

**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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Table of Contents

Heading	Page
Title page	i
Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures and Tables	ix
Abbreviations	x
Definition of Terms	xi
Abstract	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.1.1 Knowledge creation	4
1.1.2 University press publishing: justifying an African model	8
1.2 Statement of the problem	11
1.3 Purpose of the study	13
1.4 Objectives of the study	14
1.5 Research questions	14
1.6 Significance of the study	15
1.7 Scope and limitations	16
Summary	18
Chapter 2: Scholarly communication and university publishing	
2.1 Contemporary scholarship	19
2.1.1 Academic journals	24
2.1.2 Scholarly monographs	26
2.1.3 Concerns about quality in scholarship	30
2.1.4 The potential of electronic publishing	38
2.2 University press publishing	43
2.3 Inside the press house	45

2.3.1 Administration/Management	45
2.3.2 Acquisitions and editorial work	51
2.3.2.1 Gatekeeping functions	56
2.3.2.2 Editorial boards	57
2.3.2.3 List building	61
2.3.2.4 Author-editor relations	64
2.3.2.5 Peer review	69
2.3.3 Production and design (Reproduction)	72
2.3.4 Sales and promotion	73
Summary	86
Chapter 3: The context of university publishing in five African countries	
3.1 Introduction	87
3.2 Country Reports	91
3.2.1 Social, political and economic climate in Ghana	91
3.2.2 Publishing history of Ghana	92
3.2.3 Tertiary education and university publishing in Ghana	96
3.2.4 Social, political and economic climate in Kenya	102
3.2.5 Publishing history of Kenya	103
3.2.6 Tertiary education and university publishing in Kenya	106
3.2.7 Social, political and economic climate in Nigeria	112
3.2.8 Publishing history of Nigeria	113
3.2.9 Tertiary education and university publishing in Nigeria	116
3.2.10 Social, political and economic climate in South Africa	119
3.2.11 Publishing history of South Africa	120
3.2.12 Tertiary education and university publishing in South Africa	124
3.2.13 Social, political and economic climate in Zimbabwe	129
3.2.14 Publishing history of Zimbabwe	130
3.2.15 Tertiary education and university publishing in Zimbabwe	131
Summary	133
Chapter 4: Research design and methodology	
4.1 Theoretical framework	134
4.1.1 Introduction	134

4.1.2 Case study as a qualitative research	135
4.1.3 Validity and reliability issues	137
4.2 Research instruments	138
4.2.1 Data sources	139
4.2.2 Development of the survey instrument	140
4.2.3 The choice of the cases	140
4.2.4 Preliminary questionnaire	141
4.2.5 Pre-testing the survey instrument and pilot study	142
4.2.6 Administration of main questionnaire	144
Summary	144
Chapter 5: Data analysis, presentation and discussion of results	
5.1 Introduction	145
5.2 Presentation, analysis and discussion	145
5.2.1 Administration	145
5.2.1.1 Date of establishment	145
5.2.1.2 Mission and vision statements	146
5.2.1.3 Structure and position of the press in the university	147
5.2.1.4 Background of press director	149
5.2.1.5 The main departments of the House	150
5.2.1.6 Issues on staffing	150
5.2.1.7 Written and unwritten policy documents	151
5.2.1.8 Sources of funding	152
5.2.2 Acquisition/Editorial	154
5.2.2.1 Manuscript acquisition and selection	154
5.2.2.2 Editorial board and related issues	156
5.2.2.3 Author-publisher relations and copyright registration	158
5.2.2.4 Subject areas of specialization (list building)	158
5.2.2.5 Publishing categories	160
5.2.3 Production	161
5.2.3.1 Founding dates and publication figures	161
5.2.3.2 Publications and sales figures	164
5.2.3.3 Academic journals published	168
5.2.3.4 Computerized operations	169

5.2.3.5 Cooperation or partnership arrangements	170
5.2.3.6 Publishing prize(s)	172
5.2.4 Marketing	173
5.2.4.1 Publishing categories and revenue generation	173
5.2.4.2 Royalties, marketing, distribution, and sales	174
5.2.4.3 Membership and benefits of ABC	176
5.2.4.4 Press web site and main purpose of the site	177
5.2.4.5 Target markets	178
5.2.5 Views by press directors on aspects of their work	180
5.2.5.1 Campus allies of the Press	180
5.2.5.2 Challenges and remedial strategies/measures adopted	181
5.2.5.3 Indirect challenges	185
5.2.5.3.1 Benefits the university derives from the press	185
5.2.5.3.2 Threats from the national publishing infrastructure	186
5.2.5.3.3 Threats from the international publishing scene	188
5.2.5.3.4 Views on co-publishing	191
5.2.5.3.5 Views on photocopying and copyright	193
5.2.5.3.6 Views on an African model of a university press	194
5.2.5.3.7 Promotion of African scholarship by AUPs	198
5.2.5.3.8 Relationship between African scholars and publishers	199
5.2.5.3.9 Should AUPs publish educational and trade books	200
5.2.5.4. Views on the future of African university publishing	200
5.2.6 Comparison of African and American university press policies	205
Summary	208
Chapter 6: Summary, conclusions and recommendations	
6.1 Summary of findings	210
6.2 Conclusions	220
6.3 Recommendations	222
Bibliography	228
Appendices	236

List of Figures and Tables

List of figures	Page
Figure 2A: Schematic diagram of departments in the publishing house	48
Figure 2B: Relationship between prepress and impressions costs	83
List of tables	
Table 2.1: Macropublishing and micropublishing compared	46
Table 2.2: Cost of producing books	80
Table 2.3: Selling price and sales income	80
Table 2.4: Full publishing cost	81
Table 5.1: Full time equivalent employees	151
Table 5.2: Percentage of each category of authors that get published	156
Table 5.3: Proportion of three largest subject areas	159
Table 5.4: Publishing categories of the presses	160
Table 5.5: Average annual new titles for 1995-1999	162
Table 5.6: Most important publishing categories in terms of title output	163
Table 5.7: Press run for three most important categories	163
Table 5.8: Publication figures	164
Table 5.9: Social indicators	165
Table 5.10: Annual sales and trend	167
Table 5.11: Co-publishing partners	171
Table 5.12: Most important publishing categories in terms of revenue	173
Table 5.13: Royalty rates	174
Table 5.14: Rank order of marketing plans	175
Table 5.15: Press distribution channels	176
Table 5.16: Sales through campus and own bookstores	177
Table 5.17: Target market in rank order	178
Table 5.18: Challenges in rank order	181

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.