

**SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF THE
POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITY PRESSES**

DISSERTATION

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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Dedication

To my wife Dora,
a blessed friend and confidant, for encouragement, advise and support.

and to Chief Victor Nwankwo of blessed memory.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|---|
| AAU | Association of African Universities |
| AAUP | American Association of University Presses |
| ABC | African Books Collective |
| ADB | African Development Bank |
| APNET | African Publishing Network |
| AU | African Union (<i>formerly Organization of African Unity, OAU</i>) |
| AUPs | African University Presses |
| CODE | Canadian Organization for Development through Education |
| CUP | Cambridge University Press |
| DOI | Document Object Identifier |
| EALB | East African Language Bureau |
| EAPH | East African Publishing House |
| Ecowas | Economic Community of West African States) |
| GBPA | Ghana Book Publishers Association |
| IASP | International Association of Scholarly Publishers |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INASP | International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications |
| ISBN | International Standard Book Number |
| NPA's | National Publishing Associations |
| OUP | Oxford University Press |
| POD | Print on demand |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| STI | Science and Technical Information |
| STMs | (niche publishing in) Science, Technical and Medicine |
| Unesco | United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| ZIBF | Zimbabwe International Book Fair |

Definition of Terms

Wilson (1986:188) explained that **Academic publishing** is preoccupied with the large-scale production of textbooks and trade books for mass sale. 'It is a world of publicly owned corporate giants like McGraw-Hill, and Simon and Schuster.' This term will be reserved for the production of primary and secondary school text books or the lucrative 'school textbook' market.

African studies is meant to be any study or research in any discipline that has Africa as its focus.

A **backlist** is a publisher's catalogue of books in print that have already appeared in a first edition and those that have been or will be issued in subsequent reprints or editions.

Co-publishing is when the originating publishers of a specific book sell a substantial part of the print run to a co-publisher (usually in another country) for that firm to sell at their own risk under their imprint and at an appropriate price in a defined market.

Electronic publishing 'refers to texts made available in any computer-mediated medium such as diskette, CD-ROM, or via the Internet' (Armstrong & Lonsdale, 1998: 9). Works issued mainly in print with appendices or worked examples on computer diskette are categorized as print publication and therefore fall under the type of publishing covered in this study.

A **frontlist** is a publisher's catalogue of first-edition books in print. This publisher's list of books in print has generally been in publication for up to one year.

Funding will include all forms of income provided to a university press by the university. Funding sources might include, but are not limited to, monetary subsidies, use of rent-free space, the difference between market rate and student assistant rate paid for labour, use of university personnel to fill various functions for which the press is not billed, and monetary grants.

An **independent press** is a small press, lacking substantial capital, that specializes in the publication of materials which commercial publishers reject, mainly because of their perceived small economic returns.

An **industry** is meant to be a branch of business or trade. When referring to book publishing as an industry, the term "industry" is used in the same manner as when it is used to refer to banking as the banking industry or to health care as the health care industry.

List building (areas of specialization) Focusing on a few key areas and publishing in depth in those areas is called 'list building'. There is always a core of subjects for which a press house has established itself and for which it is known. List building is the part of the editorial decision that guides the selection and evaluation of manuscripts as well as the marketing of a book. Lists are brand names, registrations of trademark, and other commodities in a label-obsessed culture.

Market demand for the purpose of this study, will include the quantity of orders for various types of monographs and journals in the various forms available, including but not limited to hard copy, CD-ROM, microforms and electronic publication.

I shall borrow the terms **Macropublishing** and **micropublishing** from Bailey (1990: 62), which I find very appropriate even though he admitted they were rather awkward. Macropublishing includes all aspects of the press's work and its list as a whole, and micropublishing covers activities, considerations, and decisions about an individual book or title.

Mass market paperbacks are fiction and nonfiction soft cover books for both adults and juveniles, of which at least 50% of copies are distributed to mass-market outlets such as newsstands, drugstores, chain stores, and supermarkets.

Midlist titles refer to trade book titles with potential unit sales of approximately 5,000 to 15,000 copies. These are titles that the large trade book publishers are no longer interested in publishing because they do not bring a large enough profit.

The scholarly **monograph** is a single learned work on a defined topic (or series of topics) used for, or in the course of, tertiary education or research. It is any book for practising scholars or professionals as opposed to a textbook for students. Many scholars refer to any article or research report that exceeds one hundred manuscript pages as a **monograph**, but length is not the only criterion for a monograph. Sullivan (1976:160) restricts the term to an integrated, book length treatment that reports new results of a theoretical or empirical nature. Similarly, Persell (cited in Sullivan) defined of a scholarly book as 'one based on systematic original research that addresses a significant problem or makes an important theoretical contribution to the field in question'. This is the sense in which the term is used in this study.

On demand printing (or print on demand) is an aspect of on demand publishing (see on demand publishing) and is generally used to describe the underlying print technology which enables short or limited runs to happen.

On demand publishing is concerned with trying to create published works on demand, as and when required by a particular target population, rather than the traditional approach whereby a print run of books is produced as a speculative venture which succeeds if a good fraction is sold.

Scholarly publishing 'refers to the university presses and the modest-size commercial publishers specializing in research-based monographs in comparatively small editions.' (Wilson, 1986:188)

Self-publishing is similar to independent or small press publication. Essentially, self-publication means an author writes, edits, and sometimes prints but more often hires a printer, procures reviews, and finally, distributes his/her own work. As is the case with the small press, material that is self-published may have been rejected by commercial publishers.

A **Strategy** is a pattern or plan that integrates an organization's major goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole.

The **textbook** is defined as a category of monograph having the prescribed purpose of teaching. It is a manual of instruction.

Trade books are adult and juvenile books, both hardback and paperback, that are primarily created for the general consumer. Most of these books (50% or more) are directly marketed through trade channels such as bookstores and libraries or through wholesalers and jobbers.

The terms **university press** and **scholarly press** would be used interchangeably to mean a press attached to a university or the publishing arm of a university.

Self-publishing should not be confused with **vanity press** publication. The vanity press is deservedly held in disrepute because it publishes anything for which an author will pay, and usually at a loss to the author.

ABSTRACT

University press publishing was introduced in sub-Saharan Africa around the mid 1950s as the new independent countries strived to accelerate the pace of education and training of their peoples with the sole purpose of the rapid socio-economic development of their countries. Just like their universities, African university presses were modeled after their American and European counterparts. Like all genres of publishing, scholarly publishing in Africa has not been cushioned from the challenges imposed by economic factors. In fact publishing in Africa enjoyed a short boom in the early 1970s, but due to the serious socio-economic downturns in most of these countries, starting from the early 1980s, these gains have been halted and in some cases reversed.

This study examines the policies and practices of six sub-Saharan Africa university presses. It is a multi-site case study to establish how far the presses have adopted and/or adapted their policies to suit the environment and circumstances of Africa. The study investigates the extent to which constraints facing them affect their publishing efforts, their coping strategies, and the possible avenues of reducing the effect of these constraints. Several data collection methods were employed including on-site visits, interviews, and observations at three of the presses, and a mail survey of all six presses. There is a serious absence of competition and cooperation between the presses surveyed. There are no aggressive fund raising strategies, yet the survey showed financial constraint as the most crucial factor that impedes the development of their publishing activities. The presses do not have press publishing areas or press lists, which define the subject areas in which each of them concentrates its publishing. None of the presses has a formal written policy on manuscript acquisition. The study confirms that university presses publish mainly in the humanities and social sciences. Views on a unique African model of a university press are divided. The issue of author-publisher relationship is high on the presses agenda, especially as African scholars seek publishing avenues with

African presses. Opinion on publishing non-scholarly materials was divided but swayed towards getting the needed profits to support non-profitable but essential publishing by the university press. For the majority of the presses, the most important publishing category is undergraduate textbook, and direct sales is the most popular means of marketing their works. The presses have succeeded at selling between 25-65% of their output.

The study concludes that the coping strategies adopted by the presses in the face of harsh environmental conditions include the introduction of ICTs, changes in the treatment of authors, editorial policy on publishing non-scholarly materials, staff levels and use of outsourcing, and different approaches to sources of funding. It recommends a consortium of African university presses based at the micro level on Specialization, Cooperation, and the adoption of ICTs especially print-on-demand technologies. Each press must operate as a Trust in order to enjoy autonomy as a private company, but be registered as a non-profit organization. At the macro level funding must be vigorously sourced through donor agencies including The African Development Bank. Governments should prioritize book publishing, the development and stocking of libraries, encourage reading, set up regional university presses, and introduce book and publishing components into research project funds. The study recommends further research into the effect of technological developments on university press publishing in Africa, a follow up study in 10 years to see how university presses in Africa are surviving, and a detailed study of university press consortia and the implications for tertiary education in Africa.