



Challenges of Acquiring Self-Published Materials in Nigerian University Libraries: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

This study explored implications of self-publishing activities to the process of acquisition in Nigerian university libraries. Survey method was employed using questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. A random sampling technique was adopted; seven respondents (Collection Development Librarians) were drawn from each of the six geo-political zones of the federation. The collected data was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics which involved tables and simple percentages. The study showed that absence of multi-dimensional approach to marketing and promotion, poor editorial and operational errors and informal payment process accounted for low patronage of self-published materials by Nigerian university libraries. Therefore, there is need for further training in self-publishing for Author-Publishers, while CDLs should create the needed synergy by engaging the faculty and forming a consortium for acquisition of self-published books.

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Introduction

For centuries, the library has served as the interface between publishers and library users. It serves as the provider of coordinated and organised access to both print and non-print materials which are by-products of the publishing house. This responsibility of collection development is vital in library activities and services. It is the point of contact with the publishing houses from where the processed knowledge is produced. It is interesting to note that the university environment serves as the reservoir of raw knowledge from which the publishing houses tap. It is therefore imperative according to Hooks, (2011) that the synergy between authors, publishers and the library must be activated to enhance a harmonious relationship that can ginger an excellent production of literature for the academic community. In this vein, the importance of publishing to the attainment of educational goals of Nigerian universities cannot be over-emphasised. It is conceived as the process of producing literary and information materials for the consumption of the general public (Oso & Biobaku 2009). Since the basic tripod on which university education is based are teaching, research and community service, there is practically no escaping the utilization of literary publications to attain the twin objectives of teaching and research for the benefits of students and teachers alike.

Furthermore, it is the major factor in the promotion process of the academic staff. This is where the library comes in as the store house of recorded knowledge. In the university community, access to research materials is primarily through the university library. The library sources, acquires, processes and makes available library materials including serials to accomplish its roles of providing intellectual products to the university community. Oni (2004) and Ameen (2008) describe the unit responsible for selection of materials in the library as the collection development unit. To achieve this primary role,

university libraries ensure that appropriate materials are selected based on acquisition policy of the institution; selected materials are acquired and processed. On the other hand, Publishing can be described as a chain of activities which takes place between an idea in the mind of an author and a book on the shelf at home or in the library. (Bigley, 1996) cited by Ihebuzor, (2009). In Nigeria, the book industry may be seen as a small one in monetary terms. This notwithstanding, publishing is like a small switch that can set in motion and control an electrical system carrying power to both urban and remote areas.(Smith1986). This is because knowledge is power and the transforming ideas have always come through books.

In the same vein, self-publishing is the publication of any book by the author or writer of the work, without the involvement of an established third-party publisher. Ihebuzor, (2013) affirms that this is generally done at the expense and risk of the author. Aboyade (2014) describes self-publishing as the act of publishing one's work by bypassing the traditional publishing houses. The key distinguishing characteristics of self-publishing is the absence of a recognised traditional publisher. Instead, the author or authors mostly unprofessionally perform this role of 'jack of all trade' doing both content and desk activities, arranging for printing, marketing and distributing publication, either directly to retailers or to consumers most times. Spicer (1995) submits that there is nothing magical or secret about the publishing industry. But the difficult parts of publishing which are distribution, marketing and sales are not easily learned.

Self-published books cause problems for libraries because they are in large measure created partially but not totally outside the traditional system. Without a title page, determining whether a book is from a traditional publisher or self-published is very difficult. Thus, the self-published book is still a book and should fall within the continuing

commitment of libraries to collect and control this type of publication. Libraries have already decided that traditionally published eBooks are not essentially different from print books. They should make the same decision about self-published books whether they are eBooks or print.

Evidence exists that library users make little distinction between commercial and self-published books. Public library patrons learn about such books and ask libraries to make them available. Others libraries are resisting any inclusion of such titles for many reasons including the fact that they have policies requiring positive reviews though relatively few self-published books receive official reviews in library sources. Academic libraries also have reasons to collect self-published books. The current academic reward system works against self-publication because faculty in most colleges and universities do not receive much credit towards promotion and tenure for self-published materials. On the other hand, independent scholars and faculty not concerned about academic reward often find self-publishing to be a preferred option because they have complete control over the material and can publish enhanced editions with supporting materials that would most likely not be acceptable to a commercial publisher. These scholars can also publish research that is not being commercially viable. Finally, self-published materials can be important source material for academic research. The academic library with comprehensive interest in an issue such as a country's war and conflicts does not care about the scholarly quality of a personal narrative about the war since this self-published work acquires value as a primary source.

Statement of the Problem

It is obvious that the Nigerian book market is flooded sometimes with unprofessionally handled publications. This is because most established publishers are generally unwilling to publish manuscripts with uncertain market demand, and thus paving the way for emergence of what Ihebuzor (2013) refers to as the unpublished authors. Ihebuzor (2013) further stresses that the situation has driven some authors (including some erudite university lecturers and professors) to go directly to "printers- turned- publishers" who produce an agreed print run from their professionally unedited manuscripts for authors to market themselves. Edem and Okwilagwe (2011) averred that indigenous law text books are unavailable and inaccessible to both libraries and users.

Aboyade (2014) affirmed the enormity of marketing associated with books published by self-published authors who are usually responsible for their sales, even with the lack of wide coverage and publicity, hence, making it difficult if not impossible for libraries and interested individuals to purchase. It is in the light of the foregoing that this study seeks to investigate the challenges faced in acquiring self-published materials by university libraries in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The goal of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by librarians in acquiring self-published materials in university libraries in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- 1 To determine the channels of acquisition of self-published materials
- 2 To identify the challenges faced by Collection Development Librarian (CDL) in the process of acquiring self-published materials
- 3 To determine the percentage of locally authored materials in Nigerian universities libraries

- 4 To determine if there is any significant difference between the numbers of books produced by commercial/academic publishers and author-publishers in the university libraries

Research Questions

This study will provide answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the channels of acquisition of self-published materials?
2. What are the challenges faced by collection development librarian when acquiring self-published materials?
3. What is the percentage of locally authored materials in Nigerian university libraries?
4. Is there any significant difference between the number of books produced by publishing firms and self-publishers?

Significance of the Study

Having a balanced collection is one of the responsibilities of the library. Hence, there is the need to acquire both internationally and locally published books that will enrich teaching, learning and research. Obstacles faced in acquiring self-published materials have been a major setback for a balanced collection.

As a result of this, a study on the challenges of acquiring self-published materials in university libraries has the potential of stimulating interest of self-published authors in order to enhance their understanding of what publishing is in its real sense, and also encourage them to patronize reputable publishers that will in turn make their work accessible to the targeted audience and the general public. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the Publishing industry, especially in the area of promoting local books and their authors.

Literature Review

Factors Responsible for the Growth of Self-Publishing in Nigeria

Definitions and concept of self-publishing according to various authors tend to align at the end, even though the expressions may differ in words and vocabularies. Bradley (2011) defines the concept as a situation in which the authors choose to publish their titles on their own. To Van (2005), it portends an instance of authors deciding that they are in no need of publishers, because they feel they have the capacity to handle the job themselves. Walden (2008) sees it as the process of authors acquiring ISBN (International Standard Book Number) while they embark on the necessary development work involved or hire experts to do the various arts for them. Akinfenwa (2009) calls those who engage in these publishing efforts as author-publishers. Aboyade (2014) states that, authors self-publish because they are sick of rejection of manuscripts by traditional publishing houses.

In the past, self-publishing was not a common phenomenon in the academic world. Lately, however, the concept is being embraced for so many reasons. Ihebuzor (2013) sees the booming trade of self-publishing as a consequence of strained relationship between Nigerian authors and publishers. Author-publisher relationship has remained the most contentious issue in Nigerian book publishing industry. Akinfenwa (2009) alludes to this when he claimed that bad feeling of being short-changed by authors who were pushed to the wall due to self-centredness and gross exploitation of the publishers led to increase in the volume of self-published books. Olukoju (2002) considers self-publishing as one of the survival strategies drawn by the Nigerian academics to ridge out of the crisis generated in the publishing sector. These were occasioned by multiple factors of prolonged military rule,

misplaced priorities and economic mismanagement. Arising from conclusions of the above named authors and others, the following reasons can be adduced for the emergence and flourishing of self-publishing:

1. Strained author-publisher relationship
2. Copy-right control
3. Fear of rejection of manuscripts
4. Quest for high profit margin
5. Emergence of advanced technology e.g. print-on-demand
6. Career enlargement etc. Odendaal (2007).

Even though, the concept of self-publishing here is restricted to the idea of print book, it should be noted however that it is not the only type of self-publishing in the modern era. Bradley (2011) alludes to the fact that e-book publishing is another form of self-publishing.

Marketing Issues in Self-Publishing Business

Some authors have expressed a word of caution on self-publishing. Dickson (nd) recalls the three obstacles before self-publishing: refusal of retailers to carry self-published titles, refusal of reviewers to attend to such materials and the work load of publicity required to market the books. According to Biobaku and Akinjogbin (2009) book publishing process rests on three pillars namely: conception, production and marketing. This was highlighted by Christopher (2010) when he states that sometimes lecturers are unaware of books published in their areas of specializations. Therefore, the role of promotion remains crucial to the survival of the publishing industry. The shortage of locally authored books might have been worsened by inadequate marketing. Okere and Sanusi (2014) emphasise the position of marketing in creating awareness about the book, its contents, essence and places where it can be purchased.

Challenges of Acquiring Self-Published Books

Avenues such as bookshops, book depots, books agents etc. are the popular channels for book distribution in Nigeria (Biobaku, 2009). Self-published titles cannot be easily acquired by collection development librarian except he utilizes the above channels. However, some authors such as Okere & Sanusi (2014), Christopher (2010) and Aboyade (2014) have raised the fear of refusal by retailers and the task of rigorous marketing as issues of great concern in the book industry. The task of acquisition involves both the collection development librarian and the vendors who supply the needed materials to the academic libraries. Yeow-Fei (nd) asserted that in the Asian countries, most local publishers do not have a good distribution network, thus preventing smooth distribution of books and other library materials to the academic libraries. These challenges become more pronounced when it borders on building collections in Nigerian universities libraries vis-a-vis acquisition of self-published materials.

Procedure

The study was carried out in the month of August 2015 involving Collection Development Librarians in Nigeria university libraries as respondents. The use of survey was employed for the study by administering questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. A random sampling technique was adopted for the study; seven (7) respondents were drawn from each of the six geo-political zones of the federation, therefore arriving at forty-two respondents who filled the questionnaire. Thereafter, the collected data was analysed with the use of descriptive statistics which involved tables and simple percentages. SA, A, U, D and SD stand for strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Results and Analysis

Table 1

Marketing Strategies for Self-published materials	SA	A	U	D	SD
Advertisement on self-published materials in Nigeria is readily available on the social media	16 (38.1)	12 (28.6)	6 (14.3)	6 (14.3)	2 (4.8)
Author-publishers organise regular book exhibitions on Nigerian university campuses	5 (11.9)	12 (28.6)	2 (4.8)	21 (50.03)	2 (4.8)
There is a periodic book fair coordinated by the union of Nigerian author-publishers for publicity of their publications	4 (9.5)	7 (16.7)	12 (28.6)	12 (28.6)	7 (16.7)
Nigerian self-publishers explore mass media such as television, radio and newspapers to promote their publications	2 (4.8)	9 (21.4)	7 (16.7)	16 (38.1)	8 (19.0)
Publishers catalogues are the major tools for marketing self-published books to Collection Development librarians in Nigerian university libraries	4 (9.5)	18 (42.9)	8 (19.0)	6 (14.3)	6 (14.3)

Table 1 above shows that 16 (38.1%) respondents indicated that self-published materials do not enjoy modern mode of advertisement called social media. Out of the forty-two respondents, 21 (50%) said there is non-availability of regular book exhibitions on Nigerian campuses by author-publishers. Periodic book fair coordinated by self-publishers was indicated to be unavailable by 12 (28.6%) of the respondents. A majority represented by 16 (38.1%) respondents believed that mass media were not utilised for promotion of publications written by self-publishers, while 18 (42.9%) indicated that publishers catalogue remained the major platform for promotion of self-published materials to academic libraries in Nigeria. It is therefore obvious that multi-dimensional approach did not come into play in the marketing module employed by self-publishers.

Table 2 evaluates the channels through which locally produced self-published materials are acquired into university libraries in Nigeria; 19 (45.2%) of the respondents representing the highest frequency agreed that materials of self-publishing origin are not readily available in retailers' shops. The highest percentage of 13(31.0%) indicated that self-published books could be found in other bookshops than those of institutions where their authors lecture, while respondents with highest frequency of 17(40.5%) agreed to a suggestion that author-publishers largely do not have trust in middle men and therefore sell their books themselves.

Majority of respondents consented that they acquired books by author-publishers of other institutions through colleagues in such universities; 13 (31.0%) of respondents disagreed that Nigerian self-published books are obtainable online; 42.9% and 38.0% representing 18 and 16 frequencies of respondents strongly disagreed that books of author-

Table 2

Channels of acquisition of locally self-published materials	SA	A	U	D	SD
Self-published materials are not easy to come by at retailers shops	14 (33.3)	19 (45.2)	5 (11.9)	3 (7.1)	1 (2.4)
Self-published books cannot be found except in bookshops of institutions where the authors lecture	6 (14.3)	10 (23.8)	11 (26.2)	13 (31.0)	2 (4.8)
Most author-publishers do not trust middle men and therefore sell their publications to students on their campuses	8 (19.0)	17 (40.5)	4 (9.5)	12 (28.6)	1 (2.4)
Collection Development librarians employ the service of fellow librarians to purchase self-published books in other institutions	4 (9.5)	22 (52.3)	-	9 (21.4)	7 (16.7)
Most times, Nigerian self-published materials are easily acquired online	8 (19.0)	9 (21.4)	6 (14.3)	13 (31.0)	6 (14.3)
Librarians acquire books of author-publishers through books vendors and agents	2 (4.8)	5 (11.9)	7 (16.7)	10 (23.8)	18 (42.9)
Librarians make use of the National Bibliography of Nigeria to discover recent publications by author-publishers	11 (26.2)	16 (38.0)	-	4 (9.5)	11 (26.2)

publishers are acquired through vendors and agreed respectively that new publications are discovered using National Bibliography of Nigeria. It can therefore be deduced from the foregoing the most certain but non-conventional channels of collecting these materials were through authors and fellow librarians in other universities.

Table 3 represents the challenges Collection Librarians encounter in the process of selecting self-published materials for acquisition into the university library. The highest frequency of 13 (31.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the proposition that selection of these materials is aided by the use of self-publishers' catalogue, while the second highest percentage of 23.8% equally disagreed on the same issue. This suggests either the non-existence of such tool or its non-availability in academic libraries. In book selection, ISBN plays an important role both to the librarian and the book sellers. However, 15 (35.7%) of the respondents agreed that books by author-publishers sometimes do not carry ISBN. This is closely followed by 14 (33.3%) who disagreed with the suggestion. This close gap indicates that the question is right after all.

This table 4 presents the respondents' assessment of the print copies of materials published by author-publishers. The frequencies of 15 (35.7%) and 10 (23.8%) of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, that several editorial errors are sometimes found in works of author-publishers. Also 13 (31.0%) of respondents did not agree that works of author-publishers have better quality than the one produced by

Table 3

Challenges faced by Collection Development Librarian in the process of acquisition of self-published materials	SA	A	U	D	SD
Selection process is assisted with the aid of publisher's catalogue produced by self-publishers	9 (21.4)	9 (21.4)	1 (2.4)	10 (23.8)	13 (31.0)
Books produced by author-publishers sometimes do not carry International Standard Book Number (ISBN)	3 (7.1)	15 (35.7)	7 (16.7)	14 (33.3)	3 (7.1)

Table 4

Poor print-out of self-published materials	SA	A	U	D	SD
Sometimes poor editorial work, becomes obvious in wrong placement of title page, cover design, graphic illustration and other arrangements in self-published books	15 (35.7)	10 (23.8)	4 (9.5)	6 (14.3)	7 (16.7)
Print copies of titles by author-publishers are better than those produced by commercial publishers	6 (14.3)	10 (23.8)	2 (4.8)	13 (31.0)	11 (26.2)
Books published by Nigerian author-publishers are of low quality	2 (4.8)	12 (28.6)	7 (16.7)	11 (26.2)	10 (23.8)

commercial publishers. The highest frequency 12 (28.6%) of the respondents agreed that books by Nigerian author-publishers have low quality, even though this was closely followed by 11 (26.2%) who disagreed.

Table 5

Payment challenges in purchasing self-published materials	SA	A	U	D	SD
Payments for books purchased from Self-publishers are most times made into personal account of the authors	10 (23.8)	23 (54.8)	4 (9.5)	5 (11.9)	-
Librarians prefer to pay into company accounts when acquiring books for their libraries	12 (28.6)	20 (47.6)	5 (11.9)	3 (7.1)	2 (4.8)
Some author-publishers do not have invoice/receipt for books purchased from them	4 (9.5)	27 (64.3)	4 (9.5)	7 (16.7)	-

All these suggest that there are editorial and operational issues with some self-published materials in the Nigerian space which hinders the job of collection development in the university libraries.

Table 5 analyses the challenges encountered by Librarians when they pay for scholarly materials produced by author-publishers. 23 (54.8%) of the respondents agreed that most of the times, payments are made into personal accounts of author-publishers for books purchased from them, while the highest percentage 20 (47.6%) agreed that librarians would

prefer to lodge payments into company accounts, 27 respondents representing 64.3% agreed that self-publishers do not possess invoice/receipt for books they sell. This shows that librarians face herculean tasks purchasing books from self-publishers since they have to make payment into company accounts and collect books for items purchased for proper accounting procedure.

Table 6

Percentage of locally authored materials in Nigerian university libraries	SA	A	U	D	SD
Self-published materials available in our library are voluminous	7 (16.7)	12 (28.6)	2 (4.8)	17 (40.5)	4 (9.5)
Most of the self-published books in the library are works of foreign authors	12 (28.6)	11 (26.2)	9 (21.4)	2 (4.8)	8 (19.0)
Most of the self-published books came as donations and gifts	12 (28.6)	16 (38.1)	5 (11.9)	8 (19.0)	1 (2.4)
self-published collection in the library is less than three per cent of the total holding	15 (35.7)	9 (21.4)	14 (33.3)	2 (4.8)	2 (4.8)
Bulk of self-published materials in our collection is in electronic format	3 (7.1)	3 (7.1)	8 (19.0)	13 (31.0)	15 (35.7)

Table 6 evaluates the source and volume of self-published materials in Nigerian university libraries. The highest frequency of respondents, 17 (40.5%) disagreed that self-published books in the university libraries are voluminous indicating that most of the library collections are works produced by commercial and academic publishers. 12 (28.6%) and 11 (26.2%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that even the few self-published books in the library are works of foreign authors, 16 (38.1%) agreed that most of those few materials were donated to the library, while 15 (35.7%) strongly agreed that these materials represent less than three per cent (3%) of the entire library collections followed by 14 (33.3%) who were undecided. Finally, 15 (35.7%) and 13 (31.0%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that majority of the materials are in electronic format. Therefore, it is obvious that self-published books in Nigerian university libraries are few, largely authored by foreigners and are in print.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The study attempted to assess challenges faced by Nigerian university libraries in the process of acquiring scholarly works of author-publishers. On the basis of data collected in the course of the study, one can conclude that multi-dimensional approach did not come into play in the marketing and promotion of self-published books to the libraries. Also, poor job due to editorial and operational errors inhibits collection development in the university libraries. Informal payment process is another challenge unearthed by the study accounting for low percentage self-published materials that eventually found their ways to Nigerian university libraries. It was equally discovered that even the few materials are largely authored by foreigners, are in print and mostly proceeds of gifts and donations.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Author-Publishers should go for further training in self-publishing
2. An association of Author-Publishers should be put in place to address the observed irregularities
3. Collection Development librarians should synergize with the faculties to produce a catalogue for books published by the lecturers and their locations
4. Nigerian Library Association should mediate between author-publishers and the university libraries towards making the works of the former readily available for purchase into the library.
5. Formation of a consortium by university libraries to address the changes of acquiring works of author-publishers

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