

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Scholarly research and publishing have become an integral component of the academic world. The importance of publishing to any academic is perhaps best underlined by the maxim 'publish or perish'. Indeed, publishing in the academic world determines a scholar's standing or status both within the local research community and internationally. At the centre of the scholarly communication process is the academic reward system—the issue of promotion and tenure—that is integrally tied up with the formal peer-reviewed publication. The reward system present in most universities recognizes publication as evidence of scholarly achievement and is required for rank and tenure and to satisfy criteria for grants. Over the years the university's basic functions, which have remained unchanged, enable students to learn from their cultural heritage, helping them to realize their intellectual and creative abilities, and encouraging them to become humane and responsible people. The university expands knowledge across the entire spectrum of disciplines, and it can add to the understanding and enjoyment of life. It continues to be needed for imaginative solutions to the problems of society.

Within the range of activities associated with the traditional concept of a university, the university press plays the role of the publisher of the results of teaching and research. In a report on his own university for the 1917-18 academic year, President Butler of Columbia University stated that:

A university has three functions to perform. It is to conserve knowledge; to advance knowledge; and to disseminate knowledge. It falls short of the full realization of its aim unless, having provided for the conservation and advancement of knowledge, it makes provision for its dissemination as well (cited in Irele, 1993:74).

Daniel Gilman the first president of Johns Hopkins University also declared that: 'It is one of the noblest duties of a university to advance knowledge and to diffuse it not merely among those who can attend the daily lectures – but far and wide' (Caraway, 1995:1). The primary function of a university press is to accomplish

this purpose of disseminating the results of teaching and research and to bring scholars together by publishing scholarly knowledge of interest to other such scholars. By making available in the convenient form of the book the results of teaching and research both within the parent university and beyond, a university press finds itself at the very heart of the university system, extending and justifying its meaning as the centre of learning.

The typical university press is an integral part of its parent university, usually organized as a separate administrative department. An editorial board appointed from faculty, occasionally with some members from outside the university, typically controls the imprint of any university press. The board stands behind the imprint of the university and helps ensure the quality and significance of the books on the press's list. Unlike all other publishers, university presses are not expected to publish books for profit and are, in the main, non-profit institutions often receiving subsidy from their parent institution. Notable exceptions include pre-eminent presses like California, Chicago and Harvard (in the US), and Cambridge and Oxford (in the UK).

Scholarly publishing, usually the main business of a university press, is concerned with those publications which report research findings, comment on academic matters, or in general are aimed at an audience of intellectuals. Ganu (1999:113) defined scholarly publishing by function, saying it involves:

The publication of original works of research that may come in the form of books and journal articles that contribute to knowledge; the publication of works that seek to reinterpret established fields of study or knowledge; and the publication of textbooks for use in the universities.

Put otherwise by Hawes (cited in Brice, 1974:221), who equated the scholarly press to the university press:

Most typically, the university press book is written by a scholar to communicate information and ideas in his/her professional field. It conveys new knowledge or new interpretations, pre-eminently the results of his/her own research. Its audience includes anyone who needs to know what the scholar has discovered. But it will typically seem difficult to understand or unimportant to any one without some background in the author's subject.

One characteristic of scholarly publishing is that the works by their very nature cannot be published on an economic basis because they have a limited market, though a high profit margin may be achieved in cases of low manufacturing costs and high marked-up prices for libraries. Scholarly books are therefore of little or no interest to commercial publishers. The average price per title of scholarly monographs is far higher than that for consumer books, a factor resulting from heavy production costs, much editorial preparation, limited market, and complex typography and art work required for scholarly materials.

University publishing evolved in the late fifteenth and sixteen centuries from the early presses of Oxford and Cambridge in the UK. It was introduced in the United States in the late nineteenth century; and much later to the rest of Europe. The purpose of the university press is to provide an outlet for the publication of research by faculty members of its own and other universities, and extend the instructional function of the parent institution by publishing and disseminating knowledge and scholarship as widely and as economically as possible to both scholars and educated laymen. It publishes learned books of small sales potential and limited possibility of financial returns that commercial publishers cannot profitably undertake, and gains favourable publicity and prestige for the university of which it is part.

Scholarly publishing used to be the 'core business' of the university press to the exclusion of all other types of publishing. However increased financial stringency and cut backs in library funding have seen the university press adopt survival tactics and strategies including publishing trade books. In North America, Jones (1998) showed that environmental influences including falling direct sales to libraries and falling university subsidies since 1980 have forced many university presses to find means for attaining or maintaining self-sufficiency. One of the survival strategies was expansion into more profitable areas outside scholarly monograph publishing, that of publishing trade books. The exception has been Cambridge and Oxford, the two largest and at the same time oldest university

publishers, whose lists include trade books, primary and secondary school books, English language teaching texts and Bibles. At Oxford, scholarly publishing represents less than ten percent of its total turnover (Mitchell, 1999:364). The essential mission of the university press, however, remains the publication of significant scholarship.

The establishment of university presses in Africa, Asia and Latin America started in the early 1900s; in fact India's oldest university press in Calcutta was founded in 1908. The university press is a relatively new institution in Africa, as indeed is university education. In the former British colonies, apart from the early beginning at Fourah Bay in 1827, there were no universities till 1948, and no university presses till Ibadan established a nucleus of one in 1952.

1.1.1 Knowledge creation

Theses and dissertations completed in African universities contain a wealth of local empirical data, yet rarely are they indexed in major databases, nor do they feature much in the international literature. Not surprisingly, African research has received little recognition, especially, overseas. While universities do not have the monopoly on either the creation or dissemination of knowledge, they are especially, in the Third World, the key institutions in this process. With very few exceptions, universities stand at the centre of the scientific and intellectual process in many nations, especially those of the developing world. Altbach asserted that:

They house the largest share of creative scholars, sponsor most functioning research institutes, provide stimulation for scholarly life through the norms of academic life, and in the Third World are often the centre of the intellectual life of the nation (Altbach, 1978:489-490).

It was with this in view that the AAU 10th General Conference delegates called on African universities to give priority to effective and positive participation in the global creation, exchange and application of knowledge. This places urgent demand for the development of mechanisms of the publication and dissemination of high-level knowledge in Africa (and developing countries) on scholarly publishers, particularly university presses.

In the specific case of academic journals, Nostbakhen (quoted by Gopinathan 1992:288) justified national efforts to produce academic journals because ‘they allow local research to be published and provide a stimulus and a sense of identity and purpose to research projects peculiar to that country’. They also serve as an indicator of the scope and level of research activity within a country and demonstrate the national standards of editing and publishing. Furthermore, they augment in particular and important ways the global storehouse of knowledge by focusing on specific national contexts. Often for young researchers the national academic journal provides the only chance of being published.

Most scholarly journals are edited and published from the industrialised nations with serious implications for Africa. The most important internationally circulated journals naturally tend to cater largely for the needs in the industrialised nations and not for the small minority of their readers in the Third World. In fact, most of the world’s production of knowledge, and an equally large proportion of its distribution, take place in the larger industrialized countries. As a result, the language of scholarly communication is generally that of the major industrialized nations—usually English or French, occasionally Spanish, German, or Russian. Yet the African academic community depends on close to between sixty and ninety percent book and journal imports for active research and study (Makotsi, 1998).

‘Mainstream’ journals published in the West are seldom interested in publishing material relating to African issues simply because their international readership is not interested directly in Africa. There is simply little consciousness of the issues facing scholars outside the industrialised nations. It is admitted that the countries in Africa are non homogenous but culturally, linguistically and geographically diverse and at different levels of economic development. However they are to a large extent characterized as having high illiteracy rates, high birth rates, low per capita income, high inflation rates, etc.

Focusing on the need for the establishment and nurturing of scholarly journals in Third World countries, Altbach (1998b) indicated that its scholars cannot rely on the international (Western-oriented) journals to publish their work. They can look more optimistically to local journals that may be more oriented to their interests. Indigenous journals can also focus attention on the issues, problems, and approaches that are most relevant to their own regions or countries. The shortage of journals published in Africa—with only an estimated 200 published in Sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa—makes the need especially great (Altbach, 1998b:8). More fundamentally, journals are a key part of a fully independent academic and research community.

The widespread use of books from abroad has implications for local publishing industries, for the growth of authorship, and for the basic intellectual life of a nation. Without an indigenous publishing enterprise, a nation is doomed to a provincial status and will continue to be dependent on outside elements for its intellectual sustenance. Even though the existence of a publishing industry does not guarantee an active intellectual life, it is a necessary condition for indigenous scientific and literary activity. Dodson & Dodson (1972:62) advocated that:

To establish an indigenous publishing house is an act of liberation, and therefore a necessity, because it breaks the control, indeed the monopoly which the white races have over the world literature, for which reason they have controlled the mind of the African.

In agreement with Dodson & Dodson, Zeleza (1998) reasoned that there could be no substitute for a vigorous publishing industry in Africa. It is only by developing and sustaining their own publishing outlets, that there can emerge truly African intellectual traditions and communities capable of directing and controlling the study of Africa.

Factors that dictate the urgency of indigenizing the publishing industry in the developing regions of the world, especially Africa include the bias in reporting and indexing research emanating from the developing world, and the creation of publication outlets for the African academic community. Indeed as Altbach (1978) has noted, scholarly publishing is perhaps even more important in the

developing-country context than it is in the industrialized nations. This is because developing countries must establish technological capacities, record their own histories and interpret the workings of highly complex societies to outsiders. Without question, the dissemination of research results, the production of books for use in colleges and universities, and the publication of materials relating to the history and development of developing nations are of crucial importance. Another important factor is that much of the literature published by industrialized nations is not entirely relevant to the Third World, including Africa.

The constraints and challenges of tertiary publishing in Africa have been the focus of much research (Aina, 1999; Teferra, 1995; Pacheco, 1992; Zeleza, 1998). Without a stretch of imagination, the issues of concern in scholarly publishing are identical to those on the general African publishing scene, among them inadequate funding, high production costs resulting from the importation of the bulk of raw materials, (especially paper), and limited capacities in design, production, and printing. Distribution and marketing bottlenecks manifest themselves in nonexistent bookstores, poor transportation and postal facilities, depreciating academic library budgets, and low purchasing power of academics for whom scholarly works are meant. In some cases, publishable manuscripts are in short supply.

While markets for scholarly books are limited anywhere, the relevant markets in most African countries are particularly small and books needed for schools and for basic literacy take priority over scholarly publications. In their article on scholarly publishing in Nigerian universities, Aguolu & Aguolu (1998) predicted that Nigeria may continue for a long time to depend upon imported scholarly, scientific and technical books and journals until serious and concerted efforts are made by the government and university authorities to develop local university presses through adequate subsidies.

1.1.2 University press publishing: justifying an African model

Declaration 6 of the 10th AAU General Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, on 9th February 2001 noted that:

To a greater degree than ever before, African universities must renew their commitment to helping Africa find effective solutions to its perennial problems of poverty, hunger and disease. They must, by their research and teaching, strengthen their contribution to improvements in food production and distribution, disease control and health service delivery, and the general well-being of their people (AAU, 2001).

The expansion of higher education in Africa since political independence in the mid 1950s and the steady development of African endeavours in areas of scholarship outside the Humanities has meant the concept of African Studies has had to be broadened to take account of the new scope of scholarly interests and activities in Africa. This is because a considerable part of the research work that goes on in African universities concerns problems raised by the local environment in the science-based disciplines, such as Medicine and Agriculture, to take the obvious instances. Even in the more natural sciences, there is scope for a more focused research with a local bias, such as in Climatology. The African university press (AUP) could play a very significant role in finding solutions to African problems by disseminating the results of African researchers.

Apart from publishing the scholarly book, the AUP has to have a determined policy on tertiary level textbooks in such areas as History, Economics, and preliminary Science. Imported study materials may have to be adapted and/or rearranged with careful explanation of concepts, to suit students' inadequate backgrounds. The logical extension of a policy on tertiary level textbook publishing downwards to the secondary and primary levels of education, would make the university publisher a complete agent of education. The role played by the two great university presses of Cambridge and Oxford in Anglophone Africa, gives an indication of what is possible. Our present circumstances, as seen in the current difficulties of direct importation of study materials from traditional Western sources, dictate a similar role for the university press in Africa.

The African university press must vigorously pursue bold initiatives that are in the interest of publishing and development on the continent. Two of such examples are the Consortium for African Scholarly Publishing and the idea of a Southern African university press. The Consortium was established in 1993 as a special project of the Nairobi-based African Centre for Technology Studies. It was meant to facilitate cooperation between African scholarly publishers, and to aid the marketing, distribution and co-publication of African titles, as well as train professionals for the industry. This noble venture has been dormant since its inception.

Discussions about the establishment of a regional university press for the twelve Southern African countries have not yielded any practical results (Bgoya, 1999). It was believed that a regional university press would have a larger market catchment area and would be in a position to publish locally written textbooks and licensed editions of overseas texts, scholarly books, books based on research and aimed at the general market, and scholarly journals. The two ventures failed apparently for lack of proper coordination and political will on the part of the publishers.

The age-old concern over language policy is also a reason for the university press of Africa to set its own standards. The question of writing and publishing in African languages will surface anytime there is discussion about literature and its role in culture and development. It cannot be avoided as long as the majority of the African people do not speak the foreign languages which some authors write. For publishers there is the question of economic and financial feasibility, given that educational and cultural policy makers will do nothing or very little to support local language publishing. Ali Mazrui is quoted to have written that: the Pan-Africanism of linguistic/cultural integration [in Africa] will probably be led by East Africa, which enjoys the good fortune of a regionwide indigenous language.

That Kiswahili, which binds together Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Eastern Zaire and Northern Mozambique, will hit its first 100 million people early in the twenty-first century, if not sooner (Anon, 1999c). Would it be beyond AUPs to publish vigorously in the local languages, thus promoting the literatures and cultures on the continent? Irele (1993:76) argued that 'if a university press cannot will a national literature into existence, the least it can do is to be ready to discern its growth points and provide a medium of expression that will enable them come to fruition.' That was true for the literature in the European languages and must be true for African languages.

The fundamental question to African university presses is do they need to operate on the standards of American and European university presses? What stops AUPs from breaking away from the idea of publishing only scholarly works? After all Cambridge and Oxford are noted for not keeping that standard. In the African context, a university press must take on the special 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 foundations of the university as a national institute must ultimately rest. The African university publishing house must relate to the university as a significant channel for the discharge of its functions as an institution with the vocation towards scholarship in general and towards service to the wider society within which it operates.

In the words of Irele (1993:74), 'the university press must be seen as one of the clearest manifestations of the educational and cultural role of the university itself in relation to its particular environment.' It is especially in this dual perspective indicated by the terms 'education' and 'culture' that one needs to see the function of the university press in Africa. The emphasis here being the functional role of the scholarly publisher, made necessary by the peculiar circumstances of publishing in the context of Africa. These circumstances are marked by severe economic conditions which lead to high cost of raw materials, no clear policy

regarding the development of industry, generally small markets for books, non existing distribution outlets, low levels of literacy, the structure and size of the publishing industry, as well as the organization and vitality of the academic system itself, and the special challenges which they present.

This thesis enquired whether African university publishing has any unique identity that sets it apart from its American and European counterparts. It is a multiple case study of six university presses in five African countries. It looked at the context of this genre of publishing in the peculiar circumstance of Africa as a developing continent, identified the challenges and constraints under which these presses work and the survival strategies they have adopted to remain viable. Collaboration among African university presses, which is essential but is lacking was explored. By looking at their structure, policies and practices, the study proposed an African model that functions not only as a significant channel for the discharge of scholarship, but more importantly as a centre that serves the wider society within which it operates.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Book and journal assistance programmes to Africa date as far back as the early 1950s with the Franklin Book Program of the US and the British Educational Low Priced Book Scheme (popularly known as the ELBS). One scheme that has received wide acclaim is the Sub-Saharan Africa Journal Distribution Program, sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. A proposal for the Program was formulated in 1991/92 after Carol Priestly of the International African Institute had sought answers to such questions as: How do African researchers communicate their findings? Do African scholars know what sort of research is being carried out on the continent? Are academic and research libraries in Africa purchasing African scholarly journals? Can a research culture exist without local and regional channels of communication?

The African scholarly community shares these concerns. Seen through the eyes of a renowned African librarian the situation is aptly summarized below:

University education is dependent on the availability of published materials, which support curricula and research. It has been estimated by various authors (Ifidon, 1990; Nwafor, 1989) that 95% of most university library acquisitions in Africa is purchased from abroad, through foreign currency. The state of national economies, fluctuation of and limited access to foreign exchange for universities and their libraries (Coombe, 1991) have resulted in the erosion of both the acquisitions budgets and the potential role of university libraries. Thus not only have library materials not been replenished, but those that are available are worn. Further, African universities have tended to develop a culture of relying on donations of library materials, regardless of the appropriateness of content to the needs of the recipients or curricula (Raseroka, 1999:3-4).

The premise for this assertion is that books and journals are indispensable to a scholarly community symbolized by a university, a research association or a scientific society. More importantly, the message paints the sorry state of scholarship in African universities regarding books, journals and publishing. As the serials librarian at the University of Science & Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, for the brief period of October 1995 to September 1996, I was astonished at the huge difference between serials control and management, and that of a book or monograph. In particular, the cost of the 250 journal titles purchased through a World Bank loan to the Government of Ghana at £10,000 every month made me wonder at this dependency syndrome since all of them were imported.

Whilst looking for answers I came to believe that a local book industry, no matter how embryonic in its current state, could offer a long-term solution to the shortage of books and journals. The scholarly press caught my attention, as it is the publishing arm of the university. I strongly agree with Priestly (1993:220) that 'if donor support is to lead to long-term sustainable publishing, it has to assist the selling of books as well as the making of them.' Every book and journal distribution programme is worthy but offers only a partial solution to the problem of book and journal scarcity in African universities.

University presses in Africa were modelled after their American and British counterparts: they are to publish mainly scholarly works emanating from the universities. Yet there is ample evidence of university presses in America and

Europe diversifying their lists and taking on 'non-core' university press activities. For this and several reasons such as autonomy, economic sense, the not too relevant content of imported materials, and the peculiar circumstance of the African academic, AUPs do not have to retain their original structure and functions. An African university press must have an added responsibility towards the society by engaging in all genres of publishing—scholarly, academic, as well as general. The African model has to adapt to take care of local factors so that the activity of publishing can have real effect and meaning.

The immediate implication of this is that the university press in Africa must be structured to play the role of an educational and cultural agent in a situation of rapid and immense social change, in which the society is being transformed by values of a contemporary civilization, and for which the book represents both an essential product and a medium with a significant status. To this end I shall use the term 'appropriate publishing' to mean one that is adapted to suit local conditions and circumstances; a model African university press that borrows from the American and European counterparts but has a character of its own.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study investigated how effective the presses have been in terms of what they were set up to do—publish scholarly works. It examined and described their policies and programmes in the face of challenges that confront them as developing country presses, and revealed and explained factors known to stifle growth in African university publishing. In particular, the study:

- a. located the university press and its functions within the socio-economic environment and specifically within the tertiary education structure of the country
- b. critically analyzed press structure, internal operations and functions, and
- c. compared press policies and practices with those in America and Europe.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- a. establish the extent to which constraints facing the university presses affect their operations, and
- b. explore possible avenues of reducing the effect of the constraints by putting forward a model structure for the African university press.

1.5 Research questions

Apart from South Africa, the rest of Sub-Saharan university presses were products of post independent aspirations of various governments armed with new visions of their countries to carve a new image for their peoples. Each press must have been set up with a specific objective or objectives. The study established the extent to which the presses are individually and collectively meeting the aspirations of the founding fathers. It took a hard look at whether their continued existence is justified in the face of the plethora of problems/challenges, or whether their roles could be conveniently taken over by private commercial entities. In the build up to these, the pertinent questions were:

- What was the vision behind the establishment of the press at the time it was founded?
- Judging by the output or performance over the past fifteen years, would it be fair to continue to support the press or not. In other words, does the press exist only in name or it is performing creditably in the face of the many problems it encounters.
- The study sought to establish how far the presses have been able to cope with these problems; and whether there are innovative ways of meeting the various challenges. For example funding as a problem was scrutinized to see the funding levels over the years, whether static, increasing or decreasing, and what measures have been taken to 'source' funding elsewhere. Other identifiable problems like low sales and changes in technology were treated in a similar way. For example some presses were founding members of African

Books Collective (ABC), which seek to market African books to Europe and North America. How far this move has helped such presses is a pertinent question whose answer in quantitative terms, justified belonging to such a body.

The primary research question was: Do African university presses have a distinct character from their American and European counterparts? The study provided answers to this basic question by answering the following sub-questions:

Who are the selected university presses?

What led to the establishment of the presses?

What kinds of books do they publish?

Are they actually sold, if so in what quantities? And to whom?

Have they done so successfully over the last fifteen years? If not, why not?

What are the policies on manuscript acquisition, editorial, marketing and distribution, and production?

What deficiencies exist in their operations?

How do these shortcomings help in creating a model of an African university press in the 21st century?

How can they promote African scholarship (on a global basis)?

Can they do this in ways which, say Oxford University Press cannot?

What should be the ideal relationship between African scholars and their publishers to replace of the current mistrust between them?

1.6 Significance of the study

Studies on African publishing have mainly focused on issues pertinent to publishing development, and the provision of educational materials for pre-university education (Zell & Lomer, 1996; Apeji, 1995). To date none has made the university press in Africa its primary area of investigation. The litany of problems facing the African university press is well documented in the general context of publishing in Africa (Altbach, 1978; Nwafor, 1991; Rosenberg, 1994; Teferra, 1995). The study of these problems and the extent to which they impact

on the day to day operations of these presses provide a basis for self-evaluation of existing policies, alternative sources of solutions to these problems, attention to the state of the university press in Africa, and an impetus for further research into scholarly publishing in Africa.

The basis for restricting African university press publishing to scholarly works only is questioned with the view to having it adapt to prevailing local conditions which are at variance with those in the Western world. It is believed that an African model of a university press would be more appropriate to the peculiar circumstances of the continent. This study is important inasmuch as its findings will inform press houses, university authorities, and in fact governments of the central role this minor sector of the publishing industry can and must play in the culture, politics and intellectual life of African nations.

1.7 Scope and limitations

The study covers the policies and practices of six university presses in five Sub-Saharan African countries. The six presses are the Ghana Universities Press (Accra, Ghana), the Presses of the Universities of Cape Town and South Africa, (respectively in Cape Town and Pretoria, South Africa), University of Zimbabwe Press (Harare, Zimbabwe), University of Zambia Press (Lusaka, Zambia), and University Press of Nairobi (Nairobi, Kenya). The five countries are known to be among those with the most vibrant publishing industries in the sub region (Zell, 1992; Teferra, 1998; Altbach, 1998a). Within the limits of monetary and time constraints it was thought that the study could adequately cover only six presses. The university presses of Ahmadu Bello and Maiduguri (both in Nigeria) responded to the preliminary questionnaire only.

Based on the definition of the scholarly press by Ganu¹ the core business of each scholarly press was judged to be the publication of original works of research in the form of monographs and scholarly journals, and textbooks for tertiary level

¹See page 2 and Definition of terms on page xiii

The focus of the study is on the internal operations and policies as they relate to manuscript acquisition and list building, the application of technology in production, funding and fundraising, contracts, royalties and copyright, marketing, distribution and sales, co-operation/co-publishing and the sale of rights, and translations. For the sake of emphasis, the focus of the study was the 'printed' book and the 'printed' journal although one was mindful of current changes in the scholarly communication process as far as electronic publishing is concerned.

The power vested in printed information is very strong even with the current technological developments and the book will continue to play a significant role, particularly in developing countries for some years to come. Quoting Jack Goellner of the Johns Hopkins University Press, Day (1991:35) affirmed his belief in the book: 'I believe that the book will endure among us, not because it is sacrosanct, but because it is necessary.' Stressing the same point, Baum (1995:79) stated that:

The long heralded death of the book shows no sign of arriving. In the developed world other media will grow alongside the codex or bound volume; they may outstrip it in terms of market share but are unlikely to replace it in most genres in a plannable future. In the developing world a continuing massive demand for education in a realistic and cost-effective form guarantees the future of the educational book.

For developing regions like Africa that is the reality. While monographs are destined to undergo an electronic transformation as a consequence of technological evolution, there is an inherent belief that the printed monograph is destined to survive as a partner to its electronic companion.

Summary

Chapter 1 gave a background of the research into university press publishing, as an aspect of scholarly publishing in Africa. It attempted to position the campus press at the centre of the scholarly community by linking the author and publisher in the scholarly communication process. It detailed knowledge creation that is skewed in favour of the Western world, and argued for an African model of a scholarly press that would be sensitive to its social responsibility towards the larger society. It attributed the sorry state of book and journals supply in African universities to poor government policies, the state of the economies, and neglect of the sector. It identified book and journal assistance programmes and over dependence on assistance as the causes that stifle the growth of the industry. The study covered six university presses from five Sub-Saharan Africa countries and investigated how effective they have been given the many challenges they face as developing country presses. The objective was to establish the extent of the constraints and explore possible solutions to the problems.