

Nigeria International Book Fair

...bringing books closer to the people for better education and self-improvement



REPORT OF NIBF 2007

REPORT ON THE NIGERIA INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR 2007

Nigeria International Book Fair 2007, the sixth in the series took place at the Multi-purpose halls of the University of Lagos from Monday 7th to Saturday 12th May 2007.

The six-day events featured one day of international conference, two days of Literamed Publications Nigeria Limited sponsored children's programme, workshop by the National Library of Nigeria on (Bibliographic Control Services: A Promotion Campaign), one day of Authors' Grove, McGraw-Hills Publishing interactive session with stakeholders as well as APNETS' two-days of Buyers and Sellers Meeting. The programmes held simultaneously with the book trade and exhibition.

A total of 140 (One hundred and forty) companies exhibited at NIBF 2007. 126 paid for stands while the other 14 came under the group booking of Nigerian Publishers Association (Eastern Zone), Guild of Independent Small Publishers and APNET. There were 123 Nigerian exhibitors, 4 firms from the United Kingdom, one from USA, 6 Indian companies, one each from Zambia and Cameroon, three individual exhibitors and a collective stand from Ghana as well as APNET. In all, there were 123 local and 17 foreign exhibitors. This is 31% increase over the 107 exhibitors that we had in 2006.

The 107 (One hundred and seven) exhibitors in 2006 comprising 93 Nigerian exhibitors, 10 Indian firms, one each from Senegal and Cameroon, one individual exhibitor and a collective stand from Ghana. The total breakdown shows 93 local and 14 foreign exhibitors. This is 22% increase on the 88 exhibitors that we had in 2005.

A total number of 12,254 people comprising, exhibitors and visitors participated at this year's book fair giving us an average of 2,042 participants per day. Average participants figure for 2006 stood at 1,721 participants per day.

Unlike in the past when the display were principally on books in different formats, NIBF 2007 witnessed distinct exhibition of other instructional materials like Educational toys, Pencils, Audio and Video CDs, Musical CDs, Souvenirs/corporate gift items in addition to wide varieties of books – textbooks for primary and secondary, scholarly books for tertiary level and fiction and creative literature from all over the world. The uniqueness of NIBF 2007 is that it attracted exhibitors from all over the country as well as interest from Texas, USA and Lusaka, Zambia – new entrants at NIBF.

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PROGRAMMES

1. International Conference

The theme for NIBF 2007 international conference was: **Capacity Building in the African Publishing Industry**. It attracted speakers from within and outside the country with stakeholders in the sector playing major roles as conference speakers.

Mr Richard Crabbe, Head, Client Relations, Office of the Publisher, World Bank, Washington, DC and past Chairman, African Publishers Network (APNET) delivered the keynote address and it was entitled: *Equipping to Compete: Capacity Building in the African Book Publishing Industry*. Others speakers are: **Gina Winje** (Director, Norwegian Literature Abroad, Fiction & Non-Fiction (NORLA) who spoke on: *Developing Publishing for the World Market: The Norwegian Experience*, **Mrs Akoss Ofori-Mensah**, (Chief Executive Officer Sub-Saharan Publishers, Accra Ghana) dwelt on: Developing African Publishing for the World Market: Publisher's Experience.

On his part, **Mr Dayo Alabi** (Chief Executive Officer, The Book Company Ltd. Lagos), looked at: Developing African Publishing for the World Market: Bookseller's Experience. The Vice President, Association of Nigerian Authors **Dr Jerry Agada** spoke on Author's Experience in line with the theme while, Developing African Publishing for the World Market: Printer's Experience, form the crux of **Mr Babs Fashanu**, Marketing Director, Academy Press. **Dr Adediji Okanlawon**, Acting University Librarian, University of Lagos, shared with the audience on: Developing African Publishing for the World Market: Librarian's Experience.

Vice-Chancellor University of Ilorin, **Professor Shamsudeen Amali**, chaired the conference, though Professor Olu Obafemi ably represented him. Individual speaker did an exposé and the summary of the various papers presented are given thus:

In the welcome address Otunba O.M. Lawal-Solarin, Chairman Nigerian Book Fair Trust focused on state of capacity building in the African Publishing industry saying that 26 years after the lofty ideas of the National Book Policy, the nation is yet not to achieve its desired objectives.

Professor Olu Obafemi who represented the Chairman, Professor Shamsudeen Amali commended the organisers of the book fair for providing platform for the writer and the publisher – the two indispensable partners in the book industry to interface.

According to him, there is an urgent need for NBFT in its drive for capacity building in the book industry to shift to the type of cooperation that yields the desired dividends, especially in the production of educational materials. He therefore suggested that the conference focuses its attention on: exchanging information; i.e. making the experiences of the international community available to African, facilitating inter-African exchanges and; developing endogenous creative ideas that will simplify the process and reduce the cost of transfer of technology and knowledge with specific reference to publishing.

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The Keynote Address titled '*Capacity Building in the African Publishing Industry*' focused on the meaning, significance, problems and benefits inherent in capacity building particularly in/to Africans. He defined capacity building as 'the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks, institutional development, including community participation, human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems'.

Mr Crabbe said African publishing directly contributes to economic development and poverty reduction. Hence, for the industry to effectively perform its role it must first understand the environment in which it operates. He therefore said capacity building includes human resource development, organisational development and institutional and legal framework development.

Beyond the above, he listed three cogent steps that would facilitate capacity building in African publishing which are: need for improvement in production quality, need for capacity building in the development and publication of scholarly books (too much concentration on primary and secondary schools, there should be tertiary books) and the need for capacity building in intra-African trade in books (with a 700 million population bigger than Europe, there should be a big market).

He opined that, actions need to become more institutionalised in order to create lasting impact and desired change. Adding that, professionalism should also be developed in order to guarantee effective marketing and distribution. The industry he said will need to continue to develop a cadre of professionals with ability to edit, review, and referee materials for publication. In addition, they will need to find more creative ways to package, produce, and disseminate.

Mr Crabbe concluded that today, there are increasing opportunities for various sectors of the economy in many countries. The publishing industry should seize the moment and contribute its share to rebuilding Africa. Practitioners need to continually update their knowledge, skills and understanding and to develop the self-help and can-do attitudes needed to bring about the desired change and improvement. The evidence of more than 40 years of Africa's over-dependence on foreign book imports leads me to agree to the statement by an old man, "Only Africans can truly build and make Africa better."

At the plenary session Gina Winje's paper focused on the strategies that made it successful for Norwegian contemporary authors to get published in other languages. These she attributed to all kinds of subsidies to encourage writing in both fiction and non-fiction.

Also, she recognised the differences in the language situation between the two countries saying while, Nigerian writers would be thinking of ways to surmount language barriers, his Norwegian state would invest in publishing by recognising problem areas. Also in Norway, publishing industry realises that a common, non-commercial promotion of their

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literature serves both the individual publishing house and authors. The politicians equally see that ‘relatively modest government funds yield substantial results.

While highlighting the services rendered by her organisation – Norwegian Literature Abroad, Fiction & Non-fiction (NORLA) in promoting Norwegian literatures abroad, she hopes that the experience of the publishing industry in Norway would be of help to Nigeria.

Mrs Akoss Afori-Mensah debunked the misconstrued notion about Nigerian not reading from the start of our presentation and went on to chronicle the various contributions Africans have made to publishing from the 20th century. She was however quick to add that quality of the early work were not so good and were mainly for children, which left adults out.

She said African publishers are not adventurers – they shy away from scholarly works. Most of the published books in Africa do not find their way into the world market because they are poorly produced and distribution is poor. Although she said this has improved in recent time especially with the intervention of African Books Collective (ABC) and African Publishers Network (APNET), which make it possible for African books to be available outside the continent.

To overcome these seeming barriers, Mrs Ofori-Mensah advised that African publishers should attend international book fairs, contribute money and take a double stand at an international book fairs, take their work seriously, use internet facilities to advertise and communicate, celebrate African books in the international media as well as tell our stories in the international marketplace. She said African publishers should ensure that books by Africans are displayed in bookshops. Book fairs should be used as an avenue to market their titles. Getting books into the international market gets one some income and traditional ways of communicating is no longer effective. African publishers must get the African book into the international market place.

She concluded by saying, “Our countries should have national book policies and encourage the development of books by Africans and published by Africans and the ministries of education should ensure that these go into the school system and are read by our children. Books from Africans, by Africans for Africans! Libraries should be equipped with adequate finance so that they can purchase locally published books; and reasonable library purchases means larger print runs, more affordable books, stable income for publishers and authors and a wider variety of books.

Speaking from the booksellers’ angle, Mr Dayo Alabi said there are peculiarities in books and as such requisite human capacity must be developed to meet the challenges of selling books beyond one’s locality.

Giving statistics to buttress his presentation he said Africa imports 70% of books from outside Africa. The value of annual book import according to him is over \$300million

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while less than 5% of books published in Africa are exported. He said Inter-African book sales are very poor because of the high cost of production and poor quality among other factors.

On capacity building in the publishing industry he said, individual booksellers, small booksellers, online sellers and big bookshops in the intended export market all have roles to play in ensuring that the African publisher succeed in export market. The publisher however must ensure that their books are good enough to be displayed on any shelf anywhere in the world. He also urged authors and publishers to ensure that the contents of the publications are good enough for local and foreign markets.

Meanwhile, Mr Alabi opined that to fit into international market publishers must explore different options such as appointing distributor(s), develop one's own website, sell online and attend international book fairs. Concluding, he said it is necessary to develop international market for African books because of the advantages inherent in it. He enjoined all stakeholders to be involved so as to ensure that the book will survives.

Dr Jerry Agada in line with other speakers at the conference said, development of publishing is important to everyone. All the stakeholders in the sector have roles to play in the marketing of books.

Taking into consideration another unexplored area for developing the sector, Dr Agada identified the rich as a viable source. He cited Shoichi Noma, founder of NOMA Award for African Publishing as an example to emulate. He lamented the situation of the book, which he said is worse claiming that there are not enough awards from the rich to encourage creative writing.

He concluded by saying that stakeholders should ensure that African books are found in the world market.

Dr Adediji Okanlawon speaking from the librarians' perspective identified the place of books in education and information dissemination as well as how African books have feared in the world economic, ICT and even African Book Trade.

He submitted that developing, as it were, connotes advancement from one state to a higher level and that in between levels are developmental elements/ingredients which are in most cases deficiencies suffered at the lower level/state. For African Publishing, these deficiencies have come as impediments to publications in the forms of: Poor quality, Book famine, Poor marketing strategies, Inappropriate pricing, Under-capitalisation, and; Low capacity for the protection of copyright law. These he said have their attendant impacts on libraries, which constitute the critical mass of the end-users of the publications.

Dr Adediji proffered the following as some measure to be applied by stakeholders to build capacity in the African publishing industry. These are:

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- The need for African Publishers to adopt the concept of ‘Best Practices’ which requires the development of standards and guides which would define best operational procedure for increased productivity and good quality;
- need to open up to embracing the adoption and application of Information Technology;
- need for publishing houses to be registered on the Stock Exchange and be quoted on the floor for the purpose of recapitalisation;
- need for stakeholders to consider the option of mergers and acquisitions with the intent to increase the market space and;
- the need to develop partnership with foreign and well established publishers with the purpose of joint or co-publishing.

Concluding, Dr Okanlawon said it is understandable that the economics of publishing are harsh; it is only when the professional bodies come together and form a network that solutions can emerge. Therefore, the African publishing industry should wary about the future of print and start considering re-focusing on electronic distribution of content.

Speaking from the printers’ perspective, Mr Babs Fashanu looked at production of books; the indigenisation Decree of 1966 and how it has helped the book market in Nigeria to take off as well as the dense African book market which he said equally helped the book industry.

He was however of the view that lack of sufficient capital outlay has affected growth in the sector, pointing out that government support is necessary through funding for the book industry to develop at the expected rate as applicable in other parts of the world.

Mr Fasanu said there are attempts to produce certain types of paper locally to cushion the printing cost but those initiatives have collapsed as planting of pulp trees to service the paper industry has not been pursued despite the fact that the pulp tree takes 14 years to grow in Europe but 7 years in Nigeria.

While affirming that, the printing capacity is lower than publishing capacity in Nigeria because of high cost of production, high tariff, and cumbersome process of importation he is of the opinion that quality of book should not be compromised and all must meet a set standard. Adding that, publishers and printers should see themselves as partners and work together as pressure group on government towards making sound policies. He said publishers and printers should endeavour to stage joint fairs, host websites to showcase the activities in the industry to the world.

Identifying Government as the biggest spender, he urged that policies that would engender growth by increasing patronage to local printers be formulated, more libraries be built, provide import substitution and remove or relax all the taxes. He added that, the privatisation of paper mill should be revitalised

Mr Fasanu concluded by saying for total originality of African books it would be better to produce books by Africans for the world in Africa.

The presentations generated lots of questions from the audience and the speakers rose to the occasion. Thereafter, the Chairman of the conference in his closing remark said, knowledge is the basis of development of any country and any country that is apathetic cannot develop hence we should not give up; we should continue to struggle until there is a break for us.

2. Children's Programme

Unlike what it has always been, another dimension was introduced to the NIBF 2007 Children's Programme hosted by Literamed Publications Nigeria Limited. Both primary and secondary school students were treated to special reading sessions and arts competition. Over 1,000 students from primary and secondary schools in Lagos participated at the two-day events. There were 35 schools in all.

3. APNETS Buyers and Sellers Meeting

There were two days of intense business interactions among selected stakeholders in the book sector during the NIBF 2007.

This activity was anchored by Tainie Mudodo of African Publishers Network (APNET) and it saw publishers and booksellers from all over Africa and Asia interacting.

4. National Library of Nigeria Seminar

The National Library of Nigeria on Thursday, 10th May, 2007 organised a one day seminar on: **Bibliographic Control Services: A Promotion Campaign.**

The Chairman of the Nigerian Book Fair Trust, Otunba Yinka Lawal-Solarin delivered the keynote address at the seminar while the Director/CEO of the National Library of Nigeria, Dr. L. N. Ikpaahindi gave the welcome address.

There were paper presentations, CIP demonstration and discussions. The seminar drew the top echelons from the library sector from across the country as well as other stakeholders in the society especially from the publishing sector.

5. Writers' Forum/Authors Groove

The Authors Groove took place on Tuesday May 8, 2007 and drew authors and other artistes from across the divide. It brought the renowned and budding ones together to examine the situation in the literary world as well as forge a front at improving literary vocation in Nigeria.

It was a rewarding and refreshing time for those who participated because there were interactive sessions as well as a seminar like session.

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The Association of Nigerian Authors sponsored the event.

6. NBFT Awards Presentation

The NIBF 2007 Awards Ceremony took place at the Multi-Purpose Hall B, University of Lagos on Friday 11th May, 2007.

This year's award presentation witnessed three recipients – with two joint winners for Victor Nwankwo Book of the Year Award and one winner for Idris Animashaun Book Printer of the Years Award sponsored by Academy Press Plc.

The awardees are:

- Professor Biyi Afonja for his book – In His Hands: Autobiography of A Nigerian Village Boy
- Kainie Agary for are book – Yellow-Yellow
- EMACON PRINTS LTD for excellence performance in the book printing sector for the year 2006.

Each of the awardees went home with a beautiful plaque while the joint winners of the Victor Nwankwo Book of the Year Award got a cash prize of N30,000.00 each.

The programme which, started at 7:30pm witnessed the reading of citation of the awardees, 'ewi' rendition from Mr Akeem Lasis, a journalist with Punch newspaper and another solo play-let. This was followed by a cocktail after the awardees have received their prizes. Dignitaries from the publishing sector, the media and the public graced the occasion.

7. OBSERVATIONS

Generally, participants adjudged NIBF 2007 a huge success and improvement over the past book fairs hosted by NBFT.

8. CONCLUSION

We are happy that NIBF is gradually getting to the level of being referred to as the BOOK FAIR IN AFRICA. The Nigerian Book Fair Trust will continue to use all available means, especially the platform of the Nigeria International Book Fair as well as National Book Fairs in Enugu, Ife and Abuja (which will replace the Kaduna book fair) to promote literacy development in the country.

Bose Adetunji

Executive Secretary