largest author group in a recent survey of nearly 2,000 papers published in predatory journals, after India and the United States. The survey, published in *Nature* in September 2017, finds that the scourge of predatory publishing hits developing and developed country scientists alike. But it admits that little is known about why academics opt for this ill-reputed platform for their work. Jackie Opara examines why so many Nigerian researchers publish in predatory journals and “fall prey to the predator’s jaws”, and suggests some ways to beat the scourge.

*Note: see also* https://www.nature.com/news/stop-this-waste-of-people-animals-and-money-1.22554

Thomas, Adele *African Academics are Being Caught in the Predatory Journal Trap.*
Adele Thomas says African academics and universities are being caught in the predatory journal trap and that it is imperative that the continent’s universities start taking this threat to their integrity seriously. “Predatory journals transgress all the rules of research integrity, and Africa is not immune to these journals.” She notes that in the past few years there has been an insidious rise in predatory journal publishers in Africa. Universities will also need to consider their scholarly reputations she says, “publishing in junk or predatory journals makes both academics and their employers look bad. There are long term, less visible costs to ignoring predatory journals. Brands and reputations can be destroyed, costing universities the chance to collaborate internationally with well regarded institutions. If the fundamental values of academic research are constantly transgressed in the scramble to publish, Africa’s academy will suffer in the long run. Young academics will learn bad habits from their established colleagues who write for such journals. And, by default, those academics who strive to publish in journals known for their high impact and rigorous quality are being placed at a disadvantage. As long as quantity trumps quality, these academics will miss out on promotional opportunities and financial rewards.”

University of South Africa Library *Selecting a Quality Journal: Predatory Journals, Predatory Publishing Bibliography.*
https://libguides.unisa.ac.za/journalquality [06/06/21]
In their introduction to this very useful resource the compilers state: “Over the years publishing models changed dramatically and the rise of open access journals has changed the way in which scholars use and share their articles. Changing publishing models, including the rise of open access journals, have reshaped the ways in which scholars share and use journal articles. It has also brought predatory journals into the research arena and therefore it is important to understand and know the criteria for assessing journal quality to ensure that research is published in a quality journal.”

Part of the University of South Africa Library’s wide range of library guides, these pages offer comprehensive listings of South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accredited journals; journal selection resources including Electronic Journal Selector Web-based tools; a ‘Whitelist’ list of journals, publishers, companies or entities that are considered to be acceptable or trustworthy (including Open Access journals); a ‘Blacklist’
of journals, publishers, companies or entities that are regarded as unacceptable or untrustworthy and to be avoided or distrusted; plus *A Predatory Publishing Bibliography*, which also includes details and links to a large number of articles on bogus/fake conferences.

Waruru, Maina “Academics are Cautioned to Avoid Predatory Journals.” *University World News* 14 September 2018, Issue 520
African scholars are being cautioned against falling prey to predatory journals which lure them with simple conditions for publishing but whose primary motive is profit. Unlike credible journals whose rigorous conditions may discourage scholars from seeking their services, commercial journals make publishing much easier and faster, but avoid processes such as peer review, a critical step that ensures that scholars publish quality work. In addition to a precipitous rise in predatory academic journals in recent years, and according to Emmanuel Unuabonah, associate professor in the Department of Chemical Sciences at Redeemer’s University in Ogun State, Nigeria, publishing in Africa is also facing a growing threat of plagiarism, reducing the confidence international journals have in research produced from the continent. “Plagiarism has reduced confidence in our research outputs; now there is always a second thought about publications from many African scholars by our peers from outside the continent,” the lecturer told *University World News*. To curb the problem, there is a need to use the ‘carrot and stick’ approach to sensitise researchers and students, and help them understand the dangers associated with it, while punishing any researcher or student found plagiarising, he said. Learning institutions should put in place rules and guidelines on plagiarism while using technology to help lecturers and mentors monitor the vice.

https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-how-to-spot-predatory-academic-journals-in-the-wild/ (Posted 17 October 2017) [01/06/21]
A recent study published the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa (see also ➔ paper by Johann Mouton and Astrid Valentine in this section) found that between 2005 and 2014 more than 4,200 South African academic articles were published in 47 journals which were classified as “possibly” or “probably” predatory. These 47 journals qualified for the department of higher education and training’s subsidies, meaning that universities and sometimes the researchers themselves received money for publishing in them, and which, the author says, could have cost South Africa up to R300 million in subsidies.

The factsheet at Africa Check https://africacheck.org/ describes the nature and modus operandi of such predatory journals. Although it is not always easy to identify predatory journals, Wild says, there are certain red flags that move a journal from “potentially” predatory to “not to be trusted”, and the author suggests a number of pertinent questions that ought to be asked before work is placed with such questionable academic journals – that can easily dupe researchers, and seriously erode the body of science and scholarship generally – and “how to avoid such junk from polluting your research.”
Publishing in African languages

See also ➔ Children’s book publishing
➔ Open access publishing and licensing/Rights sales
➔ Reading culture and reading promotion

Note: this sub-section lists books, articles, and other documents that deal with various aspects of publishing in African languages generally, language-specific studies of indigenous language publishing, African language publishing for children, popular literature publishing in African languages, as well as marketing and distribution of indigenous language books. Articles that deal exclusively with writing and writing systems in indigenous languages, or issues relating to orthographies, etc., are not included.

Describes marketing approaches for indigenous language publishing in Namibia, language policies in the country, the influence of government policies on publishing in local languages, and the constraints and challenges faced by the Namibian book industries in the new millennium.

https://www.koeppe.de/titel_beyond-the-language-issue¶
Analyses the development of Hausa literature “as part of global media flows that are catalytic in the redefinition of cultural identities through creative writing.” The author narrates how youth literature in Hausa created a massive reading culture for mainly romantic-themed stories “that provided an opportunity to partake in the imagination of sexual dynamics in an Islamicate environment”, and why a young essentially male urban audience accepts this form of literature as a more accurate representation of their reality than classical Hausa literature. In his conclusion the author states: “The availability of cheap printing presses in the aftermath of the political activities in Nigeria in 1978 gave young urban Hausa novelists the opportunity to engage in the creative process of prose fiction. …with transglobal themes liberally borrowed form Hindi films and escapist European literature … the new Hausa novelists provide a literary focus and alternative to the global media onslaught in traditional society.” With advances in technology, and increased availability of this technology, production has since increased and the reception of the novels has reached an all-time high; a process that had earlier (in 1996) caused some concern among the culturalist establishment.

The African Language Materials Archive (ALMA)
http://alma.matrix.msu.edu/ [23/11/21]
The African Language Materials Archive is a multi-partner project focusing on the promotion and documentation of literature and literacy in the languages of Africa. It further serves to assist African language authors and publishers in publicizing and distributing their work.
ALMA is an initiative that aims to increase dissemination of and access to materials published in indigenous African languages, thereby serving as a vehicle for education and literacy in Africa, and for African language study in the diaspora. ALMA maintains two websites: At its original site, a section of the Digital Library for International Research http://www.dlir.org/alma-home.html?layout=default, users can find African language literary documents. A second site contains complementary materials including African language video recordings, documentary video, translation work, and bibliographies, space for which is provided by the MATRIX Project of Michigan State University. http://www.matrix.msu.edu/. Nine major African studies libraries (and Title VI Centers) in the USA are the chief supporters of ALMA and provide details of their holdings and acquisitions of African language materials.

Altbach, Philip G., and Damtew Teferra, eds. Publishing in African Languages: Challenges and Prospects. Chestnut Hill, MA: Bellagio Publishing Network, Research and Information Center (Bellagio Studies in Publishing, 10), 1999. 163 pp https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/publishing-in-african-languages ¶ A collection of essays on an important ongoing debate, the publication of material in indigenous languages. Three African publishers – Dumisani Ntshangase (Juta Publishers, South Africa), Victor Nwankwo (Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, Nigeria), and Mamadou Aliou Sow (Les Editions Ganndal, Conakry, Guinea) – two African writers-editors.academics M. Mulokozi (Tanzania) and Damtew Tefera (Ethiopia); a woman publisher from India, Urvashi Butalia (Kali for Women, New Delhi), and Thomas Clayton, an American academic, look at the situation of indigenous language publishing in Africa, analyzing the problems, and offering possible prescriptions for advancing the cause of publishing in African languages. The contributors examine the situation in the various countries and regions covered, including issues such as colonial heritage, lack of national publishing policies, ambiguities towards the use of mother tongue in education beyond the first few years of primary school, forbidding economics of minority language publishing, as well as other aspects such as orthography, and technical issues related to management of the publishing and printing industries. The papers provide informative overviews of publishing in indigenous languages in African countries and elsewhere.

Altbach, Philip G. “Publishing in National Languages. What Africa Could Learn from Other Continents.” Logos. The Journal of the World Book Community 10, no. 2 (1999): 75-80. https://doi.org/10.2959/logo.1999.10.2.75 ¶ Examines some of the arguments in favour of indigenous language publishing in Africa, and looks at the problems for African-language publishing, such as the multiplicity of languages and linguistic complexities, and the fact that for many languages there is an insufficient number of speakers, and readers, to make the language viable for publishing. The author argues that much of the failure of indigenous language publishing in Africa stems from current economic and political factors, and that developing countries in other continents have faced similar challenges. However, some small developing countries, e.g. Laos and Cambodia, have painstakingly managed to build up indigenous-language publishing, and remain firmly committed to their national languages, despite poor economic conditions and small markets. Altbach concedes that Africa has more unfavourable economic and political circumstances at the present time [1999] than the rest of the world, many African languages simply have too
few speakers to support a viable publishing industry, purchasing power is generally limited, and many languages have no standard script or grammatical structure. However, despite these considerable problems, African governments – who thus far have been less committed to the development of indigenous languages than governments in post-colonial Asia – could learn from the experience in other continents.

Vernacular publishing, the author asserts, has a significant role to play in developing technology in Nigeria, be it indigenous or transfer technology. If successive governments and programme planners would provide positive support, and appropriate policy direction, indigenous language publishing in Nigeria could well thrive. “The problems that have militated against this noble achievement of vernacular publishing have been rooted in the inability of the Nigerian nation to adopt a lingua-franca.” This is one of the major barriers inhibiting vernacular publishing, “compounded by diverse complex issues ranging from cultural diversity, to myopic chauvinism, tribal pride and prejudice.” Another reason is the fact that most parents still prefer their children to be instructed in English, as they see this as the language that gives access to privileges. The author offers a number of suggestions how to encourage more indigenous language publishing.

Asselin, Marlene, and Ray Doiron The Impact of Locally Produced, Indigenous Language Books on the Culture for Reading in Ethiopia.
A paper presented at the British Association of Applied Linguistics Language in Africa Annual Meeting in May 2012, which examines the impact of a unique local publishing programme of indigenous language reading materials (especially on topics of gender, health, local culture and curriculum) for pleasure and curriculum support in Ethiopia, initiated and developed by the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) in association with its partner organization, CODE Ethiopia.

Although the Setswana language is spoken by over 70 percent of the population in Botswana, few books are written in the language. This paper discusses the challenges of publishing books in indigenous languages in Botswana. Problems include low readership, low sales volume, absence of necessary incentives, illiteracy, lack of subsistence income, a culture of oral tradition, a language policy that tends to favour English, and the absence of reading habits.
https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/publishing-indigenous-african-languages-akin-bello
(Posted 11 July 2017)
The text of a presentation at a Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o Workshop on ‘Strategies for the Promotion of African Language Literature’ organized by the Department of African Studies, University of Vienna, in May 2017. Akin Bello, winner of the 2014 Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa for his play *The Egbon of Lagos*, recounts his personal experience as Publisher and Editor – “reading, assessing and editing a steady stream of manuscripts from diverse writers of all hues” – for his project ‘Indigenous Next-Level African Writers’, a new book series designed for literary works of all genres, but especially aimed to attract budding or as yet little-known writers, and published by his company Able Books in Ibadan.

https://www.koeppe.de/titel_beyond-the-language-issue

The number of Kiswahili books that are published in East Africa has increased markedly, covering the entire primary school curriculum in the case of Tanzania, and other genres – juvenile literature, children’s books, adult literature, dictionaries, linguistics and general titles. This suggests that there is growing readership and a growing book market, but a large number of freely distributed materials (such as those on HIV/AIDS) cannot be considered as evidence of a growing market. “Financial returns from the Kiswahili language book trade are not, except for textbooks, big enough yet to guarantee vitality of the industry, and this is related to the still too low incomes of the average Kiswahili readers. Disposable incomes do not meet basic needs let alone permit spending on books for leisure reading. The reading that is done is still very much of school books.” In Tanzania, government policy of the language of instruction – Kiswahili in primary schools and English in secondary schools – “has created a situation in which students’ ability to enjoy reading fiction is seriously curtailed because they are unable to master either language sufficiently to enjoy reading in them.” Research on this policy on education in Tanzania has demonstrated the negative short- and long-term impact of this policy. “Creative writing and publishing in Kiswahili cannot be divorced from the general demand for education and cultural development; they cannot prosper if Kiswahili is considered unprepared and unfit as a vehicle for delivery of knowledge in all fields; if it does not through research and usage, promote and expand intellectual creativity or develop adequate vocabulary for philosophy, economics, finance and industry.” The author concludes that reading Kiswahili creative works has first and foremost been influenced by the unfavourable language policies that promote English to the detriment of Kiswahili. “Kiswahili books must be embedded in the fabric of life, and literature in its broadest sense must be understood by the Kiswahili readers to be a weapon of their liberation and needless to say, with these books and with the thirst for reading created and met, literature in the sense of fiction would find a place. There would then be no limit to success with Kiswahili readership.”

The author finds that Ndanda Mission Press’s entertainment programme acted “as a mediator for the development of Swahili creative writing in Tanzania, as it gives a chance to non-
academic and newly emerging authors, who on the normal Tanzanian market could hardly succeed in publishing their works. Writers do respond to this opportunity, as is evident from the number of manuscripts sent in. The stimulation of authors is also expressed in the fact that many publish more than one book. However, long lasting careers are rather exceptional”, possibly because financial returns for the authors were negligible. Additionally, other media such as radio, TV and videos increasingly have become competitors to books in the field of entertainment, with a negative effect on book sales.


Seeks to demonstrate some of the problems of the domination of the ex-colonial languages for intellectual life in Africa, including the area of publishing. The author notes that “English serves fundamentally the interests of those for whom it is both an export commodity and a language of conquest and domination.” He argues that there is no compelling reason for adopting a foreign language as a national one. On the contrary, he says, there is ample evidence that such linguistic imposition does more harm than good. When a language is artificially imposed, “students are rarely able to master it sufficiently to work comfortably in it. Not only do they fail to acquire proficiency in the foreign language; they also lose proficiency in their own languages, becoming twice disadvantaged.” Bgoya sees dependency on a foreign language, like other forms of dependency, as a liability that a nation can ill afford.


This is a condensed version of the introduction to the author's Mbita ya Vutivi; Tsonga Bibliography, 1883-1983 (Johannesburg: Sasavona Publishers, 1983). Tsonga is usually spoken of, disparagingly, as a “minority language”, yet the bibliography contains over 550 titles, proof enough of the vitality and viability of this language. Includes an overview of Tsonga publications during the missionary era 1883-1938 and during the later period of 1939 to 1983, as well as Tsonga publications in Mozambique.

Chakava, Henry My Life-Long Involvement in African Indigenous Languages. https://www.eastafricanpublishers.com/the-chairmans-paper/ (Posted 20/05/19) [06/06/21]

Henry Chakava (nowadays frequently referred to as ‘the godfather of African publishing’) is the Chairman of one of Kenya’s leading publishers, East African Educational Publishers https://www.eastafricanpublishers.com/. In this paper – which is interspersed with some anecdotal content – he sets out the reasons behind his life-long involvement and commitment to promote and publish in indigenous languages. In his conclusion he says “Research carried out internationally by linguists has scientifically proved that learners weaned in mother tongue in the early years of their education have a better grasp of concepts in other subjects (and languages) later in life. Mother tongues also confer cultural pride, belonging and awareness to the user. However, in the case of Africa, these languages were stigmatized, declared socially inferior, and foreign languages such as English, French and Spanish
marketed as languages of immense opportunities and development. The time has come for African languages to take their rightful place in society.” Chakava calls on the Kenya government to enforce policies relating to the teaching and learning of mother tongues in the early years of primary education, and “to sensitise the public on the cultural and social benefits of this approach, as it instills pride and confidence in the learner. Kenyan publishers are advised to be more enterprising and to invest some of the profits they are currently making from these schemes into the neglected areas of general and indigenous languages publishing.”


A modified and expanded version of a paper (now inevitably very dated) originally presented at a UNESCO sponsored symposium on the publication of books in the various languages of multilingual countries, Moscow-Alma Ata, September 1976. Discusses the problems of a publishing industry which has to face the prospect of publishing in English, Kiswahili, and in a multitude of other African languages across the entire range of books: educational books and those for children, religious books, mass paperbacks, novels, reference books, and more.


Also at [https://archive.org/stream/ERIC_ED540491/ERIC_ED540491_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/ERIC_ED540491/ERIC_ED540491_djvu.txt) (Full text of entire book, freely accessible) [15/11/21]

The purpose of this paper is “to demonstrate the need for a viable, literate environment to support efforts by governments, communities and partners-in-development to use African languages successfully and constructively as tools of education and training alongside foreign languages.” Publishers have a vital role to play since they are key players in the book chain, and the author describes out some of the many challenges and the principal problems in the production of school textbooks in African languages. Furthering a literate environment, especially in African languages, is essential in achieving the inclusion of school education and literacy training in a country’s cultural development. And, the author says, it is “primarily up to the editors/publishers, writers and other African cultural players to key their output to the needs and realities of the targeted, grassroots public.” In many countries the very few books produced in African languages are often published exclusively by the State via national literacy-training services and a few education-related NGOs. The author argues that there is a need to integrate and consolidate publishing activities through co-production, co-publishing and the joint distribution of works in transnational languages. “The economic and political stakes of globalisation make the introduction of policies, strategies and mechanisms that encourage cultural convergence essential at the national, sub-regional and regional levels in
order to create the right conditions for the emergence of a national book industry that encourages the involvement of all the parties in the book chain.”


Describes the work of the Inter-Agency Material Production Committee (IAMPC) established in Botswana in 1988, whose principal aim is to support education of neo-literates, and to support adult literacy programmes and village reading rooms by producing a variety of simple readers in local languages (mainly Setswana) and in English. It has thus far [1997] published 21 titles in the ‘Ipalele Series’ and 14 ‘Thoto Boswa’ manuscripts are awaiting publication. IAMPC’s main thrust is mainly through writers’ workshops, where authors are trained at pre-workshop seminars, while the actual writing is done during the workshops. The article, by two librarians at the University of Botswana, examines the evolution of the organization, assesses its achievements to date, and makes a number of recommendations regarding future development and the way forward.


Describes the development of national language policies in Eritrea, attitudes towards education in mother tongue languages, the production of textbooks and teachers guides in Eritrean languages, and the marketing of these materials.


Analyses the main reasons why publishing in national languages has faced neglect; recounts the experience in Kenya, and argues that publishing in African and other national languages plays a crucial role in the development of society as a whole.

Dyssou, Nanda *An Interview with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o.*
https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/an-interview-with-ngugi-wa-thiongo/ (Posted 23 April 2017) [06/06/21]

An extensive and hugely insightful interview in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* with the world-renowned Kenyan writer, scholar, and social activist. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o talks about his role in the writing community, his publishing history and successes, his readership, what he considers to be his most important accomplishments, and his strong views on writing and publishing in African languages. “The problem is that, unfortunately, those that write in African languages remain invisible, their works are hardly ever reviewed or translated. Publishing venues are limited” he says, and getting published “is one of the most infuriating challenges of writing in African languages. There are hardly any publishing houses devoted to African languages. So writers in African languages are writing against great odds: no publishing houses, no state support, and with national and international forces aligned against them. Prizes are often given to promote African literature but on the condition that the writers don’t write in African languages.”
In response to a question where he thinks the future of reading and writing is headed, Ngũgĩ says “the new technologies, electronic media, open vast possibilities. In *Globalectics*, I have argued that orality is coming back. I call it cyberorality. Look at the language of the Internet: chat rooms, Facebook friends, communities, etcetera. Social media is the electronic version of the old rumour mill writ large. We used to call it bush telegraph — that is, before the Internet. Maybe we should now call it ‘electronic rumour.’ But for Africa, the real frontier is writing and publishing in African languages.”

Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/16629178/Language_capital_and_development_The_case_of_African_language_publishing_for_children_in_South_Africa [27/11/21]
Explores the challenges and constraints for African language publishing for children and argues that market forces and language policy need to work in mutually reinforcing ways. In recognizing 11 official languages, the 1996 South African Constitution provides a context for the management of diversity with important implications for the redistribution of wealth and power. “However, the development and implementation of the language-in-education policies which might be expected to flow from the constitution have been slow and largely ineffective. One of the casualties of government procrastination has been African language publishing. In the absence of well-resourced bilingual education, most learners continue to be taught through the medium of English as a second language. Teachers are reluctant to use more innovative pedagogies without the support of adequate African language materials, and publishers are cautious about producing such materials.”

In their conclusion the authors state that changes in language policy enshrined in the 1996 Constitution have played an important part in the transformation of South Africa in the post-apartheid era. “Delays in implementation, however, have reinforced the dominance of English and the privileged status of an elite with a vested interest in perpetuating the status quo. While the government has been slow to understand the links between language and literacy, on the one hand, and socio-economic development, on the other, market forces are beginning to recognize the importance of African languages in newspapers and advertising, ATMs, and the search engines. Developments in publishing, while not as expansive as was first anticipated, need to be seen within this overall context. our findings indicate that publishers – as well as the bankers, communications companies and public services noted by Alexander – now recognize that African speakers represent an asset: everyone benefits from the harnessing of this linguistic capital. Further progress, however, is dependent on the political will to implement language in education policies that promote additive bilingualism and, in the process, guarantee sales for risk-averse publishers.”

https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2011.629051 ¶
Also at (freely accessible)
Growing interest in bilingual education in Sub-Saharan Africa has highlighted the urgent need for reading material in African languages. This study focuses on the authors and writers of children’s books, one of several groups of stakeholders in the publishing industry with responsibility for meeting this demand. In order to provide a context for the discussion, the authors briefly survey the history of children’s literature in Africa and approaches to literacy teaching, which address a perennial complaint of African educators: the absence of a culture of reading. It thereafter addresses three main questions: What is the nature and extent of African language publishing for children? What are the challenges for authors writing for children in African languages? And what measures are being taken to support authors wishing to write for children in African languages? This analysis is based on interviews and focus group discussions with publishers, authors, translators, educationalists and representatives of book promotion organizations from nine African countries and documentary data on children’s books in African languages. While there are indications of a growing commitment to producing books for children in local languages, the investigation revealed that the number of titles is still constrained by funding and falls short of actual need. “The main challenges for authors are two-fold: the need to understand the ingredients for successful children’s books; and the sensitivity to negotiate the linguistic challenges associated with a newly emergent genre in African languages. Very few aspiring authors meet either criterion. The most common forms of support for aspiring authors are competitions and workshops, often offered by publishers interested in generating stories for publication. While such initiatives – and particularly the workshops – are to be commended, they are also problematic: often they are reliant on external funding and expertise and offer only temporary solutions.” The authors conclude with a range of suggestions for more sustainable ways forward.


The South African constitution and related legislative tools provide a supportive framework for multilingual education. Successful implementation, however, requires appropriate learning materials and questions remain as to the vision and commitment of publishers to producing them, the authors say. Based on an analysis of currently [2011] available books for children and interviews with publishers and key figures in the book value chain, this paper explores both the educational rationale for African language publishing and the issues that constrain expansion. These issues include the heavy dependence on the schools market in a society where the majority of the population cannot or do not buy books, the consequences of the slow implementation of the government language-in-education policy, and the particular challenges faced by small publishers. The authors argue that in order to move beyond dependence on the schools market, publishers need to look critically at the content of the materials they are producing, methods of reaching the huge, untapped markets, and pricing strategies. It also considers differing opinions about the usefulness of translation in increasing the amount of reading material in African languages. Finally, it concludes that responsibility for finding a way out of the current impasse lies with both government and the publishing industry.
The commitment to multilingualism embedded in the 1996 South African Constitution has wide ranging implications for many aspects of education. This paper focuses on the dearth of teaching and learning materials in African languages required to deliver effective bilingual education, and on the potential role of translation in offering solutions for this problem. Drawing on an analysis of currently available African language books for children and interviews with educators, writers, publishers, translators and organizations concerned with book promotion, it explores issues which have emerged as critical for both the quality and availability of translation. Attention is drawn to the ways in which translation can be perceived to either help or hinder the process of introducing children to reading materials in African languages. The challenges of working in the highly specialised field of children’s literature with languages that have undergone varying degrees of standardisation are described. Finally, the tendency to translate mainly into the larger, more commercially viable languages is considered, together with suggestions for ways in which publishers might be persuaded to translate across all official languages.
Edwards, Viv, and Jacob Mariut Ngwaru “African Language Publishing for Children in South Africa: Challenges for Translators. International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism 14, no. 5 (2011) 589-602. https://ecommons.aku.edu/eastafrica_ied/15/ [20/09/21] The commitment to multilingualism embedded in the 1996 South African Constitution has wide ranging implications for many aspects of education, the authors say’ This paper “focuses on the dearth of teaching and learning materials in African languages required to deliver effective bilingual education, and on the potential role of translation in offering solutions for this problem. Drawing on an analysis of currently available African language books for children and interviews with educators, writers, publishers, translators and organisations concerned with book promotion, it explores issues which have emerged as critical for both the quality and availability of translation. Attention is drawn to the ways in which translation can be perceived to either help or hinder the process of introducing children to reading materials in African languages. The challenges of working in the highly specialised field of children’s literature with languages that have undergone varying degrees of standardisation are described. Finally, the tendency to translate mainly into the larger, more commercially viable languages is considered, together with suggestions for ways in which publishers might be persuaded to translate across all official languages.”

Elongue, Christian A Comment on the Need of Writing and Publishing Children Books in Indigenous African Languages (Posted 12 August 2021) https://www.munakalati.org/the-need-of-writing-and-publishing-children-books-in-indigenous-african-languages/ [30/10/21] There are “many factors that have contributed to the current scarcity of bilingual children’s books in our local markets and bookstores”, the author says, and he briefly sets out some of these reasons.

Elongue, Christian Overcoming the Translation Challenges in African Language Publishing for Children. https://www.munakalati.org/overcoming-the-translation-challenges-in-african-language-publishing-for-children/ (Posted 12 August 2021) [30/10/21] Asserts that “most African Publishers argue that, while the most spoken home languages are African languages, there is a little reader demand for African language books, and that it would not be financially viable for them to publish books in these languages. They feel that expansion into the trade market with African language books is unrealistic, citing reasons such as the pervasiveness of oral culture, lack of disposable income and low levels of literacy. However, this interpretation is overly simplistic, because Africans do read when the content is affordable, accessible and of interest.”

techniques. Includes a short section on the challenges of publishing Igbo-language literature in the 21st century. The author bemoans the fact that much of the present publishing output is self-published by authors (or even self-printed), and is of generally of poor quality. “The total absence of national and international publishing houses committed to publishing works in the Igbo language, is a factor threatening the stability of Igbo literature in the 21st century. This is both the ordeal and bane of contemporary Igbo-language literature, as it acutely threatens its future.”

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/courage-and-consequence

The author is the founder and director of the non-profit publisher Associates in Research & Education for Development (ARED) in Dakar, that works in partnership with the Groupe d’Initiative pour la Promotion du Livre en Langues Nationales. In this paper she describes the background to the creation of these two organizations, their activities, the development of its publishing programme, and its efforts to establish a literate environment in the Pulaar language. Since it was founded in 1990 ARED has produced a very large number of titles, most of them experimental literacy materials in Pulaar, and it has also trained literacy teachers how to use these materials.

Fajemisin, Martins Olusegun The Experience of Publishing in Indigenous African Languages: A Survey of Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho and Kenya. Harare: African Publishers Network, 1995. 24 pp. [out-of-print?] This is a summary version of an important study commissioned by the IFLA Section on Library Services to Multicultural Populations and supervised by the African Publishers Network (APNET), which reviews the status [in 1995] of indigenous language publishing in seven African countries. It identifies African language material available from each country and its publishers; examines the development of the orthographies of each language and its implications for language utilization and publishing; and also looks at support structures in various countries, i.e. indigenous language literature bureaux, book development councils, book trade and library associations, authors’ groups, etc. The full report was apparently never published, and/or not made publicly available, but extracts from it, covering the situation in four African countries, have been published in APNET’s African Publishing Review as follows, each report authored by Martins O. Fajemisin:


https://doi.org/10.2959/logo.1994.5.4.172

“African literature today is locked away in African languages and few people care to find the key and use it.” This is the conclusion of a survey made by the author as part of an overall review of the present state of literary translation into English. As part of this survey, he interviewed a number of scholars and publishers concerned with African literature. Publishers in the UK are found to be sceptical of the market prospects of African language material in English translation: “It’s hard enough to sell African authors who have written in English, let alone in translation”, says one.


Presents the findings of a study conducted (in 2002) to investigate the impact of the adoption of the eleven official languages in South Africa and related new democratic policies on the production of books in indigenous languages, as well as the role of public libraries in promoting the use of books written in indigenous languages. The study reveals that, despite the provisions of the new constitution regarding language, it would appear that publishing houses have not made much effort to reduce the predominant status traditionally enjoyed by Afrikaans and English in the South African publishing industry. The findings also show that most libraries have collections published mainly in English and Afrikaans. In addition, it was found that books in indigenous languages made up less than 1% of the collections of most of the responding libraries. The results of the study portray a poor state of publishing in indigenous South African languages, and the authors make a number of recommendations to promote the use of these languages more widely and enhance the profile of indigenous language publishing.

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/africa-bibliography/article/documenting-kanomarket-literature/08A7B662422490CD7B6A354E8F74E98C

Republished online as “Documenting Hausa Popular Literature” at https://reverse-proxy.it.soas.ac.uk/hausa/hausa.pdf

https://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de/Dateien/FurnissHausa.pdf

This perceptive article documents the growth of Hausa popular literature and publishing through non-conventional publishing outlets—the facilitative mechanism of writers’ groups and writers’ clubs. The author describes the nature and themes of these books (sometimes also called Kano market literature, or Soyayya Books ‘love stories’) and how they are produced,
sold and distributed. Illustrated with reproductions of book covers, it also includes some discussion about the mushrooming Hausa video film industry.

While formal publishing companies in Nigeria languished through the economic crises that accompanied the structural adjustment programmes of the late 1980s and early 1990s, young Hausa writers began writing about their lives and contemporary problems they faced. Bypassing formal publishers, they self-published their novels, often with the help of a writers' cooperative. Although the books were dubbed ‘littattafan soyayya’ (romance novels) for their predominant themes of love and marriage, the novels – written in colloquial Hausa that reflects the rhythms of everyday speech – also serve as muckraking critiques of a corrupt elite and the failures of the older generation. Women writers dominate the field, perhaps because of the large female readership; their work explores the daily life and tensions of women’s lives in contemporary Northern Nigeria. The author reports that, according to Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, the head of Kallabi Writer’s Association (a group of women writers), there are over 300 Hausa women publishing novels in Northern Nigeria. In a revealing interview the prolific Hausa novelist Sa’adatu Baba talks about her writing, and about the challenges Hausa writers are facing.

Examines the numerous challenges facing authors writing in Luganda – many of them having to rely on self-publishing and self-printing – and with the strategies they apply to obstacles met in the production, mediation, and reception of their literary work, and how they seek to overcome a weak distribution infrastructure to reach their target group.

This occasional paper seeks to demonstrate that there is still very little Shona literature published in Zimbabwe, where it remains a minority literature, even though Shona is spoken by at least 75% of the total population, compared with that published in English, the current language policies which have promoted this unhappy state of affairs, and seek to illustrate the continued marginalization of Shona literature in the face of current vigorous attempts to improve the situation. Challenges faced by writers and publishers who try to write and publish in indigenous languages are discussed. The authors
suggest a number of possible intervention strategies how Shona literature could flourish in an environment dominated by English. In their conclusion the authors state: “It is true that Shona literature in Zimbabwe may not be well developed – but also that it never will be unless Shona speakers decide to use their language in creative writing. If we hesitate, who will do the duty for us? If we fall back, can we complain that others are rushing forward? Thus a decision should be made to elevate indigenous languages to official status, and immediate steps should be taken to spread the use of African languages in a wide range of domains.”

Gyr-Ukunda, Agnes **Publishing in African Languages Using Editions Bakame as a Model.**


Sets out the prerequisites for successful publishing of children’s books in national languages based on the model used by Editions Bakame http://bakame.rw/, the first Rwandan publisher to offer children’s and youth’s literature in Kinyarwanda, the national language understood by all Rwandan. Founded in 1995, after the genocide in 1994, Editions Bakame aimed to stimulate children reading books in Kinyarwanda, to help them overcome the horrors of war by means of appropriate reading based on their culture. However, many obstacles remain: distributing networks are still too weak, books are still a luxury object for many Rwandans, and the purchasing power of the population is very low; there is no a reading culture and public and school libraries in the rural areas are few.


A study carried out by the READ Educational Trust one of the leading education NGO’s in South Africa. It focuses on the South African ECD (Early Child Development) book sector as a case study for what is available, or should be available, elsewhere on the continent. The book is designed to guide writers, publishers, booksellers and anyone buying books or creating reading materials for African children to ensure material is relevant to their contexts, is interesting, and level-appropriate. The first phase of the study was a survey undertaken by READ to ascertain what is available for children in the birth to 9 years of age group in order to review the gaps in the market. To this end, READ invited publishers to submit samples of what they have available for this age group, especially materials in South Africa’s indigenous languages. The author examines some of the materials for the different age groups, reviews a number of special series of picture-story books, and assesses the quality of their illustrations, including the work of some well-known South African children’s writers. She also makes suggestions how children can create their own materials, and concludes with a helpful “Summing it all up” section as it relates to the needs of different age groups in terms of layout, textual and print features.


Demand for writing in South Africa’s native languages remains weak, the author says. Some have observed that rising proficiency in English is hindering the production of literature in native southern African languages, even while the number of speakers of these languages has
remained constant. "There are simply not enough readers, writers, or publishers who want materials in native southern African languages," Lazarus Miti, a former professor of linguistics at the University of Venda, is quoted as saying. "Generally, the more educated people get, the less competent they become in reading literature in their native language." If they find reading material in their native language too difficult or too time-consuming, he observed, they won't create a demand. Part of the problem is that formal writing in many native southern African languages is a relatively new phenomenon [in 2012]. Orthographies and vocabularies are still being standardised by piecing together different spoken dialects. This discrepancy between spoken and written forms, “coupled with a sense that fluency in English is a status marker and career tool, has clipped the wings of southern African literature before it had a chance to take off.” But Miti isn't entirely pessimistic, and he believes that things will change with future generations as schools, the media, and the government all become more comfortable navigating between eleven official languages: “People in urban areas are becoming increasingly multilingual … The natural extension of that fluency will be an increased demand for literature in those languages. It will just take some time.”


Bronwen Jones, a social activist and founder of Ithemba Publishing http://www.icon.co.za/~firechildren/ithemba/ithemba.htm, describes the difficulties of publishing in mother tongue language titles in South Africa, including matters such as translation and orthographies, and trying to get African language titles stocked by the major retail chains.


Clare-Rose Julius is Distribution & Marketing Manager at Porcupine Press in South Africa http://porcupinepress.co.za/, a self-publishing company that supports authors in the production and distribution of high-quality books. She is also one of the founding members, as well as the director, of the not-for-profit company African Narratives http://www.africannarratives.org.za/, that promotes the development of independent publishing and grassroots literature in South Africa. In this interview she talks about the challenges of publishing in mother tongue languages: problems of standardizing some indigenous languages, a lack of demand of books in African languages, the reluctance of bookshops in stocking such books, a low reading culture, the lack of both state and industry support, and VAT charged on books. While distribution into local markets and communities remains a major problem, Clare-Rose sees some promise, at least in the urban areas, in the proliferation of informal book traders and street hawkers: “that kind of informal trading of books exists already on the ground, there is a definite need and opportunity to expand it right across South Africa. And this can basically be the key to the accessibility of books to people, and everyone in the local communities in South Africa.”
An analysis of publishing in African languages in four countries of francophone Africa (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal), where the Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung/German Foundation for International Development (now InWent/Capacity Building International), in cooperation with other agencies, has been developing training programmes for textbook authors to create local capacity in the writing of textbooks for local language teaching. It reports about the main lessons learnt during the execution of the programme. Ingrid Jung argues that the development of societies depends crucially on the access to and the written processing of information, and discusses what this means for local language publishing. She concludes that the present situation in Africa is characterized by a broad gap between what is necessary to contribute to social change and education, and what local book industries offer in the field of local language publications for educational and other purposes. “To satisfy the demand for books and learning materials in African languages in the long run, it is necessary to contribute to the development of national and regional publishing houses and to the capacity building of all links of the book chain.”

Also at (freely accessible) https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/145031332.pdf ¶ [22/11/21]
The author contends that natural development of isiXhosa orature and literature, as with all South African indigenous literatures, ended with the arrival of European missionaries in 1799. The apartheid policy then exacerbated the destructive approaches to indigenous languages already in operation, as it designated separate language boards for language development. These boards operated in the ‘homelands’ and were generally conservative, corrupt and oppressive. The manuscripts they recommended to publishers were for the most part only those that could be prescribed in schools. This resulted in the publishing of material that was parochial, apolitical and neutral in style. Often the material prescribed was written by the board members themselves. Throughout this period only apolitical novels were published in the indigenous languages.

As part of his conclusion, the author says: “Perhaps in a free South Africa, the natural development of isiXhosa literature will not only be permitted, but will flourish as the language reasserts itself. This will be dependent on the effective implementation of language policy and a mature attitude of speakers towards their mother tongue. Such a change of attitude will equip them to make informed decisions for both themselves and their children with regard to language and reader, language and writer, language and work, as well as language and education.”

Describes the factors that influence production of materials in African languages, and the risks publishers face producing such materials. Some of the factors identified include size of population, multiple regional variations that exist in indigenous languages, the level of development of indigenous languages and current state of orthography, low levels of literacy of native speakers of particular languages, and government policies.


Also at (freely accessible) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273183272_Black_Writers_White_Publishers_A_case_study_of_the_Bantu_Treasury_Series_in_South_Africa [18/11/21]

Wits University Press, South Africa’s oldest university press, can be considered a pioneer in the publishing of African-language literature, due to the publication of its long-running ‘Bantu Treasury Series’ (later to be renamed the African Treasury Series), established by Clement Doke, with the first title in the series published in 1935. Along with the mission presses, local-language newspapers and some educational publishers, this publisher played a part in the development of African-language literature in South Africa. Using Wits University Press’s ‘Bantu Treasury Series’ as a case study, the author “seeks to examine the ways in which the texts were mediated by both the series editor and the publisher through the editorial, design, marketing, and sales processes.” The study reveals a number of significant trends and patterns in South African publishing from the 1930s until the 1970s. What is also interesting to note, Le Roux says, “is that the situation exemplified by this series, of black writers and white publishers, has persisted in South Africa. While black writers and leaders in South Africa have called for black-owned publishing houses, these have either failed to materialise or not survived. Skotaville Press [Publishers], for instance, was established in the early 1980s and lasted for a turbulent decade. Seriti sa Sechaba, the first publishing house run by a black woman in South Africa, lasted just a few years, also in the 1980s. Why has there been no rise of black publishing to champion and promote black writing? This is a matter that requires further research, to ascertain the reasons for their failure and to consider whether there is still a need for publishing houses that could enable black authors to reach out to their readers without the mediation of white publishers.”


While librarians are concerned with how they can serve users speaking indigenous languages, and seek materials in indigenous languages as means or tools for reaching out and ensuring the relevance of their services to communities, linguists and language policy experts are concerned with issues of language preservation and development. With a focus on the situation in South Africa, this thought-provoking paper is described as an attempt “to situate
the roles of libraries in the preservation, development and promotion of indigenous languages in a larger context, which is not exclusively focused on the needs of libraries, but considers needs related to the languages per se.” It suggests that the work of libraries in relation to indigenous languages “needs to be seen holistically within the threefold contexts of the book chain, language planning, and key contextual factors (political, linguistic, economic, technological, educational and socio-cultural) in the wider environment.” From this it is clear, the author says, “that the potential roles of libraries go well beyond the purchasing of books in the relevant language. Librarians have to help create a reading public and a ‘market’ for books in the languages of the people they serve. Thus traditional selection criteria used in book selection in wealthy countries may have to be disregarded. Furthermore, simply buying, even generously, will not be enough. Libraries need to become involved in the writing, publishing and selling of books.”


Studies the factors that have influenced the writing, production, dissemination, criticism, and overall development of literature in the nine official languages of South Africa. It reviews some of the conditions under which this literature had to survive, the language debates and the status of these languages in the country, publishing conditions, the development of genres and readership, the distribution of the books and their reception, as well as literary prizes for works in African languages. The author suggests a number of strategies that would help to enhance the profile of African language publishing, support and promote writing in African languages, lead to the prescription of African language books at school level, and at the same time would encourage young and adult readership of literary works in indigenous languages.


Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/389430/1993._CM_Doke_and_the_Development_of_Bantu_Literature [18/11/21]

Between 1935 and 1953 Clement Martyn Doke was editor of the ‘Bantu Treasury Series’ of poetry and drama, published by Witwatersrand University Press, many titles of which were literary works of a very high standard. The author provides an overview and assessment of Doke’s contribution to the development and publication of ‘Bantu’ literature in South African languages, his editorship of the series and his advocacy of translating works which, the author says, opened the way for other publishers to take an interest in literature in African languages.


Examines the chronology and attributes of literate ethno-history in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). While the earliest published authors were members of missionary societies whose
evangelical policies were predisposed towards the Christianization of local chieftaincies, the expansion and Africanization of vernacular historiography from the late 1930s owed much to the intervention of the colonial government in its publishing activities. A survey of their contents shows that vernacular histories and ethnographies mirrored preconceptions and preoccupations typical of the times of their composition. By placing these texts in the political and economic context of the colony, and by providing new data on their wide circulation among literate Africans, the article contends that published ethnohistories were one of the principal cultural components of the process of crystallization of ethnic identities in the middle and late colonial era.


Tries to debunk some of the often stated, blunt assumptions and generalizations about reading cultures in black communities and publishing for these markets, for example that blacks inhabit an ‘oral’ culture while whites live in a ‘literate’ one, “which overlooks centuries of interaction of oral and written forms in South Africa and the fact that there is no longer anything like a ‘pure’ oral culture.” The author’s research is focusing on a group of adults involved in a parent/child reading club in South Africa, who enjoy reading in African languages. By describing the complex detail and nuance of their reading worlds, the article “seeks to problematize the commonsensical and often stereotypical ideas which currently dominate discussion on leisure reading in African languages.”


There is a generalization in South Africa about the lack of a reading culture amongst the people. This generalization is usually presented by publishers and booksellers alike and to some extent by librarians, based on the sales (or the lack of sales) of their books, or the number of visitors to the libraries’ reading sections. It is also based on a misconception that if people do not read publications written in English (and Afrikaans, perhaps), they therefore do not read at all. This paper aims to demonstrate that South Africans do read books published in indigenous languages, but not enough of such material is published and made available in public libraries. The authors also stress the need to allow emerging as well as established writers to self-publish, thus leading to the production of more, and a wider variety of writing, in a variety of languages, than what is currently being produced by commercial publishers. While the authors recognize that reading is a problem, especially for women, they argue that this does not mean people do not read. Self-publishing is, to some extent at least, seen as a possible solution to the problem, encouraging more writers to engage in the publishing business, and thus generating more readers.

Using the Kenyan background, the author faults language choice (i.e. English) as the reason for the slow development of books for African children, and critically examines the extent to which colonization promoted the literature of the colonizer at the expense of indigenous literature. “Children’s literature should basically teach children simple, yet very important things like who they are, about their surroundings, etc. These things should be written and taught in the children’s own language.”


The complete book in pdf format is available as a free download at this link: http://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/African_scholarly_publishing_essays.pdf [15/11/21]

Sets out the reasons for the need for locally published books in Africa, by highlighting the key factors which make it difficult to translate the potential demand to a wide readership. The author examines the publication of indigenous research and scholarship written from an African perspective, recreational and leisure readers, and functional and literacy reading. The multiplicity of local languages tends to result in very small markets for local language materials. Moreover, the number of people in most language groups is also quite often too small to create a viable market for local language materials. However, “the demand for local language materials is very high given that entertainment outlets in many towns and rural communities are almost non-existent. Quite often a common cry from many readers in public libraries is that they have read all the books available in the local language and need more books to read. … Africa has a high percentage of semi-literate people who are still learning the skills of reading and writing. The immediate need for this segment of the population is for materials which enable them to acquire literacy and functional information to address basic needs. In some cases, this can serve as a bridge to reading other materials in the local language on a variety of subjects.”

In his conclusion Mchombu argues that demand for more indigenous publications “has to be preceded by higher awareness and demand for knowledge and information products in general”, and that sustainability of publishing and reading, and the need to build, consolidate and expand an African knowledge base capable of addressing African aspirations, requires innovative solutions in the production of locally published materials.


In this thoughtful and eloquent address Zakes Mda – the award-winning South African novelist, playwright, and poet – describes the state of the book and the culture of reading in South Africa today, and also offers some astute observations about the new digital environment, social media, pulp fiction, and informal reading circles and book clubs. Reading
in all languages must be respected and “it saddens me that today literature in indigenous African languages is so marginalized that we can only conceive of a culture of reading in English. This is not because books in indigenous languages do not exist. Every year new books are published in most of the languages of South Africa, in addition to the classics in languages such as isiXhosa, Sesotho and isiZulu that have had a literary tradition dating from the 1800s. The problem lies with book distribution rather than the book publishing sector. You may go to any of our major bookstores chains today, say Exclusive Books or CNA, and ask for the latest Sesotho novel by Nhlanhla Maake, a Setswana novel by Sabata-Mpho Mokae or an isiXhosa novel by Ncedile Saule, and the likelihood is that you will not find it in stock. It is a Catch 22 situation because the bookstores will tell you they don’t stock such novels because no one buys them, but the readers will tell you they don’t buy them because they are not in stock. This is a cumulative result of the marginalization of indigenous languages in South Africa today in all spheres of life.”

Mda ends his address by emphasizing that cultures reproduce themselves: “A reading culture once cultivated produces more readers and more readers produce more writers, who then in turn produce more readers. It all begins with a seed.”

Mila [Anon.] Angie Motshegka Launches Largest Publication Project for Indigenous Fiction at SABF.
Reports that South African Basic Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, has launched (at the 2017 South African Book Fair) what is claimed to be the largest publication project for indigenous language fiction in South Africa’s history. The initiative, called WritePublishRead http://viaafrika.com/writepublishread/ is the brain child of publisher Via Afrika, working in collaboration with the African Languages Association of South Africa (ALASA). It aims to give hitherto unpublished local writers of indigenous language fiction the chance to be published in their home language. According to the report, less than 1% of books in South African libraries are in indigenous languages, despite the fact that these are the home languages of 76% of the population. This lack of relevant reading materials “contributes to an astounding 60% of South Africans living in a home without a single book” the report claims. WritePublishRead is open for any language, and any person. Authors can work through the handbook and/or a free self-publish online course and publish their material. The WritePublishRead initiative enables authors to self-publish their books as ebooks only. The online course does, however, provide them with information on how to print their book themselves, if they so choose.

On their Web pages publisher Via Afrika argues that “we need to start with the remotely located individual in the most rural parts of the country to convince the remaining 86% of people that reading adds value. In providing reading material and motivation that will entice him or her to read, we can start creating a groundswell that will bring about change. For that to happen we need a reading champion in every community to inspire that community to read. A person is most likely to champion reading when they have a personal stake in what is being read. But the barriers to being published in South Africa are onerously high.”
Also at (‘Request full-text’)

The trade publishing sector in South Africa produces books primarily in English and Afrikaans, which is not representative of the spread of languages spoken in the country. In particular, there are very few books published for general readers in the local African languages. The Indigenous Language Publishing Programme (ILPP) http://sabookcouncil.co.za/indigenous-languages-publishing-programme/ is a recent government-sponsored initiative that aims to improve this situation. This article assesses the impact and sustainability of the ILPP as an attempt to represent the official languages more equally in the publishing industry. The study, based on an analysis of documents and interviews, found that the national language and book policies have not been well implemented, which is seen as a failure in terms of reaching constitutional ideals. Moreover, despite the ILPP being an attempt at creating language equality, the initiative seems not to be sustainable because it is reliant on external funding. The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) is not willing to fund such a project on an ongoing basis, which puts the programme’s longevity at risk. “As a result, the ILPP’s influence remains limited. The minority languages remain under-represented and this raises questions about whether there is in fact a viable market for books in all of the South African languages.”

http://repository.up.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2263/45945/M%C3%B6ller_Multilingual_2015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [19/11/21]

This MIS dissertation aims to investigate the shifts that have taken place in the multilingual trade publishing sector in South Africa, and to what extent constitutional ideals of language equity have been implemented in multilingual publishing to improve access to trade books in the country. Using a combination of primary and secondary research, it examines the disconnect between these constitutional ideals and current practice of publishers. The author notes that “today, there are few African language books available for leisure reading for adults, and this means that the eleven official languages are not being treated or developed equally”, a claim supported by an analysis of the Publishers Association of South Africa’s book industry reports, which provide figures of the sales of books in different languages and from the different publishing sectors. The government is aware of the lack of African language books being read for leisure, and is currently attempting to improve the picture. However, the author argues that a lack of implementation of the government’s language policy, as well as its national book policy, may further delay the realisation of constitutional ideals. The study concludes that there is no clear-cut solution to improve the situation, but recommends a range of changes in various areas connected to book publishing and book reading, over an extended period of time.
http://erea.revues.org/3507 [28/08/21]

Also at https://journals.openedition.org/erea/3507 [28/08/21]

Attempts to demonstrate that the growth of the official African languages in South Africa has not reached the same level as English and Afrikaans, does not enjoy ‘parity of esteem’ in the South African publishing industry, and that this underdevelopment of nine of the official languages is thus in discord with the South African constitution. The study includes an analysis *Writings in Nine Tongues. A Catalogue of Literature and Readers in Nine African Languages for South Africa* published by the Publishers’ Association of South Africa (PASA) in 2007, and the author finds that there has been little or no improvement in enhancing the profile of multilingual publishing in South Africa since the publication of this catalogue. While South Africa has moved from two official languages and huge inequalities, to eleven official languages recognised by the country’s Constitution, “it is clear that multilingual publishing in South Africa still has a long way to go. English-language books remain predominant in the South African publishing industry, although two African languages are the most widely spoken. Publishers do not want to publish African language books outside of the school market because the reading market is small and they argue it would not be financially viable. Aware of the limited readership, authors who strive — desperately, for some — to get published, some desperate to reach international audiences, will most often choose to write in English. Thus, while the new Constitution has provided freedom for all to write — men, women, black and white, language diversity has not improved much, and titles are mostly produced for the school’s market. Access to books is a big problem for many potential readers and book-buyers because of the locations of bookstores or libraries; reading culture, affected by poverty and illiteracy, is another factor that decreases the book-buying market, and the popularity of African language books is further hindered by the lower social status of African languages.” The author asserts that it is only after all these problems are adequately addressed, and start to be remedied, that the book-buying markets will increase, and the market for books in African languages will be considered as something more than just teaching tools.

**Note:** published by PASA in print and online formats, and see also this press release at https://www.publishsa.co.za/downloads/industry-news/press_release_writing_in_nine_tongues.pdf. However, this rich resource would not appear to be currently available in either format.


As part of the activities the National Library Service of Botswana, through its Inter-Agency Materials Production Committee, publishes and distributes a range of books and pamphlets for newly literates designed to provide those in the rural communities with a variety of readings materials both in Setswana and in simplified English, for both leisure reading and educational purposes. This paper describes the historical background of this initiative, the factors leading to the establishment of the Agency, its terms of reference and structure, the problems encountered by the Committee and their possible solutions, as well as methods of manuscript development, production, and distribution.

Examines the reasons why attitudes – notably those by educational stakeholders – towards African languages continue to be negative in postcolonial Malawi, and how this affects the ways in which this literature is taught and studied in schools and at university. “The economic and symbolic values that are attached to African languages and their literatures are low. Market forces which are largely determined by already deeply entrenched negative attitudes do not help matters either.” The author proposes a number of measures which could help to change attitudes towards creative writing in African languages.


Publishers in many parts of Africa are conspicuous by their reluctance to publish in indigenous African languages. Many of these publishers cite the lack of readership in indigenous languages as a reason for this. This article explores book publishing in indigenous languages in South Africa “and exemplifies pertinent issues inherent in the multilingual country where English has remained a dominant discourse at the expense of indigenous languages, which have largely remained underutilised as media of instruction and public discourse.” The author argues that this underutilisation impacts directly on book publishing in indigenous languages, as it leads to a shrinking market for publishers. In his conclusions the author sets out a number of suggestions and recommendations how to promote and strengthen writing and publishing in African languages, and “improving the relevance of material being published so as to stimulate interest in the market – local books must address subjects closer to the local/indigenous readers’ hearts.”


Explores the marginalization of publications written in indigenous languages in Malawi, based on language policies that have been biased in favour of a small ruling English-Chichewa elite, the author argues. It examines the origins of post-colonial language policy and its practice, the origins of indigenous literature in print (primarily started by Christian mission presses), provides some statistical information on published works in indigenous languages, and reviews the problems in the development of the orthography of these languages. It also examines the impact of repressive censorship laws on literary works in vernacular languages. In his conclusion the author notes that six years after the first democratic elections, and after more than thirty years of dictatorial rule by former head of state Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the use of indigenous languages, other than Chichewa, is still token. “Little has changed in
the country, let alone the thought of encouraging writers to publish in their respective indigenous languages.”

Mulgrew, Nick *An Open Letter About our Submissions Period.*

uHlanga http://uhlangapress.co.za/ is a small poetry press based in Cape Town committed to publishing new, experimental and classic works of Southern African poetry. Early in 2017 it hosted its first-ever open submissions period for original manuscripts of poetry in South African languages. It received far more submissions than expected, with 119 poets sending in eligible work. In this informative posting Nick Mulgrew shares some insights what they learnt from the submissions period, offering advice to new writers, as well as for many of the writers who weren’t successful with their submissions. While the high volume of submissions seemed encouraging for the health of poetry writing in South Africa, analysing the submissions presented a more complicated picture. The vast majority of submissions were made in English, or predominantly in English. Although submissions were open in certain African languages, very few submissions in isiZulu and isiXhosa (and none in Sotho) were sent in. A small amount of submissions in Afrikaans, or predominantly in Afrikaans, were also received.

For me, Mulgrew says, “these facts point to a couple things. First, uHlanga likely does not have a reputation for quality publishing in languages other than English. Afrikaans writers will most likely go for Afrikaans presses. This is understandable—the Afrikaans literary industry is relatively healthy in this regard. More important (and worrying), however, is our inability to attract more writers in African languages. The lack of African language submissions suggests one of two things: either there are few writers in African languages, or uHlanga failed to engage and make accessible our opportunity to people who write or would like to write in African languages. … Although many writers are reticent to write in African languages, much of this reticence is down to a perceived lack of opportunities for publication or appreciation. The point, then, is to make more opportunities available, and to be consistent with offering them.” Moreover, he adds, “the fact remains: Aspiring poets want people to read their poems without reading other people’s poems. How do I know this? Two reasons. First, sales numbers don’t add up. Second, aspiring poets aren’t reading contemporary poetry. … If you do not engage with your contemporaries, you cannot influence anything. This is why I would say – and this might be an unpopular opinion – that the work of transforming poetry publishing and appreciation in South Africa isn’t the sole domain of publishers. It’s the task of readers, and readers who are writers.”

Scholarly publishing in most African languages is not flourishing, and the author explains some of the reasons why this is the case, and sets out the major constraints that publishers face, including that of a limited audience and hence lack of demand. The position is somewhat different for Kiswahili, spoken by some 80 million people in Africa, and also the official language, or one of the official languages, in several African countries, and therefore offering much greater potential in terms of audience and readership. However, Mulokozi notes that one of the main problems that hinders greater use of Kiswahili in scholarly writing and publishing is closely related to language policies pursued in the different countries that use Kiswahili, and that in some of them Kiswahili’s status as an official language is only symbolic. Meantime very few of the existing academic publishers in Africa publish scholarly work in Kiswahili at this time, apart from one or two notable exceptions, such as the publishing output of the Institute of Kiswahili Research at the University of Dar es Salaam. The author offers some suggestions how the picture might be improved, and how current attitudinal problems might be addressed, thus enhancing the status and use of Kiswahili and at the same time likely to lead to greater demand for scholarly materials written in Kiswahili.


Mulokozi, Mugyabuso M. “A Survey of Kiswahili Literature: 1970-1988.” Afrika Focus 8, no. 1 (1992): 49-61. http://ojs.ugent.be/AF/article/view/5850/5761 Does not contain a great deal about publishing aspects of Kiswahili, but a very useful survey nonetheless about the development of Kiswahili literature in Kenya and Tanzania in the 1970s and 1980s. It outlines the major trends and the most significant developments, identified as being the emergence of socially critical literature, especially the proletarian novel, the emergence of the experimental forms in fiction, drama and poetry, the rise of the ‘pop’, market literature, and the intensification of translation work. Two conclusions may be drawn may be drawn from this survey, the author says: “The first one is that the development of Kiswahili literature in the two decades under review has been fast and dramatic, in spite of the highly unfavourable economic and, sometimes, political environment. The second conclusion is that, judging from past performance, the future of Kiswahili literature is bound to be bright. The economic and political constraints will no doubt still be there, but the dedication and self-reliance of authors and publishers, that has enabled them to achieve this much to date, will hopefully see them through the coming decades.”

Language is not just a vehicle of cultural expression, but can also be seen as an important symbol of social and political identity of any group, and publishing provides a dominant signifier of such language. Publishing in Africa has been dominated by the colonial languages, notably English and French. Thus colonial enterprise and legacies have resulted in the suppression of publishing in Africa’s indigenous languages. Yet, the authors state, there is a consensus among many scholars that literacy and associated publication in first languages not only influences the nature of education, but also promotes cultural identity. This paper examines the historical dynamism of literacy and publishing in the Igbo language (one of the three major languages and cultural groups of Nigeria) in the context of the social and political developments in 20th century Nigeria. The authors argue that the fragility and problems of publishing in Igbo language was responsible to the dwindling interest in reading, writing and speaking of the language. The paper “interrogates the distinction between indigenous publishing in Africa and publishing in African languages. It recognizes the various challenges that confront indigenous language publishing in Africa, such as lack of clear-cut language policy in most African countries, multiplicity of languages and dialects, and limited markets for published material in the indigenous languages. It posits that addressing these problems and embracing the opportunities in indigenous language publishing and literacy development will contribute in understanding the dynamics of Africa’s intellectual history.”


Takes a critical look at developments in book publishing – and publishing of African language literatures more specifically – in South Africa since 1994, a year in which a number of changes, all closely related to or part of a political agenda that set itself against the former discriminatory policies and practices of the National Party, were introduced. Examines changes in the areas of language and education policies, and how some publishers of African language literatures, as well as literary journalists and critics, responded to these policies.


South African language policy has become much more democratic since the end of apartheid, which recognized only English and Afrikaans as official languages of the country. The new language policy recognizes in addition nine indigenous African languages, and education policies allow these languages as mediums of instruction in schools. However, as the author reports here [in 1999], the task of translating policy into practice is fraught with many obstacles. While the new policies, in theory, are good for the publishing industry, especially for those publishing in the historically disadvantaged African languages, practice is stifled by a number of factors: for example, surveys have shown that many parents still prefer their children to be instructed in English as they see this as a language that gives access to economic
and other privileges. The new publishing dispensation and book promotion strategies “therefore carry with them the hangover from the previous political and educational conditions, hence the wholesale preference for English at the expense of all other languages in the country” Another seriously limiting factor is that in seven provinces provincial departments still have a school prescription committee. “As long as education departments are happy to remain prescriptive, publishers and their readers are too scared to take [on] unconventional titles, and book promoters are prepared to continue with discriminatory practices based on languages, writers will also remain complacent”—all this to the detriment of healthy publishing practice.

Language is not just a vehicle of cultural expression, but can also be seen as an important symbol of social and political identity of any group, and publishing provides a dominant signifier of such language. Publishing in Africa has been dominated by the colonial languages, notably English and French. Thus colonial enterprise and legacies have resulted in the suppression of publishing in Africa’s indigenous languages. Yet, the authors state, there is a consensus among many scholars that literacy and associated publication in first languages not only influences the nature of education, but also promotes cultural identity. This paper examines the historical dynamism of literacy and publishing in the Igbo language (one of the three major languages and cultural groups of Nigeria) in the context of the social and political developments in 20th century Nigeria. The authors argue that the fragility and problems of publishing in Igbo language was responsible to the dwindling interest in reading, writing and speaking of the language. The paper “interrogates the distinction between indigenous publishing in Africa and publishing in African languages. It recognizes the various challenges that confront indigenous language publishing in Africa, such as lack of clear-cut language policy in most African countries, multiplicity of languages and dialects, and limited markets for published material in the indigenous languages. It posits that addressing these problems and embracing the opportunities in indigenous language publishing and literacy development will contribute in understanding the dynamics of Africa’s intellectual history.”

Publishers have failed to translate many works to and from indigenous African languages for multiple reasons, from lack of financial interest to oral sounds which are untranslatable into print, the author says. Also reports about a panel discussion on the challenges of writing and publishing in indigenous African languages, as well as language and translation in general, which was the theme of a recent biennial Kwani? Litfest http://kwanilitfest.tumblr.com, which took place in Nairobi in December of 2015.
Describes the problems and challenges of publishing for small language groups in Cameroon – a country which has 260 mother tongues – focusing on the publishing activities of the Société Internationale de Linguistique (SIL), and a number of other organizations.

http://sajlis.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/43
Also at (freely accessible) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271118910_Revitalising_and_preserving_endangered_indigenous_languages_in_South_Africa_through_writing_and_publishing [19/11/21]
Many indigenous languages around the globe are struggling to survive due to several reasons, including neglect by writers and publishers. Publishers and writers as major role players in the knowledge production chain should more actively assist in promoting and preserving indigenous languages in general and in South Africa in particular. This may help to ensure that “South Africa’s knowledge economy develops without side-lining or discriminating against any culture or language.” There are many challenges that writers and publishers are likely to face in attempting to revitalise and empower indigenous languages in South Africa, but the author believes they are not insurmountable. The purpose of this study is to highlight the role – and the strategies that might be used – writers and publishers might play in revitalising and preserving endangered indigenous languages in South Africa.

One in a series of collections from the Nigerian Book Fair Trust http://www.nibfng.org/ containing the opening addresses, keynote speeches, and papers presented at the Nigeria International Book Fair, held annually since 2002, each fair focusing on a special topic or topics. The fourth collection focuses on the topic ‘Publishing in Indigenous Languages’ and indigenous knowledge systems. It contains over 20 contributions, including some of those presented at Eastern and Western zones satellite book fair events. (The papers emanating from the workshops held during the regional book fairs are primarily on issues relating to copyright protection and enforcement in Nigeria, rights administration, and the role of reproduction rights organizations.)

https://www.koeppe.de/titel_beyond-the-language-issue
An overview of the general situation of creative writing in Kinyarwanda, focusing primarily on its topics, the question of gender, and the promotion of creative writing, but also including a brief account of the current publishing situation. The bibliographic apparatus includes an extensive listing of creative writing in Kinyarwanda.


Looks at the challenges and opportunities of publishing in African languages, and provides an analysis of the language situation in Southern Africa, discussing language issues from a non-political boundary perspective. The author believes a regional approach to language issues is far more important than localized efforts. The paper charts the history of writing in African languages from the advent of Christianity in Africa and early writings that reflected a strong Christian flavour; the period from 1910 to the 1940s which saw the emergence of a whole new wave of original works by Africans; the period of the fifties and sixties when many small indigenous publishers were involved in publishing material in African languages, through to the 1970 to 1990s when publishing in African languages increased very substantially throughout the region. The author thereafter discusses some issues as they relate to the nature and quantity of publishing output in African languages, the major players involved, and the interaction between governments, the private sector, and NGOs in strengthening a publishing infrastructure for publishing in indigenous languages. Ntshangase notes, however, that a huge divide exists between policy, planning, and implementation, with many issues and obstacles still to be resolved, including matters relating to language policies and orthographies for the various languages spoken in the Southern African region. Nonetheless, the author concludes that publishing in African languages is viable, and that “it will continue to flourish once the regional governments create an enabling environment.”


Examines the status of the implementation of Nigeria’s national language policy and discusses its effect on publishing in indigenous languages as an essential and sustainable activity for the achievement of permanent literacy. The author also offers a number of suggestions for moving its implementation forward, and how the Nigerian government might facilitate investment by publishers in developing new books in indigenous languages, by way of translation subsidies and development support.
An interview with the two Ethiopian founders (in 2017), of a new publishing initiative called Market FiftyFour, which “aims to build an online social impact e-commerce platform publishing and marketing affordable audio- and e-books in African languages, for stories written by African writers for an African audience, both on the continent and in the diaspora.” Their first publication was Sheekadii Noloshayada (The Story of Us) a collection of short stories by Hanna Ali published in Somali.

Questioned about the long ongoing debate whether African literature should be written first in African languages, Editorial Director Melat Nigussie says: “Ngugi wa Thiong’o represents a very important movement in African literature, and Market FiftyFour in a way follows his perspective by giving priority to African languages. Our platform aims to empower African literature in African languages, because language is not solely a communication vehicle but is inextricably linked to one’s culture, heritage and identity. Unfortunately, African languages are still deemed inferior, and with Market FiftyFour we want to challenge this idea that originated from colonialism, but lives on in the mind of many Africans and non-Africans. On the other side of the language debate, you have Chinua Achebe who chose to write in English and believed that it didn’t matter what language you wrote in, as long as it was good. Market FiftyFour combines both these visions: we believe in writing and publishing in African languages but, at the same time, we can’t deny the reality of post-colonial Africa and the importance of English. That’s why we also publish in English, but our main focus lies on African languages. So, you could say we succeeded in reconciling Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Chinua Achebe’s perspectives.”

Reports about a partnership and collaboration between the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Global Book Alliance (GBA), and with the support of the USAID, “to find solutions to face the lack of suitable, relevant and quality reading materials in both print and electronic formats for children in Africa.” Most African governments, the authors assert, “have not managed to work with their publishing industries to ensure that materials required in schools and at home meet the reading needs of children, especially in local languages”. The new ADEA-USAID-GBA partnership facilitates forums with book industry stakeholders that have resulted in the formation of an Africa Publishing Collaborative (APC), as well as strengthened collaboration between and among ADEA, the International Publishers Association (IPA), the African Publishers Network (APNET), as well as national book development councils.
This substantial, benchmark collection of essays is indicative of a new trend in the reception of African literatures, which strives to move creative writing in African languages – as an integral, exciting and mainstream part of African literatures more generally – into the centre of scholarly attention. Exploring aspects of the production, mediation and reception of creative writing in African languages, the essays in this collection aim to contribute to understanding the historical, social, cultural as well as personal conditions in which African-language literatures are written, published, read and negotiated. They discuss creative writing with different linguistic and literary backdrops and contexts – traditions of creative writing looking back on one or more centuries of literary production as well as traditions which are just beginning to assert, or reassert, themselves.

The wide range of languages covered – including Chewa, Hausa, Igbo, Luba, Mbundu, Rwanda, Kongo, Lingala, Ganda, Shona, Sotho, Tswana, Sheng, Kiswahili, isiXhosa and Yoruba – facilitates a comparative approach. The contributors to this volume (which is mostly based on papers read at the 8th International Janheinz Jahn Symposium), have diverse professional experience in the field of African literatures, for instance in publishing and translation, those working in the ministries of culture and education of different African countries, as well as those active in secondary and tertiary education; and some have themselves published creative works in African languages. The section on the challenges of publishing African-language literatures (pp. 87-144) will be of particular interest, as publishing affects literary production in many ways: “It is concerned with publishing from the perspective of publishers themselves, with their visions, choices, difficulties and measures to overcome these difficulties, as well as with alternative media of publication and the problem of non-publication.” Several of these articles identify the absence of “potent local, national and international publishing houses interested in, or economically capable of, considering creative writing in African languages for publication as one of the greatest obstacles faced by writers, to the extent that the future of literary production is threatened.”


http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/ (click on to 11/2 issue in journals back issue archives) [18/11/21] Champions the case for more educational publications in Kiswahili as an appropriate medium for educational and national development. Educational development cannot be achieved without support services such as books in all fields, and in a language that is readily understood by many people. The authors aim to demonstrate that Kiswahili, the national and co-official language of Kenya, can play an important role in the production of educational materials, and explore the extent of publishing in Kiswahili and other African languages for various educational levels in Kenya, including children’s books, school textbooks, tertiary level texts, special education, adult education and fiction. The authors argue that Kenya stands
to gain a great deal if they assign Kiswahili publishing a larger role, but at the same time caution against downplaying the international significance of English.


Argues the case for increased publishing of reading materials in Kiswahili, and other indigenous languages, to support and enhance adult education programmes. The author reviews the current state of adult literacy in Kenya, the nature and viability of publishing for adult education, the role of African languages in adult literacy, and recommends measures to be taken to avoid a relapse to illiteracy by newly-literate by providing affordable and relevant materials.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/3819327

An interesting account that describes the publication history of Archibald Campbell (A.C.) Jordan’s Xhosa novel Ingqumbo yeMinyanya (The Wrath of the Ancestors), his most famous work, published by Lovedale Press in South Africa in 1940, and subsequently also published in English.

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002126/212602e.pdf  

A significant and substantial study which presents the results of comprehensive research and that assesses the experiences of mother-tongue and bilingual education programmes in 25 sub-Saharan African countries in recent years. The role of language for education and learning in the African context is addressed with regard to policy and development; costing and financing; educational reform and governance; education models; classroom interaction; formal and non-formal education settings; literacy, as well as publishing. The review consists of three sections. In the first, two central comprehensive themes are set out: language politics and planning in the context of development; and theories of bi- and multilingual education models and their implementation in Africa. The second section shifts the focus to the key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment practices; the use of African languages in literacy and non-formal education; and costing and financing mother-tongue and strong bilingual education. In the final section, ‘Optimising Publishing for Mother-tongue-medium Bilingual Education’, two African publishers explore the experience and potential of locally-based multilingual publishing with regard to supporting and promoting African languages and developing language industries and the creative sector. They come from publishers
specialising in educational and other reading materials: Yaya Satina Diallo from Éditions Ganndal, Guinea and Peter Reiner from Gamsberg Macmillan, Namibia, both of whom advocate strongly for locally-based multilingual publishing. They highlight its benefits and point to successful strategies, and remaining challenges. They also recommend ways of improving the publishing sector, while placing a special emphasis on African languages.

Chapter 7 “Publications in African languages and the development of bilingual education” by Yaya Satina Diallo (see ➔ separate record in this section), and Chapter 8 “Promise and pitfalls – a commercial view of publishing in African languages” by Peter Reiner is of particular interest (see ➔ separate record under Namibia.)

Opoku-Amankwa, Kwasi; Dora F. Edu-Buandoh, and Aba Brew-Hammond “Publishing for Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education in Ghana: Politics and Consequences.”


Also at (freely accessible)


One often cited challenge to effective mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBE) in multilingual countries like Ghana is the difficulty of developing curriculum and instructional materials in many languages. To explain this situation, factors such as shortage of writers and teachers in the local languages, lack of interest on the part of publishers in view of the wide availability of textbooks in multiple languages, as well as official support for dominant western languages, such as English, are usually cited. This paper discusses the veracity of these claims, by examining pre- and post-independent governments’ efforts at material development to support MTBE in Ghana. The authors point out that, while most educational policies and reforms in pre- and post-independent Ghana have emphasised the importance of mother tongue education, there has in fact been no concerted attempt to design and implement a language-in-education policy that incorporates the urgent need to develop curriculum materials for MTBE. This is attributed primarily to a lack of political will, exhibited in the limited support in terms of resources offered for the development of Ghana’s languages by successive governments, as well as fuelled by myths and misconceptions about mother-tongue education: “The fact remains”, the authors state, “that the use of an unfamiliar language as a medium of instruction denies full access to education for the majority of children from socio-economically disadvantaged families.”


https://www.koeppe.de/titel_beyond-the-language-issue ¶

Also at (freely accessible)


A personal account of the author’s motivation of setting up Hakuna Matata Press/Édé Publications (its name is taken from the Kiswahili phrase ‘hakuna matata’, meaning ‘no problems’ or ‘no worries’). Akintündé relates his experience with publications in four African
languages, including a number of bilingual editions, and the stories behind each title reveal a great deal about his passion for literary production in African languages, as well as the challenges involved in creating such a highly idealist not-for-profit project. The author is an active member of the Yoruba community in London, publishing African language books in Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo, as well as a short story collection in Kiswahili. Although the challenges have been formidable, there has also been success. “The most important success is the joy whenever a writer’s creative activities culminate in publications.”


Provides an insight into the early work of Lovedale Press in South Africa from 1823 onwards, when Lovedale was the focal point of the literate Christian culture that emerged among the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape region, and which up until the turn of the century concentrated on evangelical and educational texts. Describes the change in the press and its publication policies after R.H.W. Shepherd took charge of its operations in 1929, until his departure in 1950. Contains five case studies of editorial interference culled from the detailed records of the Lovedale Press. Peires contends that while the Lovedale Press undoubtedly published manuscripts in Xhosa which would otherwise never have been published, “the effective monopoly of the Lovedale Press ... stifled the development of a meaningful vernacular historiography.”


Also at (freely accessible) [https://www.academia.edu/35652377/Cultures_Oxygen](https://www.academia.edu/35652377/Cultures_Oxygen) [11/06/21]

A very interesting and timely PEN report, with a preface by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the leading advocate of indigenous languages in African literature (presented here, very appropriately, in both English and Ngũgĩ’s native language of Gĩkũyũ.) The report found “that there is still a conviction in the mainstream publishing industry that it is primarily viable to sell books in dominant languages, and that a major obstacle to establishing and sustaining strong minority-language publishing industries is the way that minority languages are valued locally and nationally.” It outlines global trends in minority-language literatures, explores the minority-language situation, and analyses the legal and policy framework and the prevailing book markets trends in the four focus countries. Finally, it sets out long-term objectives for the future of minority-language publishing and makes a series of recommendations to governments, as well as to cultural actors, publishers and writers. A useful list of further study sources is also included.

Of special interest, from a publisher’s point of view and those creating material in African languages, is Part 4: Prevailing Trends in the Book Market, where the report states, very succinctly: “Our research across the four countries found that the major reason cited for a lack of educational projects and the book industry in minority languages is the absence of any financial return on these products. In the post-colonial areas of Africa and the Caribbean, the
Publishing industry is only beginning to explore the huge potential of the capacity to ‘speak’ the language of readers and to seek to work with their worlds in order to open up ‘new’ markets, even though they exist within the same countries. … The chain of prejudice is very long and highly complex, and it is therefore impossible to resolve the marginalisation issue with short-term projects.” The majority of these economic arguments, the project report says, “are, in essence, ideological arguments dressed up in objective and neutral language. To reverse such deep-rooted convictions, it is necessary to start from the premise that the markets can be changed, and that consumer patterns and behaviour can be gradually altered.” The study argues that, under the right circumstances, a readership can be fostered, even created. “In order for the book market in minority languages to be viable, even possible, we must remove the barriers that exclude wide swathes of the population from education in their local language and prevent its normalised use in their daily lives.”

Note: See also Culture’s Oxygen. The PEN Report. Developing the Minority-language Creative Writing Industry in Kenya, Haiti, Serbia and Nigeria. An Inter-regional Research, Advocacy and Development Programme by Simona Škrabec https://www.academia.edu/35652377/Cultures_Oxygen


In 2014 PEN International was awarded a UNESCO International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) grant for a project entitled ‘Developing the Minority Language Creative Writing’. The eighteen months project covered four countries: Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria and Serbia. This is a report about a roundtable meeting on the theme held in London in May 2014, the outcomes of which were intended to inform the research project. The principal aim of the project is to strengthen minority language publishing industries in these four countries “through the identification of the main challenges and policy gaps affecting the publishing industry, the development of recommendations for the strengthening of cultural policies to promote minority language publishing industries, as well as the development and strengthening of a network of key stakeholders working to promote minority language publishing industries.”

Note: for the full report, released in 2017, see ➔ preceding record above.


Publishing, books, reading and the promotion of reading are issues of public discourse in Kenya as exemplified by numerous recurring newspaper articles on the topic, the author says. This meticulously-documented thesis – supported by a very extensive range of tables and appendices, and preceded by a comprehensive literature review – primarily explores voluntary reading habits in the multilingual environment of Kenya, but also addresses the issues and challenges of publishing in African languages (Chapter 4.3.1). Designed as a case study, it focuses on the social image of reading, the functions of reading, the factors impacting on reading habits, and the language use in reading among members of the ethnolinguistic
Kikuyu and Luo communities in Nyeri District (Central Kenya) and Kisumu District (Western Kenya). By taking a reader-oriented perspective the study aims to add a new dimension to the discussion on the status of reading in the Kenyan context, which has thus far been mainly debated from the point of view of publishers.

As part of her concluding section 4.3.1, ‘Implications for reading promotion and book production’, the author argues that publishing in African languages, and providing adequate reading material in all African languages, “is not only a necessary means to respect the democratic and language rights of the people, but a prerequisite to extend readership.” However, “counting on the state and the government to take action has more often than not proved to be in vain in Kenya as elsewhere in the world. Thus, action beyond the policy level is necessary to promote and strengthen the use of African languages in the country and to force political and public discourse to recognize that matter.” Undoubtedly, she concedes, “venturing into new and perhaps small market segments requires investment at risk of loss. Small markets need research about the targeted audience gaining information on audience size, topical interests, purchasing power, available time resources etc. to succeed on the new market. However, it should be in the interest of publishers to explore new business opportunities. Single publishers might not be willing and able to take this risk, but joint efforts may provide a way out. … Strengthening the use of African languages in the print sector would be a first step to fully acknowledge and appreciate the multilingual environment of the country and to start making use of its potential in social, political and economic respects rather than perceiving multilingualism as an obstacle to development.”


Reports about a two-day seminar organized by The Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) http://www.praesa.org.za/, held at Biblionef headquarters in Pinelands, Cape Town, in 2017. It brought together academics from various universities, practitioners, literacy activists, editors, publishers and others, all of them involved in different ways and to differing extents in the South African multilingual children’s literacy and literature domain. The seminar’s last session focused on the role of government, policy makers, libraries and publishers “in making the necessary shifts at high levels to enhance multilingual children’s literacy and literature development.”


Another story also at https://publishingperspectives.com/2017/06/norway-nigeria-library-digitization/ [15/11/21]

The National Libraries of Nigeria and Norway have signed a letter of intent concerning the digitization of books in Nigerian languages by the National Library of Norway. “Our aim is to give access to digitized books in indigenous Nigerian languages to Nigerians living in
Norway through our multilingual library. We also hope that this project becomes a model for our cooperation with other countries, and the success of more African languages” Jens-Petter Kjemprud, Norway’s ambassador to Nigeria is quoted as saying. The agreement will cover literature written in the Nigerian languages of Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (although the first two can be described as cross-border languages, also spoken in some other countries of the West African region). The costs will be shared, with the library in Nigeria responsible for collecting and making available copies of the material to be digitized, while the Norwegians will be responsible for undertaking the digitisation. Questions relating to formats and access (and rights issues?) will presumably be answered in the months ahead, and this is certainly a most welcome development and might well serve as a pilot for similar collaborative ventures with African national libraries elsewhere with significant holdings in African language materials.

http://www.publishsa.co.za/index.php?cmd=nineLang [web page not accessible as at February 2022] (Select from 9 different pdf files, by language)
An initiative of the Publishers’ Association of South Africa and produced with the support of the South African Department of Arts and Culture and the collaboration of National Library of South Africa – this a comprehensive and very attractively produced catalogue that showcases over 4,000 titles in nine African languages—isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Sesotho sa Leboa/Sepedi, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. For each language titles are grouped under these genres: Novels, Traditional literature, Short stories, Drama, Poetry, Essays and Prose, Multi-genres, and Non-fiction. Each entry (many accompanied by cover images in colour) gives author, title and description in the original language, publisher, ISBN, age level, together with an English translation of the title description. A directory of publishers, with full contact details including email addresses, Web sites and publisher logos, completes the volume. Published in 2007, this is a marvellous resource, but unfortunately neither the print nor the online version would appear to be available any longer.

https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/28460/1/10672619.pdf (Typescript of thesis, freely accessible)
The prominent Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o is well known for consistently drawing international critical attention to the importance for African writers to write in African languages. Gakaara wa Wanjau proceeded Ngũgĩ as a writer, a political activist and detainee for the cause of Gikuyu language, literature, and culture. As a writer, educationist, editor, and publisher Gakaara wa Wanjau – who was the joint winner, in 1984, of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa – advocated a language policy that made him politically suspect before and after independence. His work is presented here in the wider political context of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Kenya.

Outlines the history of Kenyan publishing in African languages starting with the work of mission presses in the early 20th century, the role of the East African Literature Bureau founded in 1947, through to developments since independence. Describes the activities of three Kenyan publishers producing books in indigenous languages: Gakaara wa Wanjau, David Maillu of Maillu Publishing House, and Asenath Bole Odaga of Lake Publishers.


Also at https://archive.org/stream/ERIC_ED540491/ERIC_ED540491_djvu.txt (Full text of entire book, freely accessible) [15/11/21]

A paper first presented at a Regional Conference on Bilingual Education and the Use of Local Languages, held in Windhoek, Namibia, August 3-5, 2005. The position of African languages, the author says, has been the subject of much debate over the years, especially within the context of what is often referred to as the African Renaissance. Similarly, many have written and spoken at length about how African languages could and should contribute to the development of individual African countries and the upliftment of the continent as a whole. The purpose of this paper, by the Publishing Manager of Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers in Windhoek, is to contribute to this debate not from an academic or purely theoretical point of view, but to provide inputs of a more practical nature, based on the experiences of a company involved in African-languages publishing for well over 25 years now. Reiner states that Namibia is probably one of Africa’s success stories when it comes to publishing in African languages, and one of a select few countries on the continent in which private-sector publishing of African languages is not only viable, but in fact profitable. In this study he seeks to demonstrate that “publishing in African languages is not only possible, but can be conducted as a viable, profitable and sustainable commercial activity. However, it will not necessarily be an easy task to achieve this objective, and there are certain prerequisites that need to be met before any effort has even a moderate chance of succeeding. Also, publishers venturing into this field will have to overcome obstacles during the establishment phase and be prepared to deal with unfavourable conditions and factors as part of their normal publishing routine, as well as to take risks and accept compromise. Ultimately, publishing in African languages must be seen as a long-term investment, and – like any consumer-oriented industry – publishers need to create a market for their products before they can hope to generate profits.”


A report about the Reprint of South African Classics Project (RSACP) to promote the reading of indigenous languages, initiated by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) in 2008, after government research indicated that a low level of literacy in the country had hindered development within various sectors of society. A subsequent study by the DAC, on the reading habits of adult South Africans, confirmed that less than half of all households owned leisure books. While a significant increase in the number of new indigenous African language books published was noted, this growth has largely been confined to the school market. Consequently, there has been a significant lack of growth in the publishing of adult books in indigenous languages, the report states. A number of factors were cited as causes for the lack of audiences for these books; “however it is apparent that many South Africans have read indigenous language books in the past and that these have made a lasting impact.” It is against this backdrop that the DAC realised that it is critical to reprint these works and make them available in the public domain. The Centre of the Book at the National Library of South Africa was charged with implementation and management of the project. A Coordinating Committee was established to oversee the project, and selection of titles was made after members of the public, academia, authors and librarians were invited to nominate classics in their respective indigenous languages. Each of the nine official South African indigenous languages, as recognised by the South African Constitution, was included in the project, resulting in over 400 titles.


Also at (freely accessible)

Ndanda Mission Press (NMP) is the publishing unit of the Benedictine Abbey in Ndanda in the South-East region of Tanzania, where it is part of an extended mission complex with various departments and workshops. When it was founded in 1934 by German missionaries, NMP aimed at producing theological reading material for the catholic parishes, but in 1973 it also launched a programme of entertainment literature in Swahili covering a broad range of topics. From its outset, the entertainment programme’s aim “was to stimulate reading and reflection on social conditions as well as to give newcomers among writers in Tanzania a chance to get their manuscripts published.” Based on an extensive reading of the books that appeared within the programme, this study aims to investigate the changes and developments of the programme from 1990 onwards, including aspects of editorial procedures, production and distribution, the authors and their careers, and subject and topics. It concentrates on prose fiction, which makes up the greater part of the entertainment


The purpose of this extensive DERP survey of children’s reading materials in African languages in eleven countries in sub-Saharan Africa was “to develop an approach to collecting information on the available supply of Early Grade Reading (EGR) materials.” The survey had four main research objectives: (1) Describe the availability of titles in African languages for the early primary grades in terms of language and book type (textbooks or other reading materials). (2) Review the usefulness of available titles for reading development in terms of pedagogical utility, reading level, and the cultural relevance, age appropriateness, and social inclusivity of their contents. (3) Assess the feasibility of using, adapting, and reproducing available titles based on their copyright status and current availability in digital format. (4) Describe the general landscape of the production of EGR materials in African languages, including the types of organizations producing titles, the number of titles produced per decade since the 1960s, and market prices.

Based on data from the 5,919 titles surveyed, the main findings were, among others, as follows:

- The total number of African languages in which materials were found (200) exceeds the number of African languages with well-developed orthographies.
- However, there is a paucity of titles in many languages: Although materials in 200 African languages were found, most languages are represented by very few titles: 40 languages have only one title each, 42 languages have between two and five titles, and 59 languages have between six and 20 titles.
- The degree of the implementation of language in education policies tends to predict the number of titles recorded for a particular language.
- Non-profit organizations and commercial publishers are the lead producers of EGR materials in African languages.
- Available titles are generally appropriate for supporting EGR development.
- The use of open licensing is not yet widespread in sub-Saharan Africa.

In its conclusions the report states, inter alia, “The DERP Reading Materials Survey offers more information than has previously been available on EGR materials in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the data collected do not constitute an exhaustive inventory and, given the lack of reliable statistics on the African book sector, are not necessarily a representative sample of children’s publications in African languages. … Nonetheless, the results strongly indicate that, although materials exist in a wide range of languages, for many languages, the available materials are insufficient to adequately support children’s reading development. … The findings also suggest a need for strengthening the capacity of local talent to produce developmentally appropriate supplementary materials that match early readers’ different
skill levels. ... Finally, the findings of the DERP Reading Materials Survey suggest that producers of materials may not perceive any benefit in sharing information on copyright and permissions for re-use. The low use of Creative Commons licenses also signals either a lack of knowledge of open licensing or a perceived threat of open licensing to profitability or control over the original content of titles."

SABC Digital News Sifiso Publishers to Publish in all South African Languages. [Interview with Yamkela Tywakadi] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6Eu4K54TfA (Video recording, 5:37mins.) [15/11/21] Yamkela Tywakadi is the Commissioning Editor for Sifiso Publishers http://sifisopublishers.africa/, whose mission is to produce books by African authors, with African content, and in all of South Africa’s languages, including books for children. In this interview she talks about the many challenges of publishing African literature in African languages, problems of distribution, lack of visibility on the shelves of the major bookstores, and her attempts at ‘disrupting’ conventional distribution channels in order “to get books in the right hands”. Note: See also her PowerPoint presentation Publishing in Africa But not for Africans. How the Publishing and Bookselling Industry Can Contribute to the GDP of the Country. at https://www.southafricanculturalobservatory.co.za/download/386.

Segoe, Lineo Ba re e ne re: Building a Community of Writers and Readers in Lesotho. https://africanwords.com/2017/05/22/ba-re-e-ne-re-building-a-community-of-writers-and-readers-in-lesotho/ (Posted 22 May 2017) [25/11/21] Lineo Segoete, Programming Director at Ba re e ne re https://bareenere.com/ (the name comes from a phrase used to begin folktales in Sesotho) reports about a new initiative to promote a culture of reading and writing in Lesotho. Activities include the organization of an annual literary festival and writing workshop, a national spelling bee competition, production of a poetry video series, an innovative Sesotho dictionary project, and publication of an anthology of short stories written by Basotho called Likheleke tsa puo (which translates to ‘Wordsmiths’ in English).

Sibiya, Dumisani Cry Not; Try a Lot: The Development and Promotion of African-Language Literatures. http://www.oulitnet.co.za/youngwriters/dumisani_sibiya_e.asp (Posted 25 November 2004) Several approaches have been used to develop and promote literatures in African languages, yet these literatures are still struggling to survive. “The tried but tired strategies are literary awards, book series and literary criticism”, the author says. While these methods remain supportive, he calls for a more radical, multiple strategic approaches to the development and promotion of creative writing in these languages. He examines some of the recent publishing output in African languages, and suggests possible promotional strategies that could be used in order to enhance the status of African language publishing, and the promotion of indigenous literatures.

A short profile of Akoss Ofori-Mensah of Sub-Saharan Publishers in Ghana https://subsaharanpublishers.com/, which is currently working with a number of partners to research the impact of open licensing on publishing business models by sharing books in underserved local Ghanaian languages. Founded in 1992, Sub-Saharan Publishers (a member of African Books Collective) is a multiple award-winning indigenous publishing house specializing in African children’s books, as well as publishing African literature, studies on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and scholarly books in the areas of environmental and gender studies. As part of their experiments with open licensing, Sub-Saharan Publishers digitized three stories based on tales from Northern Ghana—Fati and the Honey Tree, Fati and the Green Snake, and Fati and the Soup Pot. The Fati books were developed when Kathy Knowles, a Canadian librarian working in Ghana, felt that there should be simplified stories for Ghanaian children who are just beginning to learn to read. However, initially she was unable to find a publisher in Ghana until Sub-Saharan Publishers agreed to take them on. The Fati books have been published on StoryWeaver https://storyweaver.org.in/ and are now also available on the African Storybook https://www.africanstorybook.org/ platform. The three stories are available in English and three Northern Ghanaian languages (using a CC BY licence), Dagbani, Sisali and Dagaare, three major languages in northern Ghana where the stories are set. Open licensing allows Sub-Saharan Publishers to have these books translated into other local languages and shared electronically, so that children elsewhere in Ghana, and in other African countries, are able to read more culturally relevant local stories in their mother tongue.


Godwin Siundu is the founding co-editor of the Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies (EALCS) https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/real20/current, first published in 2014. Africa’s contribution to academic knowledge production on its own region has long been suppressed by the infrastructures of international publishing, which supports and excludes particular languages and EALCS is described as “an attempt to connect the intellectual dialogues taking place in the region with their variants elsewhere.” Before its launch, no single journal published in the region had attracted the attention of such a publisher with global networks of circulation and a reputation for rigorous editorial standards. Siundu says “we also felt that the wider world of literary and cultural knowledge production was poorer because the existing infrastructures of journal publishing with a global reach did not provide for publication in Kiswahili … We therefore see the current Kiswahili-English bilingual issue of EALCS as a significant step towards facilitating theoretical conversations involving academics versed in Kiswahili across the world, but also as an occasion for dialogue between Kiswahili and English, indisputably the most important languages in eastern Africa.”


Music and television are ripping benefits of multi-lingual programmes in pop culture, while book sales remain low because most are in English, this report claims. “Black music lovers
tend to appreciate all forms of music in their indigenous languages. But release a book, say in Sotho or Zulu, and almost no one will buy it. All local bestsellers by black authors are published in English.” The author cites Rhodes University lecturer and independent publisher Fouad Asfour, who has two theories why the indigenous languages book market performs badly: He blames the publishing industry for being largely white and untransformed; and the arts-loving public for gravitating towards popular culture, which books are not. “The problem is that the [publishing] industry is framed for a white audience. It hasn’t yet quite transformed. Reading and writing has been associated with colonialism.” For books to become popular culture, Asfour argues, “they must become less white.”

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https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/publishing-in-african-languages

Few African countries give “working language” status to the local languages spoken by the majority of the population, and this restricts the scope and usage of these languages for teaching and scientific research, and due to their poor utilitarian value, the written resources have had very limited influence. Aliou Sow discusses the challenges of publishing in African languages in this context, analysing constraints in writing, publishing and distribution, and the trends in local language publishing in French-speaking West Africa in general and in Guinea in particular. The author argues that while trying to improve the reading and writing abilities of the majority of its citizens, each country should integrate linguistic policy and the effective use of national languages into mainstream national life, especially as it concerns education and administration. “Maintaining and enriching national cultures should also not be separated from development plans; national languages can provide a base to make this possible.” He calls for educational reforms that would promote national language use, at least during the first five years of schooling. “Publishing in African languages will advance only if these prerequisites are fulfilled and only if we stop considering national languages as rural dialects.”

A wide-ranging and significant report that addresses key issues based on recent research on language and literacy education in the African context, including teacher education, and outlines key findings and recommendations for research and practice based on a review of the literature. It also includes a discussion (sub-section 3.3) about ‘Publishing in African Languages’. Part I of the report reviews focal areas of research and is based on academic articles and reports. Part II presents case studies of policies and teacher education, with a focus on 21st century skills, from six countries associated with CODE’s work in Africa: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. These case studies provide insight into the key issues discussed in Part I of the report.

In a section entitled Literacy Materials and Publishing, the report states “Print literacy materials, such as textbooks and storybooks, are key to helping students develop high levels of literacy. Yet there are often few textbooks and storybooks in African schools, particularly in African languages. Increasing the number of books available to students is important, but teachers’ use of textbooks and storybooks in the classroom is also key, as making books available does not necessarily mean they will be utilized effectively. The publishing industry faces challenges from low demand and import of books from abroad.” Publishing in African languages is only financially viable if there is a market for those books, either in the form of government guarantees or incentives, or other ways in which publishers can be confident that there is a market for their books.

Among the report’s recommendations for research are:
(i) Research how to support teachers in using textbooks and storybooks: “Providing storybooks or textbooks does not always mean that these are read or used in effective ways. Research should explore and guide effective use of literacy materials in ways that are conducive to learning. Building on existing practices, such as shared choral reading, and retelling stories, are starting points that research should investigate further.”
(ii) Research how textbooks and storybooks can promote gender equality: “The recent literature on African textbooks describes a tendency for textbooks to promote gender equality, but sometimes at odds with traditional gender norms. More research is required to learn how gender equality can be promoted while reflecting contemporary African societies, such as through the development or adaptation of textbooks and storybooks, and reception studies of these new materials.”

On the aspect of ICT and digital resources, the report says that ICT is often seen as a promising contribution to education in Africa and elsewhere, but there are high costs and technical and implementation challenges associated with introducing digital devices to schools. “ICT is more than devices for end-users, however. Open educational resources are important for sharing and creating materials, particularly in African languages.”

In Janheinz Jahn’s 1966 study, *Neo-African Literature*, he refers to the tragedy of Southern ‘Bantu’ literature, a linguistic category that comprises nine of the country’s eleven official languages. This chapter maps out writing and publishing in African languages in South Africa since 1948, years that were markers of political change which impacted on the literary history of the African languages. [Not examined]


The Basotho produced their first writers in the second half of the nineteenth century and were soon to be followed by a later generation comprising Mofolo, Segoete, Motsamai and Mangoaela, most of whose works first appeared in *Leselinyana* in a column reserved for imaginative writing, before being reprinted in book form. Includes some aspects of publishing.


A workshop paper prepared by the author for the BarCamp Africa UK conference in London on 7 November 2009. It sets out the background to African indigenous language literacy and early writing systems, and how these systems developed. In most cases, the author says, “the initiative seems to have come from Christian missionary organizations in the 19th and 20th centuries that were determined that the Bible should be translated and made available in readable form in Africa’s indigenous languages, most of which did not have a writing system. As a measure of the scale of this project, at present there are about 680 of Africa’s languages which have a complete version of the Bible in print.” The author then moves on to the more technical aspects of typesetting and publishing text in indigenous African languages: issues such as fonts, characters, encoding, and font editing. He also describes the emergence of Unicode and other liberating technical developments, and the rise of new font formats that are able to accommodate large numbers of glyphs, as well as free open source multilingual fonts. A final section deals with typesetting applications and browsers, another potential barrier – as “having an extended-repertoire font will do you no good if your applications are unwilling to play along” – and African fonts in Internet communications.

Taylor, Conrad *How to Liberate African Publishing?*

A helpful blog posting about open-source software that might be suitable for African language software, and fonts for African languages, an issue that has for long been a barrier for typesetting and publishing in some African indigenous languages, because they require characters that cannot be found in the standard fonts. What Africa really needs is fonts which contain the glyphs for African languages, the author says, many of which are now free of charge, such as SIL’s Open Font License (OFL)
http://scripts.sil.org/cms/scripts/page.php?site_id=nrsi&item_id=OFL a free and open source license specifically designed for fonts and related software based on SIL’s experience in font design and linguistic software engineering, and which allows modification and redistribution.

Taylor, Conrad Typesetting African Languages. https://archive.org/details/TypesettingAfricanLanguages (Complete e-book, read in full screen mode) Also at http://www.conradiator.com/resources/pdf/Afrolingua_full.pdf [16/11/21] A personal investigation by Conrad Taylor into the problems of typesetting African languages, with a focus on those which use an extended Latin character set beyond the scope of normal fonts. This 55 pp. illustrated booklet was written in 2000, and the author points out that this does not reflect the current situation where Unicode and Open Type offer solutions, but is contributed for historical reference. Still useful though.

Teferra, Damtew “The Politics of Multilingual Education and Publishing in Ethiopia.” In Publishing in African Languages: Challenges and Prospects, edited by Philip G. Altbach and Damtew Teferra. Chestnut Hill, MA: Bellagio Publishing Network, Research and Information Center (Bellagio Studies in Publishing, 10), 1999, 75-109. https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/courage-and-consequence [23/11/21] Analyses the significance of government policies in Ethiopia on education, language, and publishing. In the late 1990’s the [then] new government, as part of wide-ranging social and political changes, introduced a policy of vernacularisation of primary education. This extensive study focuses on the implementation of this policy in Ethiopian schools, its impact on education and textbook production, and assesses the pros and cons of implementing a vernacularization policy within the context of education and publishing. The author offers a number of practical proposals for change, for example that the language policy debate ought to be depolitized, and that widely spoken regional languages should be used for instruction until such time as the other, smaller languages are able to build an effective infrastructure.

Traore, Flavia Aiello African Children’s Literature and the Promotion of Readership: Swahili Books for Children in Tanzania. A Paper Presented at the 7th Iberian Congress of African Studies, Lisbon, Portugal, 9-11 September 2010. http://repositorio.iscte.pt/bitstream/10071/2421/1/CIEA7_21_TRAORE_African%20children%E2%80%99s%20literature%20and%20the%20promotion%20of%20readership.pdf [23/11/21] The important role of children’s literature for developing a reading culture has long been recognised. This is also the case in Tanzania where, since the 1990s, both the government and a number of donor organizations have assisted projects that have supported writers and publishers in the writing, production, and the distribution of Kiswahili children’s literature. The emergence of Kiswahili children’s books are a relatively new development, but “which appears to provide writers with a chance to experiment with the manipulation of literacy and orality, both for elite and popular literature, thus giving voice to a more heterogeneous vision of national literature and culture.” This recent flourishing of quality children’s literature in Kiswahili can be seen as a very positive development, and the author here describes some of these new projects and initiatives.
In South Africa, for many years children’s stories have been published in English and Afrikaans, languages mostly spoken by a minority of the population. Even though the publishing industry has changed over the years, publishing children’s stories still remains largely dominated by English and Afrikaans. While there has recently been a surge in the number of authors writing children’s stories in African languages, including Setswana, unfortunately children’s authors in South Africa are not as celebrated as biographers, political writers, poets and the likes. Not a great deal of publicity and credit is given to these authors, nor the translators. It is also a struggle to secure a publishing deal with commercial publishers for books in African languages, the author says, and therefore writers resort to writing in English as it is easier to get their work published. The Puku Children’s Literature Foundation encourages reviewing of children’s books written in African languages, and is facilitating creative writing workshops across the Northern Cape, a province with a large population of the indigenous San people, a people whose languages are at the risk of extinction and whose stories need to be told: “Reviewing children’s books in South and Southern Africa will bring to life stories, identities and cultures of people whose stories are not mainstream through Puku’s writing workshops. … Puku does not only review books, but uses reviewers who are experts in the field of early literacy, education and African languages. … Reviewing children’s books creates a robust environment for all sectors of the book chain in the country.”


Looks at the role of indigenous languages in cultural preservation. The author pays tribute to the pioneering role of F.C. Ogbalu of Varsity Printing Press and University Publishing Company in Onitsha who published a large number of Igbo texts during the 1960s and 70s, and thereafter examines some of the attitudes of publishers, reluctant to publish material in indigenous languages in view of its perceived limited market; and when they do publish such material are slow in paying royalties. He also reviews common problems faced by authors of indigenous language texts, including policies of SSC/GCE examination bodies, unsettled orthographies (notably Igbo), and the low public regard for local languages in aiding the learning process and cultural preservation. The author makes a number of recommendations how the profile of indigenous language publishing might be enhanced.

remain accessible once acquired. Concludes by noting that African language material may well, in the near future, be one of the few “remaining opportunities for total involvement in the living matter of knowledge.”

[site not accessible as at February 2022]
Also published in French as *Côut-efficacité de la publication de matériel éducatif en langues Africaines.*

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa Working Group on Books and Learning Materials (ADEA-WGBLM) organized two workshops held in Dakar in 1996 on the cost-effectiveness of publishing educational materials in African languages, and it also commissioned five case studies which are published in this volume. The objective of the workshop, and the case studies, was to gather information about the costs of publishing materials in national and local languages, to try to identify the benefits of these materials, both in schools and in adult literacy programmes and other non-formal education, and to review strategies to promote and encourage publication and use of educational materials from the point-of-view of cost effectiveness. The five case studies cover The Gambia (Abdoulie Jobe), Madagascar (Louis Lai Seng), Namibia (Laurentius Davids), Senegal (Gaston Pierre Coly), and Zambia (Shadreck Hakalima). Each case study systematically examines the social, economic and educational context in each country: language policy and policies on publishing in national languages, costs of publishing educational materials, strategies for minimizing costs, and perceived benefits and effectiveness. An introductory chapter by the editor summarizes the main features and the methodology used, the problems encountered in the data gathering process, and the main findings and conclusions of the five case studies.

Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/36334936/Publishing_in_African_Languages_A_Review_of_the_Literature [18/05/21]

This literature survey is an attempt to bring together some of the literature on an important and challenging, and one could well say neglected aspect of the African book sector, that of publishing in African languages. It aims to make a small contribution to the ongoing debate about publishing of indigenous language materials, how the profile of indigenous language publishing might be enhanced, and how publishing in African languages could be conducted as a societally beneficial, sustainable, and profitable commercial activity. Following an introductory overview of the current state of publishing in African languages – and a discussion of its many barriers to success – it lists a total of 170 records, covering the literature (in English) published since the 1970s and through to early 2018. Fully annotated and/or with abstracts, it includes books, chapters in books and edited collections, reports, journal articles,
Internet documents, theses and dissertations, as well as a number of blog postings (some of which have also been included in this repository).

**Zimbabwe Literature Bureau. An Editor’s Manual.**
A handy manual, albeit now very dated. The Zimbabwe Literature Bureau (the successor of the former Rhodesia/Southern Rhodesia Literature Bureau originally founded in 1957) played a significant role in the development and preservation of Shona and Ndebele culture through its publication of quite a substantial number of titles in these languages, as well as publishing dictionaries and publications in English. After existing for decades as the only avenue to publish novels in Shona and Ndebele, it was shut down by the government in 1999. This useful manual contains a variety of short papers presented at a workshop held in 1991, covering topics such as writing and play writing, editing and preparation of manuscripts, writing for new literates, papers on Shona and Ndebele literature, as well as contributions on author-publisher relations, the publishing business, and the structure of a publishing house. In an introductory paper, Bissett Chitsike, the former Chief Publications Officer, sets out the Bureau’s principal aims and objectives.

*Note:* Although the Bureau was disbanded almost 20 years ago, there are now some indications that it might be revived by the Zimbabwean government, see e.g. this recent report in The Herald [https://www.herald.co.zw/why-zim-needs-a-literature-bureau/](https://www.herald.co.zw/why-zim-needs-a-literature-bureau/).

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**Reading culture and reading promotion**

*Note:* no attempt has been made to provide comprehensive coverage of the wide-ranging topic of reading in Africa, which is strongly linked with aspects such as literacy, language policies, book distribution and, not least, book affordability. Books and articles on teaching reading in schools, or developing reading and writing skills, are not included.

Africa Writes 2017 **How to Reach the Readers: Publishing in Africa.**
Aitchison, John *South Africa’s Reading Crisis is a Cognitive Catastrophe.*  
(Posted 26 February 2018) [05/06/21]

According to the results of the international PIRLS https://nicspaull.com/2017/12/05/the-unfolding-reading-crisis-the-new-pirls-2016-results/, 2016 literacy tests on nearly 13,000 South African school children showed that 78% of grade 4 children cannot read for meaning in any language. South Africa scored last of the 50 countries tested, the author says. “Also worrying was that there were no signs of improvement over the last five years. In fact, in the case of the boys who were tested, the situation may have worsened.” Those most disadvantaged are the children of the poor; the 25% of South Africa’s population who live in extreme poverty. There are several reasons for this dismal picture, Aitchison says, “they range from the absence of a reading culture among adult South Africans to the dearth of school libraries, allied to the high cost of books and lastly to the low quality of training for teachers of reading.”

Part of South Africa’s reading catastrophe is cultural the author states: “Most parents don’t read to their children, many because they themselves are not literate and because there are very few cheap children’s books in African languages ... But reading at home also doesn’t happen at the highest levels of middle class society and the new elite either. It’s treated as a lower order activity that’s uncool, nerdy and unpopular. And it’s not a spending priority. South Africans spend twice as much on chocolate each year than they do on books. The situation doesn’t improve at school. Until provincial education departments ensure that every school has a simple library and that children have access to cheap suitable books in their own mother tongues, South Africa cannot be seen as serious about the teaching of reading.”

http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.library.20180701.03.html [05/06/21]

Reading habits enhance individual self-confidence, moral and intellectual development, and are the essential skills that all secondary school students ought to possess in order to excel in their academic pursuit. The authors of this study found that the reading habits of Nigerian secondary schools are in serious decline, and is an issue of great concern. The study “seeks to discover and elucidate the various ways whereby secondary school students in Nigeria could develop the habit of reading amidst divergent distractions around them, especially in 21st century society.” The authors conclude that promotion of the reading habit among secondary school students should be given urgent attention “because of the imminent danger of losing reading habits in the era of information and communication technologies, where the use of social media sites is the order of the day.” The study recommends that there must be “a fixed time for reading a variety of reading materials that will appeal to students and that adopting different methods to arouse the interest of students could enhance

[Anon] Soma Book Café “On our Reading Culture or Not in TZ…. .”  

In Tanzania the publishing world is “yet to boast of an extensive return coming from the demand of fiction works by its citizens”, the author says. Is it true then that Tanzanians don’t
read? In finding out more “we talked with a few key individuals in the literary world in Tanzania to learn more of the core challenge that feeds this problem. … Maybe we need to ask ourselves what do Tanzanians read, rather than do they read…I think people read, they read newspapers, they read magazines there’s a lot of free literature from NGO’s about some advocacy or other and they read that.” In her conclusion she argues that there are key factors if one is to understand the literary map in Tanzania with regard to the distribution and use of fiction works. “One is the language dilemma which our experts have shed light on, by highlighting its egg and chicken effects to both the readers and writers. Here both publishers added that most of their sales in fiction are in Kiswahili works. Two is the marketing and distribution of these works.”

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Reading-All-Africa-Building-Communities/dp/0872075168
Also at (“Request full-text PDF”)
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Reading-All-Africa-Building-Communities/dp/0872075168
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234585805_Reading_for_All_in_Africa_Building_Communities_Where_Literacy_Thrives [12/09/21]
Contains the proceedings of the 2nd Pan-African ‘Reading for All’ conference held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2001, convened as a forum for the interchange of ideas about the development of literacy in Africa. The volume includes 40 papers, (selected from more than 150 conference presentations), which are grouped under seven sections or themes. Among papers included are “Towards a Reading Society” (Pai Obanya); “Destroying the Reading Culture-A Way Backwards: A Beginner’s Guide to Millennial Ignorance” (Tony Marinho); “Concept of the Children’s Reading Tent as Practised in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe” (Agrena Mushonga); “Portable Libraries as Vehicles for Literacy Development: A Library Service to Pupils and Prisoners in Nigeria” (Virgina W. Dike); “Mobilising Local Resources for Reading Promotion” (Miriam Bamhare); “What are Students in Botswana’s High Schools Reading?” (Arua E. Arua and Mary Lederer); “Cultivating a Reading Culture in a High School in Swaziland” (Virginia Thontea Dlamini); “Developing and Promoting Lifetime Reading Habits in Kenya: The Reading Tent Project and Njoro Reading Facility” (Margaret Makenzi); “Masifunde Sonke: Building a Nation of Readers in South Africa” (Mandla Maseko and Beulah Thumbadoo); “Multipronged Approach to Promoting a Reading Culture: The East African Experience” (James Tumusiime); and “Promoting a Reading Culture” (Pilli Dumea).
This useful collection addresses the varied needs to develop materials on best practices in African literacy education and offers a wide range of perspectives. It will be of interest not only to literacy workers, but also to professionals in Africa working in publishing or other areas of the book chain.

A report commissioned by ADEA’s Working Group on Books and Learning Materials to examine the general context of literacy and reading culture in Africa, focusing on the contribution of printed books and digital materials. It explores the challenges of digital media and suggests interventions “that optimize reading of printed books and digital content to improve literacy for a better reading culture in Africa both in international and national languages.” The research draws attention to the fact that, as the number of printed books is expanding to reach a variety of audiences – covering a wide range of topics and knowledge – electronic publishing is equally expanding rapidly. “The two options are now available to publishers and the choice of a publisher will depend on a number of factors such as the cost, objectives and the prevailing circumstances.” The study notes that “numerous reports indicate that many pupils and students go through primary and secondary school without acquiring sufficient reading skills.” It recommends that “since technology will not replace reading in the near future, it is imperative to use the technology to enhance it. Reading on paper will always remain important and enjoyable and this means that the printed book will never lose its value and importance.”


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This, arguably somewhat contentious study, offers an approach to contemporary English-language African reading culture, surveying and synthesizing the substantial body of research that exists on the topic. “People looking for works in cities are immersed in English as the lingua franca of the mobile phone and the urban hustle – more effective instigations to reading than decades of work by traditional publishers and development agencies. The legal publishing industry campaigns to convince people to scorn pirates and plagiarists as a criminal underclass, and to instead purchase copyrighted, barcoded works that have the look of legitimacy about them. They work with development industry officials to ‘foster literacy’ – meaning to grow the legal book trade as a contributor to national economic health, and police what and how the newly literate read. But harried cash-strapped audiences will read what and how they can, often outside of formal economies, and are increasingly turning to mobile phone platforms that sell texts at a fraction of the price of legally printed books.” (From the abstract)

Reports about the activities of the large variety of book clubs in South Africa, their policies, objectives, focus and the way they operate, covering both commercial book clubs and those that are much more informal and have social concerns at their centre, or those which supply people living in rural areas with books and reading opportunities. Formal and social book clubs have become an established and important part of South Africa’s reading and publishing history. “They attract thousands of readers, of all ages, from across the country and continue to fulfil some very important broad functions: distributing books to rural areas, promoting a culture of reading and book buying, and supporting local artists and authors.”

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/034003528401000404
Offers a brief overview of the book situation in Africa [in the 1980s], but focuses mainly on three main obstacles to the development of reading in Africa, namely: language, literacy, and an underdeveloped readership. The author points out that these problems can best be solved within a broad framework of national development policies, for example, a literacy or book awareness campaign would also benefit writing and the book industries. He urges careful preparation of targets and priorities for each country.

An article extracted from an Honours dissertation of the same title (Department of African Literature, University of the Witwatersrand) on reading practices, literacy, and conceptions about books among adults in the greater Johannesburg area. The study is based on a series of
interviews conducted during 1996, and the case studies of two interviews are presented here: “Case study one—The didactic function of books”, and “Case study two—Books and migrancy”. The study found that the book market in South Africa is still completely dominated by white, educated, middle-class, English-speaking dwellers, and that the general book publishing sector caters almost exclusively to the tastes and concerns of this section of the population. The author believes that the market for easy readers for those who have been educationally disadvantaged is potentially vast and potentially hugely profitable, even given the lower levels of disposable income which are inherent to it. However, this market is not likely to be successfully tapped “if it is viewed through the lens of white, middle-class assumptions about reading culture, or if insufficient time and effort is taken on the part of the providers of easy readers for adults to thoroughly acquaint themselves with their market, with all its particularities, eccentricities, and special, varied needs.”

CODE Reading Liberia (2020-2022)  
https://code.ngo/approach/literacy-programs/reading-liberia/  
Reports about new and innovative two-year programme called ‘Reading Liberia 2020-2022’. It builds on CODE’s https://code.ngo/ considerable efforts in Liberia over the past decade as well as its response to the extended school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a post-conflict country, Liberia suffers from widespread poverty and has one of the lowest human development index scores in the world. This is compounded, CODE says “by staggeringly low literacy rates among young people aged 15-24 years old – only 65% for males and 45% for females can read. This is a significant contributing factor to low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihoods. Reading Liberia 2020-2022, implemented in partnership with the WE-CARE Foundation, seeks to help 40 poorly resourced schools in three counties. 16,000 books developed specially for the Reading Liberia programme will be distributed to schools that have almost no books for children to read and enjoy. The books have been written and illustrated by Liberians and published with support from CODE. They take into account the Liberian primary school curriculum and aim to be gender transformative – challenging gender stereotypes and depicting strong, capable girls and women.

Chizwina, Sabelo An Exploratory Study of Children’s Reading Promotion in South Africa.  
Reading promotion projects are vitally important in that they promote access to reading and improve children’s reading comprehension, and the principal aim of this study was to answer the main research question: What are the characteristics of children’s reading promotion projects in South Africa? In the nature of an exploratory study, it seeks to provide information on reading promotion projects in South Africa, which, the authors says, are still largely uncharted. Fifty-two reading promotion projects were identified. “The results indicate that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a leading role in children’s reading promotion projects. The government plays a part, but mostly through the Department of Education. The projects use a variety of methods to promote reading, the most common being book donations, which is used as a monomethod. Very few of the projects indicate their sustainability or provide evaluation indicators.” The study concludes “that the picture of
reading promotion in South Africa is grim. The main cause of this is that support from the highest levels of government does not exist. Apart from the few government initiatives, which are neither well planned, funded nor executed, reading promotion has to rely on what may be termed “reading Samaritans” from the local and international NGOs and the private sector whose capacity to reach a wider audience is limited.”

Commeyras, Michelle, and Bontshetse Mosadimotho Mazil “Exploring the Culture of Reading Among Primary School Teachers in Botswana.” The Reading Teacher 64, no. 6 (2011): 418-428. https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1598/RT.64.6.3
Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/2652646/Exploring_the_culture_of_reading_among_primary_school_teachers_in_Botswana
An interesting study based on information and feedback gathered during a series of workshops “Teachers as Readers AND Readers as Teachers: Creating Young Readers and Writers.” In Botswana and in other African countries, it is common to hear the lament that there is no reading culture. Yet African nations have rich oral tradition that are often perceived to eclipse print culture. A careful look, the authors state, “reveals that among lower and upper primary teachers in Botswana, reading is important and valued—and that these attitudes toward reading can be transferred to students.” We have evidence, they say, “that among teachers there is a kind of reading culture even if it is unlike that found in other parts of the world. We learned that it is more common for teachers to engage in reading newspapers than novels. However, when teachers were specifically asked about remembering something they enjoyed read- ing, they recalled more fiction than nonfiction. The teachers enjoyed reading African literature along with novels by non-African authors. We also learned that teachers read for educational and spiritual purposes.”

Between 2009 and 2012, the Gordon Institute for the Performing and Creative Arts in Cape Town held the Great Texts/Big Questions public lecture series, which became a celebrated part of Cape Town’s cultural landscape, demonstrating current intellectual and creative thinking in South Africa. These lectures gave audiences a chance to engage with transformative texts and questions, to hear thought leaders speak on the ideas, the books, the art, and the films that matter to them and to us. Relocations: Reading Culture in South Africa brings together a selection of these lectures by world-renowned artists, writers and thinkers in the form of essays, for the benefit of a wider readership, with a contemporary design which plays with words. [Not examined, publisher’s blurb]

With a reported turnover of SA Rand 3 billion in 2017, the South African book industry would appear to be thriving, and many new innovative and enterprising imprints have recently been launched, mostly small independent publishers, some of whose activities are described here. The country has a rich and diverse literary history and the country’s writers continue to command respect throughout the world, the author says. However, the statistics on the state
of reading in South Africa “are quite frightening” according to recent reports, notably the Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS) https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pirls/, an international comparative assessment that measures student learning in reading, which placed South Africa last out of 50 countries surveyed. It found that 78% of Grade Four learners in South Africa cannot read for basic meaning in any of the national languages. The author reviews some of the work and strategic interventions currently being undertaken – at government and book industry levels – to improve the quality of basic education and the provision of free higher education for the poor in the country. Much more needs to be done though, new initiatives are required to entice young children to read, and make reading an enjoyable pastime that every South African wants to engage in. “For these initiatives to succeed, we need to support them: buy books, visit your local library (and take a child with you), pass on a book you have loved, and spread a love for reading – it is vital for the future of our country.”


Effective and continuous reading, the author says, “hones the mind, making a person think logically and dispassionately. It prepares an individual for a distinction in life. Reading gives access to full participation in various activities in our modern society. It therefore adds quality to our lives by giving us access to various cultures and cultural heritages. Despite all these prestigious advantages of reading, many Ghanaians today do not find interest in reading.” In a survey the author conducted among tertiary students at two prestigious universities in Ghana, the University of Ghana in Legon and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, he sought to find out the number of students who devote their time to regular and effective reading. The results were disappointing. The survey showed “that students have low appetite for reading because sufficient efforts have not been made by government, parents and stakeholders to improve upon the quality of reading.” He offers a number of suggestions “as to what government and concerned stakeholders can do to develop and re-invent the reading culture.”


“Voluntary societies and government initiatives stimulated the growth of reading communities in South Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century. A system of Parliamentary grants to establish public libraries in country towns and villages nurtured a lively reading culture. A condition was that the library should be open free-of-charge to the general public. This became one more reading space, and others included book societies, reading societies, literary societies, debating societies, mechanics institutes, and mutual improvement societies. This Element explains how reading communities used these spaces to promote cultural and literary development in a unique ethos of improvement, and to raise political awareness in South Africa’s colonial transition to a Union government and racial segregation.” [Not examined, from the abstract]
Dick, Archie “Copying and Circulation in South Africa’s Reading Cultures, 1780-1840.” In *The Book in Africa. Critical Debates*, edited by Caroline Davis and David Johnson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015: 21-43. [https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137401618](https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137401618) Examines the production, through copying and circulation, of pamphlets, catechisms, handmade booklets, or student notebooks at the Cape of Good Hope from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. In tracing the history of these scribal and copying traditions, the author argues these practices shaped the production, distribution and reception of the book at the Cape. “Ordinary readers impacted print capitalism as they adapted to it. Politics, religion, language, class and personal identity were linked to the practice of producing reading material through copying and circulating, and through communal reading.”


An evaluation of the bilingual reading-for-enjoyment newspaper supplements scheme, which is part of the Nal’ibali (“Here’s the story” in Xhosa) campaign [http://www.nalibali.org/](http://www.nalibali.org/), a campaign that starts from the premise that stories – oral and written – are as important for literacy development as the more technical aspects of learning to sound or spell out words, write neatly and do grammar. The author finds that the achievements of the Nal’ibali supplements in the first two years of operation are impressive. The project produced approximately 11 million supplements in total, including 85 bilingual stories. With just over 200,000 copies each week reaching subscribers and reading clubs in five provinces, a large following of readers, very many of whom would not normally engage in activities around reading with children, now regularly looks forward to receiving the next supplement, and using it in many different ways. “Single-handedly, Nal’ibali has made accessible, to a huge audience and at very low cost, unprecedented numbers of stories in African languages.”

Teething problems associated with distribution of the supplements to reading clubs are likely to take some time to resolve, and issues related to extending reach also need close attention. “Yet, when all is said and done, Nal’ibali has clearly created a template for delivering children’s stories in African languages and English that reinforces a message of fundamental importance: reading is useful, meaningful and enjoyable. When children enjoy reading, they read more. The more they read, the better they become.”


This insightful report contains findings from nine different baselines and studies carried out for Save the Children Rwanda’s Advancing the Right to Read programme. Launched in 2013, the programme aims to reverse the global crisis in learning by providing a continuum of services for children aged zero to nine years, focused on supporting pre-school and early primary literacy skills to ensure all children leave school able to read. The Rwandan
Children’s Book Initiative is being implemented in Burera district and at national level is operated in collaboration with the Rwandan publishing industry.

Many revealing findings were derived from the baseline surveys, for example: The probability of children reading “is highly influenced by the home environment. Parental reading habits and socio-economic status seem to predict if a child will read or not. Findings also show that if a mother reads, a child in a household with low socio-economic status has the same probability of reading as a child in a household with high socio-economic status where the mother does not read. …. Despite the seemingly limited scope for reading in the home, the Home Literacy Environment study documented overwhelmingly positive beliefs about reading and learning among parents and community members.” The study also identified several obstacles to the production of high-quality reading materials in Rwanda. “First, the publishing industry in general lacks knowledge on what constitutes a good book for children and publishers lack a solid understanding of the quality criteria and attributes required for high-quality storybooks for all levels. The absence of degree programmes to train publishers means that many Rwandan publishers do not undergo any formal professional training and are often not sufficiently knowledgeable about the fundamental elements of various types of high-quality children’s texts.”

Local printing costs are prohibitively high, and local printers do not have the capacity to print large quantities of books that fulfil the REB’s technical specifications. Until recently, there has been an overall absence of legal and institutional frameworks for the publishing sector and for the expansion of a network of community libraries. However, a National Policy for Library Services has recently been created, and a National Book Development Policy is also under development, which is expected to support the functioning of a stronger publishing sector in Rwanda, producing a regular supply of Kinyarwanda language supplementary reading materials.


Discusses some of the factors that militate against the development of a reading culture in Nigerian society, focusing on the reading and teaching of African women’s writing in order to highlight the multiple and diverse groups of readers whose sensibilities are polarized and affected by gender, age, class and religion. It is based on the author’s classroom interactions with students at the English Department at the University of Lagos, and from discussions, essays, questionnaires and assignments administered to students.


https://doi.org/10.1163/18784712-03102002 ¶

Olatoun Gabi-Williams charts her journey from her immersion in Eurocentric literature to an encounter with postcolonial African literature in the collective setting of the Africa Book Group (ABG) in Nigeria https://twitter.com/africabookclub?lang=en. She offers an overview of the workings of the group and looks at the key authors and works of literature the international women of ABG have engaged with. In this short account she also seeks to direct attention to the power of shared reading experience to advance that part of her cultural
liberation facilitated by good postcolonial literature, healthy attitudes, and democratic discussions in the company of women.


Described as “an exploration of the reading culture as it exists today in Tanzania with an eye towards select factors that contribute to reading culture and how they have manifested within Tanzanian society.” The paper seeks to “illuminate issues and concerns around the country’s current reading culture and relation to information behaviour, highlighting factors that play a major role, such as book retail, libraries, and publishing.” In her conclusions the author says: “This study only scratches the surface of the state of reading culture in Tanzania. My intention was to obtain a better understanding of the various factors that have had some impact on reading culture, while also gathering various perspectives from the Tanzanian people who are affected by reading culture. Whether it exists or does not, or is just lacking in ways is debatable, but it seems clear that many are invested in improving it beyond its current state.”

Hofmeyr, Isabel **What Discerning Book Thieves Tell us about a Country’s Reading Culture.**


Book theft in South Africa in on the increase and has recently been under the spotlight. South African publisher Jacana [http://www.jacana.co.za/](http://www.jacana.co.za/) ran a ‘Hot Reads campaign’ featuring their titles that are most frequently shoplifted from South African bookshops. The list is dominated by titles on African political history and biography, including Biko, with some self-help titles thrown in. In her take on book thieves and a reading culture Isabel Hofmeyr says “in keeping with radical political cultures across the world, readers have turned these books into common property. They have created a particular reading subculture in South Africa that joins a long legacy of inventive and insouciant modes of reading.”


Discusses the state of reading development in Nigeria, structures for promoting the reading habit, and the role, activities, and projects of the Nigerian Book Foundation (currently dormant) in promoting a reading culture in the country. Deplores the lack of adequate government funding for reading promotion in the country, and which means that the sustainability of most projects is dependent on outside donor support.


A spirited rebuttal of the often-heard statement – “uttered and accepted as an incontrovertible truth” – that Nigeria does not have a reading culture. The late Chukwuemeka Ike (1931-2020), https://www.facebook.com/Nigerian-Book-Foundation-102343464544831/ a distinguished
Nigerian writer and former Director of the Nigerian Book Foundation [www.nigerianbookfoundation.com](http://www.nigerianbookfoundation.com) (site not accessible as at February 2022), argues that “there is nothing physiological or racial in the low level of book readership in Nigeria today.” Instead, the low readership level is attributable to two major factors: the disappointing level of basic literacy throughout the country, and the absence of appropriate and relevant books and other reading materials for the majority of the Nigerian population. “Little conscious effort is made by government, publishers, or authors to ascertain and provide for needs of the children, adolescents, and adults of all ages and both sexes outside the formal education system.” The author reviews some initiatives to promote the reading habit, reading promotion programmes, and reports about the activities of the Nigerian Book Foundation.


Reports about reading motivation and reading activity of 402 urban learners in six schools in the central region of Namibia. Employing adapted formats of three instruments, the relationships between various aspects of reading motivation, reading activity and achievement, as well as gender differences, are explored. “This sampled group of pre-adolescents seemed highly motivated to read, which is different from the normal tendency that reading motivation and reading activity decline as readers get older. Even though reading resources are quite scarce in Namibia, these readers showed curiosity about different topics and regarded reading as important. Positive relationships between motivation and reading activity, as well as between reading motivation and reading achievement, were established. These findings, as well as learners’ interest in reading stories and newspapers outside of school, the authors suggest, should be used to improve reading conditions in Namibian classrooms and for all Namibian children; and educationalists should use these positive attitudes to advance the reading agenda.” [Not examined, from the abstract]


Amid ongoing concerns about the reading decline, the lack of a ‘reading culture’ and children not reading enough, a variety of solutions are put forward, largely in the form of reading promotion campaigns. These campaigns are seldom sustainable, usually owing to sporadic funding. However, this paper considers “whether another factor that affects the sustainability of such campaigns has to do with how they are conceptualised, and whether it is a mismatch between aims and outcomes.” Working from a theoretical perspective of the social uses of literacy, the author examines discourses around reading and how they reflect certain dominant ideologies, social meanings and values. Based on a content analysis of the main publicity, communications, and speeches associated with some of the dominant reading promotion campaigns in South Africa, the paper examines the words and images being used to promote reading, and how these affect the evaluation of such reading campaigns.
Okenna Nzelu, founder and editor of Bright Lights Books https://brightlightsbooks.com/, a children’s book publisher for African readers based in London and Lagos, who offer young African writers and illustrators a platform to share their stories and art with the world. In response to a question that asked what can be done to encourage more reading in African societies where – as a result of limiting factors such as marginalization and poverty – many children are not able to get that reading exposure, Nzelu says: “That’s a huge challenge and yes, in situations of poverty it’s indeed difficult (and maybe even inappropriate) to begin to discuss reading. So, I think we will need a huge amount of resources and political will if we are to see a meaningful improvement. But reading does not need to be expensive. A child can read a letter or story written by a family member at very little cost. … I believe in starting from where you are – first by asking how we can encourage reading within families and then within communities. I would love to see free public libraries across Africa and affordable children’s books with multiple distribution channels. But until then, I think each of us should be doing the little we can, starting with our own families or communities.”

An intriguing opinion piece how to promote an effective reading culture. Itai Makone made a deal with her eight-year-old son that for every book above 110 pages that he reads, she would pay him 15 rands, an equivalent of US$1. To not dampen his zeal, she says “a book lower or above 110 pages is paid on a proportionate basis. In addition, he must note new words and find their meaning. I got this advice from a friend and the results have been amazing. He has read 18 books since this agreement was made. This method has proved more effective to foster a reading culture than previously non-incentivised methods.”

Aggressively growing a sustainable reading culture in Africa has two long-term advantages Makone argues: “There is an untapped market for reading for leisure, thus growing the reading culture will result in an increased demand for books in the medium to long term. This demand directly and positively impacts the growth of the local publishing industry. Secondly, reading donates ideas about one’s identity, image, culture. Therefore, by encouraging wide reading, the narratives and perspectives through which future generations perceive Africa and write about it will increasingly be positive. The suggestions I propose do not require a huge capital outlay to improve the reading culture for our different African countries. What is required is a strong political will by policymakers to implement changes that improve Africa’s reading culture.”

Matsinde, Tapiwa Challenging the Statement that Africans Don’t Read. http://www.shokopress.com/challenging-the-statement-that-africans-dont-read/ (Posted 02 March 2017) [05/06/21]  
A spirited rebuttal to the persistent refrain that ‘Africans don’t read’, by Tapiwa Matsinde of Shoko Press http://www.shokopress.com/, an independent publisher of illustrated African art books: “Applying the blanket statement that ‘Africans Don’t Read’, commenting on it and
then leaving it at that is not going to help address the situation. And having stated the problem we need to understand why this is so and then work together with all who have a stake to find the appropriate solutions.” A reading culture is not alien to Africa, the author says, “much has been said of the continent’s rich oral traditions passed down through the generations, but as Saki Mafundikwa’s insightful book, Afrikan Alphabets* can attest written traditions existed in Africa for centuries. … So given this foundation and heritage what went wrong? One reason is that over time many written traditions fell victim to the destructive practices of all-conquering wars, infighting, and colonialism all intent on wiping out what had gone before in a bid to establish the ways of the conquerors and cement their authority.”

Matsinde acknowledges that recent statistics and research show low levels of reading for pleasure and low volumes of book sales across most of the continent when compared to the developed world. One of the main reasons for low reader numbers across the rest of Africa points towards the expense of buying books, she says, which for a majority can cost more than several months wages, especially if imported, which adds to the costs when local taxes are added. And in some countries book piracy is a serious threat preventing publishers from publishing more books, and authors from earning a living from their work. “But putting costs aside for a moment and looking at other factors we feel another reason for a lack of interest can be attributed to the types of reading material available and that the question we should be asking is ‘What do Africans want to read?’ … Looking to today and publishing books with regards to Africa maybe it has been the lack of relevant books that African audiences want to read, or the availability of accessible formats that have had an effect. … In recent years modern African literature has commanded greater global attention bringing forth famous African authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Taye Selasi, to name but two, who are creating modern heroes and heroines that African readers can on some level identify with, and stirring interest among an African readership. And their success, coupled with the relative ease and affordability of online publishing, has led to more self-published authors writing the kinds of stories that reflect the realities, hopes, dreams and desires of a modern African readership.”

However, to keep this momentum going there is a need to invest in African readership, “and for a more conscious effort to make relevant reading material available; but publishing has traditionally been an expensive and risky business with a high barrier to entry. This creates a sort of catch-22 if you like.” While there undoubtedly is a need for more books that appeal to a diverse African readership, at the same time there is equally a need for willing book buyers, to help maintain a viable publishing and bookselling industry. “It will take a concerted effort and more crucially targeted investment and support by government, public and private sector organisations, into libraries and providing incentives for writers, publishers and booksellers of local literature. But we are not naive enough to think that things can change overnight.”


http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0340035215610303 [05/06/21]
Explores the relationship between reading habits and reading materials, and academic success of primary school students in the Ontulili community of Kenya. The study revealed high levels of satisfaction among the participants with respect to their perceived reading abilities, educational performance, and overall preparedness for further education. However, the data gathered also pointed to a severe scarcity of learning materials, low reading skills, poor infrastructure, below average educational performance, and low preparedness for further education. The author concludes that lack of exposure to relevant reading materials, educational resources, as well as opportunities “leads to subtle contentment alongside individual inability to excel as manifested by low test scores in the national examinations.” In order to realize academic success in the study area and, among other comparable communities, well-designed interventions such as promotion of reading across the school curriculum, and establishment of fully equipped libraries, consistent with the rigors of modern academic demands, must be created.

A paper presented at the 67th IFLA Council and General Conference, August 2001. The author asserts that research on reading is so heavily intertwined with research on literacy, language policy, publishing, book distribution, and book affordability and available, that it is unwise to undertake research without linking it to these related components; and that any research should therefore cover all the different issues that influence and affect reading and the development of a reading culture.

Ministries of Education, and Sports and Culture and other players in Rwanda have been encouraging local writers and publishers to write and publish more books in local languages to fill the existing gap of Kinyarwanda reading materials. Initiatives like ‘Andika Rwanda’ https://www.facebook.com/andika.rwanda, an annual national competition for writing children's stories and poems, have had significant impact on the children’s book industry in Rwanda. ‘Andika Rwanda’ gives children with writing talent a chance to get their books published and later distributed in schools. More than 20 publishing companies are currently operating in Rwanda, and creating children's books are a priority for almost all of them. However, as a budding industry, local publishers are facing many challenges that require concerted efforts between the government and other concerned stakeholders to address. The government’s role is mainly in awareness campaigns, and providing professional training and organizing workshops.

Challenges stereotypical views such as “Black people don’t read books” – as expressed, for example, by South African writer Zakes Mda writing in a popular South African newspaper – which the author believes are “replete with generalization and based on unexamined
assumption.” Instead, the article seeks to move in a different direction, and “rather than assuming that hardly anybody reads, it locates a group of passionate readers and attempts to delineate their views.” The group concerned is a small cluster of black professional women (who mainly read romances), and this article strives to give a detailed insight into their reading worlds, obtained through a series of in-depth interviews.


Reports about a responsive and extensive reading programme (ERP), involving Grade 3 learners at two primary schools in the Eastern Cape over a duration of 20 weeks. It aimed at providing learners with opportunities to read books for pleasure in their preferred language. Learners had a choice to talk about their reading in isiXhosa, their home language, or English, which is their first additional language. The study provided insight into how an ERP encouraged reading for enjoyment and helped improve Grade 3 learners’ cognitive and affective aspect of reading.” The author concluded from the findings “that ERP can instil the love of reading in learners and thus increase the learners’ affective levels in reading as well as behavioural changes. Even if the results of this study do not explicitly confirm gains in reading speed and vocabulary, learners’ positive attitude towards reading for pleasure cannot be overlooked.


Reading books written in the indigenous language or the mother tongue has social, cultural and economic value, the author says. “It is important that, for families that read together, parents and guardians ensure that premium is put on the reading of books written in the indigenous languages, especially for those who use the indigenous languages as their first language.” There are also benefits of reading in the mother tongue in terms of cultural values. When children have access to books written in indigenous languages “they are introduced to their culture, and this helps them to appreciate what and how they eat, how they dance, how they greet, and why they behave like they do.” Moreover, “they will be able to acquire new vocabularies, for example local names of fruits and vegetables that grow in their own environment.” Another benefit in terms of reading books written in local languages is the economic value: “There are people who have special skills in writing the local language”, and there is a rich store of folklores that are best articulated in the local language. “There are publishing companies that are ready to publish such books. However, the interest in writing and publishing such reading materials will be fulfilled only when there are consumers of such reading materials. It is like the demand and supply issue.”

Reading in Nigeria, the authors state, “whether for academic purposes or for pleasure has been seen to be the key to lifelong learning. While this is hardly a subject for contention, yet modern Nigeria is becoming bereft of well-read people. People just do not seem to read anymore, except reading daily newspapers and weekly magazines.” The paper examines reading culture in Nigeria today, and seeks to explain the reasons behind the decline of the reading habit, as well as suggesting strategies to promote reading in the country.


Reading and developing countries are considered incompatible, the author asserts: “This is due to the increasing apathy towards the habit of reading in these countries of which Ghana is not an exception. Existing scholarships have provided a considerable account of such an abysmal reading culture in Africa. In Nigeria, Zambia, South Africa, Uganda, Malawi and Rwanda, causative factors of poor reading culture have been identified and thus measures have been put in place to address this appalling situation.” Ghana is one of the countries that also suffers from this state of affairs. What have been the factors that have caused this unhappy situation? What are some of the measures to help promote the culture of reading? This paper “problematizes the culture of reading in Africa with emphasis on Ghana. It challenges the dominant narrative “on Africa being considered as an oral and necessarily chatting society devoid of the culture of reading. It offers a range of strategic examples How to encourage a reading culture.

Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa Printed Books are Best When Reading to Children. https://www.thepaperstory.co.za/brochures-and-publications/ (Posted 19 April 2016) [15/06/21]

To mark World Book Day on 23 April 2016, the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (PAMSA) here explores the topic of reading by gathering the opinions of South African professionals and parents about the value of reading to children from paper books. It argues that “reading to children from an early age is an acknowledged factor in early childhood development (ECD), as it not only strengthens the bond between adult and child, but helps little ones develop cognitive and conversational skills.” The digital world has pros and cons, it says, and so it not surprising that a debate on the merits and pitfalls of e-books against the printed page wages on. Tablets take away true engagement: “Touch-screens are great at a lot of things, but engaging children in a narrative is not one of them. Why? Because interactivity stops young ones from falling in love with stories and reading for pleasure, the cornerstones of imagination and understanding.” A digital device makes it very easy for a child to dismiss reading as ‘boring’ in comparison with the instant gratification of games and apps. But there are simply too many distractions: “Children are most likely to engage with stories in the right environment and context, and that means away from a screen.” It suggests that “parents should encourage a balanced mix of online and offline reading, both for older children reading by themselves and for toddlers who need guided reading to provide them with the necessary mental space to engage with a story in a deeper way.”

This substantial thesis – supported by a very extensive range of tables and appendices – explores voluntary reading habits in the multilingual environment of Kenya. Designed as a case study, it focuses on the social image of reading, the functions of reading, the factors impacting on reading habits, and the language use in reading among members of the ethnolinguistic Kikuyu and Luo communities in Nyeri District (Central Kenya) and Kisumu District (Western Kenya). By taking a reader-oriented perspective the study aims to add a new dimension to the discussion on the status of reading in the Kenyan context, which has thus far been mainly debated from the point of view of publishers.


The result of a workshop held during the Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Librarians (SCESAL) held in Johannesburg in April 2002, this volume reviews current reader development activities by public libraries in different regions of Africa. It includes accounts and case studies by contributors from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, covering predominantly work with children, but with three papers devoted to adult reader development. An introduction provides a summary of the papers, and reviews factors such as availability and accessibility of relevant books, the importance of building partnerships with other interested sectors, aspects of training, monitoring and evaluation, and the need for the establishment of reader development policies.


Also published in French as Des livres pour les écoles: améliorer l’accès aux ouvrages de lecture en Afrique.

The aim of this study was to examine some of the models through which the school population in Africa gain access to supplementary reading material, and to reach some conclusions which methods work best, and in which circumstances, and to recommend strategies that are affordable and sustainable. Given the lack of published data, it was decided that a case study approach was the most feasible and practical. A range of different modalities were examined and evaluated in depth in seven different African countries: school library services (Ghana and Tanzania); school libraries (Mali); NGO-supported classroom libraries (South Africa); book box libraries (Mozambique); teachers resource centres (Kenya); and community resources centres (Botswana). The case studies, carried out by academics and librarians in
these countries, highlight various issues which contribute to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of ways of providing access to supplementary education materials to school pupils in Africa. Many of the case studies conclude that a corollary of any strategy to provide supplementary reading materials is local book production, and the way forward is to develop a viable indigenous publishing industry in tandem with improved professional training of teachers, and in teaching with books. The book includes an extensive bibliography.

Also at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319323408_Finding_the_plot_in_South_African_reading_education

The dire state of South African reading performance, indicated by consistently low rankings in both national and international studies, “shows that we have lost the plot in the teaching of reading”, the authors argue. “To find it, we need to move beyond the predominant mode of reading as oral performance, where the emphasis is on accuracy and pronunciation, to reading as comprehension of meaning in text. While reading research in South Africa has been conducted mainly in school contexts, this case study is of a school and Adult Basic Education and Training Centre in a rural KwaZulu-Natal community near Pietermaritzburg.” The study found that an oratorical approach to reading dominated in both settings, and it suggests that developing the way in which teachers understand the teaching of reading, and transforming the teaching practices of those who teach as they were taught in the education system of the apartheid era, are key to improving the teaching of reading.

Note: For a shorter summary version see also Rule, Peter South Africa Has a Reading Crisis: Why, and What Can be Done About It at https://theconversation.com/south-africa-has-a-reading-crisis-why-and-what-can-be-done-about-it-88711


Charles Siboto, until recently an editor of children books and youth literature at NB Publishers, writes about South Africa’s reading culture, competing with international titles, and reading as tool to raise standards of education. The South African publishing scene, he says, “is a fine balancing act of publishers trying to make books as accessible as possible while making enough money to continue existing so as to publish more books. … The problem with publishing in English is that people still buy more international titles than local ones in English. … Competing with international publishers is difficult because as a country we are not yet confident enough in the power of our own stories and this should not be so. South African publishers publish books of a high calibre that can compete with titles from the UK or the US, but they get lost in the crowd.” It is also vital to promote children reading in their mother tongues. However, “this is way easier said than done because the resources are scarce. Resources aside, many black households are afraid to focus on children reading in their mother tongue because they might then miss out on learning English. This is not so, children who can read their own language well can better transition into a second language and excel
Being a multilingual society is complex but we gain more when we allow people to read in their own language and learn English in addition.”

Sisulu, Elinor The Culture of Reading and the Book Chain: How do we Achieve a Quantum Leap?
https://www.nlsa.ac.za/NLSA/News/publications/culture-of-reading/

Also at

An eloquent keynote address presented by Elinor Sisulu – winner of the 2003 Noma Award for Publishing in Africa – at a Symposium on the Cost of a Culture of Reading, held at the National Library of South Africa in September 2004. The absence of a culture of reading is a major concern not only in South African society, but for the whole of the Southern African region. The author proposes a vision of building a sustainable culture of reading, and examines the compelling reasons why South Africans should inspire to such a vision. She examines the successes and failures of the Masifunde Sonke Campaign, one of the most ambitious reading promotion campaign undertaken in South Africa in recent years, and what can be learnt from it.

Elinor Sisulu pays tribute to the sponsors of the Noma Award and the IBBY-Ashai Award (both Japanese-sponsored awards), and says “I think it is a sad reflection on the literary and publishing communities of this continent, African governments and wealthy individuals, that we are unable to mobilize the resources to establish literary awards, organize literary exhibitions and indeed to do more to build and strengthen the publishing industry in Africa.” She bemoans the fact that the potential of the book development and publishing sector in South Africa, despite a favourable policy environment, has largely remained unfulfilled. “Lack of investment, resources and capacity in the sector has meant that many of our wonderful plans to promote a vibrant book industry and library system cannot be realized. I sometimes wonder why it is that in a country in which the president and most members of cabinet are bibliophiles, library budgets in real terms have actually fallen in this decade of our democracy.” Cutbacks in library purchases have also had a negative effect on African-language publishing because black communities cannot afford to buy books in volume, and even those who can afford it will not find bookshops willing to stock books in African languages: “it is the libraries that are the biggest purchasers of African language titles. Black communities are doubly deprived if existing libraries cannot stock up on the required volumes of books in African languages and there are not even libraries in the townships.”

In her conclusion the author suggests that “perhaps in our lobbying and advocacy on reading promotion and book development we have focused entirely on the educational and cultural benefits of reading and not enough on the economic value”, and goes to say “we need to develop a bold vision that will convince those who control the national purse that South Africa has the potential to become a major player in global publishing. Our vision should demonstrate that the development of a flourishing publishing industry is not only good business sense, it is a prerequisite to realizing the dream of an African renaissance.”
Reading is in decline in South Africa, and journalists and educationists alike comment about and lament the dangerously low levels of South African learners’ reading skills. The topic of this longitudinal study was reading promotion and its perceived benefits. The aim was to determine if reading promotion can lead to reader development, and if reader development can lead to self-development, as is often claimed in the literature. A reading promotion project in the Northern Cape, South Africa, was monitored over a period of five years by using a selection of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The outcome of the study indicates that the reading promotion project was responsible for positive changes in the lives of the beneficiaries of the intervention. It especially points to the positive role access to appropriate reading material and prolonged and enthusiastic reading motivation can play in the lives of a developing community with little means. In her concluding remarks the author states: “It is possible to create a reading culture where none exists, but creating a reading promotion project that continues to foster a reading culture needs time, money and mostly enthusiasm. This research has further shown that South Africa has the human capital and that good leadership can unlock it.”

A meticulously detailed study – supported by extensive use of charts and demographics – that was commissioned and managed by the South African Book Development Council http://sabookcouncil.co.za/ as part of the Growth and Development Strategy for the South African book sector. An introduction sets out the context, describes the study methodology and approach, and stresses why reading is critical to fulfilling individual potential and collective social development. Subsequent chapters examine the role of reading in the South African leisure activity landscape, perceptions about books and reading among various age groups and demographics, book reading attitudes and behaviour, use of libraries and library borrowing patterns, reading initiatives and programmes and their awareness by the public, and more. A concluding Growth Summary provides growth insights about reading and reading habits in the country (including reading in indigenous languages), and makes a number of recommendations how to create a lively reading culture and encourage growth in this area.

This special issue of African Research & Documentation https://scolma.org/?p=2744 contains eight articles in which contributors (from Africa and the UK) explore the varied groups of readers who respond to African and other texts inside and outside the African continent, and a range of essays analyse the interactions between readers, texts, and the means of production.
There are four papers each on reading and readership in West Africa (Nigeria and Ghana more specifically), and four on reading practices and reading experiences in South Africa.


Argues that the challenges to developing a reading society in Africa are huge, but also exciting, and describes some of the many economic and social factors that hinder the development of the reading habit. The author, who was the Managing Editor at Baobab Books in Harare for several years and now co-founder and director of Weaver Press https://weaverpresszimbabwe.com/ – states that while many publishers may well develop a small subsidiary list of fiction or children’s books, the development of these titles is often dependent on the publisher’s textbook lists. When cutbacks have to be made it will always be the fiction, non-fiction and children’s books that are the first to go, because “the general public have either not created a market for them nor insisted that we want our taxes to go into book purchase.” She then describes some of the projects and schemes in which she has been involved, which have enjoyed a measure of success and which might also work in other African countries; one such scheme involves a multiplicity of publishing partners, thus extending print runs and reducing the unit costs for markets that would not otherwise be able to afford them.


The former Publishing Director of Baobab Books in Harare (now head of Weaver Press) describes the provision of textbooks and other reading materials to children in Zimbabwe from the period immediately following independence until the current situation today [mid 1990s]. She finds that most school children’s experience of books is often a negative one and sets out some of the reasons why this is so. Irene Staunton cites a number of recent [as at 1994] developments and initiatives which might lead to an improvement of the situation in the future, and states that “if people are given access to books that they want to read, and if they are encouraged to see books as providing more than a source of information which must be learned for an examination, the potential for developing a more broadly based reading culture is promising.”


A comprehensive readership initiative offered by CODE-Canada https://code.ngo/ works with local partners in Africa to provide culturally-relevant and engaging books that young people will want to read; supports libraries to distribute and care for books; and shares methods of instruction to help teachers engage children meaningfully with books to build their fluency and comprehension, especially their higher order comprehension and critical
thinking. Reading CODE programmes are currently active in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Liberia and in Sierra Leone. The effectiveness of such a literacy intervention, using teacher training, book provision, and library support for primary schools in central Tanzania, is evaluated in this research brief. It found that after a four-year project that assisted 350 teachers to promote contextualized word study, fluency, comprehension, and writing — and was supported by locally written and engaging books — children in project schools showed substantially superior performance on every measure compared to a demographically-matched comparison group of children.


This useful guide is targeted primarily at libraries that need to support communities by selecting appropriate materials, and adult literacy facilitators and community workers who are seeking suitable reading materials to maintain learners’ interest in keeping up their reading habits. The guide is based on the experiences of a civil society organization, the Easy Reading for Adults (ERA) initiative, which was active in South Africa during the 1990’s, but also draws on experience elsewhere in Africa, as well as in Asia and Canada. ‘Easy reading’ is interpreted to mean “any reading matter in any language that makes concessions to a lack of reading skills or to difficulties with mastering the language of the text.” The author sets out the key processes and approaches involved in successfully selecting, developing and disseminating easy reading material for adults, and raises a number of pertinent questions on issues that need to be considered, to ensure that materials required for adults wanting to improve their reading skills are relevant to their needs. The book also contains sections on the production process, dissemination and distribution aspects, monitoring and evaluation of projects, and there is a select bibliography.


In South Africa, for many years children’s stories have been published in English and Afrikaans, languages mostly spoken by a minority of the population. Even though the publishing industry has changed over the years, publishing children’s stories still remains largely dominated by English and Afrikaans. While there has recently been a surge in the number of authors writing children’s stories in African languages, including Setswana, unfortunately children’s authors in South Africa are not as celebrated as biographers, political writers, poets and the likes. Not a great deal of publicity and credit is given to these authors, nor the translators. It is also a struggle to secure a publishing deal with commercial publishers for books in African languages, the author says, and therefore writers resort to writing in English as it is easier to get their work published. The Puku Children’s Literature Foundation https://www.puku.co.za/en/about/ encourages reviewing of children’s books written in African languages, and will be facilitating creative writing workshops across the Northern Cape, a province with a large population of the indigenous San people, a people whose languages are at the risk of extinction and whose stories need to be told: “Reviewing children’s
books in South and Southern Africa will bring to life stories, identities and cultures of people whose stories are not mainstream, through Puku’s writing workshops. … Puku does not only review books, but uses reviewers who are experts in the field of early literacy, education and African languages. … Reviewing children’s books creates a robust environment for all sectors of the book chain in the country.”

van der Wolf, Marthe. **Sisters Aim to Build Ethiopia’s Reading Culture.** https://www.voanews.com/africa/sisters-aim-build-ethiopias-reading-culture (Posted 25/12/15) [14/09/21]
Despite having a population of almost 100 million, demand for books is low in Ethiopia. There are not many books written in the local languages, and few Ethiopians read for pleasure. Two sisters hope to buck the trend by publishing children’s books that Ethiopian children can easily grasp and enjoy. Tsion Kiros, who has started a new publishing house with her sister, says her company printed 30,000 children’s books in 2015 in the two most common languages in Ethiopia, Amharic and Afaan Oromifa, and that the next step will be to write and publish books in tandem with the government.

Present the findings of a survey conducted in selected higher education learning institutions in Tanzania to determine the reading patterns of students as part of their extracurricular activities. “The purpose was to ascertain whether students utilize their time in reading various informational materials for purposes other than academic activities.” The study findings show that while students do spend some of their spare time reading print and e-newspapers, books and magazines, and access social media, the findings also indicate that reading with regard to print media is still low among students, possibly due to the emergence of new non-print media such as the Web, and for some other reasons. The author concludes that “despite being engaged in various reading activities, challenges such as too much academic work, limited Internet connection and family responsibilities are among others, that constrain their reading habits. Thus, librarians have to play their role in cultivating and maintaining reading culture among students by creating conducive environments and acquiring resources that match with the ever-evolving academic reading practices.”

Also published in a French edition as **Changer les vies. Promouvoir une culture de la lecture en Afrique. Indaba 2001.**
The theme of the 2001 Indaba at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair was devoted to “Changing People’s Lives: Promoting a Reading Culture in Africa”, and this volume brings together 34 of the papers that were presented, together with a record of some of the discussions that took place following each presentation, the conclusions from some sessions, and concluding remarks. Papers are presented in five parts: Plenary Sessions, Publishing, Writing, Scholarship, and Policy & Access. The papers – from contributors in anglophone, francophone, lusophone, and North Africa – examine some of the “obstacles and
opportunities inherent in the ambiguities of the continent’s complex post-colonial linguistic inheritance.” What are publishers, writers, booksellers, and governments doing, or not doing, to overcome these obstacles? Is the indigenous linguistic richness of the continent a drawback or a benefit for the publisher? Participants in the Policy & Access sessions also addressed issues such as strategies for targeting readers, strategies for promoting readership, and policy implications for developing a reading culture.

Scholarly and STM publishing
See also ➔ Digital and e-book publishing
➔ Journals and magazines publishing
➔ Open access publishing
➔ Predatory publishing

Abdulsalam, Mahmud Moving Against Foreign Textbooks in Nigerian Universities. https://www.scicomnigeria.org/article/Moving-against-foreign-textbooks-in-Nigerian-Universities (Posted 05/05/21)

Known as an Academic Publishing Centre (APC), it was established in 2020 by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) https://tetfundserver.com/ for the Federal University of Technology, in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria, “to address the dearth of indigenously-authored and locally-produced tertiary level textbooks”, in collaboration with other academic publications units in Nigeria’s tertiary education institutions. The author says that “although there are printing presses in some Nigerian universities, the TETFund intervention is directed towards developing the capacity for publishing through the APCs. Checks by African Science Literacy Network (ASLN) https://www.africanscilit.org/ revealed that university publishing houses in Nigeria were designed on the model of the Cambridge and Oxford University Press to undertake scholarly, research-based publishing and they excelled in this.”

However, at this time at least [February 2022] there does not seem to be much evidence of scholarly publication outputs (books or journals) generated by these Academic Publishing Centres.


Organised by the British Library in collaboration with Professor Marilyn Deegan (The Academic Book of the Future Project) and Dr Caroline Davis (Oxford Brookes University), this two-day conference discussed “how profound changes in publishing will affect the academic book of the future in the global South”, and explored the production, dissemination and reception of scholarly publications in the countries of the South, particularly in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. An account of the whole conference has been created from tweets by delegates, and which is accessible at the above Livefyre Storify page. A summary of “the main messages” in the areas of publishing, access, and digitisation The Academic Book in the (Global) South by Lesley Pitman, can be viewed at https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/libnet/2016/03/21/the-academic-book-in-the-global-south/ (Posted 21 March 2016) [12/06/21]
Video recordings from the conference are available as follows:

**The Academic Book in the South, Day 1 Panel 1: Academic Authorship and Knowledge Production**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxxsE7N9y7Y (Video recording 1:08.58)

**The Academic Book in the South, Day 2 Panel 1: The Role of Libraries and Archives**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccYzrVnL3L4 (Video recording 58.8mins)

**The Academic Book in the South, Day 2 Final Panel: Discussion & Concluding Comments**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G95vOJ2MWnw (Video recording 1:00.44)

**The Academic Book in the South: Abhijit Gupta and Padmini Ray Murray**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMoZ6ikrv0s (Video recording 1:10.25)

This concluding session considered the prospects of the academic book in the global South, and evaluates new directions in authorship, publishing and reading of the academic book.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294573117_Scholarly_publishing_and_Nigerian_universities (Freely accessible, ‘Request full-text PDF’)

In this wide-ranging article the authors set out the reasons why, in the face of the prevailing scarcity of scholarly publications in Nigeria, universities should play an important role in enhancing the availability of scholarly publications in the country. They argue that university presses have a special obligation to help disseminate the results of the research and the ideas of Nigerian scholars, as some African scholarship may be rejected by international publishers for being too local in orientation; and that they must strive to maintain their independence of editorial judgement and of function, and must not be seen as a merely revenue-yielding service. The authors also believe that, in an African situation, university presses should go beyond publishing research monographs, learned journals and conference proceedings, and “should embrace the publication of tertiary-level textbooks and creative writing that reflect Nigerian culture and creativity.” They also challenge other concepts of university press publishing, e.g. “a university press need not have its own printing house. Printing is a separate industry that has become highly technological”, and that new approaches will have to be found for the marketing and distribution of scholarly materials. Makes a number of recommendations: fiscal policies and incentives at individual institutions and in government must be changed to support scholarly publishing; presses should more actively explore cooperative publishing ventures; more attention must be given to protecting authors and publishers rights; university presses ought to negotiate licensing rights from publishing partners overseas for titles appropriate for the Nigerian markets; and promotional and marketing strategies must be improved. The authors conclude by stating “the real value of scholarly publications does not lie in the revenues they generate, but in their impact upon the scientific, cultural, and socio-economic development of the society.”

Trainees in the library and information profession in Africa depend on textbooks emanating from outside Africa because of a dearth of locally published books. Moreover, even if available, local books are generally patterned along Western lines and they are either descriptive or historical, and Aina argues that none of them can be used as a basic textbook for any of the courses offered in library and information science schools in Africa. This has greatly affected the training of library and information professionals in Africa as trainees are exposed to literature that is largely suited to situations outside their immediate environments. The author identifies several factors that he sees as being responsible for inadequate tertiary publications for the information professions in Africa. He recommends that authors should embark on team authorship, and that international funding agencies and national governments should commission textbooks that are appropriate for an African setting.


Examines the new scholarly communication environment [as at 1997] and states that “the so-called information society that we live in today is very much an age of gross and extreme inequality, not only of access to these and other resources but also of benefits and advantages resulting from its control and deployment.” Calls for new approaches, and new techniques to foster more South-South co-operation – in research, scholarship, and publications – based on mutual benefits and identity of interests in all their dimensions: economic, cultural, and political. Asserts that “in publishing (both print and electronic publishing) tremendous areas of possible co-operation and exchange not yet sufficiently developed exist.” The author goes on to say “apart from Indian publishers, it seems other Southern interests in Latin America and Asia have not seen Africa as possible areas of co-operation and penetration. They are often limited by uncertainties, ignorance, fear, and prejudice.” Concludes that an institution must be found that can facilitate and encourage South-South contacts to bring to the fore the range of mutual benefits possible.


Describes the book and journals publishing programme of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar, Senegal. Examines some of the constraints faced by scholarly publishers in Africa, “hindered by problems of distribution, and linguistic, political, cultural and fiscal barriers”, and sets out how CODESRIA has tackled these problems. Also reports about CODESRIA’s attempts to provide more visibility for their books in the major academic libraries in the North.


http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/handle/123456789/8508 [12/06/21]

Scholarly publishing in Africa is still struggling to keep pace with the rest of the world, for a variety of reasons, some of which are examined in this article. The high mortality rate of
journals in Africa is a cause for concern. This is one of the major reasons why researchers in Africa seek to publish their findings abroad. Much of the research outcomes emanating from African universities achieve poor visibility due to lack of high quality indigenous journals. The alternative is “that African academics strive to publish in internationally renowned peer-reviewed journals in order to ensure academic promotion, but then, again, not many of these do make it into such journals. And when they do, the journals are out of reach of most university libraries, rendering access difficult.” As a result of these difficulties some African academics have published in exploitative predatory journals of dubious quality and integrity.

As one of the solutions to these problems, the author suggests that scholars in Africa should take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of Open Access (OA) journals.

http://sajs.co.za/essence-scholarship-charting-path-through-thickets-scholarly-publishing/robin-m-crewe [14/06/21]

A commentary on the work that has been done in South Africa to enhance the reputation of local scholarly journals, and a range of initiatives that have been launched in the past by groups of academics and learned societies to establish journals as vehicles for scholarly communication. Two local interventions have played a crucial role in the lives of scholars who are intent on having their work published and establishing their reputations: The first of these was the introduction by the Foundation for Research Development (ancestor of the current National Research Foundation/NRF) of a rating system for individual scholars in 1985. The rating of individuals was based on peer review of their scholarly contributions to their disciplines. The ratings essentially assessed whether they were recognised by their peers as falling in the broad categories of being international leaders in their fields, being recognised internationally for their contributions, or being recognised nationally. The second intervention was the change to a funding framework for universities in 2003 that provided an output subsidy for scholarly publications in journals, conference proceedings and books. For universities, maximising the number of these outputs was an important source of income, while for the government department providing the funding, this was meant as an incentive to enhance research performance, but with quality criteria built into the recognition of these outputs.


Based on the author’s PhD dissertation (see ➔ record below), this article presents the results of a case study of the policies and practices of six African university presses, in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe [as at 2003]. It reviews their press policies, sales figures (annually and over a 15 year period), manuscript acquisitions and editorial boards, the nature of books published and areas of specialization, marketing and distribution, together with an examination of deficiencies in their current operations. Based on the findings, the author proposes the formation of a consortium of African university presses, along the same lines as consortium formation in the library world, which “seems to be a sensible means to reduce the financial burden on each individual press or institution and at the same time provides a sustainable source of funding for each institution’s publishing programs.” The author believes
that hard-pressed African university presses have no option but to merge, form a consortium, or “face total collapse. Unless current pressures for self-sufficiency are removed, press directors have little choice but to forge alliances that will keep them in business.”


Also at (freely accessible) [https://www.academia.edu/65105076/Scholarly_publishing_in_Africa_a_case_study_of_the_policies_and_practices_of_African_university_presses](https://www.academia.edu/65105076/Scholarly_publishing_in_Africa_a_case_study_of_the_policies_and_practices_of_African_university_presses)

A wide-ranging dissertation that examines the policies and practices of six sub-Saharan Africa university presses in five African countries (in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe), to investigate how far the presses have adopted, and/or have adapted, their policies to suit the environment and special needs of Africa. The study examines the extent to which current [2003] constraints impede their publishing activities and publishing strategies. The author finds that there is “a serious absence of competition and cooperation between the presses surveyed”, lack of fundraising strategies, together with weak or non-existent policies for commissioning and list building, and without a clearly defined subject focus. The author also examines the various strategies adopted by the presses to adapt to the rapidly changing scholarly communications environment. In his conclusions he recommends the setting-up of a continent-wide consortium of African university presses, with each press “to operate as a Trust in order to enjoy autonomy as a private company, but be registered as a non-profit organization.” The author calls for more active collaboration among African scholarly presses (including joint publishing ventures, sharing of resources and expertise, reciprocal distribution, etc.): much stronger emphasis on the use of new technology, particularly print-on-demand; makes some suggestions regarding possible sources of funding for the presses, and recommends further research into the effect of ICTs on university press publishing in Africa.


Over the last five years several scholarly publishing associations have been launched in Africa: the Forum for African Medical Editors (FAME), the Society of African Journals (SAJE), the Consortium of African Scholarly Publishers (CASP), the Africa Journals Partnership Project, and the African Association of Science Editors (AASE). What, if any, has been the impact of these initiatives? This paper reviews the most notable of these associations, FAME, which was established in 2003 with the support of the World Association of Medical Editors, the Council of Science Editors and the Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR). FAME is evaluated in relation to two other international scholarly publishing associations: the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) in South America, and the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME). The article also discusses the future of FAME with regards to new developments in open access publishing through African Journals Online [https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajol](https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajol).


Critically and cogently reviews the discourse of research publication policy and the directives of the regional and global organizations that advise African countries with respect to their relevance to African scholarly communication. What emerges, the author says, “is a readiness to use the concepts and language of the public good, making claims for the power of technology to resolve issues of African development.” However, Eve Gray believes, that when it comes to implementing scholarly publication policies “this vision of technological power and development-focused scientific output is undermined by a reversion to a conservative research culture that relies on competitive systems for valuing and accrediting scholarship, predicated upon the systems and values managed by powerful global commercial publishing consortia.” The result, Gray states, is that the policies put in place to advance African research “effectively act as an impediment to ambitions for a revival of a form of scholarship that could drive continental growth.” While open access publishing models do offer solutions to the marginalization of African research, the paper argues that “what is also needed is a re-evaluation of the values that underpin the recognition of scholarly publishing, to better align with the continent’s articulated research goals.”

Kitchen, Stephanie The Academic Book in the South: Conference Report (7-8 March 2016, British Library)
https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC/Article/1/23/ [14/06/21]

Video recordings: (of presentations dealing with African book and journal publishing):
Walter Bgoya Panel: Academic Publishing in the South.
https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC/Article/1/40/

https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC/Article/1/27/

https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC/Article/1/29/

Other:
Storyfy (Tweets)
https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC/Article/1/26/

Final Panel Discussion & Concluding Comments
https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC/Article/1/33/

This two-day conference was organised by the British Library in association with The Academic Book of the Future project https://academicbookfuture.org/. This is the conference report and includes succinct summaries of papers presented by plenary speakers, including a small number from Africa that offer interesting insights:

Tanzanian publisher Walter Bgoya provides some reflections based on 44 years in African publishing. He stated that African publishing is best understood as a series of contradictions which begin in the quality of education: students’ poor performance, a weak book culture, and the weak foundation of primary and secondary education, now going back three or four
generations. School leavers are not prepared for work and publishing is starved of competent staff. Then there are the problems facing the African university. The shortage of books may not be the most critical problem here, but it is important. A major issue is the high prices of imported books from the UK and the US. Cheaper Indian editions are widely sold in Africa, costing less than half of US/UK editions, although prices are going up. However, students still prefer Western books. African publishers need to acquire rights to publish local editions. Bookshops should get more substantial discounts. In African universities, focus needs to be placed on developing common curricula and harmonising course book requirements. The fastest way for universities to get books would be for their university academics to write them. African publishers are now penetrating Northern markets, however getting US and UK academics to publish in Africa remains problematic. In the US, lecturers do not get tenure if they publish in Africa; in the UK, the choice of publisher is determined by matters of prestige and citations. Such initiatives demand economic viability for African publishing. The market is small but private universities are growing rapidly. This explosion of the student population provides a challenge to both the African and the Northern publisher – but may act as a disincentive to licenced editions. Piracy is another serious impediment. Moreover, “we need to seek how to exploit copyright practice to benefit African publishing”, Bgoya stated. Copyright evokes a gamut of issues: “As a publisher, respect for copyright protects the business. But there are also questions of access and the democratisation of knowledge.”

Akoss Ofori-Mensah from Sub-Saharan Publishers in Ghana was another speaker. Her company has published several academic books for the universities in Ghana, albeit with mixed success in terms of sales, while in Africa generally there is a lack of proper distribution channels, libraries are cash-strapped, and good bookshops are few and far between.

Mary Jay, former CEO of African Books Collective Limited (ABC) http://www.africanbookscollective.com/, spoke about the activities of this international distribution and marketing organization (currently serving 155 publishers from 24 African countries), and about the many challenges facing publishers in Africa. The new digital environment has significantly changed African Books Collective’s methodology – through e-books, print on demand, e-platforms for libraries, and open access. But she also stated that “there isn’t one digital panacea for the whole of Africa”; rather there would be utilisation of different routes. She provided some facts and figures about ABC, which handles 3,000 titles, of which 63% are academic books. This mirrors the figure of academic sales to the US, while sales in the UK and the rest of Europe are regrettably low. Twenty per cent go to the ‘Rest of the World’ category and 20% to Africa. The latter are generally comprised of donor-funded orders and ‘real’ sales to South African libraries. Intra-African trade is almost non-existent. Ebook sales are still negligible. E-platforms however, notably Project Muse, have been productive.

Other impediments to progress are corruption in textbook tenders, overseas book donation programmes, and lack of co-publishing. US and UK academic regimes of tenure don’t help. The non-inclusion of African-published titles in European and US university courses is notable. On local and global access, African Books Collective reported e-book sales of about 80% to the US, 6% to Europe, 5.5% to Africa, and 8% to Asia. Downloads are mainly in the US, but Canada, Australia, Kenya, South Africa as well as few countries in Europe all show e-book
usage. Expanding access in Africa is about libraries having the resources and digital training, about finance and technical capacity, and understanding in the institutions. Overall, there is no evidence that sales on e-platforms have depressed sales of print books; print book sales have in fact gone up.

On future prospects, Jay feels that access to training in the use of online resources is important. On open access, conventional wisdom is that it needs institutional funding, as the publisher is also taking a risk. More broadly, issues that remain include lack of intra-African book trade, the paucity of library budgets, and heavy dependence on Northern book donations, illustrated by a recent study showing that only small minority of the donations are recipient request-led. Such donated books are rarely in local languages. If libraries become dependent on donations, this negatively impacts on African publishers. African Books Collective’s Intra-Africa Book Support Scheme, no longer funded (due to a change in aid priorities), was hugely beneficial to libraries in Africa, and also to the publishers, as it enabled them to distribute books in local domestic markets.

Kigotho, Wachira African Academics May Perish Even When They Have Published. https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210110220840860 [18/05/21]
A weak publishing industry in Africa, the authors says, “including the lack of distribution hubs and an intra-Africa book trade; curricula, pedagogy and learning processes still rooted in the colonial situation and the absence of a scholarship culture, are factors that are undermining the development and production of academic books on the continent.”
According to Francis Nyamnjoh, a professor of social anthropology at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, “various factors, including mediocre content, invisibility (because of the subject matter or because the writer may be unknown and from a developing country), the remoteness of the publisher (which may not have a wide reach) and poor marketing and distribution, mean that African academics perish even when they have published.” Moreover, “the technical and financial difficulties facing the publishing industry in Africa also work against African scholars seeking to fulfil the academic requirement of publishing,” Professor Nyamnjoh is quoted as saying.

Based in Cape Town, Francois van Schalkwyk heads the South African open access, not-for-profit publisher African Minds http://www.africanminds.co.za/, and he is also the co-author of an important new study on African university presses https://www.academia.edu/33799890/The_African_University_Press (see ➔ record below in this section). In this interview with Stephanie Kitchen of the International African Institute he sets out the background to this project, describes the case studies of a number of African university presses that formed part of the report, as well as the publishing practices of academics at these institutions. He also talks about the barriers to achieving a higher rate of
open access publishing on the continent, and the steps that are needed to address these: “The expectation of universities for their presses to be profitable in nascent markets, and not giving consideration to the reputational benefits that a non-market-oriented publishing model could yield, is certainly one such barrier.” Another is academic authors’ expectations of receiving royalty payments from the sale of their books, and university presses in Africa “cannot reconcile open access and the perceived loss of sales income with the royalty expectations of their authors”, he says. “Beyond these specific barriers, and I am sure there are others, I think there is a general lack of understanding and confidence to experiment when it comes to open access publishing.”

On the topic of institutional repositories van Schalkwyk states “My concern is that repositories are being seen as a silver bullet when in reality they are part of a broader publishing ecosystem; an ecosystem that consists of institutional repositories, libraries, academic authors, indexing agencies, publishers (both university presses and others), and service providers. I think there are many repositories gathering dust because they were seen as a panacea to making a university’s research output more visible and accessible.” In their findings and conclusion in the African University Press study the authors asserted that, generally speaking, funding is not the main problem facing African university presses, and that there are other problems, such as outdated employment models, procurement systems, a weak research culture, and inappropriate institutional frameworks that are too bureaucratic. Questioned about the resources issue he responds “yes, resources are an issue. But probably not a uniquely African issue. How many university presses outside of Africa wouldn’t want to be better endowed? … Resources are not the only issue. There is a lack of imagination, of innovative thinking about how to use what limited resources are available. … University presses and other scholarly book publishers in Africa would benefit from being more connected. Exchanging ideas, sharing challenges, mutually formulating solutions to common problems – these could all contribute to a more confident and dynamic scholarly publishing community across Africa.”

The text of a talk given by the late Professor Abiola Irele (1936-2017) at a meeting at the Royal Commonwealth Society, London, as part of the supporting programme of the 2nd Bookweek Africa, held at the Africa Centre in October 1985. He defines the role of the university press in Africa as “having the responsibility of publishing not only scholarly works emanating from the specialized research devoted to the continent, but also of promoting a literate culture upon which the foundation of the university as a national institution must ultimately rest.” Discusses the peculiarities of scholarly publishing in Africa and especially in Nigeria, including an examination of textbook and general publishing, and suggests some possible avenues of expansion for African scholarly presses.
Klipp, Veronica Scholarly Publishing in South Africa. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_VjH_Y-bTs (Video recording, 8.07mins) [16/11/21] Veronica Klipp has been Publisher at Wits University Press (WUP) https://witspress.co.za/ since 2002. Established in 1912, WUP is the oldest university press in the country, with a reputation of publishing excellence in fields as diverse as palaeontology, anthropology, politics, history and literature in indigenous languages. Under her watch the Press has diversified into areas such as art history and popular science, and extended its market to cross-over books for a general trade readership. In this SABC YouTube presentation she talks about the current challenges faced by South African academic publishers, list development at the Press, the processes of getting published, and the key issues facing the scholarly publishing communities.

Klipp, Veronica “The Costs of Losing Local Research to Global Publishers.” https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20170920151825375 (Posted 22 September 2017) [16/11/21] Also at https://witspress.co.za/news/wits-university-press-publisher-veronica-klipp-writes-on-the-costs-of-losing-local-research-to-global-publishers/ Wits University Press publisher https://witspress.co.za/, Veronica Klipp says local scholarly publishing faces the challenges of a small local market, and that the costs of losing local research to global publishers is high. “The overarching mission of the university presses is to publish research for the public good and to grow the knowledge base of the country—a particularly important aim in a young democracy. Yet this mission has had to be responsive to the increasing financial austerity universities operate.” To overcome the challenges of the small local market, “presses have tried to maximise international sales through print distribution and export, and engaged in co-publications. The establishment of digital publishing and distribution networks has, of course, radically altered business models and the possibilities for global distribution of content.” However, university presses in South Africa function in a context of extreme austerity with little support from their parent institutions.

So, what needs to be done? “As research output across the continent continues to grow, we will have to radically improve the capacities of local university presses if we want to have any chance of controlling our own outputs in the global knowledge economy.” The presses need to “demonstrate their ability to disseminate and create impact in the global knowledge economy. In this way they can contribute to the prestige of the local academy, which must have been a key reason for establishing the first university press in the early 20th century.”

Le Roux, Elizabeth “Discrimination in Scholarly Publishing.” Critical Arts. South-North Cultural and Media Studies 29, no. 6 (2015): 703-784. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2015.1151104 [12/06/21] The introduction to a special issue of Critical Arts, which examines the perceptions and realities of discriminatory practices in academic and scholarly publishing in South Africa. “Studies conducted internationally, including in the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden, indicate that discrimination does take place against women and ethnic groups in scholarly publishing. Discriminatory practices may include, amongst others, unfair reviewing
and exclusion from ‘old boys’ networks. The values that underlie the scholarly communication system – such as the maintenance of ‘high standards’ – may also function to exclude South Africa’s system of accrediting journals, which in effect creates tiers of journals, exacerbates existing inequalities in the global knowledge production arena.”

http://rsnr.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/roynotesrec/69/3/301.full.pdf [12/06/21]  
Tracks the development of South African journals publishing through three key periods: a colonial period, in which South Africa became part of an ‘Empire of Scholars’; a shift to intellectual isolation during the apartheid period; and a return to an international community in the twenty-first century. The University of South Africa (Unisa) Press http://www.unisa.ac.za/ started publishing departmental journals in the 1950s, with a focus on journals that ‘speak to the student’, and is currently [2015] the only South African university press with an active journal publishing programme. As external funding declined and the country became intellectually isolated in the high apartheid period, the Press managed to attract journals that could no longer be subsidized by learned societies and other universities. More recently, new co-publishing arrangements since the mid-1990s – with the journals publishing conglomerate Taylor & Francis in the UK, Elsevier, Sage and others – have brought South African journals back into an international intellectual community. Although some argue that this constitutes a re-colonization of South African knowledge production, it is also seen as an innovative strategy for positioning local research in a global context.

The author concludes that “for the future, the ongoing relevance, readership and viability of regional academic journals will need to be considered. From the experiences of South African journals and publishers, it seems that part of the way forward is to attempt to attract a wider audience while maintaining the scholarly standards expected by the academic community. Open access is still seen as an experimental option, and it seems unlikely to have a significant effect on local journals while the government policy focuses on institutional repositories. But there remains an ongoing tension between the local and the international, as indigenous knowledge is now being promoted at the same time as the importance of participating in global knowledge production. It remains to be seen whether partnerships, such as the co-publishing arrangement described here, will overcome or exacerbate such tensions.”

Provides an overview of author selection at South Africa’s most prominent scholarly publishers, its university presses, through a case study of author profiles of Wits, Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal), Unisa and Cape Town. It is “an attempt to provide basic data to underpin perceptions of discrimination in the selection of books for publication.” The author analyses the author profile of the presses to consider whether the historical record suggests that there has been discrimination in the selection of books for publication. She argues that systemic, socio-political barriers had a greater impact than peer review systems on the publication of...
marginalised groups during the apartheid era. The author’s profiles of these university presses do indicate some change over time, towards greater diversity in terms of both race and gender. However, women and black authors – and black women authors in particular – remain under-represented.

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Examine the history, development, publishing activities and practices, and distribution overseas of South Africa’s four active university presses (at Wits University, Kwa-Zulu Natal, University of South Africa, and Cape Town University). While, contrary to a common perception that university presses are in decline due to levels of funding for universities and libraries, the author finds that “scholarly publishing may not be a vigorous commercial success in South Africa, but it is certainly holding its own.” The author also scrutinizes another significant perception that, during the apartheid years, university presses were oppositional publishers, and asks whether their publishing record bears this out. She finds that oppositional academic publishing became largely the domain of a few independent presses in South Africa until the last years of the apartheid regime. “Apartheid had a constraining effect on publishing in South Africa and it seems that the university presses did not respond by playing an oppositional role, actively resisting the repressive forces of apartheid (opposition or resistance strategies rather tended towards either publishing abroad or with the independent publishers, such as David Philip [Publishers] and Ravan [Press]). Strict control of publishing would have been difficult and costly, and it seems more likely that the presses practised a form of self-censorship. The scholarly publishing undertaken by South Africa’s university presses tells us a great deal about academic freedom in a constrained society, and thus about the interplay between academia and other, more overtly political, sections of society.”

A critical examination focussing on the international market for South African scholarly work, marketing and dissemination practices by publishers, and their current efforts aimed at improving overseas marketing and distribution. In her conclusion the author states that “an examination of the circulation of academic texts shows that the dominant relationship is still one of a centre/periphery binary rather than of a transnational network. What this study also shows is that the location of a publisher still does influence the reception of its texts, even in a globalised context; and there are still borders to be crossed, even in a so-called borderless world. The physical distribution of books still takes place along the lines of power and authority established in the colonial and early postcolonial period. Moreover, the distribution of books remains expensive, bureaucratic and subject to prejudice and bias from potential buyers. Local publishers have thus turned to a number of strategies, the key ones being the use of international distributors and co-publishing with international publishers. A secondary, but growing, strategy is the use of technology to reach across borders, especially by means of print on demand, online publishing and e-commerce. The intention, explicitly, is to reach a cross-border readership in both local and international markets and to disrupt the North-South binary in favour of a more dispersed network model of circulation.” Ironically, “it appears that there was more widespread distribution of and interest internationally in South African publishing during the apartheid era, when there was global support for the anti-apartheid movement – an early instance of the communities of interest that contemporary marketing strategies seek to promote.”


It is a common assumption that African scholarly publishing is poorly resourced, and is unappealing to authors, both African and otherwise. While the resource constraints are real, is it true that authors are avoiding African publishers in favour of those based in the North? This exploratory study was undertaken to assess the demand for scholarly publishers based in South Africa, but serving the continent as a whole. The qualitative survey, though not based on a large and widely generalizable sample, indicated some clear trends and, in so doing, explodes the myth of the African publisher as the site of last resort for academic authors. In fact the results show broad support for locally based publishers, and many respondents expressed a need for far more publishers, wherever they may be based. The authors use information gathered from the survey to indicate trends for scholarly publishers working in the region.


This MIS thesis is a feasibility study that sought to investigate and evaluate whether a new scholarly press focusing on African material and authors would be viable in the current [2007] South African, continental and international context. The study takes the form of a literature survey, a questionnaire-based empirical survey, as well as a feasibility-based business planning exercise. It sought to consider whether, given the limitations of and challenges currently facing the South African (and wider African) scholarly publishing industry, a
scholarly publisher working according to the above vision could be viably set up. How could this be achieved, and how would it be evaluated? Using the case study of the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) http://www.ai.org.za/, the author examined whether AISA would be in a position to transform its existing publishing division into a fully-fledged scholarly press. Broad support was found for the notion of a new niche scholarly publisher (focusing on the area of African studies), and a business plan was developed to show how such a press could be set up and operate, and could be economically feasible, albeit working within certain constraints and assumptions.


Investigates the current status and the challenges faced by university presses in Africa, looking particularly at the institutional perspective. Four case studies, from Ethiopia (Addis Ababa University Press http://www.aau.edu.et/offices/aau-press/published-books/, and Wollega University Press http://www.starjournal.org/wu-press.html), Kenya (University of Nairobi Press http://press.uonbi.ac.ke/cgi-sys/defaultwebpage.cgi), and South Africa (Wits University Press http://witspress.co.za/) show how different presses adapt their practices and adopt new technologies. “Interpreted through an institutional logics perspective, the status of the university presses is described according to established editorial and market logics, to which a third, hypothetical logic of the knowledge commons is added. The logic of the knowledge commons accounts for changes advanced by the digitization of content, peer-to-peer networks as the basis for production, the rise of open access, and an emerging social capitalism. In two cases, we find university presses constrained by traditional editorial logics, while a third one exhibits a hybrid editorial–market model with the purposive adoption of new technologies. Only the fourth, recently established press has embraced the new logic of the knowledge commons wholeheartedly. Thus, if there is a second transition of the academic publishing industry underway, it is in its early stages, partial, and limited in the African context. We thus show that the logic of the knowledge commons provides a useful theoretical lens for studying the far-reaching and rapid ongoing changes in international academic publishing in Africa and further afield.”

Several key points emerged from the study, namely:

(1) African university presses are constrained by their institutional support and outlook.
(2) Younger, emerging, African university presses are more able to adopt the logic of the knowledge commons rather than presses that follow the older editorial or market models.
(3) African university presses are well aware of opportunities afforded by new technologies, but are not making full use of these opportunities.
(4) Technological opportunities are mainly understood in terms of creating marketing and distribution channels complementary to the existing print-based model focused on local markets.
https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2022/01/18/democratising-publishing-or-dodgy-spammers-what-inclusive-publishers-tell-us-about-the-state-of-academic-book-publishing/ [28/01/22]

Some interesting views here about the murky area of so-called ‘predatory’ publishing. In disciplines where the academic book is the primary means for communicating research and establishing oneself in the field, the authors say, “academics may have a mental shortlist of desirable publishers. However, not everyone can access the most elite or reputable presses, and so some choose publishers with less supposed academic ‘credibility’. Some publishers get accused of spamming authors or other so-called ‘predatory’ practices.” Drawing on a recent study, the authors explore “how these practices and choices reflect a commitment to accessibility that challenges traditional models of academic publishing.”

https://www.coronatimes.net/going-online-academic-collaboration/ (Posted 10 April 2020) [15/01/22]

Professional societies are responding in different ways to the pandemic, perhaps reflecting their disciplinary cultures and financial commitments. The author has been working with a team of researchers to explore the challenges that African scholars face in getting their work published in academic journals: “Like higher education systems everywhere, African universities are increasingly driven by the global logics of research rankings and journal impact. Academic promotions, tenure decisions and even the award of Masters and PhD degrees depend on getting publications in ‘international’ journals as quickly as possible. Usually, the first step for an early career researcher is to present at a departmental seminar, and then perhaps at a national or regional conference to get feedback. Yet national and regional academic communities are being steadily undermined. A high proportion of Africa-based journals listed on AJOL (African Journals Online) https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajol are not included in citation indexes like Scopus or Web of Science.”

Discouraged from conferencing or publishing ‘locally’, “many African scholars are equally frustrated by what they perceive to be the painfully slow decision-making processes of many Northern humanities and or social science journals, facing repeated rounds of peer-review or repeated rejections.” In our research, David Mills says, “we have heard many stories of the challenges of getting published in the ‘right’ journals. The prevailing sense is that the existing ‘high impact’ journals are biased against African scholars. Denied these opportunities, some have turned instead to journals that are all too quickly dismissed by Northern gatekeepers as ‘predatory’ (a word we would ban) or simply of questionable quality. Others end up paying expensive Article Processing Charges (APCs) to get their work published in a timely manner, even while many existing journals (especially in the humanities and social sciences) do not charge APCs.”

This volume grew out of a seminar on scholarly publishing held in Arusha, Tanzania in 2002. It was originally announced for publication as *The African Scholarly Writers and Publishers Handbook*, as a sequel to the much-acclaimed *African Writers’ Handbook* published by African Books Collective in 1999, but was subsequently recast primarily as a collection of essays by book practitioners and a number of African academics. The preface to the volume offers no explanation why the original handbook concept was abandoned, although the essay collection does contain a few more practical papers such as Alois Mlambo’s “Choosing a Publisher”, Mary Jay’s “The Book Publishing Process”, and Charles Bewlay’s “A Publisher’s Expectations of Academic Authors”. Also useful, published as an appendix in the book, is a reprint of CODESRIA’s *Guide for Authors*, a small booklet published by them in 2003 that contains a great deal of helpful guidance as well as a glossary. The collection takes stock of the current status of academic publishing on the continent and contains a total of 25 papers, together with an index. Following two introductory essays, papers are grouped under a number of headings and sub-headings: Part 1, Perspectives: Scholars and Publishers, African-Language Publishing, Librarianship; and Part 2, Writing and Publishing; New Technologies. This essay collection, albeit now a little dated, offers a rich resource on many aspects of African scholarly publishing today.


Aiming to provide basic data to underpin perceptions of discrimination in the selection of books for publication, the authors consider how *Agenda* http://www.agenda.org.za/, a feminist journal of the Global South, and Africa specifically, balances the demands of peer-reviewed knowledge production with prerequisite gender, race and space/place equality in the context of mechanisms that often privilege particular ways of knowing. The article addresses a range of questions, such as: “What forces inhibit and marginalise women’s voices generally, and black women’s voices in particular, from feminist knowledge production and dissemination? How do we sustain our feminist positioning and critique in publishing in an environment where gender equality in the various socio-economic spheres of life remains elusive and where gender violence against women is rife, and this in the context of ‘scholarly’ peer review? In particular, how do we ensure that the voices of those most marginalised by these inequalities and social forces are heard in ways that matter – and, indeed, count – in scholarly publishing?”


http://chi.anthropology.msu.edu/2015/10/politics-of-publishing/ (Posted 26 October 2015)

“*African Studies is a white-owned field*”, the author declares. “This would not be a problem if all was actually equal. The problems come from who owns knowledge about Africa (both in a practical copyright, and in an epistemological level). … By and large, you cannot purchase...
academic books about Africa in Africa, and it isn’t because people don’t care or don’t want to read them.” Foreign researchers have easier access to funds to conduct often very innovative research projects: “In order to obtain tenure, and therefore more research funds, these professors publish in western university presses (or Palgrave and Routledge, which is a different story). Western presses choose not to sell their books on the African continent because the market is deemed ‘unprofitable.’ African universities seek to make themselves look more ‘respectable’ in the eyes of western donors, so they encourage their faculty to publish ‘internationally’ in order to obtain tenure and raise the standing of their departments.” Bernard Moore argues that academic knowledge about Africa remains securely in Euro-American hands. “Yes, South African presses are making headway, although this is primarily texts related to South African affairs. If any of this concerns us, we must take some degree of action. If we are going into academia, we have to take steps to change our department’s tenure procedures. Base tenure on the quality of the text, not only the press; and reward Africanists who do indeed publish on the African continent. And although it might seem, dare I say, ‘risky,’ we should publish our books (and articles, but that’s a different story) in presses that make the books available on the continent.”

Johann Mouton, who is director at The Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) http://www0.sun.ac.za/crest/ at Stellenbosch University, reflects on the growth in scholarly publishing in South Africa over the last 25 years, and how this has been influenced by the subsidy system of South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET). In his presentation, focusing on the “qualitative challenge”, he acknowledges that concerns over the quality of scientific outputs and unethical publishing practices have emerged and increased. He gives several reasons for concern over the journals where South African academics publish most frequently, including the persistence of questionable publication practices and predatory journals. However, while agreeing that there are problems that could and should be addressed, the author feels strongly that it would be irresponsible to consider a total scrapping of the scientific publishing system in South Africa, since the funding from this system is a lifeline for science in South Africa.

Mouton says “it is important to emphasize that the digitization of publishing and the advent of OA journals and books are in and by themselves progressive forces. These ‘movements’ have greatly increased access to knowledge, improved participation in and even the democratization of publishing through more transparent peer-review processes. However, as is often the case, they also contain(ed) in themselves the potential for misuse and abuse by unscrupulous publishers, editors and other actors who are intent only on profiting from these through whatever means of deception and misrepresentation.”

The proceedings of a conference held at the Africa Institute of South Africa in 2009, this is a collection of essays on the current [2010] state of scholarly publishing in Africa, with a strong
emphasis on the situation in South Africa. The conference was convened, and the papers published, in an attempt to influence “policymakers and other relevant stakeholders in developing an enabling environment for scholarly publishing to thrive.” Containing a total of 26 papers – all of them preceded by abstracts – content is arranged under seven sections: (i) The State of Research Publishing in Africa, (ii) The State of Scholarly Publishing in Africa, (iii) The Challenges of Book Distribution, (iv) The Impact of Information and Communication Technologies on Scholarly Publishing, (v) Alternative Publishing Models, (vi) The Politics of Peer Review in Scholarly Publishing, and (vii) Scholarly Publishing and Intellectual Property Development in Africa. While the majority of the contributors are from South Africa, other contributors include Kenyan veteran publisher Henry Chakava, James Currey of James Currey Publishers, Mary Jay of the Oxford-based African Books Collective, and a number of academics from the West African region. The book is particularly strong in overviews of scholarly publishing in South Africa, covering both book and journal publishing. It offers some interesting discussions and fresh insights about alternative publishing and distribution models, with articles reporting about new initiatives and strategy approaches, and also including papers on the politics and practise of the peer review process, and on South African intellectual property rights. One or two papers, by academics from other regions of Africa, unfortunately are weak and poorly informed about the current state of scholarly publishing in Africa, for example citing literature that goes back to books and articles published in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the book can be seen as a useful companion to African Scholarly Publishing Essays edited by Alois Mlambo, and published by African Books Collective in 2006 (see preceding record in this section).


Online: http://link.wits.ac.za/journal/AJIC10-Nyamnjoh.pdf [14/06/21]
Examines the publishing activities of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) https://codesria.org/spip.php?rubrique4 and its ever-evolving publications and dissemination policies. The author offers this “as a possible model to inform and inspire institutions interested in a comprehensive idea of open access in an interconnected world of local and global hierarchies, where producing and consuming difference is part and parcel of everyday life.”

https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/29085 [20/06/21]
The academic publishing sector in South Africa is facing many changes and challenges in a post-1994 democracy, most of them brought about by the Higher Education Act No 101 of 1997. In the midst of these numerous challenges, publishers are now faced with a new trend, that of self-publishing of academic textbooks, which lecturers then prescribe to their own group of students. Self-publishing implies that authors undertake all processes related to publishing on their own, including the financial risk of publishing a book. From the results of two surveys undertaken by the author it is evident that academic self-publishing is an increasing trend in the higher education environment of South Africa. The main reasons for
self-publishing in the academic environment include financial incentives; a volatile author-publisher relationship; issues of copyright and control; possible rejection suffered by authors; technological advances and a sense of community service among academics and lecturing staff. Academic self-publishing, the author reports, “is most apparent in the academic fields of business, economics and management sciences to the extent that it could have far-reaching financial impact on markets that are traditionally lucrative for commercial publishers. Commercial publishers should therefore engage with author associations and seek out possible new alternatives to satisfying author needs in a changing market place.”


This article is part of the thought-provoking blog/podcast series Citing Africa https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/?s=citing+africa&category=Citing-Africa that seeks to explore global construction and imbalances of knowledge production. The author argues that the existing infrastructures of scholarship, both technological and institutional, are re-entrenching the dominance of research from and for a western audience. Where and how is scholarly knowledge produced and circulated, and with what effects? “We must be wary of the over-production and representation of work from particular geographies, as well as the relegation of other locales as sites of data collection.” If we want to reshape the way scholarly knowledge is produced and communicated, the posting says, we ought to question who makes the decisions and why. “Focusing our attention on the sociotechnical knowledge infrastructures can help spark these important conversations: what might decentralised, non-hierarchical and locally controlled forms of scholarly communications and knowledge look like? From that vision we can help pluralise forms of knowledge and bring its stewardship and care closer to the communities it most concerns.”


Also at https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/THE-CRISIS-OF-RESEARCH-AND-ACADEMIC-PUBLISHING-IN-Olukoju/e3e967f67b57e70304c721aaa4cbe4c75ab663

A paper presented at the 28th annual Spring Symposium, African Universities in the Twenty-First Century, University of Illinois/CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 25-27 April 2002. Academic publishing in Nigeria [as at 2002], especially university press publishing, has been in decline for the last two decades at least. This paper examines the strategies adopted by Nigerian scholars to cope with the collapse, or near-collapse, of academic journals and university presses to publish their scholarly research. The paper traces the beginnings of academic publishing in Nigeria up to the period of the late 1970s, and provides some background of the reasons that led to the crisis in Nigerian higher education and its negative impact on academic research and scholarly publishing. It discusses the survival strategies adopted by Nigerian academics to cope with the situation, their search for alternative publishing outlets, the emergence of self-publishing, and the decline of high standards in scholarship, and the near-abandonment of the peer-review process by (usually short-lived) new Nigerian journals. In his conclusion the author offers a set of recommendations for encouraging research and


The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the social media impact of 273 South African post-secondary education accredited journals, which are recognised by the Department of Higher Education and Training of South Africa for purposes of financial support. The author used multiple sources to extract data for the study, namely, Altmetric.com, Google Scholar (GS), Scopus (through SCImago), and the Thomson Reuters (TR) Journal Citation Reports (JCR). Data was analysed to determine South African journals’ presence in and impact on social media as well as to contrast social visibility and impact with the citation impact in GS, JCR and Scopus. The results revealed that 2,923 articles published in 122 of the 273 South African journals received at least one mention in social media, and the most commonly used platforms were Twitter and Facebook. The journals indexed in the TR’s citation indexes and Scopus performed much better, in terms of their average altmetrics, than non-TR and non-Scopus indexed journals; and there were weak to moderate relationships among different types of altmetrics and citation-based measures, thereby implying different kinds of journal impacts on SM when compared to the scholarly impact reflected in citation databases. In his conclusion the author states that South African journals’ impact on social media, just as is the case with countries with similar economies, is minimal but has shown signs of growth.

Onyancha, Omwoyo Bosire “Open Research Data in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Bibliometric Study Using the Data Citation Index.” Publishing Research Quarterly 32, no. 3 (September 2016): 227-246.


Explores and documents the status of research data sharing among researchers in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and internationally. Relevant data was extracted from the Data Citation Index (DCI) using an advanced search strategy, which was limited to the publication years between 2009 and 2014. Data was analysed to obtain the number of data records by country, institution, subject category, year of publication, and document type as well as the number of citations. The author’s findings indicate that only 20 (out of 50) countries in sub-Saharan Africa produced at least one data record in the DCI, with South Africa leading the pack with 539 (61.39%) records followed by Kenya, Cameroon and Ghana. SSA contributes a mere 0.03 % of the world’s research data as compared to 1.4 % of the world’s research articles. Research institutions and universities are the major contributors of research data, which largely focuses on genetics and heredity (61.3%), biochemistry and molecular biology (61.3%), agriculture (29.2%) and forestry (27.3%). The author states that, citation-wise, the research data has attracted fewer average citations than the articles, and that a correlational analysis of the data reveals that there is a significant correlation between the publication of data and research articles.
https://africanpublishers.net/images/SCHOLARLY_BOOK_PUBLISHING_IN_GHANA_ERNEST%20OPPONG.pdf

This BA thesis “aims to explore project management processes in enhancing the traditional processes of scholarly book publishing in Ghana and addresses three objectives: to establish traditional processes of scholarly book publishing; to identify inherent barriers; and to develop project management methodology to mitigate against barriers in the processes. … The three objectives were achieved through narrative and content analysis of interview results from fourteen scholarly publishers.”

In his summary of the findings the author states that Ghanaian scholarly publishers adopt similar traditional processes for the publication of scholarly books as those prevalent elsewhere: However, “the scholarly publishing landscape [in Ghana] is bedevilled with some barriers inherent in the traditional processes. They include acquisition of substandard manuscripts; limited number of manuscripts and outrageous charges by commissioned scholarly authors, and their insistence on immediate advance payment, are barriers inherent in the acquisition of manuscripts. High cost and delay of peer review, difficulty in getting experts to review the work, high volume of the manuscript and lack of control over contents are barriers associated with the assessment of manuscripts. The editorial development of scholarly works is challenged with limited scholarly editors, lack [of] understanding of editorial development by some authors and over-confidence of the quality of work to the extent of disallowing corrections by the publisher/editor, and lack of effective communication among the project team: editors and author.” Moreover, the marketing, distribution, and sales of scholarly books in Ghana are hampered “with poor marketing of scholarly books leading to poor sales”, as well as lack of interest by most bookshops to take on stocks of scholarly books. Other problems include illegal photocopying and selling of content extracted from scholarly works. The author sets out a number of recommendations, and possible strategies, how to address these numerous challenges.

Rotich, Daniel C. *Remaining Academically Relevant and Visible in the Global Academic Scene Through Scholarly Publishing*. 

A presentation about the research dissemination of African scholarly works (notably research published in journals) in the global scene, which has been affected by sustainability of scholarly journals, irregular publication, inadequate editorial management, and poor distribution. Also reports about a number of new programmes and initiatives that aim to provide more visibility and developmental impact of African-published journals, including African Journals Online https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajol, the Scholarly Communication in Africa Programme (SCAP) http://www.scaprogramme.org.za/, the Budapest Initiative Open Access Initiative http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/openaccess, and the Publish or Perish software programme http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm designed to help individual academics to present their case for research impact to its best advantage. (Using Google
Scholar it retrieves and analyses academic citations to obtain the raw citations, then analyses these and presents a range of statistics and scholarly metrics). The author makes a number of recommendations for more effective dissemination of African research output, and urges that African universities should fully embrace electronic publishing in order to improve international visibility.


Examines scholarly the publishing experience among postgraduate students in a number of Nigerian universities. The findings revealed that “knowledge of data analysis, literature search and review, development of relevant research questions, methodology, access to relevant materials, e-mail, phone, identification of relevant keywords, and ICT skills are considered necessary for scholarly publishing. Postgraduate students are aware of predatory journals and publishers. Challenges to scholarly publishing experience are inadequate mentorship and support, skills, knowledge; lack of funds, and limited access to available materials including journal articles, databases, and others.”


In South Africa, criticisms of peer review often hinge on allegations of racism, anti-African attitudes, and viewpoint discrimination. This article discusses the issue of peer-review, and examines these allegations in terms of claims of Western conceptual gatekeeping. Cautions are offered on allegations of exceptionalism, as are some strategies on dealing with the process of peer review.


This guest blog post is a rejoinder to the Academic Book in the South two-day conference held at the British Library on 7-8 March 2016 (see preceding records in this section) as part of the Academic Book of the Future Project https://academicbookfuture.org/. Academic books in Africa, Ola Oduku says, “despite being produced and available for at least half a century, are now a rare sight to behold in the continent’s academic institutions. Locally-authored academic books are even harder to find.” The author (a Reader in Architecture and Dean International for Africa at Edinburgh University’s School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture) aims to “explore the spaces which books and readers inhabit and then consider what books are being written and published, and what kind of future both academic publishing and the physical book might have in Africa.” On a recent visit to libraries at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Legon University in Ghana, she found that while reasonably well-maintained, furnished, and staffed, “library stacks are sparsely stocked, holding some editions of historic textbooks, but rarely any up-to-date journals or printed matter. Unsurprisingly there are few students using the library reading spaces for study – proportionally it seems there are often more staff than users of these libraries.” In most African universities, for career advancement and promotion, academic books often are less critical
than the refereed academic paper, and Oduku argues that “in Africa, publishing itself takes significantly more time to achieve with the vagaries of production, editing, and printing in the African setting. There are of course publishing houses in Africa, but their focus is not on academic book publishing.”

So, what might the future look like for academic publishing in Africa? “If we start from the premise that academic material for student study will need to be provided, and the current system of distribution, via the academic textbook, either individually purchased or available for loan via university library outlets, is flawed and no longer works, then we need to explore what the future learning landscape might be.” The author envisions ICT-linked classrooms and new forms of library facilities where students can learn through networked cheap personal tablet readers to which material is downloaded in ‘packets’, small units of material, such as chapters in books or homework/task exercises, which can be downloaded by students using mobile devices, and which at the same time gives the responsibility of the hardware required for online access to the students and users of the material. There would also be a need to developing local writing centres and support programmes for writing. “This would mean that there would be less dependence on programmes from abroad or occasional workshops, and could result in the development of an African academic writers network, likely to be in association with African publishers. Thus an academic ‘hub for writing and publishing’ at larger universities or at regional level would be a possible way forward, to be refined to best suit the needs of regional or large universities.”


Universities South Africa is the representative organization for South Africa’s public universities. Its Strategic Framework for Universities South Africa http://www.usaf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Strategic-Framework-for-Universities-South-Africa-2015-2019.pdf describes how it will promote the interests of South African universities. It has 25 members, which collectively represent all public universities in South Africa. Its primary purpose “is to create an environment in which universities can prosper and thrive in South Africa; thus enabling universities to contribute to the social, cultural and economic development of our country.” This position paper provides an assessment of the importance of the university presses to the universities and to South Africa’s research and scholarly system, and the opportunities and costs of running a university press in the twenty-first century. A detailed study and inventory, it reflects and reports on:

1. Existing studies and reviews of SA’s university presses;
2. The governance models and staffing of the presses;
3. The quality of the processes and content produced by the presses;
4. Local and international marketing;
5. Where SA academics prefer to publish;
6. The prospects for Open Access, and its forms of funding;
7. The business models of the presses;
8. The future sustainability of the presses.

The report commences with a review of significant changes in global scholarly publishing and the emergence of scholarly university presses in South Africa; thereafter discusses where the
six presses covered by the review find themselves now; and concludes “with a speculation,
mostly gleaned from the presses themselves, of prospects and possibilities for sustainability
going into the future. The ultimate aim of the review is to offer an ‘outsider’ perspective on
these shoestring operations, and offer some food for thought for their consideration going

University World News Special Reports “African Scholarly Publishing – Network Aims to
Strengthen African Scholarly Publishing.” University World News 22 September 2017 Issue
no. 475
(Posted 16 October 2017) [07/06/21]
Reports about a meeting hosted by Witwatersrand University Press, held in Johannesburg on
30 August 2017, that brought together a number of African scholarly publishers to discuss a
wide-ranging study undertaken by François van Schalkwyk and Thierry Luescher entitled the
The African University Press https://zenodo.org/record/889744#.Wcdyr7J96pp (the database
that is part of this project can be found at http://code4sa.org/african-university-presses/#all).
One of the report’s recommendations was to set up a network of university presses, as well as
other scholarly publishers, to be called African Monograph Publishers Network/AMPNet,
intended as a network for collaboration, experience-sharing, and advocacy. This UWN Special
Report includes a general round-up of the meeting, accompanied by a series of articles and
commentary contributed by some of the participants, as follows:

MacGregor, Karen Network Aims to Strengthen African Scholarly Publishing. [Introduction/Round-up]
[23/10/17]
A small group of African scholarly publishers has launched a network for collaboration, experience-sharing
and advocacy – and they have invited other publishers of scholarly monographs across Africa to join. Work
has already begun on initial projects including building a shared database of peer reviewers and developing
peer review standards. One of the participants at the meeting, Dr Divine Fuh, head of the publications and
dissemination programme at CODESRIA http://www.codesria.org/ in Dakar, was reported as saying such a
network could also be useful in terms of scholarly book distribution and dissemination, similarly as African
Books Collective does outside Africa. Fuh also said CODESRIA was planning a conference in 2018 on
‘Rethinking Publishing.’ “It is important to invest in research into publishing, not just technical activities. …
We need more publications on publishing – we spend so much time publishing about everything else.”

African-published books are now as easily available as any book published anywhere and the international
market for African scholarship is healthy. However, while African books are now much more easily available
outside Africa than they are within; access to these books, and in turn African scholarship, is actually
publishers worked together to successfully sell their books to the North – now they must seek operate in the
same way in Africa. The article describes the history and development of the not-for profit ABC, its strategies
in a rapidly changing publishing environment, its move to a largely digital platform, and the many challenges
it – and its participating African publishers – face in the market place.

Luescher, Thierry, and François van Schalkwyk Universities Need Imaginative, ICT-enhanced Presses.
How are African university presses faring under the current ‘market’ conditions and the contradictory
developments of ‘robber capitalism’ and hyper-marketisation on the one hand, and the emergence of ‘social
capitalism’ and open access knowledge sharing on the other hand? What do African university presses make
of the challenges and opportunities presented in the scholarly publishing realm within their contexts? Are they
deploying the technological changes in production, distribution and marketing made possible by digitisation
and network effects of the internet? Have they adjusted their production processes, gone digital, and bought into the latest technologies to be able to produce e-books, enhance their visibility and marketing strategies by including social media, and drastically reduce print-runs? Based on a baseline survey of university presses in Africa, in-depth case studies of selected university presses, and an analysis of the publishing choices made by African academics, the authors of The African University Press study https://zenodo.org/record/889744#.Wcdyr7J96pp examined the opportunities and constraints faced by university presses in Africa. It includes a set of recommendations to university presses and their host institutions as well as to funders interested in supporting scholarly publishing in Africa.

Research undertaken to provide an empirically-based overview of African university presses reveals a bleak landscape, but also a group of active presses that are deploying technology to reduce production costs, enhance visibility and widen their reach. It offers ways forward for universities and presses keen to respond to the remarkable growth of research in Africa.

Can enhanced circulation of African worldviews help shape the evolution of humanity? This is the vision at the not-for-profit Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group in Cameroon which, along with other African publishers, “seeks to stir the imagination and contributes to cultural development and renaissance.” The Group has thus far published more than 500 books in a diverse range of topics and genres. “One of Langaa’s most important challenges is making its publications more available in Africa where, ironically, African canons and concepts have been repressed and are languishing in hiding and neglect, and textbook publishers predominate.”

See full record under ➔ Zell, Hans M. below.

https://www.academia.edu/33799890/The_African_University_Press [07/06/21]
Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, this an impressive study providing an overview of the current [2017] African university press landscape, and examining the opportunities and constraints faced by university presses in Africa. While there are new and enabling conditions and opportunities for university presses to increase production and to widen distribution, the authors ask: How can African university presses make the most of these opportunities? Most likely, they believe, in deploying the technological changes in production, distribution and marketing made possible by digitisation and network effects of the Internet. The study is based on a baseline survey of university presses in Africa, in-depth case studies of selected university presses, and an analysis of the publishing choices made by African academics.

The authors found that “university presses in Africa are not yet making use of technological advances to reconfigure their production, distribution and marketing processes, nor are they experimenting with new publishing models such as open access. While case studies of selected university presses surfaced unsurprising challenges (such as scarce resources and limited capacity), they also show that university presses in Africa are constrained by institutional logics that are holding them back from experimenting with new ways of doing things.” The authors’ research also revealed that an alarmingly high number of academic
authors at one flagship research university in Africa are choosing to publish monographs with predatory publishers. The report concludes with a set of pragmatic recommendations: “recommendations that are simultaneously attuned to the opportunities and to the realities of African university presses as revealed by the research conducted.”

Notes: Another presentation of The African University Press project can be found at http://www0.sun.ac.za/scicom/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Van-Schalkwyk-African-University-Presses.pdf. As part of this project, African Minds have also created an interactive map of university presses in Africa that is continuously being updated. Users can either view the map by applying any of a number of filters, or download the full dataset at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URiTsMVkeM12DiZT7IffqYgVEd0hli4xIy983Fl8/edit#gid=0.


A presentation made at the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) biennial conference held in Cambridge in September 2016. It forms part of two-year research project “African University Press in a Digital Age: Practises and Opportunities”, supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (see also ➔ record above). Its major objective was to investigate how African university presses are positioning themselves in relation to new global opportunities and challenges, while at the same time examining the institutional and other constraints faced by university presses in Africa. The study is based on a baseline survey of university presses in Africa and in-depth interviews with selected university presses. The author says that “it is hoped that a pragmatic set of recommendations will emerge; recommendations that are simultaneously attuned to the opportunities and the everyday realities of African university presses.”

This is a very interesting study, albeit presenting a rather dismal picture: A detailed table in the presentation (see ➔ link to full dataset below) indicates that there are 52 established university presses on the African continent. However, many are dormant and are not publishing new work at this time. Only seven presses published in 2015 and four in 2014. Twenty-seven institutions have websites (of which nine presses have their own web pages), but only twenty-one have current email addresses. According to the study’s findings, responsiveness to email enquiries was generally poor, with 47% of emails sent remaining unopened, and 21% bounced. A small number of presses (mostly South African) have a presence on Facebook. Only four out of 52 have some form of open access publishing, usually journals. Only a small number offer price lists, catalogues, or other promotional material while, equally, merely a very small proportion offer online ordering facilities. Very few offer products in e-book formats at present. On a happier note, a good number of those presses currently active are now distributed overseas and their books are available through the Oxford-based African Books Collective https://www.africanbookscollective.com/, or one or two other distributors. Also on the positive side, the study shows that a significant proportion of the universities have established institutional repositories, and links to websites are indicated, where available.

As part of this project, African Minds have also created an interactive map of university presses in Africa that, it was promised, would be continuously being updated. Users can either view the map by applying any of a number of filters, or download the full dataset at
However, updating would appear to have been limited thus far.


“University academics face multiple pressures to publish. These pressures emanate from contexts with different, often competing, social norms, which result in academics publishing for reasons that may run counter to accepted scientific practice. This paper asks what decisions are being taken by academics when it comes to their choice of scholarly book publisher. An analysis of books selected from more than 2,500 self-reported scholarly publications produced by academics at Makerere University in Uganda from 2011 to 2017 shows that 31 scholarly books were published. Of these books, more than half (54%) were published by publishers that do not follow accepted scholarly publishing practice. Findings also show that there was a sharp decline in books published with suspect publishers in the second half of the 7-year period. The article discusses possible reasons for the selection of suspect publishers and considers four factors that may account for the observable decline.” [Not examined, from the abstract]


An investigation concerning the awareness and use of open access (OA) channels for scholarly publishing by researchers at selected universities in Kenya. “The findings revealed that there is a considerably high level of awareness among the researchers; librarians were the main channel with regard to creating awareness; the OA channels that are more frequently used by researchers are OA journals, OA institutional repositories and OA e-books; the researchers mostly published/disseminated theses and dissertations, conference proceedings and workshop/seminar presentations through OA channels; and searching and accessing research articles, developing research proposals and formulating research problems were among the main reasons why researchers used open access channels. There are several reasons why researchers sometimes do not use OA channels for research. The study makes several recommendations for the adoption and effective use of OA channels in the selected universities and beyond. [Not examined, from the abstract]


The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of Kenyan universities in promoting research and scholarly publishing, and recommend strategies for improvement. Two universities, one public and one private, were sampled from the total number of seventy-one universities in Kenya. From a population of 433 in total, 111 participants were sampled from the two universities and from the Commission for University Education (CUE). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. The study revealed that the role of CUE in promoting research and scholarly publishing has not yet been fully
realised in universities, and that incentives offered to university faculty members to engage research and publish are ineffective.

In their conclusion the authors state that the “study established that there is a poor relationship between CUE and universities, evidenced by universities accusing CUE of overstepping its mandate. On the other hand, CUE accuses universities of lack of transparency. CUE is mandated to promote research and scholarly publishing in universities. Findings showed that CUE does not play an active role in promoting research and scholarly publishing and there is no known evidence or documentation to show that CUE has performed its objective of promoting research and scholarly publishing in terms of providing funding either to universities or directly to researchers. CUE has been passive in performing its objectives of promoting research and scholarly publishing.” Moreover, the study “established that incentives offered to university faculty members by Kenyan universities are ineffective and the lecturers are not aware of the criterion for providing incentives. The study identified challenges encountered by university faculty members while undertaking research and scholarly publishing. This was evidenced by ineffective documentation of publications, inadequate or no funding at all, poor research infrastructure, inadequate working space, and inadequate time for undertaking research.”


In the 1970s and 80s there was a lively academic publishing scene in Nigeria (and elsewhere in West Africa), with several new university presses being launched. Today however, as a cursory amount of research about the current state of university press publishing in Nigeria demonstrates, the picture is bleak. The research (conducted in April 2021) revealed that traditional university press publishing activities seem to have been almost completely abandoned in most cases, although presses still exist in the form of commercial operations offering design, typesetting, and printing and binding services to the university, as well as to other customers.

Nigerian university presses operating today seem to be far removed from the ideals and primary responsibility of a university press, which should be to produce and disseminate knowledge of all kinds, and promoting a literate culture upon which the foundation of the university as a national institution must ultimately rest. Partly due to financial constraints and the demand to be self-sustained, many university presses have ceased to be publishing presses and have become printing presses. University administrators now view their presses as an opportunity for making money in times of dwindling resources, rather than as an outlet for the dissemination of scholarship. Publishing opportunities for African scholars by Western presses, and the availability of content within Africa, remains limited. The demise, and the now almost total lack of publishing output by Nigerian university presses, with most of them currently dormant or disbanded, can be said to be a major contributory factor to this unhappy situation. A two-part Appendix offers a select, critically annotated bibliography of scholarly publishing in Nigeria, and in other parts of Africa.
https://www.academia.edu/34690740/The_African_University_Press_-_A_Gloomy_Picture [with Appendix added, freely accessible]

Issue 475 of University World News reported about a meeting hosted by Witwatersrand University Press, held in Johannesburg on August 30, 2017, that brought together a number of African scholarly publishers to discuss a wide-ranging study undertaken by François van Schalkwyk and Thierry Lüscher entitled The African University Press https://zenodo.org/record/889744#.Wcdyr7J96pp (see ➔ record above). One of the report’s recommendations was to set up a network of university presses, as well as other scholarly publishers, to be called African Monograph Publishers Network/AMPNet, intended as a network for collaboration, experience-sharing, and advocacy. The above UWN Special Report includes a general round-up of the meeting, accompanied by a series of articles and commentary contributed by some of the participants, including comments submitted by Hans Zell (slightly edited in this version), and to which an appendix, Pan-African and regional book professional organizations, groups, and networks in sub-Saharan Africa: An inventory, has been added.

A detailed examination of the state of African scholarly publishing in the 1980s. Reviews the decline in publishing output, and the demise of small literary magazines; diminishing markets in Africa, book piracy, and the significance of the impact of the “book famine”. Offers an overview of scholarly publishing in Africa and discusses the problems and misconceptions affecting this sector of the industry.

Women in African publishing/Publishing for and by women
See also ➔ Publisher histories and profiles

The independent feminist publishing house Modjaji Books in Cape Town http://www.modjajibooks.co.za/ celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2017. Its list includes writing by Southern African women, including fiction, poetry, and biography. This is an interview with its founder, Colleen Higgs, who says the launch of Modjaji a decade ago answered a series of needs and issues: “Modjaji fills a gap by providing an outlet for writing by women that takes itself and its readers seriously. For a small press, Modjaji Books is visible and vibrant and has offered a good platform for the writers we’ve published.” There have been many small moments of joy, she says, but also many challenges, and constant worries
about money and cash flow. The book market in South Africa is small, as are the margins, and several bookstores have been forced to close down. There are only a handful of South African writers who can make a living as a writer. “This is very frustrating for authors, and sometimes they take their frustrations out on us, their publishers.” On the positive side, there have been some notable rights sales and translations with publishers in other countries. Higgs says “the self-esteem and sense of self-worth that our authors gain from being published fills my heart and makes me proud and happy.”


An interview with the co-founder and publishing director of one of Africa’s leading independent publishing houses, Cassava Republic Press https://cassavarepublic.biz/. In this conversation with Tina Adomako, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf talks about the challenges facing African literature, bringing African writing to an African audience, female authors, the need for more writing and publishing in African languages, and the market for African literature in local languages: “All the things we’ve learnt from colonial times and the colonial experience need to be expressed differently. If we continue to write only in colonial languages, it almost fossilises our own languages. They stay put and don’t move on. … we need to address the matter of our own languages in order to survive into the next century.”


The IPA ‘Africa Rising’ event held in Nairobi in June 2019 featured a panel of speakers on overcoming publishing’s diversity problem in women’s leadership. The panel included Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, founder of Nigeria’s Cassava Republic Press, Ama Dadson, founder of Ghana’s AkooBooks Audio, and Thabiso Mahlape, founder of the South African imprint BlackBird Books. The evening also featured the Nairobi-based journalist and storyteller Maimouna Jallow, who performed her stage adaptation of Lola Shoneyin’s novel The Secret Lives of Bab Segi’s Wives. These interviews aim to provide a range of insights into the general situation for women in publishing in African markets today.

Bakare-Yusuf says “the male dominance of the sector is probably what’s inspiring women to create autonomous spaces of independence, creativity, and innovative publishing that are not dependent on largely inefficient and corrupt government procurement practices.” She argues that, in terms of launching new African writing onto the world stage, “women are at the forefront of it, owning or managing the publishing houses, making editorial decisions and shaping the kind of books that are available for general readership as well as for literature courses. Women are at the forefront of shaping the taste of what Africans and the world we read about Africans today and into the future.” It is the general book trade that is the future
of publishing in Africa, she says. “Women have the early-mover advantage, and that’s why we need to actively look for ways to access and raise capital.”

Thabiso Mahlape reports that she publishes not only undiscovered talent, but black voices as well, “so the biggest problem for me has been distribution … in an area where, as in Soweto, one retailer has a monopoly on the situation.” Books aren’t “something that black people consume as a day-to-day thing. So there isn’t a lot of confidence in that area, as readers, as writers, and sometimes for me as a publisher. So you do have the responsibility of not only finding talent, but also nurturing talent as well, talent that is probably going to shine its best three books from now, you know, because people need that kind of platform, that kind of courage and love and nurturing.”


In this perceptive interview Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, publisher of Cassava Republic Press https://cassavarepublic.biz/ based in Abuja and in London, discusses with Simidele Dosekun her motivation for founding and her continuous vision for the press; how this translates into the daily management and operations of the business, and the challenges and opportunities of running a small independent press. Internally, Bakare-Yusuf says, “we are clear that we are a feminist-run organization and our ethos is founded on feminist principles that start from our hiring practices to our editorial process and decision making. On the editorial side … we think that it is high time we hear the content of African women’s imaginations and interior lives: how they read their own historical moment or imagine the past and provoke the future. We are therefore very deliberate about trying to publish more women, but in doing so ensure that they also do not import retrogressive gender norms which will do harm to women and men.”

Bookwitty https://www.bookwitty.com is a new platform “where people can discover, create and share content about books or a variety of topics.” It has recently published the first two in a series of interviews with African publishers, “part of an ongoing Bookwitty project that celebrates the importance of independent publishers.” The interviews cover questions such as ‘What is your editorial line?, ‘What makes you stand out?’, ‘What is the most rewarding aspect of being an independent publisher?’, to questions about the most significant challenges, how do these publishers interact with their readers, and more.

Nana Ayebia Clarke MBE, Publisher and Managing Director of Ayebia Clarke Publishing Ltd in Banbury, UK, and former Series Editor of Heinemann’s African Writers Series for a period of 12 years, pays tribute to a number of pioneering African women publishers – Flora Nwapa, Efua Sutherland, Margaret Busby, and Buchi Emecheta among them – and which in turn provided the inspiration of a new generation of African women writers and publishers as well as those in the diasporas. “In so doing, they opened up spaces and spearheaded what would become the beginning of a literary revolution in writing about female challenges and experiences and publishing their narratives on the continent in publishing houses owned by them at a time when African women writers and publishers were unheard of.”


Gillian Engberg reports about a new literary agency that aims to expand contemporary African fiction for young people through individual mentoring and global partnerships. Launched in 2019 by two long-time children’s publishing professionals, Deborah Ahenkorah in Ghana and Sarah Odedina in the UK, Accord Literary https://www.accordliterary.com/ is a partnership that seeks to mentor, develop and encourage writers based in Africa writing books for young readers: “Our mission” they say, “is to find original and unique voices and get their books into the hands of readers around the world.” Ahenkorah and Odedina are using open submission calls to encourage participation by writers from across the African continent. Currently they are open for submissions for novels written for young readers aged between 8 and 16 years old. Both founders draw on complementary backgrounds for this new venture. Ahenkorah is well known for her activities as the publisher of African Bureau Stories, focused on African writers for children, and she also established the Golden Baobab Prize http://www.goldenbaobab.org/, a literary award granted to children’s book authors and illustrators from Africa. Odedina is a former publishing director at Bloomsbury Children’s Books who oversaw the publication of the Harry Potter books in the UK, and is now editor-at-large for Pushkin Press.


Colleen Higgs is a publisher, a publishing activist and a writer, and the founder of the Cape Town based Modjaji Books http://www.modjajibooks.co.za/, the publishing company which she founded in 2007, and which is now widely recognized to be one the leading independent feminist presses not only in Africa but in the world. In this engaging piece she says “publishing is not for the faint-hearted. Sometimes I wonder why I decided to go into publishing, using my own money when it’s a business that is fraught with so many hundreds of possible places where you can go wrong or make bad choices. There’s always a new possible error, mistake, blunder, oops, disaster. Some cost money, some cost face. It’s a business that keeps you humble and on your toes.” She goes on to say “I think publishing is teaching me a kind of Zen practice, of doing my best to make sure there are as few mistakes as possible and trying not to repeat the same ones and forgiving myself and others, and taking it in my stride and learning not to allow a publishing version of ‘road rage’ to get the better of...
me.” Helpfully, and candidly, she then sets out the nature of “a few of the errors” – no less than 33 of them! – during her eleven years in publishing thus far. This could well prove to be a very useful checklist of the pitfalls to avoid for small independent/novice publishers anywhere!

*Note:* See also ➔ other profiles and articles about Modjaji Books in this section.

House, Emma *Meeting House* - Thabiso Maphlape. (2020)
https://womeninpublishing.org/meeting-house-thabiso-mahlape/ (27/05/21)
This is part of a series of interviews conducted by Emma House with members of the PublisHer https://womeninpublishing.org/ community. Here she is in a conversation with Thabiso Maphlape, a vociferous advocate for new black writing and the founder of Blackbird Books, https://blackbirdbooks.africa/ the imprint incubated by Jacana Media in 2015, that seeks to provide a platform and a publishing home to both new voices and the existing generation of black writers and narratives; and is dedicated to publishing stories that reflect the African experience, and giving voice to South Africa’s new black authors. In April of 2020 Blackbird Books announced that it had become an independent publishing house after four and a half years of being in a joint venture with Jacana. Now independent, she says “my vision for this publishing house is that Africans need to define and be settled with what African content is. It will be a platform where authors are not asked to conform or shy away from ideas because they are not palatable to someone who was not in Africa. It will be African stories by Africans and for the world.”

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/courage-and-consequence ¶
An insightful, albeit now somewhat dated collection of papers and personal accounts providing a picture of African women in publishing in Africa today, primarily in English-speaking Africa. The eleven contributors are all women who have made notable achievements and impacts in publishing in Africa, have headed publishing companies, or have set up their own imprints. The contributors are from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe, who came to publishing from different routes, and have been active, or are currently active, in a variety of publishing operations, such state and commercial publishing, activist, non-profit or community publishing, and there is also a contribution by a bookseller. As a whole, the authors say, “the contributions give an overview of the sobering realities of African publishers, and in particular for women. They celebrate what these women have achieved, and show the courage needed to start and run cultural institutions in Africa. These women are an inspiration for others to play their part in the cultural development of the continent.”

Johnson, Elizabeth Ofosuah This Nigerian was the First African Woman to Publish a Novel and to Run a Women’s Publishing House.
https://face2faceafrica.com/article/this-nigerian-was-the-first-african-woman-to-publish-a-novel-and-run-a-womens-publishing-house (Posted 25 September 2018) [28/05/21]
A short (illustrated) profile of Flora Nwapa (1931-1993), who was the first Nigerian woman to have published a novel and the first women in Africa to have a work of fiction published in London. Her first novel, *Efuru,* was published in 1966 by Heinemann in their African Writers
Series. To encourage more women’s writing and the discussion of women’s issues in society, she set up Tana Press in Enugu in 1974, and the Flora Nwapa Company in 1977, and which is generally credited to be the first printing press and publishing house in Africa founded and run by a woman. Its publishing programme had a special focus on women’s writing, and the role of women in Nigeria, their status in the community and their economic independence. Flora Nwapa also wrote and published a number of children’s books.

Kader, Daniel *Johannesburg’s Fourthwall: Publishing Experiments on the Periphery.*
http://publishingperspectives.com/2013/04/johannesburgs-fourthwall-publishing-experiments-on-the-periphery/ [28/07/21]

Reports about the activities of the Johannesburg-based Fourthwall Books http://www.fourthwallbooks.com/ a small independent imprint launched in 2010 by editor and writer Bronwyn Law-Viljoen and writer and designer Oliver Barstow. The company was established “to publish beautifully designed and written books on art and architecture.” Fourthwall Books hopes to raise the bar for art publishing in South Africa by combining innovative and intelligent book design with excellent writing, as well as coming up with inventive ways of operating within the limitations of South Africa’s small publishing industry. As Daniel Kader states “this little outfit on the periphery might be demonstrating a way forward even for those future publishers of niche books who live at the ‘center’.”

Kitchen, Stephanie *Alice Wairimū Nderitū. Mdahalo Bridging Divides, Nairobi, Kenya.*
(2020)
https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/alice-wairim-nderit/ (27/05/21)

Alice Wairimū Nderitū is an author, newspaper columnist, ethnic relations educator, mediator of armed conflict, as well as a publisher. In this conversation with Stephanie Kitchen of the International African Institute she talks about scholarly publishing in Kenya, women in publishing, and about her path into the book industry. She is the founder of Mdahalo Bridging Divides (Mdahalo is the Kiswahili word for ‘dialogue’), an organization that seeks to contribute to the improvement of human life by promoting dialogue, inclusion, pluralism, cooperation and peaceful coexistence among divided societies. Its publishing arm, the Mdahalo Publishing House https://mdahalo.org/publishing/ offers a team of professional experts to guide authors and writers at every stage of the publishing process, providing experience, commitment, and an efficient and affordable way to get started … and ultimately get published.

Speaking about women in publishing in Africa, Nderitū acknowledges that progress has been made in gender equality in African publishing in recent years, and that the gains made by African women publishers need to be safeguarded and consolidated. However, it is still not straightforward for women to publish, she says: “We shall no doubt see more women publishers establishing and heading publishing houses, [but] I am not so sure though about taking over existing ones. There are issues, relevant across the board in Africa, including traditions, cultures and prejudices mitigating against women’s participation in decision making. This includes the publishing field.”
One in a series of perceptive interviews on ABC’s Read African Books pages, this one with Colleen Higgs of Modjaji Books, founded in 2007 “as an independent feminist press that publishes the writings of Southern African women.” Or, as Colleen Higgs puts it – here in conversation with Stephanie Kitchen of the International African Institute – “a tiny publisher that ‘punches above its weight’”. The interview was conducted at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2018, where there was a special focus on African publishing: ‘Programme Lettres d’Afrique: Changing the Narrative’. Higgs speaks highly of the Frankfurt Book Fair and describes it as “a wonderful place to meet small press publishers from Africa and other parts of the world, and is a space to share challenges and come up with solutions.”

Magadza, Moses Meeting Legendary Editor Irene Staunton. Pambazuka News, no. 668. (Posted 06 March 2014)
An interview with Irene Staunton of Weaver Press in Zimbabwe, appropriately described as “a legendary editor”. Jointly with Hugh Lewin, Irene Staunton established Baobab Books in Harare in 1988 (as a division of Academic Books), and quickly developed a highly distinguished and award-winning list of fiction, as well as publishing non-fiction, art books and children’s literature. She left in 1998 to establish a small independent company, Weaver Press https://weaverpresszimbabwe.com/ together with her partner Murray McCartney, publishing books from and about Zimbabwe. Weaver’s growing fiction list now features over eighty Zimbabwean authors, including several international prize-winners, while their short-story anthologies give voice to many younger writers. Its non-fiction list focuses on political and social history, the environment, media issues, and women and children’s rights. Some of their titles are now also available as e-books. In this interview Irene Weaver offers some interesting insights into the current status of reading and writing in Zimbabwe, on author-publisher relationships, and the literary culture in the country. “…a university lecturer recently told me that his literature students do not want to read any of the prescribed titles, let alone read around them; they prefer to pass their exams regurgitating his lecture notes, and that says something about the future of the literary culture in Zimbabwe.” Staunton is also critical of the lack of more positive support for the country’s library services. “Sadly the library service has simply been allowed to decline through lack of support and is another indication of the minimal value attached to books, and the structures that give them a place in society, whether in schools, colleges or the municipality.”

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An interview with Irene Staunton of Weaver Press in Zimbabwe, appropriately described as “a legendary editor”. Jointly with Hugh Lewin, Irene Staunton established Baobab Books in Harare in 1988 (as a division of Academic Books), and quickly developed a highly distinguished and award-winning list of fiction, as well as publishing non-fiction, art books and children’s literature. She left in 1998 to establish a small independent company, Weaver Press https://weaverpresszimbabwe.com/ together with her partner Murray McCartney,
publishing books from and about Zimbabwe. Weaver’s growing fiction list now features over eighty Zimbabwean authors, including several international prize-winners, while their short-story anthologies give voice to many younger writers. Its non-fiction list focuses on political and social history, the environment, media issues, and women and children’s rights. Some of their titles are now also available as e-books. In this interview Irene Weaver offers some interesting insights into the current status of reading and writing in Zimbabwe, on author-publisher relationships, and the literary culture in the country. “…a university lecturer recently told me that his literature students do not want to read any of the prescribed titles, let alone read around them; they prefer to pass their exams regurgitating his lecture notes, and that says something about the future of the literary culture in Zimbabwe.” Staunton is also critical of the lack of more positive support for the country’s library services. “Sadly the library service has simply been allowed to decline through lack of support and is another indication of the minimal value attached to books, and the structures that give them a place in society, whether in schools, colleges or the municipality.”


A wide-ranging ‘chat’ between Johannesburg Review of Books Editor Jennifer Malec and Sarah Ladipo Manyika, the celebrated British-Nigerian writer and professor of literature, during which she talks about her work, her motivation for writing, her fellow writers, and book prizes; and also, among other topics, about the importance of having an African publisher—which gives her the freedom to write stories that might not necessarily appeal to what the West has come to expect from an African author, or from a story with African characters. “So my second book”, she says, “is the story of an older woman who is not the typical immigrant or refugee or anything like that, she’s quite a bourgeois character, and she’s not young, she’s in her seventies. It’s not the kind of story the West has come to expect of an African author, or from a story with African characters. “So my second book”, she says, “is the story of an older woman who is not the typical immigrant or refugee or anything like that, she’s quite a bourgeois character, and she’s not young, she’s in her seventies. It’s not the kind of story the West has come to expect of an African character, whereas my publishers were like, yeah, bring it on. It’s also not the ‘right’ length, novellas are traditionally—and I don’t really understand this—not easy to sell. But Cassava Republic Press were like, no, we love that. And as we’re talking, I’m looking at the book covers and there’s no baobab tree, there’s no sunset.”

Sarah Ladipo Manyika believes Cassava Republic Press and some other African presses, are having a positive knock-on effect, “because I’m now looking at covers and seeing fewer sunsets. And there’s nothing wrong with sunsets, right, but I’m just using that as an analogy for how there’s been little imagination, or there’s been lots of stereotyping or troping of how to represent anything relating to Africa on the page. … When I was trying to publish in England and America, I kept hearing that. … I wanted to read a different kind of story. I was reading stories about war, and lots of male characters, and again, nothing wrong with those stories. I’m not dismissing those stories, but I wanted a different kind of story. And again, this was within the kind of Western perception of stories, all of this is generalisation, I’m not saying everyone thought like this, but there’s definitely this line of thinking that a love story just was not marketable. But then again that’s thinking about a particular audience. When I
was writing this book I didn’t want it just to be the West or even the West at all. So, it was very important for me to have the book out with a Nigerian publisher.”

Note: for another interesting earlier (2018) interview with Sarah Ladipo Manyika, see also this conversation with Raphael Thierry in Warscapes

Dušanka Stojaković is Chairperson of the South African chapter of IBBY and who has worked in publishing for 40 years. She started the Picador Africa imprint, and the Giraffe imprint at Pan Macmillan, but is now with New Africa Books, https://newafricabooks.com/, the company founded in 1971 by Marie Philip and her late husband David, who published some of the great luminaries of African and South African literature, and now also a publisher of children’s books and books for young adults in the eleven official languages of South Africa.

In talking about the processes and challenges of publishing in African languages, Stojaković says “up until recently, the focus has been on publishing books in English, and then translating them into the other ten official languages. With the increase in demand for these books, and interest in books written in some of the other languages of this country, we have moved to cautiously publishing books written in a language other than English. In order to make commercial sense of these projects, all the language versions are printed together, with the greatest number of copies in English. Unfortunately, most parents still see English as the language which will determine the success of the child. … Some of the ‘smaller’ languages hardly sell any copies but given that we are the only publishers who publish in these languages, we try to make the sums work by costing a project across all the language versions. Similarly, there is some demand for our books in the smaller languages, since we are the only publisher with high quality children’s books in these languages. I expect the demand for these languages to increase.”

Addresses the presence of women in knowledge management, publishing, and research dissemination in Africa, and what it means to continually side-line women in academia, and particularly in the field of knowledge production and research dissemination. “In my recent effort to compile a detailed database of scholarly works in East Swahili and Anglophone Africa”, the author says, “I was dismayed to see how few women were listed as editorial managers, Editors-in-chief, or even on the editorial boards of journals and other publishers. Yet we know, from research and our own academic experience, that qualified and ambitious women are definitely not in short supply.” He argues that patriarchy is deeply entrenched in many cultures and communities around the world: “Many communities in Africa, for instance, consider the man as the head of the house. This culture obviously perpetuates patriarchy and subordination of women which in turn finds its way to the higher institution of learning. While generally many women in many African societies face widespread poverty, sexism, and heavy labour burdens, they are still denied access to education right from elementary school, which continues to grow across the education system, yet, often, it is one
of the ways out of poverty. Further, because of these marginalisation’s and exclusions, leadership positions in higher institutions of learning are dominated by men, while women are pushed to subordinate positions. This is evident even in leadership roles of knowledge production and research dissemination.”

Mwesigire, Bwesigye bwa **FEMRITE’s Hilda Twongyeirwe: We are More than a Feminist Publisher.**
http://thisisafrica.me/lifestyle/femrites-hilda-twongyeirwe-feminist-publisher/  
(Posted 18 February 2015) [01/06/21]

An interview with the current executive of FEMRITE, the Uganda Women Writers Association http://www.femriteug.org/, a community of women writers from Uganda, nurturing each other to write novels, short stories, poetry, children’s books and real/true life stories, and also undertaking training for publishing. Since its founding, FEMRITE has published a substantial number of titles, and continues to promote Ugandan and African women writing through various activities.

Obi-Young, Otosirieze **Nigerian Literature Needed Editors. Two Women Stepped in to Groom Them.** https://opencountrymag.com/nigerian-literature-needed-editors-two-women-stepped-in-to-groom-them/ [21/05/21]

Reports about the founding of the Society of Book and Magazine Editors of Nigeria (SBMEN) https://sbmen.org.ng/, where two women publishers, Anwuli Ojogwu of Narrative Landscape Press https://narrativelandcape.com/ and Enajite Efemuaye, formerly of Kachifo Publishers, are seeking to lay a solid foundation for the future in building capacity and cultivate skills for new editors. In December 2017 the two women sat down and decided to co-found an organization to coach young editors. The following year SBMEN was formed, partly modelled on the UK’s Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP) https://www.ciep.uk/. The new association “aims to serve as a standards-setting organization by promoting editorial excellence and professionalism in the industry through guidance in global best practices and knowledge partnerships with experts from around the world.” It provides training and resources, performance assessment activities, advisory services, hosts networking events and offers a directory with job listings, all designed to increase proficiency in editing, and advance the careers and businesses of members. The organization currently also holds four classes a year on editing fiction, nonfiction, magazines, and work on online platforms.

Padda, Jatinder **Interview with Vangile Gantsho.**
http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/interview-with-vangile-gantsho (Posted 01 March 2019) [28/05/21]

Vangile Gantsho is a poet, cultural activist and co-founder with Sarah Godsell of Imepho Press http://www.imephoppress.co.za/, a Pan Africanist “intersectional-feminist publishing house committed to the sincere telling of African and international stories, celebrating both the fragility and resilience of human experience.” In this interview she describes her motivation for setting up the imprint, the ethos behind the press, and what influences her work in both the poetry she writes and her vision for Imepho (which takes its name from an indigenous species of wild chamomile found in Southern Africa): “African poetry has always been a great vehicle for dismantling colonial languages while celebrating indigenous languages and embracing the fluidity between the stories from our grandmothers and the

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Page 398
lessons from our school teachers. … Not only are we, as South Africans, catching up, we are also showing ourselves to be deserving of some field time.”

An interview with the joint founders of Dryad Press https://dryadpress.co.za/, an imprint dedicated to South African poetry. The press is a literary collaboration between two poets, Michèle Betty and Joan Hambidge. Michèle Betty is the editor of New Contrast: The South African Literary Journal http://www.newcontrast.net/ (South Africa’s oldest surviving literary journal), while Joan Hambidge is a professor in Creative Writing at the University of Cape Town, an award-winning poet, novelist, critic and author of several poetry collections. Here they talk about their motivation to establish Dryad Press, the current poetry scene in South Africa (of both writing in Afrikaans and in English), the nature of submissions they receive, and the main topics and issues that are constantly being grappled with by South African poets.

A series of profiles and conversations with three of South Africa’s “most vibrant women publishers”, who have each made a unique and valuable contribution to the South African publishing industry: They are Alison Lowry https://alisonlowry.co.za/, formerly with OUP South Africa, Lowry Publishers, and Penguin Books SA in later years, before she became an independent publishing consultant, editor and writer; Thabiso Mahlape, https://blackbirdbooks.africa/about-us/ founder of BlackBird Books, the imprint, incubated by Jacana Media, that provides a platform and a publishing home to both new voices and the existing generation of black writers and narratives; and author and journalist Zukiswa Wanner, https://paivapo.africa/, the co-founder (with Nomavuso Vokwana) of Paivapo Publishers the imprint, established in 2018, that stemmed from a desire to create greater access to literatures from Africa and its diasporas.

As part of a PhD project, the author was interviewing Managing Directors and senior staff at publishing companies, asking about the key issues currently facing their businesses. Here she dwells on the contrasts in structure and scale of the large educational publishing houses with Nigerian contemporary fiction publishers such as Farafina, Cassava Republic and Parrésia, a new generation of African publishers which face significant challenges of limited capacity and reach, but their lean structures also mean “that they are amongst the most nimble, creative and experimental publishers operating anywhere in the world.” Many of the differences between these two different faces of African publishing were highlighted by a project the author was involved in coordinating for Ankara Press http://www.ankarapress.com/. Shercliff
and Ankara Publisher Bibi Bakare-Yusuf asked seven well-known African literary authors to write a short romance story (between 300-1000 words), which would be translated and recorded in different African languages, collated into a pdf anthology and released on the Ankara Press website in digital format in February 2015. Shercliff says “creating a literary product, in digital format, for a predominantly African audience allows a publisher a freedom that would be impossible for the more traditional, large educational publishers”, and explores the reason why she believes that to be the case.


Ankara Press http://www.ankarapress.com/ is a new romance imprint published by Nigerian publishing house Cassava Republic Press, the imprint launched in December 2014 with six new titles, set in locations in Nigeria, South Africa and the UK. In this interview Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, co-founder and publishing director of Cassava Republic Press, talks about the processes and challenges of creating romance for the African market. It was launched as a digital imprint, and when asked about the reasons behind that decision, Bakare-Yusuf says it because of the ease of distribution. “It’s an African imprint so we wanted to ensure we could reach African readers across the continent and in the Diaspora, as well as in Nigeria. There is an immediacy about publishing digitally – readers all over the globe can have access to the stories on the day of launch. And a digital imprint solves many of the distribution bottlenecks we have experienced with Cassava Republic.”


An interview with the founder of Modjaji Books http://www.modjajibooks.co.za/, an independent feminist press that publishes southern African women writers, and aims to fills a gap by providing a platform for serious and ground-breaking writing by new and established women writers “with brave voices.” Modjaji have also built up a strong list in the poetry sector, and Colleen Higgs talks about the challenges of publishing poetry and dealing with a very substantial number of poetry submissions they receive each year, so many in fact that they have had to suspend considering further submissions, temporarily at least.

Pre-print version (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/44277446/Women_in_African_Publishing_and_the_Book_Trade__A_Series_of_Profiles [21/05/21]

Profiles a group of women who have made notable achievements and impacts on the book sector in Africa: in publishing and the book trade, in different roles and positions: Women who have headed publishing companies, have held senior editorial or management positions, or have set up their own imprint; who have come to publishing from different routes and have been actively engaged in a variety of publishing enterprises: commercial, scholarly, and otherwise, including non-profit, community publishing, feminist publishing, and publishing
for social change. A kind of mini who’s who, the profiles are intended to be a showcase of the variety, richness and energy of women involved in book publishing and the book trade in Africa today, as well some of the women who have made significant contributions to the African book sector in the past. This initial series of profiles focuses on 24 women in publishing in nine countries in English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, and includes links to articles about, and interviews and conversations with them, as well as select bibliographies of articles or books written by them.


Part IV: OTHER RESOURCES

Publisher histories and profiles
See also ➔ Women in African publishing/Publishing for and by women

African Books Collective (ABC), https://www.africanbookscollective.com/, the African owned and governed worldwide marketing and distribution organization for books from Africa celebrated its 30th year of trading in 2020, during which time it successfully transitioned from a donor-dependent NGO to a self-sustaining and independent social enterprise. To celebrate the occasion, Africa in Words, https://africainwords.com/about-africa-in-words/about/ a blog that focuses on cultural production and Africa, published a series of insightful profiles and interviews with small independent African publishers, “shining a spotlight on those who make up ABC today”. The interviews (all recorded in 2020 or 2021) are as follows:

Q&A: Words on the Times – Irene Staunton of Weaver Press [Zimbabwe]

Q&A: Words on the Times – Elma Shaw of Cotton Tree Press [Liberia]

Q&A: Words on the Times – Fay Gadsden of Gadsden Publishers [Zambia]

Q&A: Words on the Times – Menzi Thango of Bhiyoza Publishers [South Africa]


Q&A: Words on the Times – Francis Nyamnjoh and Kathryn Toure from Langaa RPCIG [Cameroon]
Q&A: Words on the Times Nick Mulgrew, Uhlanga Press [South Africa]

BBC World Service ‘Witness History’ Kenya’s Pioneering Publisher.
https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3cszmnd (Audio, 8:59mins) [22/05/21]

Kenyan veteran publisher Henry Chakava has been described as the ‘Godfather of African publishing’. He became Kenya’s first African book editor in 1972, when there were virtually no books or educational material published in African languages. In this conversation on the BBC ‘Witness History’ series he tells Rebecca Kesby “why he devoted his life to preserving and enriching the region’s languages, and why he believes even more must be done to make sure they survive and thrive in the future.”

Currey, James Literary Publishing After Nigerian Independence: Mbari as Celebration.
Research in African Literatures 44, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 8-16.
https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrilite.44.2.8

The Mbari Club in Ibadan, convened by Ulli Beier and Wole Soyinka together with the South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele, was established in 1961. Mbari’s publication of books grew largely out of work sent in by contributors to the journal Black Orpheus (founded earlier by Beier). Christopher Okigbo was named as editor of Mbari while Beier was primarily active in facilitating drama, art exhibits, and sculpture at the Club. The premises were an old Lebanese nightclub that was converted into an open-air performance venue, an art gallery, a library, and an office. The Mbari list of seventeen titles, from West African countries and South Africa, as well as Nigeria, seemed to give hope that independent Nigeria would be the new centre for the publishing of plays, novels, and poetry by African writers. However, “Mbari was faced with a daunting challenge: a Nigerian publisher of literary work could not afford to reach the market throughout English-speaking Africa and the Commonwealth.”

This perceptive account, drawing on the author’s personal experience working in African literary publishing and alongside a range of published sources, examines publishing by Mbari and the involvement of British publishers across the decade, as individual editors persuaded their colleagues to buy international rights to new work from Nigeria. The article demonstrates how, in the early years of the sixties, young Nigerian writers and sympathetic British publishers had a vision of Nigeria as a new publishing centre for literary publishing, certainly for Western Africa and even for the whole of the continent. “We were all slow to grasp the realities of neo-colonialism. Mbari was a revelation of the way in which Africans could write. As always, it was easy to print books, the problems came in distributing and selling them, even in Nigeria itself. All shipping routes led to London. Intra-African trade had hardly begun and the well-organized British educational publishers took over. The best of them did get African writers known beyond their own countries and across the English-speaking world.”
http://www.praxismagonline.com/farafina-books/ (Posted 26 February 2016) [08/06/21]
Nigerian publisher Eghosa Imasuen of Kachifo Ltd http://kachifo.com/home/ (and its Farafina Books imprint) talks about establishing cordial relationships between young unpublished writers and their prospective publishers, their editorial and submissions policies, and the challenges and vagaries of the publishing business in Africa. “This industry is recovering from near-death. And there really is no arbiter of what makes it to the market. So there is a din in the market, a multiplicity of voices. The market will decide, and those who are left will improve. There is no process to this. Those who do good work will continue to do so, and the books will improve.”

http://www.praxismagonline.com/parresia-books/ (Posted 07 March 2016) [08/06/21]
An interview with Richard Ali, Chief Operating Officer at Parrésia Publishers http://parresia.com.ng/ in Nigeria, in which he shares his opinion on the state of publishing in Africa and talks about the high costs of producing books, the need for the highest standards of production quality, the challenges of distribution, and how to improve relations between writers and publishers.

Su’eddie Vershima Agema is founder and Chief Executive Officer of Sevhage Publishers https://sevhage.wordpress.com/ in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria (and see also https://sevhagereviews.wordpress.com/). In this interview he speaks to Praxis Magazine about the steep price of African-published books as a result of high manufacturing costs, and reading habits in Nigeria (or the lack of it). He also talks about author-publisher relations and fair dealing with writers, the need for high editorial and production quality standards, and effective marketing strategies.

http://www.praxismagonline.com/amalion-publishing/ (Posted 10 March 2016) [08/06/21]
Sulaiman Adebowale is the director of Amalion Publishing http://www.amalion.net/en/, a Pan-African publishing house based in Dakar, Senegal, producing books both in French and in English, and publishing authors from many parts of the continent as well as the diaspora and elsewhere. In this interview he talks about the challenges facing African publishers, the harsh realities of the economics of publishing, new approaches of promoting writers and their books, his views on self-publishing, and about the digital engagement with readers. Adebowale disputes the still common notion that most African books are poorly produced: “I don’t know any publisher on the continent or outside who will deliberately set out to produce anything but excellent books. The more money and time you have to put into the production processes, the better the end result. But the money invested means you may have to print more copies to sell, and more money to market and distribute in order to even think of breaking even.” And, he asks, just how much are readers willing to pay to buy books, whether regularly or even just occasionally?
On self-publishing, he says some authors have been successfully doing this, but most have not, just as much as some publishing ventures have been successful, while others have failed. “It is the way of the world. Specifically for the African book market, the rarity of successful self-published books could be one of the reasons why we are having this discussion in the first place. The writers have yet to come up with better published and marketed titles on their own.” There is plethora of platforms and social media outlets for African writers to express themselves and get their work published and shared, but “how does a writer get noticed in this avalanche of writings online? How do you make your literature stand out from the drivel of writings out there?”

On the digital side and e-books, Adebowale says that there are now several publishers on the continent active in this area but “the key question is still on the market and the earnings, when will this side be a good ROI [Return-on-Investment]? If the e-commerce platforms develop further in most African countries and not just a few, there can be better leverage there. And we can also think of doing something much more interesting and engaging with e-books rather than simply just selling the plain vanilla e-pub and Kindle files. Secondly, most publishers still have work to do about creating content for mobile phones, which is the dominant digital platform in our part of the world.”

Emelife, Jennifer On Publishing Business in Africa: Louise Umutoni. http://www.praxismagonline.com/huzapress/ (Posted 26 February 2016) [08/06/21]. Jennifer Emelife speaks with Louise Umutoni, founder and director at Huza Press http://huzapress.com/, a Rwanda-based publishing house committed to developing quality creative writing, and the growth of the creative industry through the publishing and distribution of contemporary African writing. She talks about the challenges of distribution within Africa, utilization of the Internet as distribution platforms, the promise of e-books, and the lack of online payment systems. “Our goal at Huza Press is to work with at least one publishing house in every region to either republish for us, or serve as a distribution point for our books. E-publishing is another solution that some publishers are looking at, but lack of online payment systems pose a hindrance to this ....We don’t have reliable online payment systems and mobile money is not cross-cutting. There are a few platforms that have been set up to sell African content such as Nuntu http://nuntu.hehelabs.com/, but they are still grappling with creating a reliable payment system. I think that once we address the payment system issue then we will start to see a lot more use of the Internet as a distribution platform.”


Note: see also this obituary of Jonathan Ball at https://www.thebookseller.com/insight/obituary-jonathan-ball-1254558
Kanis, Liesbeth Nonkululeko *Reaching for the Stars with a Spear: Interview with Tanzanian Publisher Walter Bgoya.*  

In 2021 Mkuki na Nyota Publishers https://mkukinanyota.com/ in Dar es Salaam celebrated its 40th anniversary as an independent and now leading Tanzanian publishing house established in 1991. This is an insightful interview and portrait of the founder of the company Walter Bgoya, who was formerly General Manager of the state-owned Tanzania Publishing House, before launching his own company.

On the ongoing debate about print vs digital books, this is what he says: “In Africa printed books and the publishers that make them available are indispensable. Problems of electricity, not only in rural areas, but in urban poor areas mean that the leapfrogging into the digital age and bypassing the print book that is being touted by international and local NGOs, and even ministries of education is not a viable alternative. High speed internet and broadband are not available or are unaffordable. All the discussions and debates about this issue do not even consider the language problem. To believe that English, French and Portuguese are the languages through which knowledge will be transmitted to the majority of our people is a colonial hangover.” Knowledge creation and production”, Bgoya says, “must be in languages that people understand. “It is only African publishers who are best placed to publish in African languages, for reasons that are self-evident. They know the languages and they know that it is to their advantage to become relevant to the majority of their people. It is ultimately better business.”

[04/06/21]

Also at https://stsinfrastructures.org/content/vita-books-publishing-against-imperialism-interview-shiraz-durrani-and-kimani-waweru

Vita Books (now distributed worldwide by African Books Collective) was established as a progressive/radical publisher over 30 years ago, moving from London to Kenya in 2016. Since its move it has continued to publish material meeting its principal aim of making progressive, alternative ideas and experiences available to working people. In this long but interesting and insightful conversation with Stephanie Kitchen of the International African Institute, Shiraz Durrani and Kimani Waweru talk about their most notable achievements over the years, their network of authors and activists and the range of their list; their views on general non-fiction publishing in Kenya (i.e. as distinct from school textbook publishing), the audience and readership of their books, as well as providing some examples of progressive book and library initiatives in Kenya in times past. Durrani says “Vita Books is not a traditional publisher but an activist organisation involved in progressive information, communication and publishing activities in the interest, not of profit, but of a free flow of relevant, alternative information for social and political transformation in the ‘neo-colonised’ world.”

Kwara State University Press http://www.kwasu.edu.ng/kwasupress/ is a recently established university press in the middle belt of Nigeria. Here Stephanie Kitchen of the International African Institute is in conversation with its (former) Director, and asks him what was the motivation to establish the press, what is its initial list (now distributed by African Books Collective) and subject focus, what is its commissioning/acquisitions strategy, and whether KWASU Press plans to establish partnerships – and co-publishing ventures – with other academics presses in Africa and beyond. Professor Solihu also talks about the considerable challenges of marketing and distribution their books within Nigeria, and seeking sales from Nigerian university libraries. Another topic discussed is that of the issue of publishing in conventional print format vs. digital e-books.

On the wider picture, relating to the function and role of university presses in Nigeria today, Solihu says “when the university press competes with other big publishing houses in order to make money as others do, or when it is pressurized by the university authority to generate monetary profits, which has been the case with many Nigerian university presses nowadays, it often loses its academic and scholarly rigour. Partly due to such financial constraints and the demand to be self-sustained, many university presses have ceased to be publishing presses and have become printing presses. This type of press could well publish almost anything as long as the author is ready to pay the cost. … We must uphold the integrity and restore confidence in the university press. The primary responsibility of the university press should be to produce and disseminate knowledge of all kinds. Its return might be in terms of the money it makes through book sales, or more frequently in terms of the university profile and image it helps to build as a citadel of knowledge production and dissemination.”

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Elements series), 2021. 93 pp. (Print and ebook)

In many parts of the world, oppositional publishing has emerged in contexts of state oppression. In South Africa, censorship laws were enacted in the 1960s, and the next decade saw increased pressure on freedom of speech and publishing. With growing restrictions on information, activist publishing emerged. This insightful case study scrutinises the history of the most vocal and arguably the most radical of this group, Ravan Press. Using extensive archival material, interviews and the books themselves, it examines what the history of Ravan Press reveals about the role of oppositional print culture.

Investigates the contribution made to knowledge production and scholarly publishing by South Africa’s oldest university press during different phases in its long history, and frequently through difficult economic times. More specifically, Elizabeth le Roux examines the Press’s reputation as a ‘progressive’ or ‘oppositional’ publisher, but finds that during the period of the 1960s to the mid-1980s, and on the basis of an analysis of the actual publications produced under the imprint of the Press during the apartheid years, that reputation was not merited; and the Press evaded confrontation with the repressive apartheid state, or even colluded with it. Compared with more radical, independent, and oppositional South African publishers such as Ravan Press, David Philip, Ad Donker, or Skotaville Publishers, it only played a minor role. As a result, radical academics at Wits chose publishing platforms outside the university to air their views. “On the basis of the actual publishing output, it is shown that the press should not be considered oppositional, in part because it operated within the constraints of a publicly funded institution of higher education (its academic context), and in part because it did not resist the censorship regime of the government (the state context).” Wits University Press did not rethink its ‘proper’ role of a university press until the apartheid period was nearly over, and policy shifts towards more progressive publishing, and becoming more politically engaged, only became evident as from the beginning of the 1990s.


Print culture came to South Africa with the Dutch East India Company, followed by the British colonisers. This influence persisted after colonisation officially ended, with the Union of South Africa in 1910. Many early publishers and booksellers were immigrants, especially Dutch immigrants. While the settlers were Dutch, many lent their support to Afrikaner nationalist causes. Illustrated with archival photographs, this article considers the implications of the colonial influence for the development of South African print culture, using a case study of Van Schaik Publishers, which was founded by a Dutch Immigrant, J.L. van Schaik, in 1914. Attention is paid to the question of how this early publisher saw its role in developing an ‘imagined community’ that engaged both with the culture of the coloniser and that of the developing settler colony. The author argues that Van Schaik played a significant role in the development of Afrikaans publishing, but that little scholarly attention has been paid to his publishing philosophy and strategy. “Van Schaik developed a highly successful business as both a bookseller and a publisher, largely thanks to print networks that already existed between South Africa and Europe, which he in turn further developed. The records suggest that Van Schaik was successful owing to both his ability to develop networks through the associations of family and political sympathies, and his attention to the details of his business. It is clear that Van Schaik gained an early understanding of the local market and tapped into a growing Afrikaner nationalist spirit, which was facilitated by acceptance into a fairly elite, professional network. It is difficult to disentangle business motives from the ideological motivation associated with the promotion of Afrikaans. … An examination of Van Schaik’s publishing philosophy and list shows that such early publishers played an important role in developing an ‘imagined community’, especially within the nascent Afrikaans community.”


Interview with David Maillu, a popular writer in East Africa who also worked in television as an actor and as a graphic artist before setting up the publishing house Comb Books (now African Comb Books Ltd https://africancombbooks.com/about-us/). In this conversation with Bernth Lindfors Maillu describes how he began writing and how he got involved in publishing.


Nick Mulgrew discusses the poetry publishing scene in South Africa and the birth of his poetry press, uHlanga http://uhlangapress.co.za/ that seeks to open doors for young poets to develop their careers, and specializes in publishing debut anthologies from the country’s most promising young poets. Like other forms of literature locally, poetry is in the doldrums, Mulgrew says, and with a few exceptions, “commercial publishers don’t do poetry, really. Few publish it, and even fewer publish it if it’s not to do with textbooks or the school market.” He hopes that his small new press will contribute to “make the literary industry in South Africa more equitable, more accessible and more interesting than it currently is.” uHlanga publications are now available from the Oxford-based African Books Collective.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjA4WQmlXn0 (Video recording, 1.27:15mins)

Set within a wider discussion on African publishing in the knowledge production ecosystem this was a Zoom event to celebrate forty years of Tanzanian publisher Mkuki na Nyota https://mkukinanyota.com/ widely recognized as one of Africa’s most progressive publishers. It washosted in partnership with TORCH (University of Oxford), African Studies Centre (University of Oxford), African Books Collective https://www.africanbookscollective.com/, INASP, Carleton University Institute of African Studies and the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria. Held on 2 December 2021, speakers included Issa Shivji, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Chambi Chachage, Mary Jay, Mkuki Bgoya, and Walter Bgoya himself.

Padda, Jatinder Interview with Nick Mulgrew, uHlanga.  
http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/interview-with-nick-mulgrew-uhlanga  
(Posted 10 May 2019) [04/06/21]

A conversation with the founder of uHlanga http://uhlangapress.co.za/, a small poetry press based in Cape Town committed to publishing new, experimental and classic works of Southern African poetry. Initially established in 2014 as an annual magazine of poetry from KwaZulu-Natal, uHlanga now focuses on publishing full collections and curated anthologies. In this insightful interview Nick Mulgrew talks about his motivation to set up a poetry press, the variety of submissions they receive, the challenges and the opportunities of publishing in languages other than English, the global markets for South African poetry, and more. How
does he entice both new and established poets to publish with uHlanga? “Frankly”, he says, “I think just existing as a poetry publisher in southern Africa is enough of an enticement for many people. There are always way more poets than avenues for publication, especially in print, and double especially in good-looking print. But, to answer in a less stuck-up way, I try to be open with my authors. Each book is a partnership, and a personal relationship. I think that counts for something.”


Robert Berold is a South African poet, author of four books of poetry and four books of non-fiction, and former editor of New Coin, one of South Africa’s most established and influential poetry journals. He is also a publisher, his press Deep South https://www.deepsouth.co.za/ was started in 1996, together with his friend Paul Wessels. Its principal aim is to publish what is considered to be innovative and risk-taking South African poetry, regardless of market prospects. It has published over 30 books thus far, mostly poetry, but also some novels. This an insightful conversation between Tom Penfold and Robert Berold, talking about poetry and publishing in South Africa, how did his press Deep South https://www.deepsouth.co.za/ come about, and what were the aims in establishing it as press. Publishing risky innovative work hasn’t been that difficult, Berold says “because I am not looking to sales to carry the costs. Getting most readers to recognise the quality of the work is something else. It doesn’t help that there is hardly any critical dialogue in SA poetry, just variations of publicity and the myopic certainties of identity politics. Ultimately, I can only publish work I feel to be engaging and moving. … I know that some poets will have very limited sales because they will be considered difficult or confrontational – but I don’t mind. I try to take a long view, publishing books that I think people will still read in 20 (or 50) years time. There aren’t too many manuscripts like that.”

Note: Outside South Africa, Deep South books are distributed by the Oxford-based African Books Collective, and a further profile of Robert Berold can be found here. https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/robert-berold/.


RFI’s Laura Angela Bagnetto speaks to the founder and head of Amalion Publishing, Sulaiman Adebowale. His Dakar, Senegal-based publishing house http://www.amalion.net/en/ aims to reach across Africa’s colonial language divide to foster discussion by publishing academic texts and novels in both French and English. Adebowale explains Amalion’s multilingual path, and the decision to work across languages, as a condition predicated on the situation of the continent. In order to broaden knowledge and understanding of Africa, discussions on Africa cannot be monolingual because the continent and its peoples are not: “We cannot restrict ourselves to the phony boundaries of Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone, Arabophone Africa. If you don’t work across the languages, you will end up losing the interesting stuff.”
A profile of Dakar-based Amalion Publishing http://www.amalion.net/en/ founded in 2009 by Sulaiman Adebowale, an enterprising small independent publishing house that has developed a diverse list of scholarly monographs in the social sciences, as well as literary writing and poetry. Its aim is to “promote a broader understanding of Africa and its people by providing a platform for authors to express new, alternative and daring perspectives and views on people, places, events, and issues shaping our world.” Unusually, Amalion publishes both in English and in French and distributes its books across the African continent, as well as through marketing outlets in Europe and in North America.

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/the-african-writers-handbook
The late Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941–1995) was a high-profile Nigerian writer, television producer, and environmental activist, as well as an enterprising and innovative African publisher. On 10 November 1995, he was summarily and callously executed on the orders of the [then] Nigerian junta despite pleas from world leaders to save his life. This article was submitted to The African Book Publishing Record (ABPR) as a provisional version in 1992, but he never managed to expand it, as had been his wish. It was published posthumously by ABPR with only minor editorial changes, and as a tribute to Ken Saro-Wiwa. It provides an account of his school days as the scribe of school magazines, his first steps on “the painful path of self-publishing”, and the setting up a “do-it-yourself operation” that became known as Saros International Publishers distributed outside Nigeria by African Books Collective

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316711422 ¶ [28/05/21]
The Mbadi Artists’ and Writers’ Club was established in Ibadan in 1961 as a hub for writers, artists and intellectuals, and its initial members included Ulli Beier, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J.P. Clark, and the South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele, among others. In addition to a variety of cultural activities, and staging theatre productions, it acted as a publishing house and published the early works of many African writers who are now icons of African literature, as well as being involved in the publication of the literary and cultural journal Black Orpheus. Together with Onibonoje Press & Book Industries Ltd, Mbari was among the very first indigenous publishers in Africa, and enjoyed a good measure of success. As Nathan Suhr-Sytsma points out, “the historical irony is that as the Mbari writers sought to escape the orbit of the colonial university, the local publication venues to which they turned were surreptitiously funded by another global power: the United States. Both Black Orpheus and Mbari Publications unwittingly received substantial monies from the Central
Intelligence Agency through grants from the Congress of Cultural Freedom (CCF).” However, the author’s own interest “is not so much in unveiling how these writers were ‘co-opt[ed]’ by the CCF, as some recent work has tried to do, but in questioning the assumption that people can do valuable cultural work only when free from determination.” And that, despite the covert funding, it could be argued that the Mbari writers strategically used the support of the CCF to “advance their own striking visions of the world.” So, was the joke on the writers or on the CIA? “Much as the CIA may have liked to produce an African intelligentsia that uniformly welcomed American interests, its cultural initiatives often had the effect of reinforcing the de-facto independence of the institutions and individuals it supported.”

While the CIA underwrote, however covertly and indirectly, the artistic and literary flourishing associated with Mbari, the author concludes, “neither the world literature paradigm of writers who transcend their nations of origin, nor a countervailing emphasis on ‘authentic subjectivity’ quite captures the Mbari writers’ Nigerian-based, but non-nativist position, or the capacity they enjoyed through Mbari Publications to engage local, national, pan-African, and transatlantic publics. To observe, in turn, that this nonmetropolitan publisher was as embedded in compromise and controversy as its metropolitan counterparts ought to heighten, rather than detract from, the interest of the remarkable work it fostered.”

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972021000486 ¶
This extensive article explores book publishing in Tanzania through the history of two pioneering publishing houses “and the charismatic man behind them”, Walter Bgoya, former General Manager of the Tanzania Publishing House (1972-1990), who pioneered an independent publishing model in founding Mkuki na Nyota Publishers Ltd in 1991. Bgoya has also written extensively on many aspects and issues relating to publishing and book development in Africa.

The author states that “this article represents the first scholarly attempt to put these two bodies of work in conversation, in that it brings together a focus on Walter Bgoya as a cultural innovator … the books he has helped conceive, and produce, the ‘habits and dispositions surrounding them’ and the obstacles faced by a publisher from ‘the neglected’. In so doing, I reconstruct and recount Bgoya’s intellectual formation, aspirations and motivations to work in an exacting sector, while simultaneously investigating the inner workings of two leading publishing houses and the consequences of austerity measures on book production and dissemination in postcolonial Tanzania. I examine these themes using the framework of resilience as an analytical tool through which we can grasp how Bgoya has responded to the
challenges engendered by state policies (or the lack thereof) and the shifting world order. … Bgoya’s resilience is charted through the lens of microhistory, an epistemologically fruitful historiographical perspective (neither a school of thought nor an orthodoxy) that has sometimes been misunderstood: the small scale was once discarded as ‘a trap’. Yet, reducing the scale and considering apparently insignificant facts and individuals’ idiosyncratic social relations allows us to grasp continuities and clues that can generate – not automatically, and not by analogy, but by anomaly … With this theoretical backdrop in place, I aim to demonstrate how concrete and intimate details about two publishing houses and the man behind them – i.e. the ‘micro’ dimensions (publishing model, individual choices, the social relations around them, entities constraining publishing) – are connected to the ‘macro’ national and the man behind them.”

Note: A shorter version, Story of an Independent Tanzanian Publisher who Held Out Against the Tide at https://theconversation.com/the-story-of-an-independent-tanzanian-publisher-who-held-out-against-the-tide-168105

Also at https://www.academia.edu/34784471/Interview_with_Bankole_Olayebi_Bookcraft
An insightful interview with Nigerian publisher Bankole Olayebi of Bookcraft Ltd http://bookcraftafrica.com/index.php. Established over twenty years ago, the company has published a large number of high-quality titles in a diverse range of subjects, including art, biography, history, literature, politics, current affairs, as well as general trade books and large format coffee table titles. Olayebi talks about the challenges of the book industry in Nigeria, challenges which have become ever more acute in recent years. One of them is the dearth of qualified and well-trained, publishing professionals (designers, editors, proof readers, book packagers, and others) “who understand how the book business should work. It seems to me that over the years regrettable, not enough time and effort has been invested in the training of publishing professionals. The result is that today, it has become very difficult to find the right people to fill various roles; and it’s not very easy to find people to train for these roles.” Bookcraft is now actively involved in e-book publishing, but Olayebi says “I do not see e-books completely supplanting print book, anytime in the immediate future. I believe that print, or physical books will always be with us. Even in the US and in Europe, the advent of the e-book has not resulted in the death of the print book, as some people were so quick to predict, a few years ago! To paraphrase Mark Twain, ’reports of the death of the print book have been grossly exaggerated’.”

Publishing in Nigeria is in crisis, and efforts to strengthen the Nigerian book industry is going to require the involvement or contribution of the entire gamut of stakeholders – government, the private sector, academic institutions NGOs, philanthropists even – in order to put the industry back on its feet. It seems to me, Olayebi says, “that we have got to start from scratch and build the industry back. There’s no question that the book industry as a whole has suffered a number of setbacks in the last couple of decades; some of this self-inflicted, in my opinion. And this is because not enough has been put back, especially by those in the industry, in terms of investment in human, financial resources, infrastructure, etc., to properly grow the industry.”
Also at (freely accessible) https://www.academia.edu/34941205/Interview_with_Gbenro_Adegbola_First_Veritas
A further interview in the Borders Literature Online series of interviews with members of the African book professions. Here Olatoun Williams is in conversation with Nigerian publisher and digital entrepreneur Gbenro Adegbola of First Veritas http://1stveritas.com/, in which he talks about his background, how he got into publishing, the digital vs. print debate, developing digital content, the need to invest in publishing training and education, the major challenges facing the Nigerian book industries and the main threats to the industry, with the menace of piracy high up on the list. Another major hurdle, he says, is access to funding and credit: “I find that the financial industry is blissfully ignorant of what we do. They don’t understand it. They confuse it with printing and that has affected access to credit. In fairness to them, the role of the publisher is not so obvious. The understanding of what publishing constitutes how publishers make money - you find that a lot of people don’t understand it.”

One major challenge for the book industries, Adegbola says, is the current dearth of training opportunities and professional development courses: “The industry can’t go into universities and tell them to set up publishing courses. What is needed is for the self-help courses organised by the industry to be strengthened and expanded initially. And individual companies should invest more in training, possibly overseas training as well. The traditional excuse is that if you train someone, there is no guarantee they will stay. My position is that the experience will not leave the industry. It remains in it even if they don’t stay with your company. So people have to take an industry-wide attitude.”

A conversation with Hans Zell, albeit assigned a somewhat confusing title by the Nigerian Guardian. This interview is not just about the activities of book donation organizations, but is a wide-ranging interview, in which he talks about his time in Nigeria in the 1970s; the establishment of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa (of which he was its Secretary for a period of time) and its significance; the founding and early years of African Books Collective https://www.africanbookscollective.com/ the global marketing and distribution platform for African books. He also reminisces about the establishment of the Hans Zell Publishers imprint and its development as a leading publisher of African studies reference resources; as well as offering his views on the topic of the sometimes-strained author-publisher relations in an African context.
Note: First published as Interview with Hans Zell at https://bordersliteratureonline.net/Book_Trade_Interviews, but removed/withdrawn in 2020 for undisclosed reasons, and it is no longer accessible on that site.
Education for publishing/Book industry training


This useful survey “looked into the availability of three models of publishing training, namely: Formal University Publishing Training, Short Publishing Training and Workshop especially organized by the publishers’ association. It also looked into the expected training needs from the various African countries. This survey involved 31 African countries out of 42 sampled. The questionnaire mainly targeted the Presidents or Executive Secretaries of the various National Publishers’ Association.” It argues that “lack of training for publishers is highly evidenced in the kind of books some publishers publish. Indeed, publishers are increasing in Africa and most of them have not undergone any formal publishing training because of factors which include unavailability of universities offering publishing programmes or training centres in their countries; lack of short publishing courses or even workshops.” The survey also notes that “all the countries have their expected training needs. Though most of them have similar training needs, but the dominating ones are Electronic/Digital Publishing; and Book Marketing and Sales. Many publishers need adequate knowledge on electronic publishing; available e-book stores and some find it difficult publishing and selling their books online. The publishers’ associations play pivotal role in organising workshops and short training programmes and can also make proposals to universities for the creation and development of formal training with the support of APNET and other organisations.” Concludes with a series of recommendations on the way forward.


The African Publishing Institute of the African Publishers Network), in collaboration with national book trade associations, operates an integrated pan-African training programme for the African book professions. It conducted short, intensive courses, trains trainers, and places people on periods of attachments with publishers in various parts of the continent. This booklet reviews the nature of the training programmes, the courses and workshops conducted over a period of ten years, and also includes a complete list of participants of all courses run between 1995 and 2001.


Since 2000, the University of Pretoria has hosted a Bachelor of Information Science with a programme specializing in publishing. Over the years the programme has benefitted from a shifting staff with various areas of expertise, and for the past ten years has included a module focussing specifically on digital publishing. As traditional publishing becomes more digitized, the responsibilities of its professionals become increasingly distributed. This is especially true in situations where copy editors are required to work within a mark-up (increasingly XML)
In developing the curriculum, the author says, “we have shaped our teaching of editorial practice to consistently reinforce the underlying structure of a publication, as inferred from the technology and practices of a production department. As such, the philosophy of creating a publication from an informed structural perspective has become one of our key driving concepts reinforced over the course of several modules in our degree and continuing professional development programmes.” In his conclusion, the author suggests: “With all the possibilities that information technology brings to modern publishing, structural editing seems to be a valuable if not an inevitable way of working.” Publishing successfully in the new digital context “requires that we train editors who are capable of working in a digital environment. Our graduates require more than language skills; they must be able to cope and function as structural information architects.”


Developed by the Commonwealth of Learning in association with the Africa Publishing Initiative (API), this is an excellent, though now slightly dated resource for all those keen to acquire editorial skills. It is part of a series of distance learning tools currently being developed by the World Bank’s API in collaboration with the African Publishers Network https://african-publishers.net/ and partner universities. Each self-learning programme will consist of a CD with examples, exercises, videos, modules for face-to-face training, together with an accompanying manual for self-study. This pilot on editorial skills was launched in the summer of 2007 and was trialled in five African countries: Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Attractively designed and very user-friendly, the CD consists of a Course Guide: Getting Started; Module 1: Planning and Organizing Textbooks; Module 2: Language Editing; and Module 3: Copy Editing and Design, plus a manual in pdf format Editing Educational Materials: A Manual for Editors in Africa. The manual is designed to provide learners with practical guidance in the work and business of editing, whether they are currently a textbook editor, or are considering working in the field. It provides an overview of the editing processes and a basic understanding of the different roles involved, and offers guidance on the business practices involved in editing and publishing. It is divided into five major sections: (i) Book production in brief: An overview of the publication process; (ii) Organization: Time management, file management, project management; (iii) Development of a publisher’s list: Identifying potential publications, working with authors in development; (iv) Communication with authors and others: Letters and contracts; and (v) Manuscript preparation: Quality control in the manuscript preparation process. A series of helpful appendices are included: sample letters – between publishers and prospective authors, publishers and ministry of education officials, correspondence with series editors, etc. – sample contracts, and a model letter of agreement.


A useful and comprehensive guide for authors – especially students and budding scholars – designed to facilitate communication and understanding between authors and editors at CODESRIA, covering aspects of presentation and organization of manuscripts, notes and reference systems, tables and illustrations, obtaining permissions to reproduce material, preparing text on disk, dealing with copy editing queries and proofs, preparing an index, and more. While principally designed for CODESRIA authors, it will be useful for any author preparing a manuscript for publication.

https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/coming-of-age-1 [No digital version available at this time]

Richard Crabbe, a former Chair of the African Publishers Network https://african-publishers.net/ in its early years and now with the World Bank, says that his contribution in this collection focuses on the *publishing industry* rather than publishers, to emphasise the synergy that should exist among all players that are involved in the book chain: writers, editors, illustrators, designers, publishers, printers, distributors, and booksellers. “It is the failure to think in such terms that has led to book provision programmes side-lining one group or other, but especially distributors and booksellers.” He presents a useful inventory of what has been done in the past, describes what is being done currently in terms of training opportunities and professional skills development programmes, and suggests how the African publishing industry and interested parties might prepare to equip a new generation of publishing professionals for the continent. In his conclusion Crabbe states “much has been done in the past; quite a bit is being done now, but we need to do more and better”, in order to be “better able to project Africa’s future publishing needs and identify the human resources that will be required to meet such needs.”


A major report – now inevitably very dated, but probably the most comprehensive survey of publishing training facilities undertaken to date – prepared for the African Publishers Network https://african-publishers.net/ and sub-titled “An investigation of existing publishing training, a survey of African publishers’ training need and a proposed five-year plan for an African Publishing Institute (API)”. The report surveys existing training provision [as at 1992], training needs, proposed API activities, structure and plans for the Institute, course development, and funding.

Higgs, Colleen *A Few of the 100s of Mistakes Publishers can Make* (Posted 15/07/21) https://www.modjajibooks.co.za/a-few-of-the-100s-of-mistakes-publishers-can-make/ [16/08/21]

https://www.modjajibooks.co.za/titles/2021-african-small-publishers-catalogue/
A handy checklist of 29 things *not* to do if you are a publisher, or if you are self-publishing. One could add a few more, for example, number 30: Don’t have sales expectations that are absolute pie in the sky!


In South Africa, the professional status of editors remains largely undefined. In certain industries, such as the publishing industry, editing is regarded as a professional activity, requiring well-defined, high-level skills linked to particular qualifications and experience. In other sectors, editing is regarded as an activity that can be done by anyone with an aptitude for languages. At present [2008], editors in South Africa do not need to obtain any form of professional accreditation in order to practice legally. The South African Translators’ Institute (SATI) does offer the option of accreditation in editing, but this is in no way enforceable. This article addresses issues surrounding the professionalization of editing in South Africa. In particular, it reports on an attitudinal survey done among editors, which aimed to gauge editors’ perceptions and feelings about matters relating to skills, training, professionalization and accreditation. The article also considers the professionalization and accreditation processes for editors in Australia and Canada, and makes some suggestions for possible approaches to the professionalization of the editing professions in South Africa.


Charts training for publishing in South Africa over the ten-year period of 1990-2000, an area of publishing dominated by politics to one dominated by emerging government policy. The first part of the paper focuses on the historical development of a number of training initiatives in the book industry, drawing conclusions about the nature and success of these initiatives. The second part examines the current social and institutional contexts within which training can be located, as well as the impact of multimedia in publishing, and makes the point that “training involves much more than individuals acquiring skills by registering to attend training courses.”


A useful inventory and directory of publishing training institutions in South Africa, both for university degrees as well as short courses offered by private institutions or by book professional organizations. For degree courses it provides full contact details (of programme leaders, etc.) telephone number and email address, website, brief details of the courses/modules offered, level (NQF), admission requirements. For others it gives a short description of the nature and duration of the courses.
The furore that has recently raged over defective textbooks for primary schools in Ghana, has thrown into sharp focus the need for well-trained editors in the book industry, the author says. “In Ghana, some writers and ‘fly-by-night’ publishers seem to short-circuit the system. Some self-opinionated writers go straight to the printer to produce their works. Many self-published authors operate in this way. With the advent of computers, many feel they do not need editors to look at their work, in the first instance.” Dekutsey argues that “the editor’s role in the quality control process needs to be recognized and given pride of place. Their absence or relegation to the background bodes ill for the provision of quality learning and teaching materials to our children.”


This handbook is not only a very useful reference tool for writers, but also presents something of a benchmark volume on the sensitive and sometimes hotly debated issue of author-publisher relations. The book aims to provide all the answers African writers will want to know about publishing, how to break into print, publishing agreements, authors’ rights, and how to find resources. It contains contributions by many distinguished African authors writing about their experience in getting published and their relations with publishers, and there are also several articles providing the publisher’s perspective. Additionally, the book includes a vast array of practical information on, e.g. book prizes and awards, writers’ organizations, magazines, self-publishing, literary agents, book fairs and book launches, together with an annotated directory of publishers with African literature lists, resources for writers on the Internet, an author’s bookshelf, and more. The book is the outcome of an African Writers-Publishers seminar jointly organized by the African Books Collective Ltd. (and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation held in Arusha, Tanzania, in February 1998. The seminar concluded with a statement issued by participants “Arusha III. A ‘New Deal between African Writers and Publishers”, which is included in the handbook (pp. 131-134).


An early account of the BA (Publishing Studies) course established at the Department of Book Industry at the University of Science and Technology [now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology] in Kumasi in 1984, by the former director of the department. Describes the background and structure of the programme, and deals in some detail with
aspects such human resource development and the setting up of appropriate training facilities.

Online: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000463/046364eo.pdf [20/07/21]
An early report of a UNESCO mission to advise and assist in the establishment of a three-year degree course in book publishing at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana [now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology], as well as exploring the possibility of creating a “Regional Centre for Training Personnel in Book Publishing” as a future development of the course.

https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/46196 [17/07/21]
Also published in French as Guide pratique de marketing et promotion des publications sur le développement agricole et rural.
Produced in landscape format and attractively designed, this is a valuable if now somewhat dated practical marketing manual that aims to assist small publishers to make sense of the publishing world, particularly NGOs with publishing activities, but where publishing is not the core function. The manual will guide them through the principles and processes of effective marketing, and linking the capabilities of a publishing company to the needs of the customer. The author was formerly Marketing and Managing Director of David Philip Publishers in Cape Town, and is well known for a series of successful marketing workshops she has conducted during each year’s Zimbabwe International Book Fair. Those that are struggling with their marketing will find a wealth of practical, hard-nosed advice in this guide, which covers these topics: (1) Defining your Market, (2) What is Marketing? (3) The Marketing Plan, (4) Sales and Selling, (5) Distribution, Co-operative Publishing and Rights, (6) Publishing, Marketing and Finance, (7) Development Agencies, Donors and Commercial Publishers, and (8) Strategic Planning. Interspersed with the text are a number of practical exercises, and there are also reproductions of flyers and other publicity material as illustrative examples of good practice.

Note: for other INASP publishing support activities, and publishing resources, see also https://www.inasp.org.uk/psi/index.html.

Although now inevitably dated, this introduction to publishing management remains an excellent, concise introduction to publishing management, published in a series that focuses on the issues involved in publishing and developing educational materials in Africa. However, the book is equally valuable to the book professions elsewhere in the developing world, and while much of the emphasis is on textbooks, the principles apply to all types of
publishing, and to most countries of the world. The book sets out the basics of efficient, economical, and prudent management of time and money in publishing. After some general considerations it deals with strategic planning in publishing textbooks, developing manuscripts (commissioning, appraisal, copy-editing, working with designers, pre-testing, etc.), costs of production, preparing a title budget, as well as the various aspects of financial management: different methods of accounting, records required to track financial progress and aid forecasting, and preparing a cash flow projection. There is also a short chapter on marketing and a glossary.


Examines the need for professional education of book industry personnel in the countries in the South, and reviews some of the training initiatives that have been undertaken so far [to 1996], including those supported by governments, NGOs and donors, and mostly involving short-terms workshops. Also looks at some of the publishing courses offered by institutions in the UK and elsewhere. Montagnes argues that special needs include intensive hands-on training in technical procedures and expertise, financial management, marketing, and manuscript development, and that much could be done by local groups exchanging knowledge and experience. He calls for the establishment of an International Centre for Publishing Training in the South which could undertake training of trainers, produce training materials, co-ordinate with other organizations concerned with education for publishing, and thus help to reduce the current duplication of effort and optimize the use of donor funds.


Developed at a fourteen-week training course at the International Rice Research Institute, this manual – designed primarily for use in developing countries and which has also been used for training courses in Africa – discusses editorial and publishing procedures with the emphasis on practical matters. The book includes concrete examples, checklists, and questions and exhortations to the students. Although now somewhat dated, this training manual remains one of the best introductory guides to book publishing.


A companion volume to *Editing and Publication: A Training Manual* (see ➔ record above) that aims to guide trainers through the best use of the Manual, offering sample exercises and ways in which to stimulate creative thinking.

Surveys the involvement of the countries in the North in the training of publishing professionals in developing countries, and describes the course set up at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines in the 1980s with donor assistance from Canada. Provides guidelines for conducting similar training courses.

This was probably one of the first training manuals for African publishers to come from an African imprint, and this one – co-published with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU (CTA) https://www.cta.int/en – is targeted primarily at NGOs with publishing activities. It aims to equip users with basic and relevant skills in publishing by first discussing concepts and then providing tips and examples. To reinforce the lessons, a range of exercises follow each chapter. The book contains many useful suggestions, it is attractively designed, has a good range of model forms, and makes effective use of icons to draw attention to new terms, to provide tips and advice, and warn about potential pitfalls. However, one or two chapters are somewhat flawed, particularly the section on electronic publishing, and the book is now inevitably very dated.

Also published in French as Guide pratique de la librairie. Although the retail book trade in Africa face problems and obstacles of equal magnitude as their publishing colleagues, bookselling in Africa has perhaps received less attention and support than the more ‘glamorous’ area of publishing, but as is rightly pointed out in the foreword of this guide, booksellers have an important role to play in book development in Africa, and they have the capacity to nurture a culture of reading within the local community.

This excellent guide is edited by two highly experienced African booksellers, and it also contains contributions by several successful booksellers from around the continent. Attractively designed and laid out in landscape format, the guide aims to assist both novice booksellers as well those with established businesses. Two introductory chapters set out bookselling in an African context and the role of the bookseller in the book chain, followed by seven themed chapters. These cover the establishment of a bookshop (and examining what opportunities exist for those new to the book trade), business planning and management, training staff, dealing with customers, and maintaining and expanding a bookselling business. They are supported by a number of case studies presenting real-life examples of successes, or failures. A final chapter deals with non-traditional methods of selling books, such as mobile bookselling, book clubs, street vendors, market book stalls, as well as online bookselling. Each chapter contains a wealth of practical, hard-nosed advice, not only on the day-to-day management of a bookshop, but also on all the finer aspects of running a successful retail operation. Additionally, the book includes a number of model guidelines and forms, and other
documentation that provide examples of good practice, and good housekeeping. A series of appendices include resources for booksellers, listings of book trade organizations, associations, journals, and useful Web sites.


One in a series of several training manuals developed by the African Publishing Institute (API) of the African Publishers Network [https://african-publishers.net/] to facilitate intra-African training among its members, which can be used for both formal training or individual study. Arranged under three modules: (1) Communication Skills, (2) Negotiation Skills, and (3) Managing Staff, the course is designed to equip publishing staff with the “fundamental interpersonal skills necessary for professionalism in the publishing industry.” A variety of practical exercises and tasks are included to make the manual as interactive as possible.


This excellent manual is intended as a guide for running training courses or workshops for groups of writers, illustrators, editors and others involved in producing popular reading material. Divided into six chapters, the manual takes the reader through various stages: how to develop a gender perspective; how gender is constructed socially, and how to develop a framework for analysing gender. Illustrations are looked at for what they show, how they show it, and what they do not show. Developed in a series of workshops, the book is accompanied by a detailed checklist to analyse works for gender-sensitivity, a glossary of terms, and an annotated bibliography for those who wish to read further. The training modules have been designed for use in workshop situations, and are accompanied by a pack of laminated training cards in a cover pocket of the A4 format wire-bound book, which can be used in different combinations by trainers or for self-study purposes.

South African Booksellers Association **Careers in the Book Industry.**

**Careers in the Book Industry** is a welcome new online feature from the South African Booksellers Association [https://www.sabooksellers.com/] that aims to give the professions in the industry a voice, showcasing the breadth and depth of the available career options, through talking to active professionals within the industry. In this first contribution Thokozile Sibongile Machika, Associate Editor at Pan Macmillan SA, talks about what prompted her to pursue a book industry career, the skills that are need to perform her role effectively, the formal qualifications that are required for the job, what advice would she give to young people considering a career in publishing or bookselling, and more.

Publishing in academic journals is vitally important for African scholars who wish to communicate their ideas and the results of research to their professional communities. For some, however, venturing into publishing in academic journals can still be a daunting task. This paper shares insights derived from the literature and from some recent Southern African initiatives. A helpful checklist to guide new authors – covering the basic items for preparing and submitting an academic paper for publication – is also provided.


Also published in French as Guide pratique pour l’édition de revues sur l’agriculture et le développement rural.

One in a series of guidebooks and training manuals for journal editors in developing countries that are active in the field of agriculture and rural development. They aim to assist editors to improve their publishing operations, and provide more effective communication of the scholarship and the research results published in their journals. The book is organized under nine chapters “that cover what we consider to be the essential basic elements in successful journal publishing.” Interspersed with the text there are a variety of model forms, reproductions of title pages, covers of journals, and other documentation that provide illustrative examples of good practice, together with checklists and listings of address sources.

Zell, Hans M. Book Marketing and Promotion: A Handbook of Good Practice. Oxford: International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2001. 384 pp. (This title is out-of-print. Subject to stocks lasting, a very small number of copies are still available direct from the author, see http://www.hanszell.co.uk/training_manuals.htm)

This is a compendium of practical ‘how-to’ advice on all aspects of book marketing and promotion, particularly for publishers in developing and emerging countries. It is also designed to serve as an information and reference resource for research institutions, NGOs, and other non-profit organizations with publishing activities. Organized under seventeen chapters, the book sets out the different types of marketing methods, techniques, and approaches, with each chapter providing guidelines for good practice. A number of model forms, checklists, and other documentation are interspersed with the text to provide illustrative examples of good practice. A special chapter (now somewhat dated) “The Internet for the Book Professions” presents an overview of the Internet and the World Wide Web as a tool for the book professions in developing countries. Five case studies, by leading marketing practitioners, provide a broad picture of book promotion and distribution in different regions of Africa, and in India, the Caribbean, and the Pacific region. A sixth case study highlights the experience of African Books Collective https://www.africanbookscollective.com/ in marketing African books worldwide.

Aims to assist journal editors in Africa to improve their publishing operations, and provides guidelines for good practice, and good housekeeping, not only for those coming to journals publishing for the first time, but also for those who already have some experience in academic serials publishing. This second edition has been revised, expanded and updated after being tested during a series of practical workshops held for African journal editors and publishers. Covering most aspects of journals publishing and management, the handbook puts special emphasis on systems management, subscription fulfilment, financial control, and effective marketing and distribution, including a chapter (now somewhat dated) on journals marketing on the Internet. It also includes a series of model guidelines, model forms, and other documentation that provide illustrative examples of good practice. Additionally, there is a resources section, an annotated bibliography, and a glossary. Two specially commissioned contributions cover desk-top publishing for journal production, and computerized subscription invoicing and fulfilment for small journal publishers.