

Digital Publishing in Nigeria: Evidence of Adoption and Implications for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

As publishers all over the world embrace digital publishing, it is not clear whether their Nigerian counterparts are adjusting to this new reality or not. This study, therefore, aims at finding out, by way of empirical investigation, whether Nigeria's publishing houses have adopted any digital publishing innovations in the light of the increasing importance of these innovations for the survival of publishing businesses across the globe. The study is anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and tries to answer the questions as to the extent of adoption the findings show that new design and printing technologies adopted are evident on the current developments discernible in book covers, cover finishing, impression quality, illustrations and binding. Local publishers now produce books in CD-Rom, audio CD and online through the African Books collective. The implication for sustainable development is that perennial paper problems which could have been overcome with digital distribution systems may persist. Power problems make the future look bleak and deepen the nation's problem of book-shyness.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The world of publishing is experiencing a revolution driven by technological innovations. In the words of Kasdorf (2007: 1)

...we are in the middle of a revolution. It's a common observation that the technological advances of the past decade or two are changing publishing more profoundly than it has changed since Gutenberg's time.

Kasdorf explains, in addition, how book and journal publishers in America and Europe are diversifying into electronic publishing – electronic distribution of information and knowledge hitherto distributed through traditional paper books. His

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statement summarises how the business of book publishing has, since 1450, advanced from handsetting of movable metal type to Linotype setting, Monotype setting, Lithographic offset printing, Word processing, Desktop publishing, Direct imaging, On-line books, and now portable electronic books. The rapidity of the change, according to him, has created opportunities and challenges. And making a move to electronic publishing, he explains, is beginning to be a matter of survival for publishers.

Another interesting background to this study development is the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria has already assisted in the provision of some basic infrastructure to make E-publishing feasible in Nigeria. According to Adio(2004:41) the present idea of the N.U.C on Virtual Digital Library that links the university libraries to the rest of the world is a welcome idea, and this will serve as an impetus to other higher institutions, public and special institutional libraries to chart a new course in the discharge of their responsibilities. Implicit in this statement is that publishers who fail to digitize their current lists and future titles may lose out in the emerging E-publishing market, thereby leaving the Nigerian readers to the mercy of foreign publishers.

This survey seeks to find out what book production practices, skills and devices that are adopted among Nigerian publishers for the purpose of e-publishing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions are posed to guide the study:

1. In what aspects of publishing output are adoptions of digital innovations discernible?
2. How would adoptions or non-adoption affect the sustainable development of the publishing business in Nigeria?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK This study is housed under the Innovation Diffusion Theory. Innovation Diffusion is defined as the

Strategic exposure of change target to new idea, object or practice (that is, innovation) in a manner that they would pay attention to understand, internalize and adopt the new idea, object or practice (which is diffusion) for their own benefit. (Nwodu, 2006:102)

According to Katz (1963) as cited by Nwodu (2006) diffusion means the process of spread of a given new idea or practice over time, via specifiable channels through some social structures.

This theory assumes: That there are change agents who are responsible for the introduction of new ideas or practices. That diffusion is hardly hypodermic in effect. That the process of diffusion may be fast or slow depending on the environment or the circumstances of the change targets.

According to Baran and Davis (2003: 169) empirical studies in the USA “Show that when new technological innovations are introduced, they will pass through a series of stages before being widely adopted.”

Most people will become aware of the innovation often through the media at the first stage.

A small group of early adopters adopt it at the second stage.

Opinion leaders learn from early adopters and try the innovations themselves at the third stage.

Opinion leaders find the innovation useful and encourage their friends, the opinion followers at the fourth stage.

Finally, after most people have adopted the innovation, a group of laggards or late adopters make the change.

LITERATURE

Above all, the internet has become the most powerful driver of innovation the world has seen. One result has been to change the structure of the communication industry, shifting the focus

of innovation away from the old giants and ... to drive forward communications technology at a formidable pace (Caincross 2001:97).

The book industry is part of the communications industry being transformed by the internet. The conclusion of Caincross on the value of internet-related innovations is that: "Those parts of the world that embrace the internet will find themselves better able to compete than those that lag behind".

The internet, a super network of globally interconnected computers, has the capacity to convey any information that can be stored in digital form. This includes books set digitally with the relevant programmes. It is, in fact, the digitization of books and their distribution through the internet that enabled Amazon.com (an American internet bookstore) to account, within five years, for four per cent of American book sales (Caincross, 2001) In fact, she explains that internet power equipped Amazon.com to do better than off-line bookstores quoted in the stock exchange. Her words:

"Amazon.com's capital value overtook that of all America's off-line bookstores, including Barnes & Noble and Borders, put together." In response to the realities of the electronic book marketing era made possible by the internet, America's leading book marketer, Barnes & Noble has found ways to use visits to its physical bookstores to recruit on-line customers" (Caincross 2001: 106) The following are the areas in which the internet is facilitating the publishing of books: Typesetting, layout and editing, On-line distribution, On-line ordering, Marketing, Advertising, Pricing, Payments and Hiring.

Books in digital form, distributed through the internet as on-line books are now common and sold directly by authors and publishers, or through on-line bookshops such as Amazon.com. Recently, publishers have introduced small, book-sized hand-held electronic books known as e-book. To distinguish the downloadable on-line book from the ones printed on demand, the former is increasingly being referred to as D-book. In other words, electronic publishing, as operationalised in this study covers the whole gamut of books distributed by any form of electronic device. They include books on tape, books on CD, microfilm, etc.

From this historical perspective, there is no doubt that innovative ideas in book publishing have served as catalysts to development and civilization. Ubahakwe (1983) cited by Echebiri (2005:198) puts it succinctly:

“There is no doubt that the book is one of man’s revolutionary inventions and accounts in good measure for the rapid development of man’s civilization”.

The implication of this statement to this study is that innovations under investigation merit detailed study due to their possible impact on the overall development of the society.

Reviewing the importance of the computer and other digital equipment/processes to the editor, Adejuwon (2003: 20) said that, in contemporary publishing, “there are more opportunities for creative editors on the computer or the internet”, in agreement with Okwilagwe (2001). From Adejuwon’s experience as a senior book editor specializing in scholarly books, he outlines some benefits of digital book editing:

Electronic editing appears to make it easy to input, reformat, edit, rewrite, spell-check, redesign and print all at one sitting, so solving all editorial problems, but it takes time to make the best use of the computer (Adejuwon, 2003: 22).

Abegunde, (2003:39) attempted an examination of contemporary developments in Nigeria’s publishing sector. His appraisal was that the adoption of computer for prepress operations is only a milestone along the path of a digital tomorrow. He said,

Today the use of computer has revolutionized prepress in the area of word processing, layout and integration of images and text, colour separation and halftone photograph, page assembly, plate making and imposition...

adding that it has largely supplanted manual skills. Abegunde gave a schematic presentation of the “past, present, current, most current and future” e-publishing innovations in the Nigerian book industry as follows:

Previous/Past	Present	Current	Most Current	Future
Pre-Press Wooden and Metal form preparation	Linotype, Monotype, Photocom posing, Proofing paste up, camera work (filming) stripping, retouching and plating	Desktop publishing (computer), camera work (filming) plating.	Digital imaging, colour correction, separation, colour manipulation and computer to plate (no film)	

Source: Quality Book Production (2003)

METHODOLOGY

The survey method of research was employed to collect data from 22 publishing organizations in Nigeria. The sampled publishers are located in Lagos, Oyo and Ogun States, a region that accounts for over 70% of all the registered publishing firms in the country. The publishers were selected by simple random sampling using a list of publishers registered by the Nigerian Publishers Association, 2007.

DATA PRESENTATION

Table 1: Aspects in which adoption is manifest on output of publishers

S/N	Areas of adoption	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Cover design	20	100

2	Cover Finishing	18	90
3	Impression quality	7	35
4	Inside illustrations	14	70
5	Binding	11	55

Source: field data

The data indicate that all the sampled publishers agree that new technologies have brought improvement in the quality of their cover design while 18, representing 90% .indicated that their cover finishing (e.g. lamination and varnishing) have been influenced positively. The same goes for inside illustrations on which 14 70% admitted there is improved quality, just as 11 and 7 respondents indicate improved qualities in the areas of binding and impression.

Table 2: Areas of improved quality due to newly adopted technology

S/N	Projects	No of selling or producing respondents	Percentage	No of titles
1	CD – ROM	2	13.63	27
2	Books in Cassette	4	18.18	6
3	Paper books with CD – ROM	18	90%	65
4	Audio CD Books	3	13.63	5
5	P.O.D Titles	7	31.8	1,150
		Total number of tittles		1,253

Source: field data

Note that the figures represent extent of adoption not minding whether the adopting publisher sells for foreign publishers or produces the e-product locally. This is because we are searching for available variety. The data indicate that as many as 90% of publishers either produce or sell books that come with CD – ROM, 31% or seven respondents have digitized their titles and market them online by means of print-on-demand through the African Books Collective, ABC. By this means 1,150 titles have

been sold. The publishers have also sold book contents in CD – ROM format, Cassette format and audio CD format.

The survey shows that the following E-marketing and Distribution Innovations have been adopted by 50% of the publishers:

1. Buying/Selling via internet stories
2. Internet pricing & fulfillment
3. Online book adverts
4. E-publishing partnership

Table 3: Internet Connectivity Innovations Adopted

SN	Conduit	No of adoptions	Percentage
1	E-mail address	21	95.45
2	Website	14	63.63
3	Internet facility	14	63.63

Source: field data

To sell books online, publish books online or get involved in any form of e-publishing collaboration, these conduit innovations are necessary: E-mail address, website and internet facility or access. The survey also tried to measure adoptions with regard to these processes. The data show that 21 or 95.45% of the publishers have e-mail addresses, 14 or 63.63% have websites and are connected to the internet.

Table 4: Acquisition of e-publishing Skill

SN	Innovation	No of respondents	%
1	Trained	9	40.9
2	No training	8	36.36
3	Blank	5	22.72

	Total	22	100
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Source: field data

Training is an essential part of embracing change and innovation, especially e-publishing innovations. The essence of investigating it therefore is to seek indications of preparedness for change or unpreparedness. Nine out of 22 respondents (40.9%) trained staff on digital publishing whereas 8 (36.36%) did not train. Five returned the column blank indicating that they probably did not train thereby bringing the number of No-Training responses to 13 or 59.08%.

Discussion of Findings and Implications for Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, according to Elliot (1999:7) is “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirneeds”. Development may also be viewed as the process by which the level of living or the quality of life of a people is improved through their participation in the process of positive change.

The publishing community in every country is experiencing a revolutionary change which makes people like to wonder if the book will survive if absorbed into cyberspace. There have also been predictions of the “demise and burial” of the traditional paper book by some book industry watchers. As Nigeria slowly joins the rest of the world in adopting digital publishing innovations, what are the possible implications for a sustainable publishing culture and practices in the country. This question becomes even more Germaine in the light of Adeboye’s (2002) assertions that developing countries are losers in the globalization game while Western countries are the winner at the end of the day. The data will therefore be discussed in the content of sustainable development.

From the Definitions of development, it is obvious that innovations and practices adopted are bound to have some pleasant and some unpleasant impacts on the business of publishers. Among the implications are the ones identified in the following areas:

Payment for E-Books: Security for payments is the single most essential requirement for electronic commerce to flourish. Caincross (2001:107) highlights the problem thus:

Ordering is simple, compared with paying. The currency of the internet is the credit card, which accounts for about four out of

five e-commerce transactions. But many potential customers either dislike paying by credit card or indeed do not have one.

In Nigeria, the use of credit card is almost non-existent. This poses a challenge to the publisher who is thinking of selling his books online. As other payment mechanisms are still crude, this is a challenge that must be handled before success should be expected in e-publishing (Caincross, 2001).

Royalties: Organisations like Disc-Us Books Inc. publish for authors under their “co-publishing” arrangement and pay royalties on copies sold. According to Brownstone and Franck (1999) they pay royalties as high as 50 percent. They are able to do this because their cost of production is close to nothing. The issue of royalty payment is one that constantly causes disaffection between authors and publishers. With electronic publishing holding better promise for authors, publishers are likely to come under serious pressure for higher royalties, even for paper books.

Cyber Copyright and Piracy: Talab (2004) conducted a study on online plagiarism and its copyright implications. She warns that there are serious copyright issues with some of the publishing services on the internet. Copyright, the exclusive legal right of an author or a publisher to publish and dispose of his or her work as he or she sees fit, is greatly endangered by e-book business. Hill (2003:57) says:

Protecting intellectual property has also become increasingly problematic, particularly if it can be rendered in a digital form and then copied and distributed at very low cost via pirated CDs or over the internet

Dyson, cited in Caincross (2001) proposes three models for acquiring copyright materials: That content could be sold outright to advertisers or sponsors who would give it away happily in order to attract attention to their products. To sell the razor cheaply but charge mainly for the blades, by which she means that a book given at a give-away price on the internet earns money chiefly from subsequent invitations to the author to speak at conferences.

This is what Ithiel de Sola Pool, cited in Caincross (2001: 237) describes as “service right” whereby “a charge is made not for reproduction but for continuing service in the form of, say, updating the original material”. The idea is that not many people will bother to pirate a book updated by the hour.

Until a fool-proof copyright administration system is worked out, copyright theft may continue against the business interest of electronic publishers.

Editioning (ISBN): Whenever a book is reproduced in any edition other than the first, it must appear with a new International Standard Book Number (ISBN). If there are, for instance, paperback edition, book club edition, CD-Rom edition and low price edition of the same work, each will be assigned a different number. Constant adjustment of editorial materials and publication information for this purpose has become a reality in publishing. Nigerian publishers must take care of these minute details in order to play in the global market of e-publishing, especially now that the international Standards Organisation has increased the digits from 10 to 13.

Specialisation: Baran (2004: 84) points out that globalization, mergers and acquisitions induced by electronic publishing and electronic commerce are forcing small publishers who “cannot compete in the blockbuster world” to specialize in specific areas such as the environment, feminism, gay issues and how-to books. Local publishers who think that they cannot compete with the big global players can as well think of specialized areas in which they can publish their e-books. The expectation is that the sensitive nature of the subject areas will draw attention to their titles.

Cost of paper: It is believed that the high cost of paper is a major set back to book publishing in Nigeria. For this reason, Tiarniyu (2005: 154) suggests:

Paper constraint can be significantly circumvented if Nigerian publishers individually or jointly invest in CD-Rom and internet publishing... of scientific and rare Nigerian content for sale or subscription... Nigerian companies, universities and other tertiary level institutions might then be encouraged to subscribe to such publishing products.

In other words, e-publishing may reduce cost of production is extensively adopted.

Remainders: Every publishing house which has been in business for some years is likely to have in its warehouse many copies of books with slim chances of being sold at the right price. Such books are often called remainders and sold at great discounts. Before they are sold, they occupy portions of the warehouse and create inventory problems. E-publishing solves this problem as well as the problem of providing distribution trucks, to a reasonable extent.

The Case of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: Founded in 1768 by three Scottish printers, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was bought in 1920 by Sears Roebuck which later sold it before its operational offices were moved to Chicago. Having flourished for more than two centuries, its market dominance, in 1990, seemed impregnable and its profitability assured. Then came the CD-Rom. Caincross (2001) narrates the high-profile disaster as follows:

Microsoft's Encarta, an electronic encyclopedia launched in 1993, came free with many PCs. That made economic sense: it cost almost nothing to make an extra copy, compared with the \$250 or so it cost to make a set of *Britannicas*. The encyclopedia company fought back with its own CD-Rom. But first the company priced it high, to avoid undercutting its salesmen, then lowered the price and duly enraged them:... While company and distribution channel squabbled, sales of all hardbound encyclopedias collapsed to a tenth of their 1990 level. The encyclopedia was sold for a fraction of its book value...

The company has since been sold and industry watchers are wondering how the new owners intend to revive it. The fate of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is an awful warning of what might lie ahead for publishers. It is however possible to start out with reference works and games as Holm (1996) suggests.

By- Passing publishers: Rather than continue to seek a publisher until the information in a manuscript becomes obsolete, some authors now take advantage of e-publishing and publish their works on the internet by themselves. Writers, who do this through their own web sites, keep 100% of the income. Authors who distribute their work through an established e-publisher, according to (Baran: 2004) usually get royalties of 40% to 70% compared to the 5% to 10% offered by traditional publishers.

Success Begets publishing contract: When an author becomes successful in his or her self-publishing online adventure, some of the publishers who rejected his or her manuscript may solicit for it or the right to publish the paperback or make a movie from it. For instance, in 1998, Melisse Shaprio, an American, suffered rejection at the hands of many publishing houses. She later published her book *Lip Service* online. Within a short time, she sold 1,500 copies at \$12.95 each. The book was quickly signed by the

Doubleday Book Club and the Literary Guild (Baran 2004: 84). So for local publishers lacking the confidence to accept some category of manuscripts, internet success may provide basis for assessment.

Cyber plagiarism: Every writer ought to beware of the danger of cyber plagiarism. The ease with which researchers and writers download and print materials from the internet is capable of luring them into plagiarism. According to Talab (2004; 15) “online plagiarism is such a growing concern for educators in K₁₂ and higher education... Recently a college president resigned because of it.” It is important to give due credits to sources of data whether they are from the internet or not. Any e-publisher who fails to heed this warning may have himself or herself to blame in the near future. (Asein, 1994).

New Definitions and New Documentation Formats: From the traditional definitions of book, a book ought to be bound within a cover. It also ought to be on printed pages. Electronic publishing, with online editions, CD-Rom and e-books, has made it imperative for publishers to come up with a definition of book which will embrace all kinds of book- both traditional and electronic. Related to this is the challenge of citing information gathered through the internet. The best advice on this is to rely on the style books of the leading university faculties and authoritative manuals such as the *Chicago Manual of Style* (1982) and *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (1994) or more current editions.

Publishers in Europe and America began more than twenty years ago to applaud and appropriate the benefits of electronic publishing. According to Plotnik (1982) publishers were happy to announce in a *Folio Magazine* article that it decreases work steps, decreases possibility of errors and promotes productivity during writing. The *Columbia Encyclopedia* (2004) also states that initial forecasts for the overwhelming success of e-books, however proved to be premature, as comparatively few examples of the format were sold during the first years of their widespread release.

If this was the experience in America what should we expect in Nigeria where e-publishing is simply a novelty and the appropriate reading habit a mirage. It is not likely that publishers will go beyond the establishment of websites in the near future. They currently appear to be establishing websites more; as status symbols than means

of advancing the cause of e-publishing in Nigeria, and we must appreciate their reasons which include:

- ◆ With power supply more erratic than it was in 1980, any kind of publishing that depends on electric power is not likely to thrive in Nigeria.
- ◆ Ownership of computer is essential for the prospective readers of electronic books; and it is doubtful that access to computer is widespread.
- ◆ The elite who own personal computers will need to buy power generating sets if they intend to actually benefit from them. (Adesanoye, 1995).
- ◆ With personal computers and power generating sets, they will also need a lot of luck to find fuel to power the sets when they have to use them.

Conclusion

Digital publishing innovations have, no doubt made an in-road into Nigeria's conservative publishing practices but have little or no effect on the book-sky public who have several reasons to remain adamant to change. Among their reasons are perennial energy problems, low computer ownership density, hinted access to internet facilities. These are genuine problems which, if not overcome, will make sustainable digital publishing difficult if not impossible.

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