

THE ROLE OF PUBLISHING IN THE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

.....Being an address by the Director of the National Library of Nigeria, Mr. S. B. Aje, at the annual conference of the Nigeria Publishers Association held at Ibadan recently.

The President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. It gives me great pleasure to have this privilege of addressing you this year while you are about to commence your annual general meeting. I have looked forward to this opportunity to meet you in a body to discuss matters of mutual interest to us: you as producers of the material receptacles of knowledge and we as the disseminators of knowledge and aiders its consumers.

I am therefore grateful to the President, Mr. M. O. Akinyele, who acceded to my request and who has allotted time to the discussion. I also appreciate your response to attend this extraordinary session. Let me hope that our association will become stronger on the basis of the common interest between us so that we may serve our clientele more effectively and with increased profit to all.

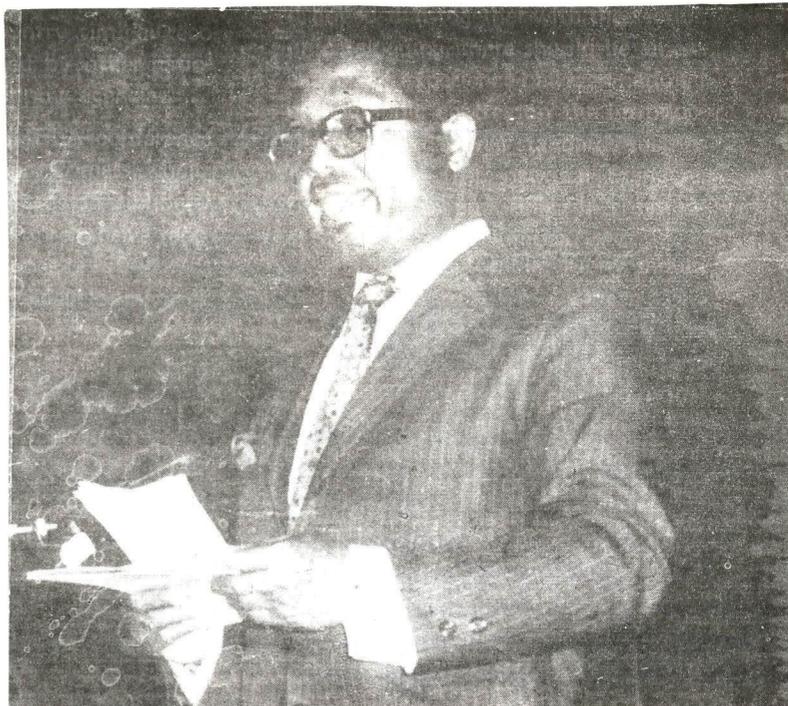
The Role of Publishing.

Publishing represents a vital and indispensable function in the knowledge industry. There is no gainsaying the fact that without publishing knowledge cannot be effectively disseminated in a world of rapid development. It can also be proved that it is publishing that has escalated the pace of development in the world. Publishing as we know it today has become a highly technological process but it still must not lose its professionalism which inheres in the essential philosophy that dissemination constitutes the vitamin which sustains the growth of knowledge. Dissemination is the elemental process comparable to the natural phenomenon of the dispersal of seeds which leads to propagation of the species of a plant, as we know very well.

The world has become conscious of the processes of producing and propagating knowledge. The publisher is the catalyst. At the other end is the author's audience who constitute the consumer of the product. The consumer

in his own case is besieged by an avalanche of the products of knowledge and he needs to quickly identify the various components, particularly those of them that are of immediate interest to him.

put out on sale by a small group of people somewhere in Gongola State of Nigeria on a subject that is of interest to this man in a small village in India? This is where standardisation comes in and the world is moving to-



MR. S. B. AJE

This is a formidable problem. Therefore the consumer is anxious to devise ways of rapid identification so that selection, that is, choice for eventual consumption may be quicker. Not only that, he also wants to be in control to the extent of being aware of what is available to him to use from and use. This is not easy particularly in a world of rapid generation of ideas that are quickly made known and not kept secret. The situation is further aggravated by increasing shortage of time for what there is to do.

Universal Bibliographic Control

A global approach to the problem of awareness and also to the whole question of identification has become imperative. How does a man in India benefit from a pamphlet published and

wards accord in this matter so as to create general awareness for everybody and to facilitate choice of items of knowledge to the average seeker. The concept that has emerged for solving the problem is known as Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC).

In the recent past several bodies have addressed themselves to this programme and as of today three areas have attained a reasonable degree of stability which is manifested in various systems.

ISBN

The first system is the International Standard Book Number (ISBN). This ensures that every book, that is, monographs published anywhere in the world is assigned a unique number which cannot be taken by any other mono-

graph. This monograph will always be identified by that number only. There are many advantages to this. One of these covers ordering, making it faster and less expensive of time, energy and material. Another advantage derives from the fact that information about each publication is stored in one central data bank in the world.

This facilitates dissemination so that any interested persons can be made aware of the existence of a monograph publication, however small. By collation there is an automatic guaranteed extension of the market for that single item in the world.

How does this work? It is simple. There is a central Data Bank located in Berlin by consensus of all the agencies which initiated the system. All nations of the world are, however, welcome to participate in it free of charge. Each national, linguistic or geographical unit

Let us look at the other side of the coin. If a publisher is not registered for this purpose his publications cannot be fed into the international data bank and the advantages listed above are lost.

There are cases of publishing houses incorporated in Nigeria but affiliated to an international headquarters located outside the country.

The international headquarters in some cases allocate block numbers to these houses for application in Nigeria. Invariably the numbers relate to the country in which the headquarters is located or the language block in which it operates. Such numbers applied to publications originated and produced in Nigeria impose one fundamental disadvantage.

In the central data bank the publications do not register as Nigerian, and do not match with Nigerian publica-

only numbers allocated in Nigeria by the competent authority, which is the National Library of Nigeria.

ISSN

The second system is known as the International Standard Serial Number. This, the ISSN, is a unique code for the identification of serial publications, which can be used wherever information on serials needs to be recorded or communicated. It operates in the International Serial Data System (ISDS) with headquarters in Paris. Initially financed by the UNESCO and the Government of France, the International Centre (IC) has now been constituted by statute as an organ of the member states of UNESCO under a General Assembly consisting of member states which have acceded to the statutes and set up national centres.

Nigeria has satisfied the two condi-

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has been allocated a group identifier either on linguistic, national or political basis.

For example, Nigeria has a choice of taking the same number in the English-speaking block or one as a country Nigeria. We have chosen the latter and it is 978. This is so recorded in the International Data Centre;

Here in Nigeria, we can register every publisher and allocate them numbers within the group identifier 978. Each number is made of ten digits of which the group identifier has already accounted for three. The rest is divided between the publisher identifier, the serial number of the book and a tenth digit which is a check.

There is a national agency in each country to allocate the numbers and to keep a record of items published with the numbers. The National Library of Nigeria is the agency for Nigeria. As all books issued in Nigeria are required to be deposited in the National Library by law (National Library Decree 29 of 1970 Section 4) the National Bibliography of Nigeria which lists such publications also records the numbers.

tions. They count for the country of the international headquarters of the publishing house. As a result Nigeria is losing in terms of the score of numerical output. Even though it is actually producing it is the other country that takes the count and the credit.

This is not only anomalous, it is grossly unfair and it should be checked. For record purposes not only should Nigeria as a country know what it produces in quantitative terms, the world should also know and recognise it. The ISBN, locally assigned is the answer to that.

To be specific any ISBN starting with 978 represents a Nigerian publication. If it starts with 0 (zero) it is of English origin and could come from the United Kingdom or Canada. I urge that we avoid this pitfall by securing independence in this regard from any overseas international headquarters. Nothing will be lost, but the house will gain credit for what it achieves.

I therefore appeal to all those who have not registered in Nigeria to do so, soonest and those who have hitherto used numbers allocated outside Nigeria to desist from doing so, and use

tions and is a member of the General Assembly. The national centre for Nigeria is located in the National Library of Nigeria. Under the statute, a Governing Board elected from among the members of the General Assembly runs the affairs of the International Centre. The first Board has been elected and a Nigerian, the speaker, is the current President.

The International Centre is the data bank for serials throughout the world. It allocates block numbers to the various nations. Here allocation is by political entity either a nation or region. The national centre assigns numbers to serials.

It is therefore the responsibility of publishers of serials to get in touch with the National Library of Nigeria for allocation of numbers to their respective titles.

One number goes to each title and is of constant application to appear on every issue without variation. All that has been said for ISBN applies to the ISSN in the area of its importance.

ISBD

While the foregoing systems take

care of the counting of publications issued as monographs and serials for awareness and identification, another system known as International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD) assures accurate recording of data relating to the publication for easy exchange. All countries are expected to issue lists of publications emanating from their respective territories in the name known as national bibliography.

The measure taken to ensure comprehensive listing is legal deposit, which is provided for and is operative in Nigeria. An agreement has now been reached on the format for recording data on publications in the national bibliographies. This is convertible to computer format for producing machine readable catalogues (MARC): which facilitates exchange of information throughout the world.

ISBD recognises specific areas such as author, title, publisher, price, etc., which must be clearly provided on any given publication and be identified easily. Experience has shown that many Nigerian publishers do not observe these basic requirements. Books have been issued without a definite title. The title-page has become standardised in its contents, but not all publishers seem to be aware of this. Items like place and date of publication are frequently absent, not to talk of the price.

It is realised that the physical presentation of Nigerian books do not as yet in many cases allow for printing on the price of the book. When the Nigerian book begins to arrive with dust jackets, may be this will be possible.

(a) Title and statement of authorship area

Title and statement of authorship are important for the identification of a book therefore a standard book must have a distinctive title, and clear information about the intellectual responsibility for the work. That is, there must be printed on the title page of the book, - the title and the correct form of the authors' names. In this connection attention is drawn to ISO/R1068-1969: Title leaves of a book. Every publisher should have this. Similarly, ISO/R-8S-1964: Layout of periodicals will be much help.

(b) Edition

Edition statement is also very important for identification of a publi-

cation. Edition statement should be printed on the title page. It is also necessary to know if a book was previously published, either in another country or by a different publisher. Such information, or the history of the book usually appears on the verso of the title page.

(c) Imprint

Imprint information is important from the point of view of the book trade and for retrieval purposes. Imprint is made up of (i) the place of publication; (ii) name of publisher; and (iii) date of publication in that order. Imprint information is not complete without any of these three elements. Date of publication for example, is useful for knowing the currency of a publication and the number of publications produced in a country within a particular period.

The place of publication helps to know the particular location of the publisher concerned. It has to be the city, town or village. With complete imprint information, publishers can be easily contacted in order to purchase more copies of the publications.

(d) Collation

Collation means the physical make up of the publication i.e. pagination, number of volumes, binding, accompanying materials, etc. What is required here is that all publications should be properly and distinctively numbered. Number of pages helps to differentiate a pamphlet from a book. When number of pages is recorded on the catalogue card, it helps the reader to know how big or how small the particular publication is. When a publication is numbered it facilitates references.

(e) Series

If a publication is part of a series, such information should be indicated on the book, either in the preliminaries or in the subsidiaries. Series statement helps readers who are interested in publication of particular series, e.g. Heinemann's African Writer Series.

(f) Notes

Notes qualify and amplify the formal description of a publication. Therefore the publisher can include any information in the preliminaries of a book which can bring out background information or help to understand the content of the book. Notes can be given on the title, author, or content of the book.

(g) ISBN, Binding and Price

The international standard book number (ISBN), binding and price constitute a unique identification of a publication. The inclusion of ISBN on a publication, whereby each item produced by a publisher bears this unique number which also identifies country of origin and publisher, is a great booster for the book trade.

The use of the ISBN in Nigeria, as described above, will not only help to identify the publisher and country of origin, but will also provide a numerical check to the items published in the country. It is very important, and indeed compulsory in some countries for each book deposited through legal deposit to have an ISBN. This is to the mutual advantage of both the country and the publishers.

(h) Price

Price is important for the book trade and for price standardization.

A librarian, especially a cataloguer, finds it necessary to give full bibliographic details in describing a book according to the new "International Standard Bibliographical description (ISBD)" Such detailed information is gathered from different parts of the publication.

For this purpose, a publication is grouped into parts termed prime sources of information. Different areas of a bibliographic description are found from one or other of the prime sources of information. Publishers are therefore required to include adequate information on their publications in order to facilitate such detailed description.

Areas	Prime Sources of Information
1. Title and statement of authorship	Title page
2. Edition	Title page, other preliminaries
3. Imprint	Title page, other preliminaries
4. Collation	Publication itself
5. Series	Publication itself
6. Notes	Publication, or anywhere
7. ISBN, binding, price	Publication itself or anywhere

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The question of a standard presentation to ensure the presence of all areas required for full bibliographic description of Nigerian produced books should be taken up very seriously by your Association this year. We are at your service and are ready to provide any assistance in promoting this whenever your executive committee plans to launch it.

Generally speaking your association should be concerned with standards. We are no longer in the early stages of publishing since we have the experience of other peoples to draw on. If we adhere to existing standards we shall not only place our products on a wider market than this country, we shall

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also be in a position to contribute positively to the development and improvement of the standards in the world context.

There is no doubt that we are capable of contributing, but before we can we must use what there is and understand it. Then the Nigerian experience will afford stimulus for research and improvement.

Book Production Statistics

I do not wish to stop this brief discussion without drawing your attention to book production statistics which is collected on national basis and

published by UNESCO. This is a very important exercise and it is urged that every publisher should endeavour to facilitate the collection of such statistics. If your executive so wishes we can discuss the format for the collection at a future date.

Finally, we, that is libraries, as corporate representatives of your consumers would suggest that closer links be maintained on these matters as this is the only way to eliminate the skepticism which usually pervades new ideas as these.

Mr. President, members of the Nigerian Publishers Association, I thank you for listening, and wish you a successful annual general meeting.