

Focus On Bookshops And Bookselling In Nigeria: The University Of Lagos Bookshop

INTRODUCTION

The University of Lagos Bookshop is located in a central place along Dan Fodio Boulevard on the University Campus. It occupies a two storey building in a complex designed to accommodate the Bookshop, a Bank and a Post Office. The Bank has just vacated its premises for a new site, thus making room for future expansion of the Bookshop. It began operations in 1966. It has a total floor area of 3,000 sq ft. This has proved grossly inadequate for the increased number of students and staff that the Bookshop is now expected to serve. This increase has been brought about by recent curriculum expansion coupled with increased student enrollment.

The University which started in 1962 with only three teaching units, now has nine teaching units, namely: The College of Medicine; The Faculty of Arts; The Faculty of Business Administration; The Faculty of Law; The Faculty of Science; The Faculty of Social Sciences; The Faculty of Environmental Design; The Faculty of Education; and The Faculty of Engineering. In addition to these teaching units is the Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) which by 1982/83 academic session will be having nine different courses in its programme. COSU which began operation in 1976 now has over 3,000 registered students. The University itself has over 10,000 students. There are 1565 course titles and 65 academic departments. In addition to serving students and staff of the University, the Bookshop also open its doors to everybody who wants to buy books irrespective of whether they are staff, students or buyers from outside the University.

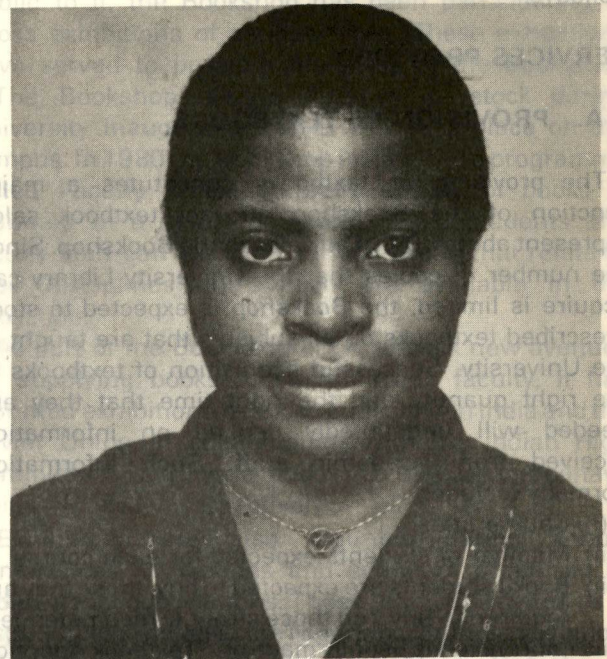
FUNCTIONS

The Bookshop was established primarily to make available for sale both the required and recommended textbooks needed by the students. It is now expected to provide a wide variety of general books, periodicals, a large number of supplies and items which the faculty staff and students may need at any given time. It is supposed to make the University community aware of the existence of newly published books. In short the Bookshop is an integral part of the University community which can be looked upon as a rich source of books where there is ample opportunity to own books. It strives to play its rightful role in the academic community by trying to provide faculty staff with prompt and accurate information about course books; promoting book sales within the University campus; and making the University Bookshop a centre of cultural information.

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Bookshop maintains a self-selection integrated book arrangement. This is to say that textbooks and general books are arranged alphabetically by authors

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within their designated subject groups. The ground floor consists of children's books, stationery items, books on Arts, Languages and periodicals. The first floor (mezzanine) consists of books on Engineering, Environmental Design, Science, Social Sciences, Law and Education. The 2nd floor houses administrative and accounting offices. A branch of the Bookshop is located at the College of Medicine, Idi-Araba, Surulere. Books on nursing, medicine, and other related medical titles are stocked there.

ORGANISATION

Although the Bookshop is self-accounting and fund generating, it is still being run as a service department of the University. It has as its main controlling and policy making body a Management Committee whose members represent the Council, Senate and other vital interests in the University. The Manager, who is the chief executive of the Bookshop, is however responsible for overall planning, control, stock selection, and the day-to-day running of the Bookshop.

However, in the wake of financial problems that have beset Nigerian Universities, and the recent pronouncements made by the Federal Government that Universities should go commercial, the University of Lagos Bookshop is currently reviewing its present organisational structure in order to make it more commercial than at present. It should be stated that the Bookshop presently pursues acquisition and policies that enhance its competitiveness, increase efficiency and generate resources for further growth.

HOURS OF OPENING

The Bookshop is normally open from 8.15 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays, and 8.15 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. on Saturdays. It is closed during public holidays.

SERVICES PROVIDED

A. PROVISION OF TEXTBOOKS

The provision of textbooks constitutes a major function of the Bookshop. In fact textbook sales represent about 60% of all sales in the Bookshop. Since the number of copies that the University Library can acquire is limited, the Bookshop is expected to stock prescribed textbooks on all subjects that are taught in the University. Successful acquisition of textbooks in the right quantity and the right time that they are needed will undoubtedly depend on information received from academic staff. Such information normally includes:

- (i) Course titles
 - (ii) Member of students expected for each course
 - (iii) Books students are expected to buy, those they are required to buy and those strongly recommended.
- This information is usually made on "Textbook Adoption Forms" which the Bookshop sends to academic departments early in the year.

It is noteworthy to mention here that because 85% of textbooks used in the University are imported from abroad, orders for such books are usually sent to publishers by March so as to ensure their availability by the beginning of academic year which usually starts in October.

The quantity and type to be ordered depend on many variables and estimates. In some cases guestimates play a large part in the process. For example, we have to estimate among other things, students enrolment in different courses for the coming year, the number of books that will be traded among students, and the number of students who just do not buy books. Even a lecturer who is recommending books is not sure whether he will teach that subject at the beginning of another academic session. We therefore rely heavily on the records kept in the Bookshop on past orders for guidance. These records are kept on textbook cards. The information accumulated over a period of years is very invaluable and gives a history of the books used as textbooks.

B. PROVISION OF GENERAL BOOKS

Although the emphasis in collection is on textbooks, the Bookshop in recent years, has pursued the development and maintenance of a basic general book collection. This is a kind of support function for an outlet of many published materials. Books in this category are both hardbound and paperbound. Since students will naturally prefer less expensive paperbound books, the Bookshop stock of these books cover a wide range of subject areas. The advantages derived from the sale of paperbacks are many. Firstly, the Bookshop reaches a large audience of potential buyers through the sale of

paperback. Secondly such books tend to serve the demand of impulse buyers because students who come to the Bookshop for textbooks often browse through its collection and ultimately buy general books. Thirdly such general books have in some cases served as substitutes for the much needed textbooks which the Bookshop is unable to stock. Fourthly, since students also read for pleasure and enlightenment, such books have helped to serve that purpose.



The Hon. Minister of State in the Federal Ministry of Education Mrs. E. Ivase and others inspecting books Exhibited by the University of Lagos Bookshop during the Easter Workshop organised by the Nigerian Library Association (Lagos Division) April 6 - 8, 1982.

The sale of children's books has also assumed noticeable impetus in recent years. As student population increases so does staff population. There are now many married students who perhaps have children. Academic staff and other University staff have children. Everyone in the University is bound to have brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces and children of friends for whom they may want to buy gifts. There is a staff school and a secondary school on the campus. All these people have increased the demand for sale of children's books. The Bookshop now devotes a special area to the sale of children's books. In this section, low shelves are used so that children can have easy access to them. A new addition is a book-shelf made in form of a motor car. This has attracted children to the section and eventually led to more sales. The Bookshop has helped in generating reading awareness among children through its participation in the annual open fun fair organised by the Lagos University Women Society. At this annual event, children's books are sold while there are other corners for the sale of clothes, cakes, biscuits, ice-cream, lucky dips, and other games. The enthusiasm generally expressed by children to buy books is very encouraging. Primary and Secondary school textbooks are also stocked.

C. PROVISION OF NON-BOOK MERCHANDISE

Non-book merchandise constitutes a fair share of the Bookshop stock. These are:-

1. Items which are purchased by students in connection with their course work or study. Among these are engineering drawing and art supplies;
2. Stationery and office items.
3. Greeting cards, wrapping papers, and posters.
4. Insignia items.

These are items which are not necessarily required for the pursuit of academic knowledge. They are however used to decorate students rooms or used as gifts and souvenirs. They usually bear University crest. These items serve to fulfil the aspirations of the members of the University community who wish to be identified with the institution. Such items now include T-Shirts; Jackets; Bags; Key-Holders; Bed-Side reading lamps; Photo Albums; Serving Trays; Combs; and Car Stickers. They have proved to be very popular among students, alumni and visitors. Arrangements are being made to include class rings and ties in the near future.

The Bookshop also endeavours to provide for the specialised needs of medical students. At the moment it stocks simple medical equipment like dissecting sets; Forceps; Blood Pressure Instruments; Oscopes; and Stethoscopes.

D. PROVISION OF PROFESSIONAL AND REFERENCE BOOKS

Because books in this category carry very high unit costs, and due to constraints of space, the Bookshop has limited its stock of technical and reference books to dictionaries; encyclopaedia; do it yourself series; and study aids series. The Bookshop has been guided in its selection of technical and reference books by the number of special orders made by customers on these subjects.

E. LIBRARY SERVICE

The Bookshop orders books for libraries. It also stocks a wide range of hardbound books in many subject areas. Such books have been found useful by librarians who have visited our Bookshop on buying trips. Lists of books on various subjects are sent to libraries regularly. The Bookshop has "approval plans" with some libraries based in Lagos.

F. SPECIAL ORDER SERVICE

This service is widely used by customers. This is a service whereby books which are not in stock are ordered specially for customers after a down payment of 100% of the value of the books.

G. OTHER SERVICES

A delivery service within Lagos for libraries and institutions is operated. Mail order service for customers both within and outside the country is also offered. The Bookshop offers credit facilities to University staff, departments, and institutions.

Application forms are available from the Bookshop Accountant.

BOOKS EXHIBITION

In order to bring the stock of the Bookshop to the doorsteps of buyers and to focus the attention of the public to it, the Bookshop has been participating in books exhibitions of various types. These exhibitions have served to promote the stock of the Bookshop.

The Bookshop always displays its stock during University Inaugural Lectures that take place on the campus. In 1980 the Bookshop introduced a programme called Faculty Week, whereby display of books is mounted in a selected faculty. Thus, students and faculty staff can examine various books that relate to their disciplines and which are available in the bookshop.

As part of the Bookshop effort to seek new avenues for supplying books to students and faculty, it has mounted exhibitions of books published in India and the Soviet Union in collaboration with the Indian High Commission in Nigeria and V/O "Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga" Moscow, respectively.

Exhibitions are also mounted during annual conferences, workshops and seminars organised by professional associations. Those that have invited us to display books included the Nigerian Library Association; Nigerian Society of Physiotherapy; Society of Haematology and Blood Transfusion; and the Nigerian Institute of Bankers, to mention a few. The Bookshop has in the past participated in the Ife Book Fair and the annual Nigerian Curriculum bank exhibition organised by the University of Lagos Library.

In-Shop exhibition of books with Nigerian Publishers has featured prominently among the activities of the Bookshop. There is also a permanent display of books published by the University of Lagos Press in the Bookshop.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Expansion of the Bookshop is of paramount importance. This has become necessary in view of tremendous increases in student and staff population. The Bookshop therefore has to increase its services in order to cope with ever-increasing demand from its customers. It is envisaged that services provided will be increased to include film collection, gift wrapping and photocopying. We also intend to introduce book tokens for sale to customers and experiment at buying used textbooks from students for re-sale. This is an attempt to achieve the main purpose of any good bookshop "to have the right book, in the right quantity, at the right time." We also hope to continue to follow policies and procedures which are practised in good bookshops, and which in our opinion, are in the best interest of our customers.

REFERENCES

1. Mann, Peter H. Students and books. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974. 213p.
2. NACS Manual Of Operations. Oberlio, Ohio. National Association of College Stores, 1977.