

BOOK PUBLISHING IN IMO STATE: THE CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Fanny O. Egwim

Taiwo A. Akinde

Ifeyinwa Blessing Okoye

Federal University of Technology, Owerri

ABSTRACT

This work is on the challenges that face Book Publishers in Imo State and how these challenges can be overcome. The paper started with considering the history of book publishing in Nigeria and Imo State in particular after which it proceeded to define Publishing, highlighting the Book Publishing processes. A profile of Book Publishers in the State was made. In order to find out the actual state of Book Publishing in Imo State, survey research scheme was employed and questionnaire was used as a major instrument to collect data from thirty Publishing Houses. The study revealed that majority of publishers in Imo State engaged in publishing Tertiary Institution textbooks. High cost of imported machinery and raw materials, lack of credit facilities, piracy, poor reading culture, poor quality of locally sourced materials and lack of mechanism put in place to control entry into the profession were identified, among others, as major constraints to book publishing in Imo State. Based on the analysis of the responses, suggestions were made on how Book publishing can be further promoted in Imo State. The paper concluded and made recommendations on how Book Publishing can help in enhancing scholarship in the State.

INTRODUCTION-AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Book Publishing was first introduced in Nigeria in 1846 by the Scottish Presbyterian Mission, led by Rev. Hope Waddell who arrived Calabar from Jamaica, bringing with him a lithographic press and a conventional press for letter press printing. He published the first printed materials in Nigeria "Twelve Bible Lessons" and "Efik Vocabulary" in the same year. The first Nigerian newspaper "Iwe Irohin" was published at Abeokuta in Yoruba land in 1859 by the Methodist Missions, while the first, privately owned newspaper, "Anglo-African", was issued in 1863 by a Jamaican Immigrant named Robert Campbell. Hence, in the second half of the 19th century, Nigerian printing and publishing were tied mainly to Newspaper Journalism. However, the first Nigerian commercial press, viz: the Tika-Tore Printing Works, not tied to newspaper publishing, was established in 1910 Lagos. (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002).

These presses however, had a limited subject range as their major focus was on religious, topical and political issues of the day. School texts, general and light readings and scholarly publications had to be imported, as the Nigerian school curricula were not very different from their European counterparts.

Nevertheless, to cater for the growing educational system, the Oxford University Press (which later in 1978 became known as University Press Ltd as a result of the Nigerian Indigenization Decree of 1977) set up its branch at Ibadan in 1949. This was followed by the establishment of the Ibadan University Press in 1950, which became a full-fledged publishing outfit in 1955 following the University Senate's decision. Onibonjo Press was established in

1958. Other indigenous publishers of consequence emerged in the 1960's and 1970's. They included: African Educational Press Onitsha, John West Publications. Lagos, Fourth Dimension, Enugu, Ilesanmi Press, Ibadan, the Ethiope Publishing Corporation, Lagos and Northern Nigerian Publishing Corporation. (NNPC) which was a joint state publishing venture, based in Zaria.

Other Nigerian University Presses emerged by the end of 1970'. They include: Ife University Press, University of Nigeria Press, University of Lagos Press, Ahmadu Bello University Press and University of Port-Harcourt Press. All these scholarly Publishing Houses belonged to the moribund "Scholarly Publishers Association of Nigeria" (SPAN) inaugurated in 1988 and open to all Nigerian University Presses, publishing divisions of Research Institutes, Professional Associations, Learned Societies and Commercial Publishers with scholarly interest.

Other British outfits that tried to control (and are still controlling) Nigerian book market before the indigenization decree of 1977 are: Longman. Thomas Nelson, Macmillan, Evans Brothers and Heinemann,

Despite, today's proliferation of all types of publishing houses: commercial, scholarly, religious and state subsidy in almost all the states of the Federation, the publishing needs of the country are still far from being met. Most of the publications needed in the tertiary institutions, especially the universities for teaching and research, continue to be imported from the USA and Europe. Although this situation has remained the same, the trend has now changed with most of the imported books coming from India, while the printing materials come from Malaysia, Indonesia, India and China. The obstacles to the development of the publishing industry in Nigeria (and Imo State in particular) and how these can be addressed, thus, became the main thrust of this paper,

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE AREA OF STUDY

The study centred on book publishing in Imo state. Imo state was created in the South Eastern Nigeria, among others, in 1976 by the then Military Administration of Major General Ramat Muritala Mohammed. Since inception, the publishing effort in the State has been mainly that of the private sector. The foreign / multinational Publishing Houses like Evans, Macmillan, Longman, Spectrum, Heinemann, University Press, etc. established their presence in the State by opening Book Depots and Warehouses while their Publishing Presses remained in the South Western Nigeria, especially at Ibadan and Lagos.

However, the oldest and the largest indigenous publisher in the State is the Totan Publishing Ltd which was established in 1974 (Mirikwe, 2006). This was followed by the establishment of Africana-FP in 1980, IMOCO in 1985, Crown Publishers in 1988 and Web-media in 1989. Other indigenous Publishing Houses in the State emerged in the 1990's and the 2000's.

Majority of Publishing Houses in Imo State are located in Owerri, the capital city. This is probably, because of proximity to infrastructural facilities, a literate urban environment and

institutions of higher learning which serve as the major market for the products of the Book Publishing Industry.

The Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) is considered not active in the State (Okoronkwo, 2006), leaving the publishing efforts in the State unorganized and uncoordinated centrally. The University Presses that would have boosted scholarly publishing have not been well developed in the two Universities domicile in the State namely:- Federal University of Technology, Owerri and Imo State University, Owerri. Also Government Press, which was established in the State House, published only political literature and government documents. Last, but not the least, of the publishing houses found in the State, are religious presses established by religious bodies for religious propagation. Foremost among these, is the Assumpta Press. Publishers of The Leader: a Catholic religious weekly newspaper.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This exercise set out to:-

1. Study the growth and development of the Book Publishing Industry in Imo State.
2. Find out the class of books mostly published by these Publishing House,
3. Find out what constraints militate against Book Publishing in the state; and
4. Proffer suggestions that would promote / enhance Book Publishing activities in Imo State.

THE CONCEPT OF PUBLISHING CLARIFIED:

Publishing has been defined as the industry concerned with the production and dissemination of literature or information - the activity of making information available for public view (Wikipedia, 2006). Traditionally, the term refers to the production and distribution of printed works such as books and newspapers. With the advent of digital information system and the Internet, the scope of publishing has expanded to include electronic resources, such as the electronic versions of books and periodicals, as well as websites, blogs and the like. Publishing includes the acquisition of the manuscript(s) /work(s), production - printing (and its electronic equivalents) marketing and distribution of newspapers, magazines, books, literary works, musical works, software and other works dealing with information, including the electronic media. However, the focus of the present paper is only on book publishing as indicated in the title.

BOOK PUBLISHERS IN IMO STATE: A PROFILE

According to Osuagwu (2005), a publisher is the entrepreneur who assumes responsibility for the issuance of a book (or other media) to the public. He promotes its sale through the distribution of review copies, advertising, maintaining a sales force and the stock of copies, handles sales both to the wholesalers and retail bookstores and on occasion, by mail to individual purchasers.

A list of commercial Book Publishers in Imo state as compiled during the site visits and interviews included:

1. Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Pic; Okigwe Road, Owerri

2. Longman Nig. Pic, Orlu Road, Owerri. .
3. Evans Brothers Nig. Pub. Ltd., Orlu Road, Owerri.
4. Macmillan Nig. Publishers Ltd., Aladirima, Owerri.
5. University Press Pic; Ikenegbu, Owerri.
6. Spectrum Publishing Ltd, Orlu Road, Owerri.
7. Totan Publishers, MCC/ Uratta Road, Owerri.
8. Africans First Publishers, Okigwe Road, Owerri.
9. IMOCO Publishers, Mere Street, Owerri,
10. Crown Publishers, Mbaise Road, Owerri.
11. Web-media, Wetberal Road. Owerri.
12. Alphabet Publishers, Mbaise Road, Owerri.
13. Edna-Ben, Ajoku Street, Owerri.
14. Springfield Publishers, Plot 9/11 Housing Estate, Area L, Secretariat, Owerri.
15. Skillmark Media, Kagha Street, Owerri.
16. Supreme Publishers, Okigwe Road, Owerri.
17. Cape Publishers, Ikenegbu, Owerri.
18. CEL-BEZ & Co. Publishers, Douglas Road, Owerri.
19. Tonny Ben Publishers, School Road, Owerri.
20. Reliable Publishers, Mere Street, Owerri.
21. Avan Global, Lobo Street, Owerri.
22. Nationwide, Royce Road, Owerri.
23. Readon Publishers, Egbu Road, Owerri.
24. Versatile Publishers, Ikenegbu, Owerri.
25. Goodwill Publishers, Erekwere Street, Owerri
26. Ambassador Press, Edede Street, Owerri.
27. Gilson Press, Njemanze Street, Owerri.
28. UmeloBros. Ltd, TetlowRoad, Owerri.
29. Okson Printing Services, Royce Road, Owerri.
30. Oscar Graphics, Ajoku Street, Owerri.
31. Ihem Davis Printing Press, Uratta Road, Owerri.
32. Assumpta Press, New Owerri Layout, Owerri
33. Transfiguration Press, Uzii, 38 Mbaise Road, Owerri, and
34. Government Press, Owerri.

It is pertinent to state explicitly that except for the first eight, all the others in (he above list are merely printing houses.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Survey research design was employed in this study. The target population was the total number of Book publishers in Imo State which was taken to be thirty four firms of publishers and printers-listed above.

The main instrument that was used for data collection was the questionnaire. Questionnaire is easy, fast and cheap to administer considering the dispersion of the respondents and the time

constraints. The said questionnaire (see Appendices 1 & II) contained three sections. Section A was on business profile, Section B dealt with constraints to book publishing in the State, while section C called for suggestions on how book publishing can be further promoted and assist in enhancing scholarship in Imo State. In all, the questionnaire had seven (7) unstructured open-ended questions and three (3) structured close- ended questions. The unstructured questions which were on business profile helped us to obtain background information on our area of study. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers from the insight gleaned from the review of related literature. Furthermore, the researchers visited some of the Publishing Houses under review to administer the questionnaire personally to the individual respondents.

This facilitated early responses and offered the respondents opportunity to seek clarifications on whatever appeared ambiguous to them in the questionnaire.

Most of the questionnaire was recovered promptly. The data so collected were descriptively analyzed using tables, simple percentages and frequency distribution.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS:

Out of thirty (30) copies of (he questionnaire given out, twenty-five (25) were duly filled and returned. This represented an 83.33% rate of return. Subsequently, analysis in this work was based on twenty five - the number of responses received.

Responses on the nature of the book publishing activities engaged in by publishers in Imo State are shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: BOOK PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES IN IMO STATE

S/N	OPTION	BASE NO.	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
1.	Tertiary Institution Books	25	23	92
2.	Secondary School Text Cooks	25	18	72
3	Primary School Text Books	25	16	64
4.	Others (Fictions)	25	18	72

Twenty-three (23) or 92% of the Publishers in Imo State engaged in publishing Tertiary Institution Books, eighteen (18) or 72% published both Secondary Schools texts and other general reading materials such as fictions, while sixteen (16) or 64% engaged in producing and marketing Primary School's texts.

The above findings is understandable as most of the higher institutions in the State are situated in Owerri. Publishers will be making efforts to meet with the book requirement of these tertiary institutions. They would want to maximize their sales as well as their profits. Also, the multinationals/foreign publishers are the major stakeholders in the production and distribution of both Secondary and Primary texts. Though indigenous publishers still engage in this area, they do so on "Print on demand" basis only. Other light reading materials and generalise are produced both by the indigenous and the foreign publishers. It can also be deduced from Table 1 that none of the publishers engaged exclusively in the production of

just a single category of books; that is, for either tertiary institutions, secondary or primary schools. Rather, apart from publishing books in their preferred areas, they also published to some extent, in those areas of lesser interest to them.

The percentages were computed as follows:

$\frac{(\text{Frequency} \times 100)\%}{\text{Base No}}$ For example; for tertiary institution textbook

It is $\frac{(23 \times 100)\%}{25} = 92\%$

An insight into the constraints to Book Publishing in Imo State could be gleaned from 'Table 2 below

Twenty-three (23) or 92% of the respondents in this table identified 'High cost of machinery with heavy import duties' and 'High cost of imported raw materials e.g. Paper, ink, etc.' as major constraints, while twenty (20) or 80% saw 'Lack of credit facilities' and 'Piracy' as the runners up constraints to book publishing in the state. However, eighteen (18) or 72% pointed to 'Poor reading culture' and 'Poor quality of locally sourced materials,' while fourteen (14) or 56% consider 'Lack of mechanism put in place to control entry into the profession*' as yet another constraint to book publishing in the state.

Lastly, thirteen (13) or 52% believe that 'difficulties in repairing/replacing equipment in case of breakdown' would constitute a constraint to book publishing in the state.

Field Survey had earlier revealed that most of the multinationals merely established their outlets in Owerri but left their Publishing Houses in the South West part of the country. It is believed that this attitude stemmed from such constraints as we discussed in this paper. It is advisable to address these issues that discouraged Book Publishing in Imo State.

TABLE 2 THE CHALLENGES OF BOOK PUBLISHING IN IMO STATE

S/N	OPTION	BASE NO.	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
a.	Lack of mechanism put in place to control entry into the profession	25	14	56
b.	Lack of credit facilities 25	25	20	80
c.	Poor reading culture of the populace	25	18	72
d.	Piracy, photocopying, and duplication for commercial purposes	25	20	80
e.	Low educational level of most publishing staff	25	12	48
f.	Lack of bibliographical tools to advertise new publications	25	7	28
g.	Non-compliance with legal deposit law which could have helped in promoting the book(s)	25	6	24
h.	The challenge of multimedia publishing	25	6	24
i.	Unsatisfactory Book Review medium	25	9	36
j.	High cost of machinery with heavy import duties	25	23	92
k.	Difficulties in repairing /replacing equipment in case of breakdown	25	13	52
l.	High cost of imported raw materials (e.g paper, ink, etc)	25	23	92
m.	Poor quality of locally sourced materials	25	18	72
n.	The Challenge of internet and self-publishing	25	II	44

TABLE 3- BOOK PUBLISHING IN IMO STATE: THE WAY FORWARD

S/N	OPTION	BASE NO.	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
i.	Development of university presses	25	9	36
ii.	Development of Government Presses	25	7	28
iii.	Establishment of more paper Mills by Government/Private sector and the revival of the moribund ones.	25	21	84
iv.	Securing licensing rights from foreign publishers & franchising	25	8	32
V.	Training, education and continuing education of publishing staff	25	19	76
vi.	Increased sales promotion (e.g. Book Exhibition, Trade Fair, Book-reading campaigns, etc)	25	16	64
vii.	Strengthening the local capacity (through tax relief loan facilities, etc.	25	IS	72
2	Others (please, specify) 1. Heavy penalty on piracy 2. Local publishers should be given governments' contract to produce school texts.	25	2 1 1	8

Table 3 examined how Book Publishing can be further promoted in Imo State. Analysis above showed that twenty-one (21) or 84% of the respondents suggested 'Establishment of more paper mills by Government and the Private Sector, as well as the revival of the moribund ones: Nineteen (19) or 76% upheld the need for 'Training, education and continuing education of publishing staff. Also, eighteen (18) or 72% suggested "strengthening indigenous capacity through relief, loan facilities, etc; while sixteen (16) or 64% saw 'increased sales promotions e.g. Book exhibition. Trade fair, Book reading campaign, etc. as means of promotion Book publishing in Imo State, Meaningful Government and Private Sector participation, manpower training, provision of loan facilities as well as adequate publicity will promote Book Publishing in Imo State.

CONCLUSIONS

This work considered the origin of Book Publishing in Nigeria and Imo State. It then defined the concept of publishing, highlighted book publishing processes, and produced a profile of

Book publishers' in Imo State. To provide answers to these research questions, data collected using questionnaire were descriptively and discreetly analyzed.

In conclusion, it is our view that developing and strengthening a literate environment in Nigeria, or any of its states, is only possible if reading materials are of good quality, affordable and available in sufficient quantities. These should be accessible to a wide range of readers, regardless of where they live (Ochogwu, 1991). Since learning is a life-long affair, publishing books that meet the demands of every stage of life will make learning easier and more worthwhile (Ijewere, 2006). In Summary, government should ensure that books produced in Imo State of Nigeria are of very high quality in material and content and comparable with what is obtainable in any other part of the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above revelations the researchers wish to make the following recommendations:

- i. Local and /or indigenous authors, especially, University Lecturers, should be encouraged to produce textbooks and professional literature of high academic merit. Both the Nigerian Governments and the Universities should make adequate research grants available to the academic to undertake theoretical, applied, or development oriented research projects which would be published soon on completion,
- ii. Other Funding Agencies (e.g. British Council, The World Bank , African Development Bank, the Social Sciences Research Council of Nigeria, etc) as potential and prospective sources of research grants, are also being called upon to encourage indigenous authorship and publishing through funding.
- iii. The Imo State Chapter of the Nigerian Publishers' Association should be established and organized to coordinate and control publishing efforts in the State. For effective control on the practice and the education of publishers to be achieved, there should be an enabling law or legislation backing the Association.
- iv. Most of the published scholarly books are purchased by academic and research libraries, hence, these libraries should be well developed and more actively supported by their institutional authorities and governments, in order not to deny the publishing industry this key market.
- v. Notwithstanding that the emergence of e-books and e-journals have drastically reduced (he level of acquisition of the traditional book, with the slow pace of the development and integration of these formats in academic and research libraries in the country, the "book", as we know it today, will still remain with us for many years to come.
- vi. Book printing Technology as *a* course should be offered in all the Polytechnics and Universities of Technology in the country to meet the growing personnel needs of the publishing industry.
- vii. Book publishers in Imo State are encouraged to open websites where they can publish their works electronically to increase access to these works. This could also help them lo download any foreign books of interest, either on subscription or on open access,

REFERENCES

- Aguolu, C.C. & Aguolu, I. E. (2002). Publishing, structure and development Libraries and information management in Nigeria: Seminar essays on themes and problems. Maiduguri: ED-LINFORM Services.
- Ijewere, D. (2006). Interview with Chairman, Longman Nigeria Ltd., Owerri. 31 October.
- Mirikwe, T. (2006) Interview with Chairman, Totan Publishers, Owerri. 31 October.
- Ochogwu, M.G. (1991). Instructional and research resources for library education in Nigeria: Problems of availability and accessibility. Available online at <http://www.worlib.org/voll02n02ochongwu-vo2n2.shtml-30k-cached>. Date last accessed 20^m of October. 2006.
- Oduagwu, E.A. (2005}. *Publishing processes and techniques*. Owerri: Demmac Consult (Nigeria) in association with CEL-BEZ & Co. Publishers.
- Okoronkwo, B.C. (2006). Interview with Chairman, EDNA-Ben Publishers, Owerri. 27 October.
- Wikipedia (2006). "Publishing" Wikipedia encyclopedia. Available online at <http://www.wikipcdia.org/free-encyclopedia/publications/>. Date last accessed 20th of 3October, 2006.