

This pre-print version uploaded on Academia.edu on 03 February 2022.

Final version to be published in *Africa Bibliography, Research and Documentation* vol. 1 (2021)
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/africa-bibliography-research-and-documentation/information>
ISSN: 2752-6399 (Print), 2752-6402 (Online)

The Current State of Nigerian University Presses – A Bleak Picture

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In the 1970s and 80s 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. The 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 economic structural adjustment that have drastically curtailed government spending, and which have 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 should 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; or there is certainly no evidence that such strategies have been successful. If a university press wanted to compete in the textbook markets, for tertiary education, much less 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: that would call for a 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 gaining 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 very 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/licenses 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 reported in a recent paper¹

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:

we can say that despite some modest progressive efforts outlined above, 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 this writer lived and worked in Nigeria for three years in the early 1970s there were less than ten universities in that country, and they were all Federal universities. Today the figure is a total of 161! (43 Federal, 48 State universities, and 70 private universities.)

A university ranking table of 155 Nigerian institutions of higher learning can be found at <https://www.4icu.org/ng/>. However, I have no knowledge of the activities of all these new private universities – and their academic publishing programmes, if any – and so I am unable to comment on them.

Wikipedia, in their most recent list of university presses worldwide, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_university_presses lists just one press under Nigeria, the Ibadan University Press.

¹ Jay, Mary, and Stephanie Kitchen "Decolonisation and co-publishing" (2019)
<http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/decolonisation-and-co-publishing>

The African Books Collective (ABC) <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/>, the Oxford-based but African owned and governed worldwide marketing and distribution organization for books from Africa, celebrated its 30th year of trading in 2020, during which time it successfully transitioned from a donor-dependent NGO to a self-sustaining, independent, and successful social enterprise. According to ABC's website <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/about-us> 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 investigation, which sought to throw some light on the present state of activities by Nigerian university presses, reveals the following picture:

Obafemi Awolowo University Press (OAU, formerly Ife University Press)

A Book Depository page lists 26 titles from this press, most of them published in the 1980s-1990s and some in the early twenties, with the most recent one published in 2014.

<https://www.bookdepository.com/publishers/Obafemi-Awolowo-University-Press-Nigeria>, while the Open Library

https://openlibrary.org/publishers/Obafemi_Awolowo_University_Press_Limited lists 10 titles published between 1987 and 2011.

The ABC page for that press at <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/publishers/obafemi-awolowo-university-press> lists none.

I was unable track down an active web page for Obafemi Awolowo University Press, and the university's website <https://oauife.edu.ng/> offers no link to the press. However, it does have a link to "Institutional journals" <https://oauife.edu.ng/research/institutional-journals>, which in turn offer 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 page <https://ir.oauife.edu.ng/handle/123456789/5006> offers access to annual reports, gazettes, convocation lectures, speeches, faculty lectures among others.

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

Ibadan University Press <https://www.ui.edu.ng/content/ibadan-university-press> boasts to be "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.

The home page of the **University of Lagos Press** <http://unilagpress.com/> 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."

African Books Collective indicates no products from this press are currently available <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/publishers/university-of-lagos-press/?searchterm=None>

while the university's repository <https://ir.unilag.edu.ng/handle/123456789/2102> lists merely a large number of occasional papers and a lecture series.

A (suspect) Book Depository page <https://www.bookdepository.com/publishers/University-Of-Lagos-Press> lists as many as 81 titles, most published in the 1980s and 90s, and some from early 2000, 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 Bookshop <http://unilagbookshop.com/about-us/> states (with its usual modesty!):

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

Recently added by ABC is the **Kwara State University Press**

<https://www.kwasu.edu.ng/kwasupress/> and their website is marginally better 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 <https://www.kwasu.edu.ng/kwasupress/aboutus.html>, 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.

It is actually an attractive initial list (originally developed by the late Professor Abiola Irele, while serving as Provost at KWASU), and under "Our publications" it gives access to 15 pages of book covers and descriptions. However, it provides no bibliographic data, ISBNs, prices, etc., much less ordering information, nor an indication that outside Nigeria their books are distributed by African Books Collective. The link to "Journals".

<http://journals.kwasu.edu.ng/cgi-sys/defaultwebpage.cgi> leads to a dead/inactive page, while <https://journals.kwasu.edu.ng/index.php/index/about> leads to a risky page with a warning “Your connection is not private”.

Although the present website looks rather amateurish and is not user friendly, there is an interesting interview with the former head of the Kwasu press (2017-2020), “Interview with Professor Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu” at ABC’s subsite Read African Books <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/abdul-kabir-hussain-solihu/> (see Select bibliography below). Solihu talks eloquently about the considerable challenges of marketing and distributing their 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 not distributed by ABC, are these:

University of Nigeria Press. Their website at <https://www.unn.edu.ng/university-of-nigeria-press/> 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 has a website at <http://buk.edu.ng/press/> as well as a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/bukpresskano/>.

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 provides no details of any books published, while a link to “Bayero University Journals” on the university’s web pages list over 30 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 https://openlibrary.org/publishers/University_of_Port_Harcourt_Press lists details of a total of 19 titles. The Press still has a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/University%20of%20Port%20Harcourt%20Press/495855090498299/> but the main university website <https://www.uniport.edu.ng/> offers no link to a university 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.

A link to “Research Publication” doesn’t work. A link to “Uniport Journals” <https://www.uniport.edu.ng/publications/pub1/journals.html> gives links to nine scholarly and literary journals, some of which indicate “Publishing house: University of Port Harcourt Press”, most of them irregularly published apart from one.

The website of Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria <https://www.abu.edu.ng/> offers no link to the **Ahmadu Bello University Press**, which has been acting as both publishers and printers, but their former web page at <http://www.abupress.org/> comes 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 imprint <https://journals.abu.edu.ng/> including access to back issues for most. ABU Press Limited still has a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/abupresslimited/>, but the last posting goes back to April 2014.

ABU Press published some substantial scholarly studies in the 1970s and 80s (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 73 works published between 1971 and 2011 https://openlibrary.org/publishers/Ahmadu_Bello_University_Press. The Press’ current status is not known.

Finally, and in contrast with all the presses mentioned above, one press that is very much active today is **University Press plc** <https://universitypressplc.com/> 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 for general reading. A number of their titles are available from African Books Collective at <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/publishers/university-press-nigeria>.

Past and recent studies on Nigerian university presses

Below 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 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 kind of studies (many of them based on information or data collected via descriptive survey questionnaires) tend to be inadequately researched and documented, are for the most part poorly written, and it can be argued that such poor-quality research is damaging to the academic credibility and standing of Nigerian scholars.

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 of them are certainly deceptive, exploitative, opportunist, and disreputable, that make false claims, promote shoddy scholarship, and make a great deal of money out of it in the process. But where else then should Nigerian academics seek to publish their papers? Many Nigerian scholarly journals of high quality published by some of the above-mentioned 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 put it in a recent insightful article²:

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. ... In our research we have heard many stories of the challenges of getting published in the 'right' journals. ... The prevailing sense is that the existing 'high impact' journals are biased against African scholars. 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* twenty years ago (see Select bibliography), in which he reviewed the (then) structure and management of Nigerian university presses and its shortcomings, wrote that there is this

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.

² Mills, David "Going online can redress global inequalities in academic collaboration" <https://www.coronatimes.net/going-online-academic-collaboration/> (2020)

That, unhappily, seems to be very much the picture of 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 a meeting of the Royal Commonwealth Society in London in 1985 (and published in the *African Book Publishing Record* in 1986 (see Select bibliography), in which he defined the role of the university press in Africa as

having 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 a July 2018 interview, with the former head (2017-2020) of the Kwara State University Press mentioned earlier, Professor Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu³, 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)⁴ 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 by Western presses, and the availability of content within Africa, remains 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.

³ Kitchen, Stephanie Interview with Professor Kabir Hussain Solihu (2018)
<https://www.readafricanbooks.com/publisher-profiles/abdul-kabir-hussain-solihu/>

⁴ <https://codesria.org/spip.php?rubrique4>

As Francois van Schalkwyk aptly put it in a recent interview⁵, 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 initiatives⁶ for collaboration, networking, and sharing of know-how among African scholarly publishers; launched with the 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.

Acknowledgement: For comments on an early draft on this paper I am indebted to Sulaiman Adebawale, Founder and Director of Amalion Publishers in Dakar
<https://www.amalion.net/>.

⁵ Kitchen, Stephanie Interview with Francois van Schalkwyk, African Minds (2017)
<https://www.readafricanbooks.com/interviews/francois-van-schalkwyk/>

⁶ 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, 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).

Appendix: Select bibliography

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

Records drawn from *Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Bibliography*. Lochcarron, Scotland: Hans Zell Publishing, 2008.

Aguolu, C.C., and I.E. Aguolu **"Scholarly Publishing and Nigerian Universities."** *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 29, no. 2 (January 1998): 118-129. [No digital version available]

Also at

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294573117_Scholarly_publishing_and_Nigerian_universities (Freely accessible, 'Request full-text PDF')

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. They argue that university presses have a special obligation to help disseminate the results of the research and the ideas of Nigerian scholars, as some African scholarship may be rejected by international publishers for being too local in orientation; and that they must strive to maintain their independence of editorial judgement and of function, and must not be seen as a merely revenue-yielding service. The authors also believe that, in an African situation, university presses should go beyond publishing research monographs, learned journals and conference proceedings, and "should embrace the publication of tertiary-level textbooks and creative writing that reflect Nigerian culture and creativity." They also challenge other concepts of university press publishing, e.g. "a university press need not have its own printing house. Printing is a separate industry that has become highly technological", and that new approaches will have to be found for the marketing and distribution of scholarly materials. Makes a number of recommendations: fiscal policies and incentives at individual institutions and in government must be changed to support scholarly publishing; presses should more actively explore cooperative publishing ventures; more attention must be given to protecting authors and publishers rights; university presses ought to negotiate licensing rights from publishing partners overseas for titles appropriate for the Nigerian markets; and promotional and marketing strategies must be improved. The authors conclude by stating "the real value of scholarly publications does not lie in the revenues they generate, but in their impact upon the scientific, cultural, and socio-economic development of the society."

Bankole, S. Bodunde **"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, 1988, 105-114.

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. Bodunde **"Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria."** *Scholarly Publishing* 21, no. 2 (January 1990): 92-98. [No digital version available]

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. This arises “from the general misconception within the system, and indeed outside the system, that a publisher is essentially a printer and that most printers downtown make quick money for little effort.” The author goes on to say “the universities also seem to be oblivious to the fact that the ability of a press to compete in the open market is constrained by the degree to which its management is free and is given the resources to function as a proper business.” Also describes the aims and objectives of the Scholarly Publishers Association of Nigeria (SPAN), founded in 1978, but which did not unfortunately last long and petered out by the end of the 1980s, largely, in the author’s view, because of rapid turnover of staff at university presses in Nigeria which is “still very much an issue today and has consistently bedevilled any attempts to evolve a tradition of cooperation among the presses.” Makes some suggestions how university press publishing might be revitalized in the future, and calls for renewed collaborative ventures between Nigeria’s scholarly presses.

Bankole, S. Bodunde “**Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria: The Dilemma.**” *Bellagio Publishing Network Newsletter*, no. 8 (December 1993): 5-7.

Also published in *The Publisher* 3, no. 1 (January 1995): 31-32.

Probes into 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, Abiola “**The Challenge of University Publishing in Africa, with Special Reference to Nigeria.**” *The African Book Publishing Record* 12, no. 3 (1986): 149-152.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1986.12.3.149>

Also reprinted in *Readings on Publishing in Africa and the Third World*, edited by Philip G. Altbach. Buffalo, NY: Bellagio Publishing Network, Research and Information Center (Bellagio Studies in Publishing 1), 1993, 74-77.

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. Defines the role of the university press in Africa as “having 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.” 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, Stephanie **Interview with Professor Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu.**

<http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/interview-with-professor-abdul-kabir-hussain-solihu>

Kwara State University Press <http://www.kwasu.edu.ng/kwasupress/> 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, and asks him what was the motivation to establish the press, what is its initial list (now distributed by African Books

Collective) and subject focus, what is its commissioning/acquisitions strategy, and whether Kwasu Press plans to establish partnerships – and co-publishing ventures – with other academic presses in Africa and beyond. Professor Solihu also talks about the considerable challenges of marketing and distribution their books within Nigeria, and seeking sales from Nigerian university libraries. Another topic discussed is that of the issue of publishing in conventional print format vs. digital e-books.

On the wider picture, relating to the function and role of university presses in Nigeria today, Solihu says “when the university press competes with other big publishing houses in order to make money as others do, or when it is pressurized by the university authority to generate 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.”

McLean Rathgeber, Eva-Maria “**Nigeria's University Presses: Problems and Prospects.**” *The African Book Publishing Record* 5, no. 1 (January 1979): 13-17.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr.1979.5.1.13>

Identifies the problems and prospects for scholarly publishing in Nigeria in the 1970s and early 1980s. It reports about a study undertaken by the author in 1978, which included a series of interviews with a wide range of book professionals and authors of scholarly books, to seek their views and perceptions of the prospects and constraints of the indigenous scholarly book industries. The author assesses the future prospects for Nigerian university presses, who were [at that time] taking a first step away from university involvement by becoming limited liability companies “which can be seen as a promise of a brighter future for indigenous scholarly publishers.” Very dated now, but this remains a useful background study, and is partially based on an MA thesis by the author.

Olukoju, Ayodeji “**The Crisis of Research and Academic Publishing in Nigerian Universities: The Twentieth Century and Beyond.**”

https://codesria.org/IMG/pdf/Ayodeji_Olukoju.pdf (2002)

Also 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. Academic publishing in Nigeria, especially university press publishing, has been in decline for the last two decades at least. This 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. The paper traces the beginnings of academic publishing in Nigeria up to the period of the late 1970s, and provides some background of the reasons that led to the crisis in Nigerian higher education and its negative impact on academic research and

scholarly publishing. It discusses the survival strategies adopted by Nigerian academics to cope with the situation, their search for alternative publishing outlets, the emergence of self-publishing, and the decline of high standards in scholarship, and the near-abandonment of the peer-review process by (usually short-lived) new Nigerian journals. 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, Steve **"Flogging a Dead Horse? The State of Tertiary Book Publishing in Nigeria."** *Glendora Review* 1, no. 3 (1996): 39-41.

<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. **"Scholarly Publishing in Nigeria."** *Scholarly Publishing* 4, no. 1 (October 1972): 51-60. [no digital version available]

A portrayal of scholarly publishing in Nigeria in the 1970s by a former editor of Ibadan University Press, the oldest of Nigeria's indigenous scholarly publishers, which evolved gradually over more than a decade. 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. **"The Problems of Publishing for a University Press in Africa."** In *Publishing in Africa in the Seventies*, edited by Edwina Oluwasanmi, Eva McLean, and Hans M. Zell. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1975, 318-328.

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. The author believes university presses should focus on "African humanities", and should be wary of too great a diffusion of subject areas, which will make promotion difficult. While university presses should develop and publish tertiary level textbooks, the author warns that textbook publishing is risky and should be approached with caution and only after a period of consolidation. University press editors and directors should have more autonomy in list development and the decision-making process. The author was formerly Editor and Acting Director of the Ibadan University Press during the 1970s.

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

Note: 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.

Aina, L.O. "The Problems of Tertiary Publishing in Africa and Implications for the Training and Education of Library and Information Professionals." *Library Review* 48, no. 8 (1999): 399-402.

Also at (freely accessible)

https://www.academia.edu/21068415/The_Problems_of_Tertiary_Publishing_in_Africa_and_Implications_for_Training_and_Education_of_Library_and_Information_Professionals?email_work_card=view-paper

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, and 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. The author identifies several factors that he sees as being responsible for inadequate tertiary publications for the information professions in Africa. He recommends that authors should embark on team authorship, and that international funding agencies and national governments should commission textbooks that are appropriate for an African setting.

Alemna, Anaba A. **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), 2016. 29 pp.

<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. The high mortality rate of journals in Africa is a cause for concern. This is one of the major reasons why researchers in Africa seek to publish their findings abroad. Much of the research outcomes emanating from African universities achieve poor visibility due to lack of high-quality indigenous journals. The alternative is "that African academics strive to publish in internationally renowned peer-reviewed journals in order to ensure academic promotion, but then, again, not many of these do make it into such journals. And when they do, the journals are out of reach of most university libraries, rendering access difficult." As a result of these difficulties some African academics have published in exploitative predatory journals of dubious quality and integrity. As one of the solutions to these problems, the author suggests that scholars in Africa should take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of Open Access (OA) Journals.

Darko-Ampem, Kwasi "A University Press Publishing Consortium for Africa: Lessons from Academic Libraries." *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 36, no. 2, (January 2005): 89-114.

<https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/jsp.36.2.89>

Based on the author's PhD dissertation (see record above) this paper presents the results of a case study of the policies and practices of six African university presses, in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe [as at 2003]. It reviews their press policies, sales figures (annually and over a 15-year period), manuscript acquisitions and editorial boards, the nature of books published and areas of specialization, marketing and distribution, together with an examination of deficiencies in their current operations. Based on the findings, the author

proposes the formation of a consortium of African university presses, along the same lines as consortium formation in the library world, which “seems to be a sensible means to reduce the financial burden on each individual press or institution and at the same time provides a sustainable source of funding for each institution’s publishing programs.” The author believes that hard-pressed African university presses have no option but to merge, form a consortium, or “face total collapse. Unless current pressures for self-sufficiency are removed, press directors have little choice but to forge alliances that will keep them in business.”

Darko-Ampem, Kwasi **Scholarly Publishing in Africa: A Case Study of African University Presses**. Stirling, Scotland: University of Stirling, 2003. PhD dissertation (Department of English Studies, e-theses). 235 pp. <http://dspace.stir.ac.uk/dspace/handle/1893/71>

Also at (freely accessible)

https://www.academia.edu/65105076/Scholarly_publishing_in_Africa_a_case_study_of_the_policies_and_practices_of_African_university_presses

This wide-ranging dissertation examines the policies and practices of six sub-Saharan Africa university presses in five African countries (in 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 study examines the extent to which current [2003] constraints impede their publishing activities and publishing strategies. 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. In his conclusions he recommends the setting-up of a continent-wide consortium of African university presses, with each press “to operate as a Trust in order to enjoy autonomy as a private company, but be registered as a non-profit organization.” The author calls for more active collaboration among African scholarly presses (including joint publishing ventures, sharing of resources and expertise, reciprocal distribution, etc.); 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.

Esseh, Samuel Kwaku Smith **Strengthening Scholarly Publishing in Africa: Assessing the Potential of Online Systems**. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2011. PhD dissertation, 400 pp.

.Also 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.” Issues about authorship, readership, editorial and peer review, as well as the level of science resources in African academic libraries, are also discussed. The author assembled data from 286 key actors (journal editors, potential journal editors, librarians, IT administrators, faculty and postgraduate students) from sub-Saharan Africa during a twelve months period in 2007–09. Drawing on this data set, the study documents and analyses the

availability of journals and other information resources accessible to the African research community through digital technologies, and examines current constraints in ICT infrastructure, training, and support inhibiting the utilization of ICT in advancing African scholarly publishing output. A range of recommendations and proposals are put forward “for tapping into the full potential of these technologies in strengthening research capacity, improving the quality of research, reducing Africa’s isolation from the global scholarly community, and ultimately narrowing the information divide.” Among these proposals, set out in a detailed appendix, is a “Proposal for [a] Centre for Study of Online Scholarly Publishing in Africa”, which “seeks support to develop a sustainable Centre at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana “that will be responsible for the training and development of highly skilled human capacity with Africa’s academic research community, that will facilitate and strengthen the production, circulation, and utilization of knowledge in Africa and beyond through new publishing models.”

Kitchen, Stephanie **Interview with Francois van Schalkwyk, African Minds.**

<http://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinions/interview-with-francois-van-schalkwyk-african-minds> (Posted 19 September 2017)

Francois van Schalkwyk heads the South African open access, not-for-profit publisher African Minds <http://www.africanminds.co.za/>, and he is also the co-author of an important new study on African university presses https://www.academia.edu/33799890/The_African_University_Press (see record below). In this interview with Stephanie Kitchen of the International African Institute 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, and university presses in Africa “cannot reconcile open access and the perceived loss of sales income with the royalty expectations of their authors”, he says. “Beyond these specific barriers, and I am sure there are others, I think there is a general lack of understanding and confidence to experiment when it comes to open access publishing.”

On the topic of institutional repositories van Schalkwyk states “My concern is that repositories are being seen as a silver bullet when in reality they are part of a broader publishing ecosystem; an ecosystem that consists of institutional repositories, libraries, academic authors, indexing agencies, publishers (both university presses and others), and service providers. I think there are many repositories gathering dust because they were seen as a panacea to making a university’s research output more visible and accessible.” In their findings and conclusion in the *African University Press* study the authors asserted that, generally speaking, funding is not the main problem facing African university presses, and that there are other problems, such as outdated employment models, procurement systems, a weak research culture, and inappropriate institutional frameworks that are too bureaucratic. Questioned about the resources issue he responds “yes, resources are an issue. But probably not a uniquely African issue. How many university presses outside of Africa wouldn’t want to be

better endowed? ... Resources are not the only issue. 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.”

Le Roux, Elizabeth **A Social History of the University Presses in Apartheid South Africa. Between Complicity and Resistance.** Leiden: Brill, 2015. 237 pp. (print or e-book)

<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/books/9789004293489>

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. The university presses are often associated with anti-apartheid publishing and the promotion of academic freedom, but this work reveals both greater complicity and complexity. Elizabeth le Roux demonstrates that the university presses cannot be considered oppositional – because they did not resist censorship and because they operated within the constraints of the higher education system – but their publishing strategies became more liberal over time.” [Not examined, publisher’s blurb]

Le Roux, Elizabeth **“Between the Cathedral and the Market: A Study of Wits University Press.”** In *The Book in Africa. Critical Debates*, edited by Caroline Davis and David Johnson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 176-197.

<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137401618>

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, that reputation was not merited; and the Press evaded confrontation with the repressive apartheid state, or even colluded with it. Compared with more radical, independent, and oppositional South African publishers such as Ravan Press, David Philip, Ad Donker, or Skotaville Publishers, it only played a minor role. As a result, radical academics at Wits chose publishing platforms outside the university to air their views. “On the basis of the actual publishing output, it is shown that the press should not be considered oppositional, in part because it operated within the constraints of a publicly funded institution of higher education (its academic context), and in part because it did not resist the censorship regime of the government (the state context.” Wits University Press did not rethink its ‘proper’ role of a university press until the apartheid period was nearly over, and policy shifts towards more progressive publishing, and becoming more politically engaged, only became evident as from the beginning of the 1990s.

Le Roux, Elizabeth **“The University as Publisher: Towards a History of South African University Presses.”** In *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*, edited by Andrew van der Vlies. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012, 437-448.

<https://witspress.co.za/catalogue/print-text-and-book-cultures-in-south-africa/>

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 Cape Town University). While, 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. "Apartheid had a constraining effect on publishing in South Africa and it seems that the university presses did not respond by playing an oppositional role, actively resisting the repressive forces of apartheid (opposition or resistance strategies rather tended towards either publishing abroad or with the independent publishers, such as David Philip [Publishers] and Ravan [Press]). Strict control of publishing would have been difficult and costly, and it seems more likely that the presses practised a form of self-censorship. 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."

Moore, Bernard C. **The Politics of Academic Publishing on/in Africa.**

<http://chi.anthropology.msu.edu/2015/10/politics-of-publishing/> (Posted 26 October 2015)

"African Studies is a white-owned field", the author declares. "This would not be a problem if all was actually equal. The problems come from who owns knowledge about Africa (both in a practical copyright, and in an epistemological level). ... By and large, you cannot purchase academic books about Africa in Africa, and it isn't because people don't care or don't want to read them." Foreign researchers have easier access to funds to conduct often very innovative research projects: "In order to obtain tenure, and therefore more research funds, these professors publish in western university presses (or Palgrave and Routledge, which is a different story). Western presses choose not to sell their books on the African continent because the market is deemed 'unprofitable.' African universities seek to make themselves look more 'respectable' in the eyes of western donors, so they encourage their faculty to publish 'internationally' in order to obtain tenure and raise the standing of their departments." Bernard Moore argues that academic knowledge about Africa remains securely in Euro-American hands. "Yes, South African presses are making headway, although this is primarily texts related to South African affairs. If any of this concerns us, we must take some degree of action. If we are going into academia, we have to take steps to change our department's tenure procedures. Base tenure on the quality of the text, not only the press; and reward Africanists who do indeed publish on the African continent. And although it might seem, dare I say, 'risky,' we should publish our books (and articles, but that's a different story) in presses that make the books available on the continent."

Mouton, J. **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>

(2018)

A Powerpoint presentation made at the National Research Foundation (South Africa) Workshop on Ethics in Publishing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spW2QCHjbO4> held

on 11 April 2018. Scientific research, the author says, “is a process of human decision-making: from the initial choice of topics, research questions, methodological choices up to publication choices. In these processes scientists make choices that either conform to sound ethical principles (research integrity) or not. 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 scrutinises 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. The author provides some helpful pointers how to identify suspect publishers, and unethical and questionable practices in scholarly publishing, such as fake metrics, promises of rapid publication, flattery and bombastic phrasing when calling for papers, journal names common to many titles: e.g. ‘advanced’, ‘scientific’, ‘scholarly peer-reviewed’, ‘international’; journal subject (predatory journals tend to have a broad coverage of subjects and topics, combining fields that are more or less related, or even lacking a specific field), and journal location (an emerging strategy is to rent office addresses in the US or the UK, and include American or British in the journal name, although the business is run from another country (India, Pakistan, Nigeria, etc.) Other indicators might be questionable volumes of publication by journal editors in their own journals, or dubious volumes of publication by members of the editorial board of journals.

Mouton sets out some of the main challenges in identifying predatory journals: (i) The demarcation challenge: “Can we distinguish with acceptable levels of certainty between predatory and non-predatory journals AND between ethically acceptable and questionable editorial practices?” (ii) The quality assurance challenge: “How do the major actors (universities/ DHET/ASSAf/NRF) assure that scholarly publishing in South Africa maintains high levels of quality?” In his conclusion, the author states: “Perhaps the new way of making science, turning it into a business, is one of the causes that gave birth to predatory journals. Another cause might be a re-interpretation of the classical ‘publish or perish’ goal distorted by science metrics; several consequences are the need to publish abroad and, if possible, in a country with higher-rated journals, the need to be visible in order to be cited (in the context of an evolving electronic ‘publishing ecosystem’), and the need to publish fast. If this is the case, a return to the science for the sake of science or the benefit of society is a possible solution.”

Mouton, J. “**Predatory Publishing in South Africa: Scale and Challenges.**” (2017)

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 Beal and his *Beall's List of Predatory Publishers 2016* <https://scholarlyoa.com/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2016/>, together with an analysis of the extent of predatory publishing in South Africa. The results of their analysis of publications produced over the period 2005 to 2014, the author says, “have already raised red flags about the quality control procedures at some SA universities. ... Academics at a large number of SA universities are now consistently publishing in predatory journals. At some universities, more than 25% of their journal production now appears in predatory journals. These – and other questionable publication practices – are

increasingly seen to be located at a small number of universities. The potential negative impact on their scientific reputations as institutions of scientific and academic integrity are huge. It is becoming a matter of urgency for all SA universities to manage the reputational risk that these practices hold.”

Note: see also the updated version of the Beal’s list <https://beallist.net/#update>) *Beall’s List of Potential Predatory Journals and Publishers*.

Mouton, Johann, and Astrid Valentine “**The Extent of South African Authored Articles in Predatory Journals.**” *South African Journal of Science* 113, no.7/8 (2017): 1-9.

http://www.sajs.co.za/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/SAJS-113-7-8_Mouton_ResearchArticle.pdf

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

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. This estimate is based on an analysis of all South African authored papers that qualified for subsidy over the period 2005 to 2014. The analysis demonstrated “that over 4,000 South African papers were published in 48 journals which the authors re-classified (refining Beall’s classification, <http://beallist.weebly.com/>) as either being probably or possibly predatory.” A breakdown of these papers by year also showed that the greatest increase in predatory publishing has occurred since 2011. Results are also presented of the distribution of these papers by individual universities and the scientific field.

In the final analysis, the authors state, “it is clear that predatory publishing poses a serious challenge to science in South Africa. If it continues to increase at the rate of growth seen in the past 5 years, predatory publishing may well become accepted practice in some disciplines and at some universities. Not only will it affect the very fabric of the science system (our confidence in the peer-review system), but it will also undermine the trust and confidence of the general public in science and its products.” The authors conclude with some suggestions about predatory publishing, “and its pervasive consequence for our trust in science, and how this should be addressed by the major stakeholders in the South African higher education system.

Naidu, Edwin, and Sharon Dell “**Predatory Journals in the Firing Line.**”

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190531111556458> (Posted 31 May 2019)

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. “The purpose of removing predatory journals from the indices and journal lists is to ensure that they do not get recognised and articles published in them do not

get recognised for the purposes of subsidy, in the South African context. Besides, removing them is to minimise the possibility of disseminating fake or predatory journals,” he said. According to some reports, but not yet verified, some of the leading publishers are buying up some of the more lucrative predatory journal titles, which then migrate from one index (such as the IBSS list <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/outputs-accredited-journals/accredited-journals>) to another, causing a great deal of confusion among academics and administrators alike.

Okune, Angela *Decolonizing Scholarly Data and Publishing Infrastructures*.

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2019/05/29/decolonizing-scholarly-data-and-publishing-infrastructures/> (Posted 29 May 2019)

This article is part of the thought-provoking blog/podcast series *Citing Africa* <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/?s=citing+africa&category=Citing-Africa> that seeks to explore 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. Where and how is scholarly knowledge produced and circulated, and with what effects? “We must be wary of the over-production and representation of work from particular geographies, as well as the relegation of other locales as sites of data collection.” If we want to reshape the way scholarly knowledge is produced and communicated, the posting says, “we ought to question who makes the decisions and why. Focusing our attention on the sociotechnical knowledge infrastructures can help spark these important conversations: what might decentralised, non-hierarchical and locally controlled forms of scholarly communications and knowledge look like? From that vision we can help pluralise forms of knowledge and bring its stewardship and care closer to the communities it most concerns.”

Okune, Angela; Sulaiman Adebawale, Eve Gray, Angela Mumo, and Ruth Oniang’o
“Conceptualizing, Financing and Infrastructuring: Perspectives on Open Access in and from Africa.” *Development and Change* 52, no. 2 (2021): 359-372.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/dech.12632?af=R>

Pre-print version (freely accessible)

<https://www.researchdatashare.org/content/okune-angela-sulaiman-adebowale-eve-gray-angela-mumo-and-ruth-oniang%E2%80%99o-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. The piece is supplemented by data from the in-depth discussion that informed it, which is published on an open-source platform in an effort to invite readers to also lend their analytic perspectives and contribute towards iterative analysis and ongoing dialogue.” (From the abstract)

Opara, Jackie *Nigeria’s Predator Problem*.

<http://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1370873> (Posted 19 October 2017)

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. But it admits that little is known about why academics opt for this ill-reputed platform for their work. Jackie Opara examines why so many Nigerian researchers publish in predatory journals and “fall prey to the predator’s jaws”, and suggests some ways to beat the scourge.

Note: see also <https://www.nature.com/news/stop-this-waste-of-people-animals-and-money-1.22554>

Opong, Ernest **Assessment of Project Management Processes in Scholarly Book Publishing in Ghana** BA (Publishing Studies) Department of Construction Technology and Management at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, November 2019.

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. ... The three objectives were achieved through narrative and content analysis of interview results from fourteen scholarly publishers.”

In his summary of the findings the author states that Ghanaian scholarly publishers adopt similar traditional processes for the publication of scholarly books as those prevalent elsewhere: However, “the scholarly publishing landscape [in Ghana] is bedevilled with some barriers inherent in the traditional processes. They include acquisition of substandard manuscripts; limited number of manuscripts and outrageous charges by commissioned scholarly authors, and their insistence on immediate advance payment, are barriers inherent in the acquisition of manuscripts. High cost and delay of peer review, difficulty in getting experts to review the work, high volume of the manuscript and lack of control over contents are barriers associated with the assessment of manuscripts. The editorial development of scholarly works is challenged with limited scholarly editors, lack [of] understanding of editorial development by some authors and over-confidence of the quality of work to the extent of disallowing corrections by the publisher/editor, and lack of effective communication among the project team: editors and author.” Moreover, the marketing, distribution, and sales of scholarly books in Ghana are hampered “with poor marketing of scholarly books leading to poor sales”, as well as lack of interest by most bookshops to take on stocks of scholarly books. Other problems include illegal photocopying and selling of content extracted from scholarly works. The author sets out a number of recommendations, and possible strategies, how to address these numerous challenges.

Thomas, Adele **African Academics are Being Caught in the Predatory Journal Trap.**

<http://theconversation.com/african-academics-are-being-caught-in-the-predatory-journal-trap-48473> (Posted 29 October 2015)

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. Predatory journals transgress all the rules of research integrity, and Africa is not immune to these journals. She notes that in the past few years there has been an insidious rise in predatory journal publishers in Africa. Universities will also need to consider

their scholarly reputations she says, “publishing in junk or predatory journals makes both academics and their employers look bad. There are long term, less visible costs to ignoring predatory journals. Brands and reputations can be destroyed, costing universities the chance to collaborate internationally with well-regarded institutions. If the fundamental values of academic research are constantly transgressed in the scramble to publish, Africa’s academy will suffer in the long run. Young academics will learn bad habits from their established colleagues who write for such journals. And, by default, those academics who strive to publish in journals known for their high impact and rigorous quality are being placed at a disadvantage. As long as quantity trumps quality, these academics will miss out on promotional opportunities and financial rewards.”

University of South Africa Library **Selecting a Quality Journal: Predatory Journals, Predatory Publishing Bibliography.**

<https://libguides.unisa.ac.za/journalquality> (Last updated 03 March 2021)

In their introduction to this very useful resource the compilers state: “Over the years publishing models changed dramatically and the rise of open access journals has changed the way in which scholars use and share their articles. Changing publishing models, including the rise of open access journals, have reshaped the ways in which scholars share and use journal articles. It has also brought predatory journals into the research arena and therefore it is important to understand and know the criteria for assessing journal quality to ensure that research is published in a quality journal.”

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’ list 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, Adeyinka, and Bosire Onyancha “**Scholarly Publishing Experience of Postgraduate Students in Nigerian Universities.**” *Accountability in Research* 28, Issue 7 (2021): 395-427.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2020.1843444>

Examines scholarly the 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, François “**Normative Drift and Self-correction in Scholarly Book Publishing: The Case of Makerere University.**” *Learned Publishing* 33, no. 3 (2020): 259-268.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/leap.1292>

“University academics face multiple pressures to publish. These pressures emanate from contexts with different, often competing, social norms, which result in academics publishing for reasons that may run counter to accepted scientific practice. This paper asks what decisions are being taken by academics when it comes to their choice of scholarly book publisher. An analysis of books selected from more than 2,500 self-reported scholarly publications produced by academics at Makerere University in Uganda from 2011 to 2017 shows that 31 scholarly books were published. Of these books, more than half (54%) were published by publishers that do not follow accepted scholarly publishing practice. Findings also show that there was a sharp decline in books published with suspect publishers in the second half of the 7-year period. The article discusses possible reasons for the selection of suspect publishers and considers four factors that may account for the observable decline.” [Not examined, from the abstract]

van Schalkwyk, François, and Thierry M. Luescher **The African University Press**. Cape Town: African Minds, 2017. 62 pp.

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

Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, this 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. While there are new and enabling conditions and opportunities for university presses to increase production and to widen distribution, the authors ask: How can African university presses make the most of these opportunities? Most likely, they believe, in deploying the technological changes in production, distribution and marketing made possible by digitisation and network effects of the Internet. The study is based on a baseline survey of university presses in Africa, in-depth case studies of selected university presses, and an analysis of the publishing choices made by African academics.

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: “recommendations that are simultaneously attuned to the opportunities and to the realities of African university presses as revealed by the research conducted.”

Notes: Another presentation of *The African University Press* project can be found at

<http://www0.sun.ac.za/scicom/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Van-Schalkwyk-African-University-Presses.pdf>.

As part of this project, African Minds have also created an interactive map of university presses in Africa that is continuously being updated. Users can either view the map by applying any of a number of filters, or download the full dataset at

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URiTsMVkeM12DIZT7IfxqcYgVEt0hohli4xIy983FI8/edit#gid=0>.

van Schalkwyk, François **African University Presses. An African Minds Research Project**.

[https://www.academia.edu/29291359/African_University_Presses_\(2016\)](https://www.academia.edu/29291359/African_University_Presses_(2016))

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 record above, and <http://www.africanminds.co.za/african-university-presses/>). 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. The author says that “it is hoped that a pragmatic set of recommendations will emerge; recommendations that are simultaneously attuned to the opportunities and the everyday realities of African university presses.”

This is a very interesting study, albeit presenting a rather dismal picture: A detailed table in the presentation (see link to full dataset below) indicates that there are 52 established university presses on the African continent. However, many are dormant and are not publishing new work at this time. Only seven presses published in 2015 and four in 2014. Twenty-seven institutions have websites (of which nine presses have their own web pages), but only twenty-one have current email addresses. According to the presentation, responsiveness to email enquiries was generally poor, with 47% of emails sent remaining unopened, and 21% bounced. A small number of presses (mostly South African) have a presence on Facebook. Only four out of 52 have some form of open access publishing, usually journals. Only a small number offer price lists, catalogues, or other promotional material while, equally, merely a very small proportion offer online ordering facilities. Very few offer products in e-book formats at present. On a happier note, a good number of those presses currently active are now distributed overseas and their books are available through the Oxford-based African Books Collective <https://www.africanbookscollective.com/>, or one or two other distributors. Also on the positive side, the study shows that a significant proportion of the universities have established institutional repositories, and links to websites are indicated, where available.

As part of this project, African Minds have also created an interactive map of university presses in Africa that, it was promised, would be continuously being updated. Users can either view the map by applying any of a number of filters, or download the full dataset at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1URiTsMVkeM12DlZT7IfxqcYgVEt0hohIi4xIy983FI8/edit#gid=0>. However, updating would appear to have been limited thus far.

Waruru, Maina “**Academics are Cautioned to Avoid Predatory Journals.**” *University World News* 14 September 2018, Issue 520.

<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, 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 in 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. "Plagiarism has reduced confidence in our research outputs; now there is always a second thought about publications from many African scholars by our peers from outside the continent," the lecturer told *University World News*. To curb the problem, there is a need to use the 'carrot and stick' approach to sensitise researchers and students, and help them understand the dangers associated with it, while punishing any researcher or student found plagiarising, he said. Learning institutions should put in place rules and guidelines on plagiarism while using technology to help lecturers and mentors monitor the vice.

Wild, Sarah **Guide: How to Spot Predatory Academic Journals in the Wild.**

<https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-how-to-spot-predatory-academic-journals-in-the-wild/> (Posted 17 October 2017)

A recent [2017] study published the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa (see paper by Johann Mouton and Astrid Valentine above) found that between 2005 and 2014 more than 4,200 South African academic articles were published in 47 journals which were classified as "possibly" or "probably" predatory. These 47 journals qualified for the department of higher education and training's subsidies, meaning that universities and sometimes the researchers themselves received money for publishing in them, and which, the author says, could have cost South Africa up to R300 million in subsidies.

The 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, Hans M. "**The African University Press – A Gloomy Picture.**" *University World News* Global Edition, Issue 475 (22 September 2017).

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170922175606239> [Original article]

https://www.academia.edu/34690740/The_African_University_Press_-_A_Gloomy_Picture [with Appendix added, freely accessible]

Issue 475 of *University World News* reported about a meeting hosted by Witwatersrand University Press, held in Johannesburg on August 30, 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 record above).

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