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<https://doi.org/10.70118/jaist.202501802.21>**Abstract**

**Purpose:** *The purpose of the paper is to discuss the roles played by Nigeria's academic libraries in the country's conventional book publishing industry.*

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** *The study was approached through exploratory method and review of related literature.*

**Findings:** *The paper found out that through availing authors conducive environment for writing, bindery services, massive book purchases, book fairs, and so on academic libraries, significantly impact Nigeria's book publishing industry at every stage.*

**Originality/Value:** *Academic libraries play significant roles in our book publishing sector. It is therefore very important that from the conceptual to production, and from the marketing and distribution to the fulfilment stages of publishing, academic libraries should live up to their billing in order to promote the dynamism and viability of the sector.*

**Implication:** *The argues that improved funding of our academic libraries will boost library book purchases thereby improving the lot of book publishers.*

**Keywords:** *Academic libraries, Conventional publishing, Book, Librarians, Roles, Nigeria, Library service.*

**Paper Type:** *Exploratory.*

**Introduction**

The importance of tertiary educational institutions in the overall development of a nation cannot be overemphasized. Such institutions preoccupy themselves with teaching, learning, research and community service in the process they churn out skilled manpower. In turn this skilled manpower ventures into every aspect of national life to effect and enforce modernization. This is the route through which countries like the U.S.A, France and the United Kingdom acquired

sufficient knowledge and skill to drive their economies and advance on the development rung. Nigeria realizes this fact. This is why she has increased her tertiary educational outfits from two at independence in 1960 to 274 universities, 183 polytechnics, and 236 colleges of education at present, comprising federal, state and private ones. In these days of mass education however, there have been arguments on the adequacy of the reach and impact of these institutions. Whether there is merit in this argument or not, it is

incontestable that tertiary educational institutions are a sine qua non for national development.

A central organ and driving force in these educational institutions is their progeny or arm called the academic library. By providing information resources on the basis of which teaching, learning and research are prosecuted, an academic library serves as the bedrock of tertiary education. This was why Maigari (1984) citing Elliot, insists that in setting up a university, he would first build up its library. Stressing further the importance of the academic library, Aguolu & Aguolu (2002:366) aver that the academic library is the life-blood of a university. The implication of this is that just as humans cannot survive without blood, no tertiary educational institution worth its sort can operate successfully without a library. Also underscoring the relevance of an academic library in a tertiary educational setting, Aguolu & Aguolu (2002) opine that providing for and maintaining such a library translates to a primary step in equipping a university. This is very important. In a clime like ours with low library awareness, an academic library must be well equipped and managed before it can be a force to be reckoned with in its environment.

On the other hand, b-o-o-k (batch-of-organized-knowledge) refers to a printed publication enclosed in covers which serves a number of purposes: -

- A means of communication.
- Transmission of ideas
- Means of interaction
- Tool in the business of education
- Means for transformation

The book as we know it today was preceded by other forms of record of man's activities—

cave walls, tree barks, stone, clay tablets, papyrus scrolls, parchment wax, and paper. Limitation in terms of durability, portability and so on at each stage warranted the search and migration to a better alternative. Even then at each of these stages there was need to preserve these records of man's civilization, organize accumulations of society's memory and make same available to both the present generation and posterity. This is the *raison d'être* of libraries. Libraries arrived the scene as mediators between man and the gargantuan sea of information materials. Man would have been drowned up by this sea of information resources if not for libraries that brought their skill and expertise to bear and make these resources easily accessible across generations. The business of organizing information in book form is called book publishing.

Conventional book publishing process involves transforming a manuscript into a book and distributing same to its intended market (Igwe, Ahmed, Alhassan & Saka 2015:4). Enang & Kolawole(2024) include details such as turning an idea into a manuscript, editorial work on the manuscript, printing and releasing the output onto the market as components of the publishing process. On the other hand Dare, Olujinmi & Ifeduba (2022:139) conceive book publishing as making anything publicly known. Book publishing deals with the process of articulating, packaging and distributing in book form the intellectual ideas, thoughts, experiences and perceptions of man. From the initial printing contraption invented by Gutenberg in 1450, book publishing has evolved over the years to involve several parties. The author generates manuscripts. The publisher fashions the work into the desirable. Next, the work goes through the hands of the printer. Next in line

is the book vendor who distributes the finished product to the consumer. The librarian is equally involved in book publishing because aside from book purchases, he performs other ancillary services that advance the course of publishing. In addition, he disseminates the information content of books to readers.

### **Book Publishing in Nigeria**

Rev. Hope Waddel and his printer-friend Samuel Edgerley introduced printing in Nigeria in 1846 when they set up a press in Calabar for the production of Christian literature (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2002; Igwe, Ahmed, Alhassan & Saka, 2015). In 1859, when they set up a press in Calabar for the production of Christian literature (Aguolu & Aguolu 2002; Igwe, Ahmed, Alhassan & Saka, 2015). In 1859, another missionary, Rev. Henry Townsend set up another press at Abeokuta which produced both religious literature and the first newspaper in Nigeria. 1910, saw the coming on board in Lagos of Tika-Tore Printing Works, a commercial publishing outfit. 1926 witnessed the birth of two newspaper publishing Houses-Lagos Daily News, and the Daily Times. In 1950 Ibadan University Press arrived Nigeria's publishing scene. Some other organizations that have come to expand the frontiers of Nigeria's publishing landscape include; Evans, Longman, University Press, Macmillian, Heinemann, Fourth Dimension, Onibinoje, Aromolaran, Ilesanmi, Literamed and so on. However, even with what seems to be an impressive number of publishing houses, inadequacies such as sole proprietorship, low print runs, imported machinery, imported raw materials (ink, paper, etc), poor management practices, low

quality personnel, prohibitive cost of books, poor distribution networks, and poor quality of products have come to characterize Nigeria's publishing industry. The direct consequence of this is that Nigeria's book production level trails far behind her book needs. The disturbing thing about this situation is that whereas Evans (2000) maintains that books remain the leading stock of libraries. Nwankwo (2005), even in the face of the relentless onslaught by digital technology, avers with a ring of certainty that the book will be with us for quite a while. Book importation to make up for the shortfall in book production comes with economic and security implications for the country.

### **The Roles of Academic Libraries in Conventional Book Publishing in Nigeria**

Academic libraries are in a mutually beneficial relationship with the book publishing industry. The quantum, quality and availability of publications have a ripple effect on the growth and vitality of these libraries. On the other hand academic libraries carry out a number of services that enable the publishing world to survive and prosper. Any disruption in these services negatively impacts on the book publishing industry. For instance, book publishing depends on academic libraries for the preservation, organization, patronage and dissemination of their products to users. At each of the four stages involved in book publishing (conceptual, production, marketing and distribution, and fulfilment) academic libraries play significant roles that sustain the industry. Set out below is a discussion of the specific roles played by academic libraries in our book publishing sector.

#### ***1. Conceptual stage***

At this stage a publisher determines the salability of a manuscript, the appropriateness of its language, the articulation of the facts and so on. Academic libraries perform the following roles at this stage

(a) *Assistance in the generation of manuscripts*

Worthwhile manuscripts which often metamorphose into published works are mostly the products of research and/or intellectually fecund minds. Academic libraries provoke such works by availing (prospective) authors of intellectually stimulating resources like books, internet facilities, reference facilities, and an inviting environment. A good chunk of Nigerian indigenously published literature emanates from our library patronizing academics, thus bearing eloquent testimony to this fact.

(b) *Conducive environment for writing.*

Comfortable furniture well-arranged books, secluded cubicles, ambient/ well-lit/noise free environment and flexible opening hours provided by academic libraries tend to fire the writing zeal in patrons.

(c) *Identifying gap in literature*

In the course of performing their daily chores, academic libraries stumble on areas of unmet needs or gaps in the literature. This information is used in guiding authors and publishers on possible lines of new intellectual and financial investment. This also holds true in the case of out-of-print materials (Evans, 2000:130; Katri 2012:184).

(d) *Directories of publishers/bibliographies*

Our academic libraries stock and also compile directories of publishers as well as bibliographies. For authors searching

for publishers with whom to do business, these tools can be handy and invaluable.

(e) *Publish or perish rule*

Extant rules require that all academic staff (including librarians) in academic institution must publish as partial condition for their promotion. In their bid to satisfy this requirement academic librarians generate massive literature that keep publishers mills running.

(f) *Editorial work*

There are several librarians in our academic libraries who have knack of, and demonstrable competence in editorial work. A good number of these serve on the editorial boards of some publishing houses as editors and consultants, reviewing works submitted for publication.

(g) *Organizing conferences/workshops.*

Academic libraries invite publishers to conferences at which ideas are exchanged on improving book quality, book availability, service improvement, and cooperation.

Proceedings of conferences, and workshops organized by these academic libraries often get published.

Some academic libraries also write and publish books.

All these activities swell the volume of published literature in Nigeria.

(II) *Production stage*

Issues relating to the physical format of a book such as typesetting, printing, illustrations, page design, font size, print run, etc. are resolved at this stage. Academic libraries contribute in the following ways:

(a) *Floating presses*

A number of academic libraries in Nigeria including University of

Nigeria Nsukka, University of Maiduguri, Federal University of Technology Owerri, and University of Lagos are known to have floated presses for book publishing. As at 2005, University of Ibadan Library Press had to her credit some 500 different book title publication apart from journals (Adesanoye, 2005).

*(b) Setting up bindery outfits*

As obtains at Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Federal University of Education Pankshin in Plateau state, and Delta State University Abraka libraries, academic library binderies help to prolong the lifespan of publications by re-enforcing some poorly bound ones. They also re-bind old and worn-out ones.

Some of these outfit have attained a level of perfection that some reputable publishers farm out part of their bindery work to them.

*(c) Observance of copyright law*

Piracy in its various dimensions, is one cankerworm threatening the existence of Nigeria's book industry, cornering some 60-80 per cent of the book trade with debilitating effects on publishing and intellectual creativity. ( Nw ankwo, 2005; Oyeyinka, Aganbi, & Adebayo, 2016; Oduagwu & Oduagwu, 2017). While the 2004 copyright law criminalizes piracy, advancements in duplication technology have tended to promote its cause.

Given the cheap price of pirated books relative to genuine copies, and the scant funds at the disposal of Nigeria's academic libraries, it amounts to the height of loyalty to the publishing industry for these libraries to stick to patronizing genuine books while shunning pirated copies. Even in their

reprographic service (which is quite massive), these libraries operate within the confines of the "fair use" provision, which allows limited copying of a work for scholarship purposes.

This limited duplication, alongside book loan which confers temporary book ownership on a registered library patron guards against unbridled photocopying and the (attendant) waning purchase of books.

There are claims to the effect that book loans can prove demoralizing to book purchases by individuals. This holds true to the extent that personal treasure of a book and/or the wherewithal to enforce permanent ownership of it is in short supply or non-existent.

*(d) Indexing*

Indexing- listing in an alphabetical sequence at the end of a work of all the major terms along with the corresponding page numbers where they occur. It confirms, eases and quickens the location of specific information in a book. Librarians in our academic libraries enhance the standard and quality of our publications by availing our publishers of their incisively professional indexing skills.

*(e) Archival/preservation role*

Nigeria's academic libraries throw their doors open for the storage and preservation of the country's intellectual output as churned out from our publishing houses.

**III Marketing and distribution stage**

This stage involves all that is geared towards creating awareness for a book, enhancing its sales, and making it reach the final consumer. Academic libraries contribute in the following ways at this stage:

(a) *Advertising/publishing book subject/ details*

Modern day, open access service in libraries emphasizes library processing as a key function in enhancing reader access to books on the shelves. In the course of processing the subject of a book is determined, and its bibliographic details are recorded. As this knowledge guides arrangement, books treating similar subjects are brought closely together on the shelves.

Processing serves an incidental advertising benefit to the publisher. Going through the records or collection in an interested subject area, a patron will get the details of titles he might be interested in. This awareness might create demand for such in him.

In the same vein the bibliographies and catalogue of our academic libraries serve as book selection tools to other libraries, institutions and individuals, University of Ibadan, for instance, acting as the national depository centre performed this function at the national level from 1950 to 1973. Obafemi Awolowo, Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello, and Lagos Universities also took up similar roles of bibliography compilations at regional levels and at various times.

It is also an indisputable fact that book loans permeate a wider segment of the literate population.

(b) *Patronage*

Weak purchasing power occasioned by spiraling poverty and hyperinflation, low literacy level, and the prohibitive cost of books have conspired to push book purchase to rock bottom level in Nigerians' scales of preference. Although Raju & Pietersen

(2016) paint a grim picture of the dwindling financial fortune of Africa's (Nigeria inclusive) academic libraries, certain indices point to this category of libraries remaining the lifeline to our publishing industries. Aguolu & Aguolu (2002) estimate that academic libraries book purchases account for 95 percent of the total. Given their preponderance (693), their collective financial clout relative to other entities, the UNESCO prescription of additional 10,000 volumes of book and journals per university per annum, accreditation requirements on a certain minimum book provision for an academic department to be mounted or kept afloat, and the rat race to build an efficient collection to satisfy an ever burgeoning clientele, our academic libraries might remain the biggest customers of Nigeria's conventional book publishing industry for a while. Writers like Garfield and Lancaster had predicted that by the year 2000, conventional books would have been completely displaced by electronic media (Ifidion 2006 citing Apeji,1991). Okiy (1998 :24) completely aligns with this view. Two and half decades after the predicted doomsday scenario date, soaring book production figures puncture the plank of these futuristic writer's argument. For instance, from 2,316 in 1991/2, Nigeria's conventional book production jumped over six folds to 15,716 in 2001/2. ( Ifidion 2006:3), This wouldn't be, if electronic media had submerged books. Instead, lamentations of book famine have continued to rend the air (Balogun,1997). Even in an advanced economy like the USA where the electronic media is making waves, sales income for book publishing increased steadily from \$14.1 billion in 1989 to some \$22.1 billion in 1998 (Evans, 2000:141).

(c) *Book fairs*

Book fairs organized by our academic libraries present opportunities for the intermingling of publishers, book vendors, librarians, the academic community and the general public. They also create room for the expansion of book sales, negotiating book business contracts, and recruiting new authors

*(d) Book review*

Book review, a critique on the strengths, weakness, kernel, structure, delivery, price. etc. of a publication, or one still in the works, serves publicity ends. Given the near absence of formal training opportunities in book publishing in our clime, the authority of library workers in the world of books, and their walk with readers, book review when undertaken by academic library personnel, can prove to be an invaluable guide in improving and revising publications.

*(e) Book display*

The display of new arrivals in our academic libraries increases the awareness and prominence for such books with possible increased demand for them. Sales promotion tools like trade catalogues are not in vogue in Nigeria's book trade. This is why the exposure, motivation and economic benefit that accrue to authors and publishers in the wake of book display cannot be overemphasized.

*(f) Bookshop*

Some academic libraries operate bookshops which make the work of publishers available to the reading public.

*(g) Reading/literacy campaign*

Academic libraries have been known to make available materials to sustain and expand literacy. They also use various fora like the UNESCO designated yearly 'World Book Day' to organize reading competitions and campaigns, thus increasing the love of,

and demand for books. The relevance of the campaign is better appreciated when one looks at the sorrowful state of Nigeria's reading culture (Oyeyinka, Aganbi and Mewolara-odule,2016:6).

*(h) Censorship*

Academic libraries in Nigeria, and elsewhere are known to be staunch advocate of unhindered information flow. Censorship stands opposed to this, because it favors restriction in the circulation of certain literature. Academic libraries reduce the detriment foisted on authors and publishers by standing- up to and throwing away the shackles of censorship (institutional, political, religious, legal or personal).

*(iv) Fulfilment stage*

At the fulfilment stage a publisher is concerned with whether a publication satisfied the purpose for its publication. Fabunmi (2004) contends that prior identification of consumers' interests or tastes, and guidance by same, guarantees success of a publication. Incidentally, book publishing and academic libraries not only serve identical audiences and the same end of disseminating ideas contained in books, they are guided by the same principles in their dealings with their clientele. Library user studies, profiles of library users, statistics of use of library resources, loans records of specific titles, among other records, can therefore prove invaluable in determining the interests of readers, as well as in assessing the success of any publication.

**Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it is apparent that Nigeria's academic libraries constitute a vital pillar of support to our book publishing industry. They offer various services and

patronize the publishing world in a way that keep it afloat. Even though that Nigerian conventional book publishing industry remains at the fledging level, it falls short in meeting the country's book needs among other weaknesses. This situation is largely a reflection of the inadequacies in the academic library setting. It stands to reason therefore that a sure way of shoring up our ailing book industry is to enhance the fortunes of our academic libraries. Improved funding of our academic libraries for instance, will boost library book purchases thereby improving the lot of book publishers.

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