

Hans Zell's engagement with publishing and the book in Africa - A timeline

Period/Year	Activity/Publications	Position held/Role/Activity
1965-1967	Establishment and management of a new university bookshop at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone.	Manager
1967	“Writings by West Africans” exhibition, British Council, Freetown.	Organizer
1971-1974	Management of University of Ife [now Obafemi Awolowo University] Bookshops at the university's Ibadan and Ile-Ife campuses; and setting up of the University of Ife Press .	Managing Director, University of Ife Bookshop Ltd; and Editor, University of Ife Press
1972	“Printed & Published in Africa” book exhibition, held at Ibadan and Ile-Ife.	Organizer
1973	International Conference on Publishing and Book Development in Africa, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 16-20 December, 1973.	Convener and Conference Director
1975	Conference proceedings of the above published by the University of Ife Press, entitled <i>Publishing in Africa in the Seventies</i> .	Joint Editor, with Edwina Oluwasanmi and Eva McLean
1975	1st edition of <i>African Books in Print/Livres Africains Disponibles</i> published by Mansell Information/Publishing Ltd., London (in association with the University of Ife Press).	Editor
1975	Volume 1, no. 1, (1975), first issue of the quarterly <i>African Book Publishing Record</i> (ABPR) published by Hans Zell Publishers, Oxford; in later years published by Bowker-Saur. Hans Zell edited the journal from 1975 to 2002, and since that time it has been edited by Cécile Lomer. It is now published by de Gruyter in Berlin, and is currently in its 46th year of publication.	Founding Editor and Publisher (Editor to 2002)
1977	1st edition of <i>The African Book World & Press: A Directory/Répertoire du Livre et de la Presse en Afrique</i> , published Hans Zell Publishers, Oxford; Gale Research Company, Detroit; France Expansion, Paris; and Verlag Dokumentation, Munich.	Editor & Publisher
1978	2nd edition of <i>African Books in Print/Livres Africains Disponibles</i> , 2 vols., published by Mansell Information Publishing Ltd, London, and Meckler Books, Westport, Conn.	Editor

1979	<p>Inaugural meeting at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, of the Managing Committee/ The Jury of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa, chaired by Professor Eldred Jones of Sierra Leone.</p> <p>The principal aim of this new award – sponsored by Shoichi Noma, former President of the Japanese publishing house Kodansha – was to be the encouragement of publication <i>in</i> Africa of works by African writers and scholars. Hans Zell acted as Secretary to the Noma Award Managing Committee (and as a Trustee of the Noma Award charitable trust) from 1979 to 1995, when he was succeeded by his deputy Mary Jay.</p>	Convener, and Secretary to the Managing Committee (to 1995)
1980	<p>First presentation of the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa during the 1980 Frankfurt Book Fair, whose focal theme was “Africa” during that year.</p> <p>The late Mariama Bâ was the first recipient of the award for her novel <i>Une si longue lettre</i>, published by Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Dakar, in 1979, which is now considered a classical statement on the female condition in Africa, and which was subsequently translated into 17 languages.</p>	
1980	<p>2nd edition of <i>The African Book World & Press: A Directory/Répertoire du Livre et de la Presse en Afrique</i>, published Hans Zell Publishers, Oxford; Gale Research Company, Detroit; France Expansion, Paris; and K.G. Saur Verlag, Munich.</p>	Editor & Publisher
1982	<p>First ‘Bookweek Africa’ held at the Africa Centre, London, 8-10 June, 1982.</p> <p>Book exhibition and events.</p>	Joint organizer
1983	<p>3rd edition of <i>The African Book World & Press: A Directory/Répertoire du Livre et de la Presse en Afrique</i>, published Hans Zell Publishers, Oxford; Gale Research Company, Detroit; France Expansion, Paris; K.G. Saur Verlag, Munich (this edition co-edited with Caroline Bundy).</p>	Editor & Publisher
1983	<p>Acted as a consultant to the organizers of the 1st Zimbabwe International Book Fair in 1983, and organized the re-showing of the first ‘Bookweek Africa. An Exhibition of Books and Journals’, held at the Africa Centre in London the previous year (see above).</p>	Consultant
1984	<p><i>Publishing and Book Development in Africa: A Bibliography/L'Édition et le Développement du Livre en Afrique: une bibliographie</i>, published by UNESCO in its ‘Studies on Books and Reading’ series.</p>	Author
1984	<p>Acted as a consultant to the organizers of the 2nd Zimbabwe International Book Fair, 1984, and provided advice about setting up a permanent Book Fair Secretariat.</p>	Consultant
1984	<p>3rd edition of <i>African Books in Print/Livres Africains Disponibles</i>, 2 vols., published by Mansell Information Publishing Ltd, London, and N.W. Wilson Co., New York.</p>	Editor
1985	<p>Acted as a consultant to the organizers of the 3rd Zimbabwe International Book Fair, 1985.</p>	Consultant

1985	Second 'Bookweek Africa' held at the Africa Centre, London, 17-19 October, 1985. Book exhibition and events.	Joint organizer
1985	'African Publishers' Working Group Meeting on Collective Export Marketing and Distribution', London, 13-16 October, 1985. This meeting led to the founding of the Oxford-based, but African-owned and governed African Books Collective Ltd (ABC), which commenced trading in 1989, see below.	Joint organizer (with Mary Jay)
1986-1995 (part-time)	African Books Collective Ltd., Oxford, Senior Consultant to the ABC Council of Management. Functions included setting up company, providing financial planning and management, supervising administration, establishing an orders processing system, offering advice about marketing and promotion, warehousing, etc., and assuming overall responsibility for day-to-day operations on a part-time basis. Mary Jay took over as the Senior Consultant, and as ABC's CEO in 1995, to 2012. Its current CEO is Justin Cox. Formerly donor supported but now self-financing, and having moved to a largely digital business model, ABC celebrated its 30th year of operations in 2020, and see also http://www.africanbookscollective.com/ .	Consultant (with Mary Jay)
1989	4th edition of <i>The African Book World & Press: A Directory/Répertoire du Livre et de la Presse en Afrique</i> , published Hans Zell Publishers, An imprint of the K.G. Saur Division of Butterworths.	Editor & Publisher
1990	"Africa–The Neglected Continent" published in <i>Logos. The Professional Journal of the Book World</i> 1, no. 2 (July 1990). For link to online version see CV.	Author
1992	Publication of <i>Publishing and Development in the Third World</i> , edited by Philip G. Altbach, by Hans Zell Publishers, London, in association with Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, and Heinemann Kenya Ltd. Commissioned papers, including many on Africa, presented at the major international seminar on publishing in the Third World, held at the Rockefeller Conference Centre, Bellagio, Italy, in February 1991.	Publisher
1993	4th edition of <i>African Books in Print/Livres Africains Disponibles</i> , 2 vols. published by Hans Zell Publishers, an imprint of Bowker-Saur Ltd., London.	Editor
1993	"Publishing in Africa: The Crisis and the Challenge" published in <i>A History of Twentieth-Century African Literatures</i> , edited by Oyekan Owomoyela, and published by University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska. For link to online version see CV.	Author
1993	Publishing in Africa: The Crisis and the Challenge. Roundtable at the (US) African Studies Association, 36th annual meeting, Boston, December 1993.	Roundtable convenor and chair

1995	Hans Zell's collection of books and journals, and a personal archive relating to 35 years of publishing and book development in Africa for the period 1960 to 1995, donated to the African Publishers Network (APNET), Harare, Zimbabwe.	Donation
1996	<i>Publishing and Book Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Annotated Bibliography</i> published by Hans Zell Publishers, an imprint of Bowker-Saur, London. Published in association with the African Publishers Network (APNET), Harare, Zimbabwe. Now annotated, this bibliography superseded the earlier UNESCO bibliography published in 1984.	Joint Editor (with Cécile Lomer)
1998	<i>A Handbook of Good Practice in Journal Publishing</i> , 2nd revised edition published by the International African Institute, London and African Books Collective Ltd, Oxford. A handbook, and guidelines for good practice, to assist journal editors in Africa to improve their publishing operations.	Author
1999	Commissioned by Book Aid International (BAI) to provide an evaluation of BAI's Publishing Support Programmes, consisting of the 'Intra-African Book Support Scheme', and the 'Publishers' Resource Pack Project'.	Consultant
2000	5th edition of <i>African Books in Print/Livres Africains Disponibles</i> , 2 vols., published by Hans Zell Publishers, an imprint of Bowker-Saur Ltd., London. Note: a 6th edition, edited by Cécile Lomer, was published by K.G. Saur, Munich in 2006.	Editor
2000	2nd edition of <i>The Electronic African Bookworm. A Web Navigator</i> published by African Books Collective Ltd, Oxford.	Author
2001	<i>Book Marketing & Promotion: A Handbook of Good Practice</i> , published by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), London A compendium of practical advice on all aspects of book marketing and promotion, particularly for publishers and NGOs in Africa and in other developing countries.	Author
2002	<i>The African Publishing Companion: A Resource Guide</i> , print edition and online, published by Hans Zell Publishing Consultants, Lochcarron A documentation and information resource on African publishing and the book trade.	Publisher
2008	<i>Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Critical Bibliography</i> , published by Hans Zell Publishing, Lochcarron, Scotland. Print edition and online. With an introductory essay by Henry Chakava. Online at http://www.hanszell.co.uk/pbrssa/index.shtml A new, completely revised and fully updated edition of the earlier <i>Publishing and Book Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Annotated Bibliography</i> published in 1996 (see above)). The content and focus of the new edition was substantially recast in several ways. Annotations and abstracts – which are often quite extensive – are now more evaluative rather than descriptive and much greater emphasis is placed on the relative significance of	Author

the material included, thus offering a more critical dimension in reviewing the available literature on the topic. Contains over 2,500 critically annotated entries, including almost 500 resources that are available online, most of them freely accessible. (For reviews see <http://www.hanszell.co.uk/pbrssa/reviews.shtml>)

- 2008/09 “Publishing in Africa: Where Are We Now?”, an extensive two-part article, published in *Logos. Forum of the World Book Community* 19, no. 4 (2008) and 20, no. 1 (2009). Also published (part one and part two combined) in *The African Book Publishing Record*, 35, no. 4 (2009). Also available at Academia.edu, see CV for links. Author
- 2013 Published “Print vs Electronic, and the ‘Digital Revolution’ in Africa” in *The African Book Publishing Record* 39, 1 (2013). Pre-print online version on Academia.edu, see CV for link. Author
A critical look at the print vs digital debate in Africa, taking stock of the current [2013] position as it relates to electronic publishing and the use of electronic reading devices in (English-speaking) sub-Saharan Africa, and the rapidly changing publishing environment on the continent. It describes and critically examines a number of projects and initiatives that are concerned with digital printing and publishing, and provision of e-book reading devices.
- 2013 Published “How Many Books are Published in Africa? The Need for More Reliable Statistics” in *The African Book Publishing Record* 39, no. 4 (2013). Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link. Author
This article calls for more reliable statistical information about African book publishing output. In much of the literature on publishing in Africa numerous writers of articles and reports on the state of the book sector in Africa have raised the issue of Africa’s total book production, comparing it with that of the rest of the world. Almost always they have cited the figure to be between 2-3% of the world’s publishing output. This is the figure that has been cited perpetually for the last two decades at least, and is based on statistical analysis published the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS). Those figures, in turn, came from the statistical data presented in the ‘Culture and Communication’ domains in the now discontinued *UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks* from 1963 to 1999, and which, as the author demonstrates in this article, have been chronically patchy, unreliable or suspect for a number of reasons.
- 2015/16 “Book Donation Programmes for Africa: Time for a Reappraisal? Two Perspectives.” Co-author (with Raphaël Thierry)
Published in *African Research & Documentation. Journal of SCOLMA. The UK Libraries and Archives Group on Africa*, no. 12 (2015). [Published June 2016]
Pre-print online versions on Academia.edu, see CV for links.
Part I: Book Donation Programmes in English-speaking Africa, by Hans M. Zell
Part II: Le don de livre, mais à quel prix, et en échange de quoi? Un regard sur le don de livre en Afrique francophone, by Raphaël Thierry.
A wide-ranging, provocative two-part study that attempts to shed more light on current book donation practices, and provides an analysis and profiles of the work of the principal book aid organizations active in the English-speaking parts of sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, the study seeks to find out how many African-published books are included in current donation schemes. Part II examines book donation practices in francophone Africa.

- 2015 Hans Zell's further collection of books, monograph series, journals, articles, archival and other documents on publishing and book development in Sub-Saharan Africa, for the period 1996 to 2014, donated to Kwara State University Library, Malete, Nigeria. The catalogue of this collection can be accessed at <http://kwasu.edu.ng/library/pbrssa.html>. Donation
- 2016 Migration of the *Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa* online database, consisting of over 3,000 fully annotated records, to Kwara State University Library; to be re-launched by them on an enhanced open access/open source content management digital platform. Donation
Note: Due to a number of persistent technical problems relating to metadata mapping and software functionality, as well as ongoing software development and data transfer issues, there have been serious delays in the migration of the database. However, the new hosts have now indicated that remaining problems and issues have been resolved, and have advised that KWASU and its contractor “are looking forward to completion of the development project and delivery of the software in early 2020”, with subsequent relaunch of the database on a more dynamic, Drupal-based open source content management platform. The first batch of updates and over 600 entirely new records will then also be added to the database.
- 2016 “Indigenous Publishing in Africa – The Need for Research, Documentation, and Collaboration.” A contribution of a chapter in *Coming of Age. Strides in African Publishing. Essays in Honour of Dr. Henry Chakava at 70*, edited by Kiarie Kamau and Kirimi Mitambo. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 2016. Author
 Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.
 Also published as a review essay, “African Publishing Coming of Age”, in *Logos. Journal of the World Publishing Community* 27, Issue 3 (2016).
 This paper sets out the need for more systematic and more vigorous research and documentation, data gathering, and analysis of the African book sector. It also argues for the desirability for more collaboration, knowledge sharing, and information and skills exchange within Africa; as well as the possible development of North-South links and partnership programmes, such as for example a programme to establish a North-South research group, a new research cluster or network bringing together suitable academic and research institutions in Africa, Europe, and North America. A final section offers some pointers for reinvigorating research, and possible forms of collaboration.
- 2018 “Publishing in African Languages: A Review of the Literature” published in *African Research & Documentation. Journal of SCOLMA -The UK Libraries and Archives Group on Africa*, no. 132 (2018). Author
 Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.
 An attempt to bring together some of the literature on an important and challenging, and one could well say neglected aspect of the African book sector, that of publishing in African languages. The article seeks to make a small contribution to the ongoing debate about publishing of indigenous language materials, how the profile of indigenous language publishing might be enhanced—and how publishing in African languages could be conducted as a societally beneficial, sustainable, and profitable commercial activity.

“African Book Industry Data & the State of African National Bibliographies” published in *The African Book Publishing Record* 44, Issue 4 (Dec 2018). Author

Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.

From the abstract:

No less than three international meetings on publishing in Africa have taken place recently, which have been followed with detailed action plans. Among many other recommendations, calls for action to find solutions to perennial problems, as well as discussions focusing on sectorial innovation and revitalization of the African book industries, participants in all three meetings were strongly urged to start collecting and disseminating book industry data. It is true that reliable figures of book publishing output for the continent of Africa do not exist at the present time, with the exception of a very small number of countries, notably South Africa and Morocco. Meantime the state of African national bibliographies, which can form the groundwork of book industry data, presents a picture of neglect for the most part, with many national bibliographies seriously in arrears, currently dormant, or having ceased publication altogether. Only a small number are accessible in digital formats. Book publishing data and book production statistics are important elements in measuring the growth and vitality of indigenous publishing in any part of the world. In the absence of such data for most of the African continent, there is a need for research, analysis, documentation, and systematic gathering of current, reliable data and statistics. However, there are huge challenges and complexities in the goal of collecting data for book industry surveys, which must not be underestimated. Many questions will need to be asked: for example, how is data going to be collected and analysed; what will be the parameters; and what are going to be the sources and the methods? Who should be responsible for undertaking the research and the compilation of such book industry data; and, crucially, who is going to fund the research and the data gathering process on a systematic and ongoing basis?

Collecting book industry data is closely interrelated with the publication of national bibliographies and, in addition to examining the issues and challenges relating to the creation of book industry statistics, this paper also provides an analysis of the current state of national bibliographies in Africa, as well as linked matters such as legal deposit legislation, and compliance of legal deposit. An analysis of the current status of African national bibliographies sadly presents a dismal picture. It is unlikely that reliable data for the African book industries can be collected and published without the input and full cooperation of national libraries or bibliographic agencies. Any attempts to revive the fortunes of African national libraries, and the resumption of publication of high quality and timely national bibliographies, will amount to a formidable task. This paper offers a range of suggestions and recommendations how the situation might be addressed and improved, but also points out that regular compilation of a national bibliography, and effective maintenance of legal deposit, necessitates adequate staff in terms of both numbers and expertise, which is not the case at this time.

2016-2020

Publication of a series annual literature reviews: “Publishing & the Book in Africa: A Literature Review for”) for 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 published in the quarterly *African Book Publishing Record*, of which pre-print versions are all freely accessible at <https://independent.academia.edu/HansZell>. Author

Each annual review lists select new literature in English that has appeared on the topic of publishing and the book sector in sub-Saharan Africa during the course of the previous year. Extensively annotated and/or with abstracts, records are grouped under a range of regional/country and topic-specific headings. The literature reviews cover books, chapters in books and edited collections, journal articles, Internet documents and reports, theses and dissertations, interviews, audio/video recordings, podcasts, as well as a number of blog postings.

“Publishing in Africa: Where Are We Now? An Update for 2019” published in two parts in *Logos: Journal of the World Publishing Community*.

Part 1: 30, Issue 3 (2019) Part 2: 30, Issue 4 (2019).

Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.

An update and sequel to a two-part paper published in *Logos. Forum of the World Book Community* over ten years ago in 2008/09 (see p. 5). It provides a broad round-up of the current situation of the book industry in Africa today (primarily that in English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa), together with a brief review of the activities of the various organizations and associations that have been supportive of African publishing over the years. Part 1 examines the persistent failure of African governments to support their book industries and public libraries in a tangible and positive fashion. It reviews the current status of book development councils in Africa, and the unsatisfactory progress that has been made in establishing national book policies; examines the challenges of generating book industry data, and the opportunities presented to African publishers by the new digital environment. Part 2 sets out a number of recommendations to strengthen the book industries in Africa and the way forward, especially as it relates to capacity and skills building, training for book industry personnel (including training for digital publishing), strengthening book professional associations, South-South linkages and knowledge sharing, encouraging international collaboration, the need for ongoing research and documentation, as well as issues as they relate to African books in the global market place, and the important but neglected area of publishing in African indigenous languages. An appendix provides a list of conferences, meetings, and seminars on publishing and book development in Africa held between 1968 and 2019.

Author

“Indigenous Publishing in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Chronology and Some Landmarks” published in *African Research & Documentation. Journal of SCOLMA. The UK Libraries and Archives Group on Africa*, no. 36 (2019).

Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.

This chronological timeline sets out some of the key dates, events, and landmarks in the history and development of indigenous publishing in sub-Saharan Africa. It also includes details of the major conferences, meetings or seminars on African publishing, held in Africa or at venues elsewhere, since 1968. An earlier version of this chronology first appeared in *The African Publishing Companion: A Resource Guide* (2002), and has now been updated through to the period up to 2019, and considerably expanded to also include publication of a number of benchmark studies, conference proceedings, journals, and reference resources on the African book world.

Author

“Digital vs Print Resources at African University Institutions: A Discussion Document” published in *African Research & Documentation. Journal of SCOLMA. The UK Libraries Group on Africa* no. 138, (2020) forthcoming

Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.

It is clear that both libraries and publishers in Africa will want to fully embrace the advantages and opportunities now offered by what is commonly referred to as the ‘digital revolution’. However, despite the enormous benefits of the new digital information environment, there are also a good number of caveats. While free access to many high-quality information sources and databases can be seen as a levelling of the playing field, and addresses some of the inequalities of access in the past, it also has its challenges and potential pitfalls. Academic libraries in Africa have had to adapt new technologies in order to satisfy today’s user expectations. Yet at the same time university libraries in Africa have been battling with declining budgets, and serious and chronic underfunding for over three decades now. Amidst all the digital euphoria, and the constant proliferation of electronic information sources, a number of common myths and misconceptions have emerged, especially so among students. One misconception is that *all* information is available online, on the Internet, whether free or through fee-based services, and that

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most of the information anyone requires nowadays for study and research can be tracked down by Google searches or other search engines. But Google can't or won't do it all. The second misconception is that traditional print resources are now largely obsolete and need no longer be consulted in research; and visits to the library are no longer required. This is fallacious thinking on several counts.

There have been a good number of studies on reading preferences, and access and use of print vs. electronic resources at African university institutions. Their findings tend to vary among different disciplines, but most seem to indicate that both undergraduates and graduate students still expect a mixture of print and electronic resources to meet their information needs.

2021

“Women in African Publishing and the Book Trade: A Series of Profiles” published in
The African Book Publishing Record 47, no. 1 (2021) forthcoming
Pre-print online version at Academia.edu, see CV for link.

Author

A kind of mini Who's Who, these profiles are intended to be a showcase of the variety, richness and energy of women involved in book publishing and the book trade in Africa today, as well some of the women who have made significant contributions to the African book sector in the past. This initial series of profiles focusses on 24 women in publishing in nine countries in English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, and includes links to articles about, and interviews and conversations with them, as well as select bibliographies of articles or books written by them. A 'Further reading' section offers details of a small number of earlier studies and articles about women in publishing in Africa.

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