

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nigerian university presses: a bleak picture

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Abstract

In the 1970s and 1980s there was a lively academic publishing scene in Nigeria, 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. Research (conducted in April 2021) revealed that traditional university press publishing activities seem to have been almost completely abandoned, 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 promote 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-sustaining, 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, remain limited. The demise, and the now almost total lack of publishing output by Nigerian university presses, can be said to be a major contributory factor to this unhappy situation.

Résumé

Les années 1970 et 1980 ont été une période dynamique pour l'édition académique au Nigeria, marquées par le lancement de plusieurs presses universitaires. Le tableau est aujourd'hui sombre, comme le démontre un mince volume de recherche sur l'état actuel de l'édition universitaire au Nigeria. Cette recherche (menée en avril 2021) a révélé que les activités traditionnelles d'édition universitaire semblent avoir été pratiquement abandonnées, même s'il existe encore des presses sous la forme d'activités commerciales offrant des services de conception, de composition, d'impression et de reliure aux universités, ainsi qu'à d'autres clients. Les presses universitaires nigérianes actuellement en activité semblent très éloignées des idéaux et de la principale responsabilité d'une presse universitaire, qui devraient être de produire et de diffuser la connaissance de toute sorte, et de promouvoir une culture lettrée sur laquelle doit se fonder en définitive l'université en tant qu'institution nationale. En partie en raison de contraintes financières et de l'exigence d'autonomie, de nombreuses presses universitaires ont cessé d'être des maisons d'édition et sont devenues des imprimeries. Les administrateurs d'universités considèrent désormais leurs presses comme une

opportunité de faire de l'argent en période de réduction des ressources, plutôt que comme un organe de diffusion de la recherche. Les opportunités, pour les chercheurs africains, de faire publier leurs travaux par des presses occidentales, et la disponibilité de contenu en Afrique, demeurent limitées. On pourrait dire que la disparition des presses universitaires nigérianes, et avec elle leur désormais manque quasi-total de production éditoriale, sont l'un des principaux facteurs qui ont contribué à cette triste situation.

In the 1970s and 1980s 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. 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 the outside world; created (or 'upgraded?') by the university authorities in order to generate revenue. Undoubtedly, there have been other reasons for the decline in university presses, for example the steady and continuous deterioration of the Nigerian economy, the crash in global oil prices, and the economic structural adjustment that has drastically curtailed government spending, and which has had a particularly severe effect on Federal universities. More recently academic publishers have faced the challenges of a rapidly changing publishing environment.

It has been suggested from time to time that African university presses are best placed to focus on textbook publishing. I do not share this view. Far from it, just as much as it would be imprudent for them to compete in the area of general and trade publishing, or fiction – best left to commercial publishers – I would recommend they keep well away from it. Most of them, at the present time at least, do not have the required workforce, and do not have the capacity, with the exception perhaps of some of the long-established university presses in South Africa. For most others it would be unwise. Several Nigerian university presses have flirted or experimented with publishing tertiary-level textbooks, but it has never really worked. If a university press wanted to compete in the textbook markets for tertiary education, even more so with school books, it would require a sizeable cadre of personnel, marketing staff, reps, etc. to call on university lecturers, schools and government departments, to get these textbooks adopted for classroom use. This can be a very expensive undertaking and any press would need big print runs and significant sales to make this work.

As a matter of fact, production of high-quality tertiary-level textbooks is still quite low in many African countries. Quite possibly because, for many private-sector African publishers, this would mean straying into uncharted territory, calling for considerable investment, would be risky, and is an area in which they might find it difficult to compete with the multinational publishing giants, much less gain a competitive advantage.

It is true of course that tertiary-level textbook publishing could open up a captive, and potentially lucrative, market, but most university presses have rarely been equipped to compete in these markets. One alternative that might well be worth

exploring by African university presses is *co-publishing*, seeking to acquire rights/licences from Western publishers to publish 'local' versions of textbooks. The African partners would not then incur the considerable editorial development costs of such textbooks. That might work successfully, although they would then still need a considerable workforce to try to get these tertiary-level textbooks adopted for classroom use; and that could take a long time, and there are numerous challenges. As Mary Jay and Stephanie Kitchen (2019) reported

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 concluded

[w]e can say that despite some modest progressive efforts ... 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 current picture

When I lived and worked in Nigeria for three years in the early 1970s there were fewer than ten universities and they were all Federal universities. Today the figure is a total of 161 (forty-three Federal, forty-eight state universities, and seventy private universities).

African Books Collective (ABC) celebrated its 30th year of trading in 2020, during which time it successfully transitioned from being a donor-dependent NGO to a self-sustaining, independent, and successful social enterprise. According to ABC's website¹ it distributes the following African university presses, although a number of them are currently dormant, or may have ceased operations altogether: Dar es Salaam University Press, Ghana Universities Press, University of Nairobi Press, University of Namibia Press, University of Mauritius Press, University of South Africa Press, and these four Nigerian university presses: Obafemi Awolowo University Press (formerly Ife University Press), Ibadan University Press, University of Lagos Press, and Kwara State University Press.

My own investigation, which sought to throw some light on the present state of activities by Nigerian university presses, reveals the following picture.

¹ <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/about-us>

Obafemi Awolowo University Press (formerly Ife University Press)

A Book Depository page lists twenty-six titles from this press, most of them published in the 1980s–1990s and some in the early 2000s, with the most recent one published in 2014.² The ABC page for that press³ lists none.

I was unable track down an active web page for Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) Press or the university's website.⁴ However, it does have a link to 'Institutional journals'⁵ which in turn offers links to a dozen journals, but only half the links work and lead to further information about each journal, the others presumably having ceased publication a long time ago. An OAU repository page⁶ offers access to annual reports, gazettes, convocation lectures, speeches and faculty lectures, among others.

One can only come to the conclusion that, unhappily, the press has apparently been disbanded, for reasons unknown.

Ibadan University Press⁷

This proclaims itself 'The First Scholarly Publishing House in West Africa', and that is indeed true.

Currently it states that it is a

Publisher of
Senate Public Lectures (link comes up with a 404 page not found message)
Academic Books (link comes up with a 404 page not found message)
University Lectures
Inaugural Lectures
Journals
Monographs

However, with none of the above links working, the 'website' now consists of just a single page, displaying images of half a dozen book covers, with no other or ordering information.

This is a sad picture of a once flourishing and pioneering university press.

University of Lagos Press⁸

The home page is now described as 'part of UniLag Press and Bookshop', and claims that it is 'The Best Nigerian Printing Press'. Under 'Our Services' it includes a link to 'Publishing' but that only leads to a page stating 'We are a printing film and production company based in Lagos, Nigeria.'

² <https://www.bookdepository.com/publishers/Obafemi-Awolowo-University-Press-Nigeria>

³ *Ibid.*; https://openlibrary.org/publishers/Obafemi_Awolowo_University_Press_Limited lists ten titles published between 1987 and 2011.

⁴ <https://oauife.edu.ng/>

⁵ <https://oauife.edu.ng/research/institutional-journals>

⁶ <https://ir.oauife.edu.ng/handle/123456789/5006>

⁷ <https://www.ui.edu.ng/content/ibadan-university-press>

⁸ <http://unilagpress.com/>

ABC indicates no products from this press are currently available while the university's repository⁹ lists merely a large number of occasional papers and a lecture series.

A (suspect) Book Depository page¹⁰ lists as many as eighty-one titles, most published in the 1980s and 1990s, and some from the early 2000s, but a number of these are non-academic titles in French and cannot possibly have been published by Lagos University Press.

The web pages of the University of Lagos Bookshop¹¹ state:

No bookshop is better than Unilag Bookshop. Their books are very affordable and they have so many books in stock. They attend to you immediate and fix all challenges Their books are always neat and affordable too.

But it offers no links or details to publications of the University of Lagos Press, which is now apparently dormant, or no longer exists.

Kwara State University Press¹²

Recently added by ABC, their website is marginally more informative than the web pages of others listed here. However, an 'About us' leads to a page called 'About the Centre' which offers a bewildering and rather bombastic 'Our mission' statement,¹³ which doesn't seem to have anything to do with the university press, and in fact would appear to be a mission statement of the university's Centre for Entrepreneurship.

The website provides an attractive initial list, originally developed by the late Professor Abiola Irele, while serving as Provost at KWASU, and under 'Publications' it gives access to 15 pages of book covers and descriptions. However, it provides no bibliographic data, ISBNs or prices let alone ordering information, nor an indication that outside Nigeria their books are distributed by ABC. The link to 'Journals'¹⁴ leads to a dead/inactive page.

Although the present website is not user-friendly, there is an interesting interview with the former head of the KWASU Press (2017–20), 'Interview with Professor Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu' at ABC's subsite Read African Books.¹⁵ Solihu talks eloquently about the considerable challenges of marketing and distributing books within Nigeria, and seeking sales from Nigerian university libraries, as well as commenting on the wider picture.

Other Nigerian university presses I am (or was) aware of, but which are not distributed by ABC, are as follows.

⁹ <https://www.bookdepository.com/publishers/University-Of-Lagos-Press>

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ <http://unilagbookshop.com/about-us/>

¹² <https://www.kwasu.edu.ng/kwasupress/>

¹³ <https://www.kwasu.edu.ng/kwasupress/aboutus.html>

¹⁴ <http://journals.kwasu.edu.ng/cgi-sys/defaultwebpage.cgi>

¹⁵ <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/abdul-kabir-hussain-solihu/>

University of Nigeria Press

Their website¹⁶ states:

The University of Nigeria Press wants to bring it to the notice of university community about the activities the [sic] undertake which includes General Printing, Book Publishing, Production of Journals, Posters, Flex Banners, Brochures, Flyers, Magazines, Newspaper, Labels, Conference Files/Bags, Jotters, Impression and Binding Jobs etc. . . . They also have a world class editorial board headed by Rev. Fr. Professor A. N. Akwanya by sending there [sic] research and scholarly materials for proof-reading and editing.

Visitors are prompted to 'Click to View', but there is nothing to view. Nor are there details of any publications.

Bayero University Press

This press has a website¹⁷ as well as a Facebook page.¹⁸ The home page states that the press wants to

Be a leader in academic publishing in Africa.

Mission:

To promote the publishing of high quality books and journals in science and humanities and project African perspectives on the global scholarly map

Activities:

Editing of submitted peer review journals and approved books and other periodicals

Designing and repositioning of journals

Technical advise [sic] to editorial committees

Publishing bibliographies and other documents

Promote scholarly works produced by the staff of the university

Publishing

Printing

But it provides no details of any books published, while a link to 'Bayero University Journals' on the university's web pages lists over thirty journals, but includes details/links for only a handful of them.

University of Port Harcourt Press

This press had a promising and diverse initial list, and was active between 1987 and 2011. The Open Library page¹⁹ lists details of a total of nineteen titles. The Press still has a Facebook page but the main university website²⁰ offers no link to a university

¹⁶ <https://www.unn.edu.ng/university-of-nigeria-press/>

¹⁷ <http://buk.edu.ng/press/>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/bukpresskano/>

¹⁹ https://openlibrary.org/publishers/University_of_Port_Harcourt_Press

²⁰ <https://www.uniport.edu.ng/>

press. A new press board was apparently launched in 2017, but the press now seems to be limited to printing and binding activities rather than serving as an academic publications unit.

Ahmadu Bello University Press

The website of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria²¹ offers no link to the university press, which has been acting as both publishers and printers. Their former web page²² came up with a ‘This site can’t be reached’ message when last visited in December 2021. The ABU home page does however include a link to ten journals published under the ABU imprint²³ including access to back issues for most. ABU Press Limited still has a Facebook page but the last posting goes back to April 2014.

ABU Press published some substantial scholarly studies in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in the fields of geography, history, politics, economics, agriculture/farming, as well as a few titles on African literature and culture, and the Open Library lists no less than seventy-three works published between 1971 and 2011.²⁴ The press’s current status is not known.

University Press plc

Finally, and in contrast with all the presses mentioned above, one press that is very much active today is University Press plc²⁵ in Ibadan, the former Nigerian branch of Oxford University Press. However, it is *not* a university press in the conventional sense, as their publishing output is not confined to academic/scholarly publications, and also includes an extensive range of general interest titles, as well as primary, secondary and tertiary level textbooks. University Press plc (UPPLC) was founded in 1949 under the name of Oxford University Press Nigeria, and has since grown to become one of the oldest and leading Nigerian publishers of materials for both educational and general reading. A number of their titles are available from ABC.

Past and recent studies on Nigerian university presses

Below as an Appendix is a short Select Bibliography of publishing by Nigerian university presses. Although there is now a growing and significant body of literature on the academic publishing industry in Africa – including on the activities of university presses – I am not aware of any recent substantial studies of university press or other scholarly publishing in Nigeria, other than some rather pedestrian papers published by suspect/predatory publishers. These kinds of studies (many of them based on information or data collected via descriptive survey questionnaires) tend to be inadequately researched and documented and are for the most part poorly written. It can be argued that such poor-quality research is damaging to the academic credibility and standing of Nigerian scholars.

²¹ <https://www.abu.edu.ng/>

²² <http://www.abupress.org/>

²³ <https://journals.abu.edu.ng/>

²⁴ https://openlibrary.org/publishers/Ahmadu_Bello_University_Press

²⁵ <https://universitypressplc.com/>

Much has been written about ‘predatory journals’ in Nigeria and elsewhere, but some commentators don’t approve of the label ‘predatory’. Whatever we want to call them, many are certainly deceptive, exploitative, opportunist and disreputable, make false claims, promote shoddy scholarship, and make a great deal of money in the process. But where else then should Nigerian academics seek to publish their papers? Nigerian scholarly journals of high quality published by Nigerian university presses have long ago ceased publication, are currently dormant, or are now published only sporadically. This has left a huge void in publishing opportunities for Nigerian scholars. As David Mills (2020) has insightfully put it:

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. . . . 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.

Conclusion

A former director of the University of Lagos Press, Bodunde Bankole in an article published in *Scholarly Publishing* over thirty years ago (1990) (and see Select Bibliography below), in which he reviewed the (then) structure and management of Nigerian university presses and their shortcomings, wrote that there is

[f]allacious thinking by university administrators who view their presses as an opportunity for making money in times of dwindling resources, rather than as an outlet for dissemination of scholarship.

That, unhappily, seems to be very much the picture today.

Nigerian university presses operating today also seem to be far removed from the ideals expressed by the late Professor Abiola Irele in a talk at the Royal Commonwealth Society in London in 1985 (Irele 1986) (published in the *African Book Publishing Record*; see Select Bibliography), in which he defined the role of the university press in Africa as

[h]aving 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.

More recently, it is appropriate to quote from the aforementioned interview (Kitchen 2018) with the former head (2017–20) of Kwara State University Press, Professor Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, in which he says

When the university press competes with other big publishing houses in order to make 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.

Many would agree with those views. But is anyone listening among Nigerian university administrators?

It could be argued that, apart from the substantial publishing programme by the Dakar-based Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA)²⁶ and a number of university institutions in Africa – notably those in South Africa, and a few elsewhere – scholarly publishing output is still relatively modest; while publishing opportunities for African scholars with Western presses, and the availability of content within Africa, remain 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.

The persistent expectation of Nigerian university administrators that their presses could be profitable in nascent markets remains quite unrealistic.

As François van Schalkwyk aptly put it in a recent interview (Kitchen 2017), 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.

Sadly, there is a whole graveyard of failed initiatives²⁷ for collaboration, networking, and sharing of know-how among African scholarly publishers – launched with the

²⁶ <https://codesria.org/spip.php?rubrique4>

²⁷ Some of these include: Association of West African University Presses (1973, Nigeria), African Association of Science Editors (1985, Ethiopia), Consortium of African Scholarly Publishers (1995,

best of intentions, but most of them short-lived and/or terminated as soon as donor or other financial support ceased. Others never reached the drawing board.

Why have all these initiatives failed, or simply petered out? Is it a failure of collective will? A reluctance to share professional know-how and business savvy? Or are there other reasons? Whatever the reasons, there is now, perhaps more than ever, a need for solidarity among African scholarly publishers: to share skills, experience, and know-how, and to help facilitate collaborative ventures and programmes, such as co-publishing projects. Many university presses and other scholarly publishers in Africa share a great deal of common ground, and they all face the same formidable challenges to survive and prosper. And so more active collaboration and sharing of skills and expertise could be of mutual benefit – to come together, share ideas, and move from discussion and debate to action.

Acknowledgements. For comments on an early draft on this paper I am indebted to Sulaiman Adebowale, founder and director of Amalion Publishers in Dakar (<https://www.amalion.net/>).

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- Irele, A. (1986) 'The challenge of university publishing in Africa, with special reference to Nigeria', *African Book Publishing Record* 12 (3): 149–52.
- Jay, M. and S. Kitchen (2019) 'Decolonisation and Co-publishing' <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/decolonisation-and-co-publishing>
- Kitchen, S. (2017) 'Interview with François van Schalkwyk, African Minds' <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/interviews/francois-van-schalkwyk/>
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- Mills, D. (2020) 'Going Online Can Redress Global Inequalities in Academic Collaboration' <https://www.coronetimes.net/going-online-academic-collaboration/>

Appendix: Select bibliography

Part 1: Articles on Nigerian university presses (to 2008)²⁸

Aguolu, C. C. and I. E. Aguolu (1998) 'Scholarly publishing and Nigerian universities', *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 29 (2): 118–29.

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.

Bankole, S. B. (1988) 'Running scholarly presses as a business: the Nigerian experience' in *The Future of Small Presses in Scholarly Publishing: proceedings from the 4th International Conference on Scholarly Publishing, Helsinki, June 1–3, 1988*. Oslo: IASP.

Kenya), African Association of Editors of Scholarly Journals (proposed 2002, Harare), Consortium of African University Presses (proposed 2003, Ghana), African Scholarly Network Press (2003), Consortium of Academic Publishers (2014, Tanzania), African Monograph Publishers Network/AMPNet (2017, South Africa).

²⁸ Records drawn from H. Zell (2008) *Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa: a critical bibliography*. Lochcarron: Hans Zell Publishing.

Describes the numerous problems and obstacles faced by scholarly publishers in Nigeria, and contends that forming a limited liability company for a university press 'may in fact be more of a liability than an asset in the long run'.

Bankole, S. B. (1990) 'Scholarly publishing in Nigeria', *Scholarly Publishing* 21 (2): 92–8.

The [former] managing director of the University of Lagos Press reviews the structure and management of Nigerian university presses in the 1980s and 1990s. He examines their shortcomings, and the fallacious thinking by university administrators who view their presses as an opportunity for making money in times of dwindling resources, rather than as an outlet for dissemination of scholarship. Makes some suggestions as to how university press publishing might be revitalized in the future, and calls for renewed collaborative ventures between Nigeria's scholarly presses.

Bankole, S. B. (1993) 'Scholarly publishing in Nigeria: the dilemma', *Bellagio Publishing Network Newsletter* 8 (5): 5–7.

Also published in *The Publisher* (1995) 3 (1) January: 31–2.

Probes the crisis in Nigerian scholarly publishing and the enormous problems faced by the country's university presses. Assesses future prospects, and calls for a change in attitudes by university administrators regarding the role and function of Nigerian university presses and the dissemination of scholarly publishing output.

Irele, A. (1986) 'The challenge of university publishing in Africa, with special reference to Nigeria', *African Book Publishing Record* 12 (3): 149–52.

Also reprinted in:

Altbach, P. G. (ed.) (1993) *Readings on Publishing in Africa and the Third World*. Buffalo NY: Bellagio Publishing Network, Research and Information Center (Bellagio Studies in Publishing 1).

The text of a talk given by Abiola Irele to 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. Discusses the peculiarities of scholarly publishing in Africa and especially in Nigeria, including an examination of textbook and general publishing. Suggests some possible avenues of expansion for African scholarly presses.

Kitchen, S. (2018) 'Interview with Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu' <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/abdul-kabir-hussain-solihu/>

Kwara State University Press 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 about motivation and challenges. Another topic discussed is that of publishing in conventional print format versus digital e-books.

McLean Rathgeber, E.-M. (1979) 'Nigeria's university presses: problems and prospects', *African Book Publishing Record* 5 (1): 13–17.

Identifies the problems and prospects for scholarly publishing in Nigeria in the 1970s and early 1980s. Very dated now, but this remains a useful background study, and is partially based on an MA thesis by the author.

Olukoju, A. (2002) 'The Crisis of Research and Academic Publishing in Nigerian Universities: the twentieth century and beyond' https://codesria.org/IMG/pdf/Ayodeji_Olukoju.pdf

Also available at: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/THE-CRISIS-OF-RESEARCH-AND-ACADEMIC-PUBLISHING-IN-Olukoju/e3c962ef679d57e70304c721aaa4cbf4c75ab663>

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. The 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. In his conclusion the author offers a set of recommendations for encouraging research and scholarship, and for the funding and revitalization of publication outlets for scholarly research in Nigeria.

Shaba, S. (1996) 'Flogging a dead horse? The state of tertiary book publishing in Nigeria', *Glendora Review* 1 (3): 39–41.

Also available at: <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/html/itemdetail.cfm?recordID=2191>

Takes stock of the tertiary publishing crisis in Nigeria; finds that it is 'comatose', and offers a number of strategies and suggestions which the author believes will improve the current situation 'with or without a depressed economy'.

Udoeyop, N. J. (1972) 'Scholarly publishing in Nigeria', *Scholarly Publishing* 4 (1): 51–60. A portrayal of scholarly publishing in Nigeria in the 1970s by a former editor of Ibadan University Press. The article sets out the press's role in education at all levels and in encouraging the study of Nigeria's national heritage. Describes how the press operates, examines some problems and constraints, and looks at the challenges for the press in the years ahead.

Udoeyop, N. J. (1975) 'The problems of publishing for a university press in Africa' in E. Oluwasanmi, E. McLean and H. M. Zell (eds), *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press.

An early account of university press publishing in Africa. Argues that the problems of publishing for an African university press stem, in part, from the history of the press and that of its parent body, together with inexperience and lack of publishing skills, awkward management structures, the slow process of decision-making, and other factors.

Part 2: Some recent articles on scholarly/university press publishing in Africa²⁹

Aina, L. O. (1999) 'The problems of tertiary publishing in Africa and implications for the training and education of library and information professionals', *Library Review* 48 (8): 399–402.

²⁹ This section of the Select Bibliography lists a number of (for the most part) recent papers and studies on scholarly publishing in Africa. It also includes some articles on the imbalances of knowledge production, the perceived threat of predatory journals, and the scale and nature of unethical practices in scholarly publishing.

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. 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.

Alemna, A. A. (2016) 'Scholarly Publishing in Africa and the Role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI)'. Accra: Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences (Annual Lecture in the Humanities). <http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/handle/123456789/8508>

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. Some African academics have published in exploitative predatory journals of dubious quality and integrity. The author suggests that scholars in Africa should take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of Open Access (OA) journals.

Darko-Ampem, K. (2003) 'Scholarly Publishing in Africa: a case study of African university presses'. PhD dissertation, University of Stirling. <http://dspace.stir.ac.uk/dspace/handle/1893/71>

This wide-ranging dissertation examines the policies and practices of six African university presses in five African countries (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 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. The author calls for more active collaboration among African scholarly presses (including joint publishing ventures, sharing of resources and expertise, reciprocal distribution, etc.) and 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.

Darko-Ampem, K. (2005) 'A university press publishing consortium for Africa: lessons from academic libraries', *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 36 (2): 89–114.

Based on the author's PhD dissertation (see record above).

Esseh, S. K. S. (2011) 'Strengthening Scholarly Publishing in Africa: assessing the potential of online systems'. PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia. Also available at: <https://pkp.sfu.ca/files/AfricanWorkshops.pdf>

A 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’.

Kitchen, S. (2017) ‘Interview with François van Schalkwyk, African Minds’ <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/interviews/francois-van-schalkwyk/>

François van Schalkwyk heads the South African Open Access, not-for-profit publisher African Minds.³⁰ He is also the co-author of an important study on African university presses³¹ (see record below). In this interview 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. University presses in Africa ‘cannot reconcile open access and the perceived loss of sales income with the royalty expectations of their authors’.

Le Roux, E. (2012) ‘The university as publisher: towards a history of South African university presses’ in A. van der Vlies (ed.), *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Examines 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 University of Cape Town). 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. ‘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.’

Le Roux, E. (2015) ‘Between the cathedral and the market: a study of Wits University Press’ in C. Davis and D. Johnson (eds) *The Book in Africa: critical debates*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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.

³⁰ <http://www.africanminds.co.za/>

³¹ https://www.academia.edu/33799890/The_African_University_Press

Le Roux, E. (2015) *A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa: between complicity and resistance*. Leiden: Brill.

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, this reputation was not merited; the Press evaded confrontation with the repressive apartheid state, or even colluded with it.

Moore, B. C. (2015) 'The Politics of Academic Publishing on/in Africa' <http://chi.anthropology.msu.edu/2015/10/politics-of-publishing/>

'African Studies is a white-owned field', the author declares. Bernard Moore argues that academic knowledge about Africa remains securely in Euro-American hands.

Mouton, J. (2017) 'Predatory Publishing in South Africa: scale and challenges' http://postgradenvironments.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Mouton-2017-Predatory-publishing-in-South-Africa_Scale-and-challenges_June-2017_SU_J...pdf

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 Beall and his Beall's List of Predatory Publishers 2016,³² together with an analysis of the extent of predatory publishing in South Africa.

Mouton, J. (2018) 'Scale and Nature of Unethical Practices in Scholarly Publishing' <https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/Appendix%20%20Scale%20and%20nature%20of%20unethical%20publishing%20-%20J%20Mouton.pdf>

A PowerPoint presentation made at the National Research Foundation (South Africa) Workshop on Ethics in Publishing held on 11 April 2018.³³ 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 scrutinizes 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. Mouton sets out some of the main challenges in identifying predatory journals.

Mouton, J. and A. Valentine (2017) 'The extent of South African authored articles in predatory journals', *South African Journal of Science* 113 (7/8): 1–9.

Another version available at: http://postgradenvironments.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Mouton-2017-Predatory-publishing-in-South-Africa_Scale-and-challenges_June-2017_SU_J...pdf

³² <https://scholarlyoa.com/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2016/>

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spW2QCHjBO4>

A critical examination of so-called predatory publishing in academic circles in South Africa, which confirms, the authors say, 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.

Naidu, E. and S. Dell (2019) 'Predatory Journals in the Firing Line', 31 May, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190531111556458>

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.

Okune, A. (2019) 'Decolonizing Scholarly Data and Publishing Infrastructures', 29 May, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2019/05/29/decolonizing-scholarly-data-and-publishing-infrastructures/>

This article is part of the thought-provoking blog/podcast series, Citing Africa,³⁴ that seeks to explore the 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.

Okune, A. *et al.* (2021) 'Conceptualizing, financing and infrastructuring: perspectives on Open Access in and from Africa', *Development and Change* 52 (2): 359–72.

Pre-print version (freely accessible) available at: <https://www.researchdatashare.org/content/okune-angela-sulaiman-adebowale-eve-gray-angela-mumo-and-ruth-oniang%E2%80%99-2020-%E2%80%9Cconceptualizing/>

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.

Opara, J. (2017) 'Nigeria's Predator Problem' <http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1370873>

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. Jackie Opara examines why so

³⁴ <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/?s=citing+africa&category=Citing-Africa>

many Nigerian researchers publish in predatory journals and ‘fall prey to the predator’s jaws’, and suggests some ways to beat the scourge.

Oppong, E. (2019) ‘Assessment of Project Management Processes in Scholarly Book Publishing in Ghana’. BA thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. 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’.

Thomas, A. (2015) ‘African Academics are Being Caught in the Predatory Journal Trap’, 29 October, <http://theconversation.com/african-academics-are-being-caught-in-the-predatory-journal-trap-48473>

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.

University of South Africa Library (2021) ‘Selecting a Quality Journal: predatory journals; predatory publishing bibliography’ <https://libguides.unisa.ac.za/journalquality>

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’ 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.

Tella, A. and B. Onyancha (2021) ‘Scholarly publishing experience of postgraduate students in Nigerian universities’, *Accountability in Research* 28 (7): 395–427.

Examines the scholarly 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’.

van Schalkwyk, F. (2016) ‘African University Presses: an African Minds research project’ https://www.academia.edu/29291359/African_University_Presses

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 records below). 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. As part of this project, African Minds has also created an interactive map of university presses in Africa that, it was promised, would be continuously updated. Users can either view the map by applying any of a number of filters, or download the full dataset.³⁵ However, updating would appear to have been limited thus far.

van Schalkwyk, F. (2020) 'Normative drift and self-correction in scholarly book publishing: the case of Makerere University', *Learned Publishing* 33 (3): 259–68.

'This paper asks what decisions are being taken by academics when it comes to their choice of scholarly book publisher. The article discusses possible reasons for the selection of suspect publishers and considers four factors that may account for the observable decline.'

van Schalkwyk, F. and T. M. Luescher (2017) 'The African University Press'. Cape Town: African Minds. <http://www.africanminds.co.za/african-university-presses/>

Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, this is 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. 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.

Waruru, M. (2018) 'Academics Are Cautioned to Avoid Predatory Journals', *University World News* 520, 14 September. <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20180911203520801>

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,

³⁵ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URiTsMVkeM12DlZT7lfxqcYgVEt0hohli4xIy983F18/edit#gid=0>.

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, 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.

Wild, S. (2017) 'Guide: How to Spot Predatory Academic Journals in the Wild' <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-how-to-spot-predatory-academic-journals-in-the-wild/>

This factsheet 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'. She 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'.

Zell, H. M. (2017) 'The African university press – a gloomy picture'. *University World News Global Edition*, Issue 475. <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170922175606239>

Issue 475 of *University World News* (UWN) reported on 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 Lüscher entitled *The African University Press* (see records above).³⁶

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.

Hans Zell has been author, editor, and publisher on African topics for almost five decades, and has written extensively on many aspects of publishing and book development in Africa. In addition to numerous articles and studies published in journals, he is also the author of several books, training manuals, and African studies reference resources.

³⁶ See also <https://zenodo.org/record/889744#.YdQ97GjP1Pa>