

Performance of Nigerian Publishers as Innovation agents to Nigerian University libraries

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Keywords: Publishing, Library, Innovations, Change, Agents, University, Nigeria

Abstract

There have been arguments suggesting that the low rate of adoption of digital publishing innovations in Nigeria could be attributed to the conservative activities of local publishers. This study, therefore, set out to investigate the role played by local Nigerian Publishers towards the acquisition and adoption of digital resources in university libraries. Employing a combination of interviews and examination of official records, data were gathered from three university libraries. The questions as to the number of digital resources adopted and who played the role of change agent were answered within the framework of diffusion of innovation theory. The findings indicate that five foreign publishers played the role of innovation change agents in collaboration with some donors while none (0%) of the local publishers played any role whatsoever. It is, therefore, concluded that local Nigerian publishers have not performed the expected role of change agents with regard to the adoption of digital library innovations in Nigerian Libraries. The recommendation is that further studies should be conducted to examine the factors affecting the adoption and diffusion of digital library and publishing innovations by book publishers in Nigeria.

Key Words: Publishing, Library, Innovations, Change, Agents, University, Nigeria

Background to the study

The Nigerian book industry has been a poor performer in terms of developing the literature market, producing sufficient and suitable literature titles and promoting a sustainable reading culture. Adesanoye (2007: 9) argued that publishers should engage in book development programmes “that go beyond merely providing the books for our

children. Book publishers... must, therefore find a way of encouraging culture of leisure reading, this being the only way of ensuring the sustainability of the book industry”.

He added that if publishers will fulfill their mission as change and development agents, their umbrella association, the Nigerian Publishers Association, would need to take the lead. From the global scene, a variety of forces, according to Warren (2010) are converging to dramatically increase use of digital textbooks and online learning in libraries and schools. This, according to Utulu (2009) has become a reality in Nigeria, where, institutional libraries, he argues, are beginning to adopt electronic resources to meet the challenge posed by the demand for virtual library resources. The appearance of e-readers on the scene seems to present an opportunity for publishers and libraries in countries having challenges with leisure reading. Commenting on this, Siegenthaler, Wartz and Groner (2009: 26) said “there is a great need for empirical research on the usability of e-readers examining the extent to which the devices are capable of replacing the classic paper book and how their additional capabilities should be implemented so that users can use them intuitively”.

With regard to usability of digital products or resources in Nigerian libraries, Oduwole Oyewumi and Oyesiku (2002) recommended that publishers of digital resources should strive to make them user-friendly in line with suggestions made by Ojo-Igbinoba (1993). In a study that focused on the adoption of ICTs in Nigeria, Akinyosoye (2004) argued that people in the Nigerian environment need intermediaries or change agents who will help to adapt the technologies to local needs of users. In this respect, local publishers are in position to adopt imported virtual library resources and make them more user-friendly by packaging them to suit the educational levels and media literacy levels of local users. The thinking of these researchers has been that publishers are not interested in playing the role of change agents in this regard, but there is hardly a sufficient empirical basis for such conclusions.

Statement of the Problem

In every nation’s publishing industry, book publishers generally act as innovation agents to libraries and schools. In this era of information technology, this role has become more critical than ever before, according to scholars. For instance, Tiamiyu (2005) observed

that the opportunities and threats of “global electronic revolution now loom large on the Nigerian publishing horizon” and submitted that Nigerian publishers should individually or jointly invest in CD-ROM and internet publishing of scientific and rare Nigerian content for sale to or subscription by libraries and schools (Tihamiyu, 2005: 148).

Rather than respond to this call, Nigerian publishers seem to shy away from this responsibility, probably thinking that there is no market for digital resources in Nigeria. In fact, a leading Ghanaian publisher who has taken advantage of the existing electronic book market in Nigeria and other African countries, Ofori-Mensah (2008:22) argues that Nigerian publishers “are not adventurous and shy away” from scholarly works, digital publishing and global networking. The implication is that foreign publishers would naturally fill the vacuum thereby leaving local university libraries to the import conditions of foreign publishers who may not fully understand local needs and challenges. If local publishers are able to play the role of change agents in this regard, they would be helping the nation to compete profitably in the emerging global digital book market. But failure to take the lead would expose the nation’s libraries to foreign publishers whose digital resources may not be local-user friendly.

There is, however, no empirical evidence to ascertain if local publishers are truly shying away from this expected role neither do we have reliable empirical data to prove that foreign publishers are dominating the local supply of digital resources to these libraries. The problem of this study, therefore, is to provide empirical evidence on this issue as a first step towards finding a solution.

Research Questions

To investigate the above-stated problem, the following questions are posed:

1. What are the digital book resources adopted in the selected Nigerian libraries?
2. Are the digital resources introduced and supplied by Nigerian or foreign publishers?
3. Did Nigerian publishers act as change agents or facilitators in the introduction of any of the adopted digital resources?

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to find out if Nigerian publishers have heeded the calls made by scholars (Oduwole et al 2002 and Adesanoye, 2007) in acting as change agents in connection with the adoption and diffusion of digital book innovations in Nigerian libraries. Specifically, the aim is:

To investigate the level of adoption of digital resources in the selected university libraries.

To examine available records with the aim of finding out if Nigerian publishers supplied some or all of the digital resources in the selected libraries.

To ascertain if Nigerian publishers acted as facilitators towards the acquisition of digital resources in the selected libraries. The expected role could be outright supply, facilitation of provision, editing, distribution, or co-publication.

Literature Review

Theoretical framework: This study is anchored on the framework of Rogers (1995) innovation diffusion theory; a theory which assumes, according to Nwodu (2006) that there are change agents responsible for the introduction of new ideas or practices and that diffusion is hardly hypodermic in effect. It also assumes that the process of diffusion may be fast or slow depending on the environment or the circumstances of the change targets and the attitude of the change agents and opinion leaders.

According to Baran and Davis (2003:169) empirical studies in the USA. “show that when new technologies are introduced, they will pass through a series of stages before being widely adopted”. They identify five stages of the diffusion process as proposed by Rogers (1995):

- Stage 1: Most people will become aware of the innovation often through the media.
- Stage 2: A small group of early adopters will adopt it.
- Stage 3: Opinion leaders learn from early adopters and try the innovation themselves.

Stage 4: opinion leaders find innovation useful and encourage their friends, the opinion followers.

Stage 5: finally, after most people have adopted the innovation a group of laggards or late adopters make the change.

The assumption in this study is that publishers occupy the position of opinion leaders or change agents; which implies that they are in position to try the innovations and introduce them to other publishers and libraries.

There are views that suggest that certain sections of the Nigerian publishing industry are trying to adopt while others have not made much effort in adopting e-publishing innovations. Opaleke (2006:2) argues that “computer-oriented machines can now be found in many offices and homes for the purpose of rendering services. However, Nigerian libraries have not seriously adopted the innovation”. Citing Fayose (1983), Opaleke (2006) claims that a study revealed a total absence of non-print (that is electronic books) in Nigeria’s school libraries in 1983m he seems to blame this on the government policies and the inability of computer vendors to penetrate educational institutions. He probably did not recognize that it is not computer vendors but publishers who should market e-publishing products to libraries. However, if the publishers have not adopted the innovation, they may have no e-publishing services and products to sell to the libraries.

For publishers to market e-publishing services in Nigeria universities, the university libraries have to, at least, be prepared with basic database resources. A study carried out by Hicks and Tillim (1997) and reported in Opaleke (2006) shows that, in 1997, none of the sampled Nigerian university libraries had internet access; all the six offered CD-Rom services but projected no OPAC services. Studies conducted recently confirm that the situation is no longer the same. But a similar study from publishing perspective would, no doubt, throw light on the situation.

A related issue is whether Nigerian students (customers of the libraries) have the right understanding, literacy and skill to use electronic services if provided by publishers through libraries. Ofudu (1997) cited by Opaleke (2006) examined the extent to which staff and students of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) use electronic equipment and materials in the Kashim Ibrahim Library of the A.B.U. The result of the study shows that

many students are not aware of the existence of media unit in KIL, and their services are not utilized. For those that are aware, their use was hindered by non-availability of current materials and users are not pleased with length of opening hours.

Like Nwankwo (2005) and Tiamiyu (2005), Opaleke (2006) also concludes that “multimedia resources have not been given much priority and resources such as computers, satellite television and radio and internet connectivity are still absent”.

Ability to read and opportunity for reading are inter-twined with publishing. Where there is no literacy, there will be no reading and therefore, no market for published works. Ogum (2004:270) investigated the influence of electronic communication devices on the acquisition of literacy and reading for pleasure in Rivers State. He found that electronic information technologies have influence on reading and literacy and stressed that “new electronic communication and entertainment technologies have hampered interest in leisure reading”. By new technologies, he means Global System for Mobile, GSM, communication, the internet and home video. Ogum, citing Ituen and Ogum (2002) also contends that these new electronic media, rather than promote reading, are discouraging it. He says that the conventions of written communication appear to be relegated to the background and that the writing and enjoyment of composition as well as the reading of plays and novels have been interrupted by their cravings for home video.

The implication of this is that the innovations under investigation in this study have been perceived as having disruptive effects on the customers of the publishers--readers. If so, such thinking is capable of discouraging the promotion of e-publishing innovations by publishers. To avoid any perception of electronic publishing media as disruptive, it is important to introduce the concept of media literacy which, in the words of Baran (2004:50), “is the ability to effectively and efficiently comprehend and utilize mass media content”. In other words, publishers, before introducing the innovations, may have to consider the level of not only literacy but media literacy in the country. Put differently, the reading public need to be conversant with the technologies of electronic publishing communication, the codes that are used, the messages produced as well as the selection, interpretation and impact of the messages. Included in the literacy package is computer literacy, internet browsing ability and ability to use other gadgets needed for effective access to e-publishing contents. Whether this literacy or skill has been acquired

by a reasonable number of the reading public is doubtful. How the situation affects publisher's introduction of e-publishing innovations can only be investigated in another study.

Just as it is impossible to discuss publishing without mentioning readers, it is impracticable to conclude this review without finding out what exists in the libraries. This helps to place the publisher's position, constraints and prospects in perspective.

Agboola (2000) conducted a study to find out users' preference of and reaction to bibliographic database in CD-Rom as against full text database acquired by the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. Questionnaires were completed by 2,248 users before and after using the library. A total of 1,069 respondents printed out the full text of articles as contrasted with 377 who used the bibliographic abstract and printed out 165 pages. He concludes that "The acquisition of the CAB abstracts and the TEEAL databases have no doubt revolutionized literature and document delivery at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, going by the response of the community to the service" (Agboola, 2000:23)

The high degree of response reported in that study suggests that where there is adequate level of computer literacy, there will be a market for e-products, especially in the academic communities, all other things being equal. In another study on the potential of CD-Rom in Libraries, Ojo- Igbinoba (1993) recommends that African librarians and scholars unable to subscribe to online bibliographic databases would find that CD-Rom offers an acceptable alternative. The justification of this recommendation is that CD-Rom is found to be

a more efficient medium for storage and publishing large amounts of information. Besides, CD-Rom is cheaper to own and to run, more user friendly; one can browse on them, power cuts do not affect the disc or its memory, do not require online telephone connection and is more durable than print and microfilm (Ojo-Igbinoba, 1993:3).

Beyond outlining the advantages of the CD-Rom over online services in Africa, Ojo-Igbinoba's use of the expression "user friendly" is worthy of note in the light of Oduwole, Oyewumi and Oyesiku's (2002) recommendations. In a survey of electronic services in Nigerian libraries involving 37 university libraries, they found that CD-Rom

data bases and electronic mails are the major services provided in the sampled libraries. They also found that these services were mainly used by final year students and postgraduate students writing their projects. They, therefore, recommend that "...CD-Rom publishers should try to make their products user friendlier" arguing that it is important to develop easy-to-use search/retrieval systems in view of the fact that potential users of CD-Rom databases in Nigerian academic libraries are not highly computer literate. This recommendation actually provides sound market information for any Nigerian publisher thinking of going into the e-publishing market as a change agent.

From Adio's (2004) study, we understand that the National Universities Commission introduced a Virtual Digital Library project to link the nation's university libraries to the world. That is, to be linked to as many publishers and libraries as have useful services to provide irrespective of their location on the globe. If this effort by the NUC is not sufficient incentive to a publisher to consider the adoption of e-publishing innovations, Akinyosoye's (2004: 35) observations may suffice. In a study carried out to investigate how ICTs can be employed in development and poverty alleviation, he observed that:

The poor need intelligent intermediaries to use ICTs. These intermediaries are needed to bridge both the overt and the social resource endowment gaps between what the poor have and what they would need in order to use ICTs...

By intermediaries, he means institutions and NGOs. Publishing organizations and institutions can do so much in this regard. For instance, in line with Ojo-Igbinoba (1993) Oduwole Oyewumi and Oyesiku (2002) the publishers can act as intermediaries by making the available e-publishing services local user-friendly. In his write-up, Turner (2001: 13) thinks that subscription agents should act as a different kind of intermediaries between the libraries and publishers for effectiveness. Turner, who, himself, is a subscription agent states:

Electronic journals require a simple and effective infrastructure for purchase and access of content not on a publisher-by-publisher basis but across all publishers – big and small. This is what the users require. Therefore, publisher support for agents and intermediaries will benefit the development of electronic journals.

For Nigerian publishers whose major complaint seems to be the lack of infrastructural facilities, perhaps the idea of introducing such subscription agency services will providesome leverage.

Methodology

The researcher employed a combination of personal interviews with examination of official records in the selected university libraries. The sampling was done purposively in recognition of the following divisions or strata that characterizethe academic library landscape in Nigeria:

- Public University libraries (University of Ibadan and University of Lagos)
- Private University Libraries (Redeemer’s University)

Analysis of Data

The data collected are presented in line with the research questions as follows:

RQ1. What are the digital book/journal resources available in the selected libraries?

Table 1: Digital book/journal resources available in the libraries

S/N	Electronic Resources	URL Address	Source
1	AGORA	http://www.aginternetwork.org	FAO/WHO
2	HINARI	http://www.healthinternetwork.org	FAO/WHO
3	OARE	http://www.oaresciences.com	FAO/WHO
4	NIGERIAN VIRTUAL LIBRARY	http://www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com	Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC)
5	EBSCOHOST	http://www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com	Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC)
6	JSTOR	For Access through UI Net: http://www.jstor.org/logon/ For off campus access: http://www.jstor.org/token/22MkjNqUBEfE-share/ui.edu.ng (this is case sensitive)	MacArthur Foundation

7	WILSON WEB OMNIFILE	http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/jumpstart.jhtml	MacArthur Foundation
8	PROCEEDING S OF THE AMERICAN MATHEMATI CAL SOCIETY	http://www.ams.org/	Library subscription
9	TRANSACTION S OF THE AMERICAN MATHEMATI CAL SOCIETY	http://www.ams.org/	Library subscription
10	MATHSCINET	http://www.ams.org/	Library subscription
11	ZENTRAL BLATT MATH	http://www.zentralblatt-Math.org/ or http://www.zblmath.fiz-karlsruhe.de/	Library subscription
12	DOAJ	http://www.doaj.org	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
13	HIGHWIRE ARCHIVE	http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/devecon.dtl	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
14	AFRICAN JOURNALS ONLINE	http://www.ajol.info/	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
15	BIOMED CENTRAL	http://www.biomedcentral.com	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
16	BMJ PUBLISHING GROUP	http://bmjjournals.com/subscriptions/countries.shtml	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
17	RESEARCH PAPER IN ECONOMICS	http://www.repec.org/	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
18	POPLINE: POPULATION INFORMATIO N ONLINE	http://www.popline.org	MacArthur/Jo urnal Donation Project (JDP)
19	INASP	http://www.inasp.info/health/index.htm	MacArthur/Jo

	HEALTH LINKS		urnal Donation Project (JDP
20	GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK	http://www.gdnet.org/	MacArthur/Journal Donation Project (JDP
21	PUBMED CENTRAL	http://www.pubmedcentral.hih.gov	MacArthur/Journal Donation Project (JDP
22	INASP PERI:	http://www.inasp.info/peri/electronic.html	MacArthur/Journal Donation Project (JDP
23	ASSR:ARAB SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH	http://www.assr.org/	MacArthur/Journal Donation Project (JDP
24	E-JOURNALS	http://www.e-journals.org	MacArthur/Journal Donation Project (JDP
25	LanTEEAL	Available only at the Veterinary Medicine Library	Available at the Veterinary Medicine Library
26	BIONE	http://www.bioone.org	
27	RSC	http://www.rsc.org	
28	BIOLINE INTERNATIONAL	http://www.bioline.org.br/journals	

Field data

Table 1 indicates that there are 28 different digital resources in the sampled libraries. A good number of the resources were found to be available in all three libraries and the older and bigger resources as indicated in table two.

Table 2: Distribution of digital resources in the libraries

SN	University	No of e-resources	Percentage
1.	University of Ibadan	25	89.2

2.	Redeemer's university	12	42.8
3.	University of Lagos	20	71.42
	Total	28	

Field data

Table two presents a distribution of the 28 adopted digital resources across the three university libraries. Total is 28 instead of 57 because many of the digital resources are available across all the libraries surveyed.

RQ2: Are the digital resources donated/supplied/facilitated by Nigerian or foreign publishers?

Table 3: Sources/facilitators/donors of e-resources

SN	Source	No of Resources	Percentage
1.	Donor Agencies with foreign publishers.	5	17.8
2.	Donor Agencies only	11	39.2
3.	Donor Agencies with local publisher	0	0
4.	Government with foreign publishers	2	7.14
5.	Government with Nigerian publishers	0	0
6.	Foreign publishers	4	14.28
7.	Nigerian publishers	0	0
8.	Library Direct Subscription	6	21.42
	Total	28	100

Field data

Data in the table indicate that there is zero return for the following proposed sources: donor agencies with Nigerian publishers, Government with Nigeria publishers and Nigerian publishers. Foreign publishers co-operated with donor agencies to provide 17.8%, and collaborated with government to provide 7.14% and provided 14.28% independently. Donor agencies without support provided 39% while the libraries sourced 21.4% by subscription.

Discussion of findings

Attempt is made in this section to discuss the two questions posed to guide the study with regard to the findings, the literature and the theoretical framework.

RQ1. What are the digital resources in the selected libraries?

There are 28 different resources aimed at various segments of the academic community. We have science only journals, monographs and books in separate packages like AGORA. All the universities also have access to resource with broader bases such as EBSCOHOST and J-Stor. In all, the 28 provide a full range of resource cutting across academic disciplines- Art, Science, Social science, Medicine, ICT, etc. and there are indications that more resources one expected, especially at the University of Ibadan library. This supports the findings of Utulu et al, that Nigerian university libraries now access numerous digital resources. But whether local publishers played the role of opinion leaders as recommended by Adesanoye and other scholars can only be explained by responses to the next question.

R.Q.2 Did local publishers introduce or facilitate the introduction of any of the 28 digital resources identified in the sampled libraries?

The data presented in table three indicate that none of the 28 digital resources was introduced by a local publisher neither did they facilitate the introduction of any. Five library resources or 17.8% were introduced by donor agencies in collaboration with foreign publishers. Some of the resources were provided by a government agency, the National Universities Commission (NUC) while the libraries sourced 21.42 by direct subscription.

The literature points to the fact that there is need for adaptation, repackaging or modification of some of the resources to make them local-user- friendly and that calls were actually made on members of Nigerian Publishers Association to act as opinion leaders or change agents. This finding indicates that,probably, no local publisher thinks that there is any prospect in e-publishing services in libraries. In a nation where we have over 42 million users of the internet, with tertiary institutional libraries as major clusters for users, are there no potentials for these resources or are there factors inhibiting the adoption of digital resources by local publishers. Or have they adopted e-resources for

their businesses but failed to play the role of change agents to libraries? These are issues for further studies.

Conclusion

The study indicates that about 28 digital resources are available in the institutional libraries surveyed but the fact that there is no evidence that a local publisher played any role towards their adoption and use suggests that Nigerian Publishers have not performed any role to advance the national objective of supporting University Libraries to be at pace with technological developments.

It is therefore recommended that further studies should be conducted to investigate the factors affecting the adoption and diffusion of electronic resources and e-publishing innovations in Nigeria.

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