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Publishing & the Book in Africa: A Literature Review for 2017

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This is the third in a series of annual reviews of select new literature in English that has appeared on the topic of publishing and the book sector in sub-Saharan Africa.

The previous annual literature reviews can be found as follows:

2016:

https://www.academia.edu/31441110/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_A_Literature_Review_for_2016 (pre-print version)

Print/online version published in *The African Book Publishing Record* 43, no. 2 (May 2017): 120-170. <https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2017-0004>

2015:

https://www.academia.edu/20432811/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_-_A_Literature_Review_for_2015 (pre-print version)

Print/online version published in *The African Book Publishing Record* 42, no. 1 (March 2016): 11-37. <https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2016-0003>.

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REFERENCE & BIBLIOGRAPHY

Zell, Hans M. **Publishing & the Book in Africa: A Literature Review for 2016.** *The African Book Publishing Record* 43, no. 2 (May 2017): 120-170. <https://doi.org/10.1515/abpr-2017-0004>
Pre-print online version (freely accessible)
https://www.academia.edu/31441110/Publishing_and_the_Book_in_Africa_A_Literature_Review_for_2016 [19/05/17]

The predecessor of the present list, this is the second in a series of annual reviews of select new literature in English that has appeared on the topic of publishing and the book sector in sub-Saharan Africa. Extensively annotated and/or with abstracts, it brings together new literature published during the course of 2016, a total of 164 records. The literature review covers books, chapters in books and edited collections, journal articles, Internet documents and reports, theses and dissertations, interviews, audio/video recordings and podcasts, as well as a number of blog postings, Records are grouped under a range of regional/country and topic-specific headings.

GENERAL & REGIONAL STUDIES

Africa: General studies/Book history in Africa

Williams, Olatoun **Interview: Hans Zell.**

<http://www.bordersliteratureonline.net/hanszellinterview.html> [01/09/17]

Also at https://www.academia.edu/34181016/Interview_with_Hans_M_Zell

Hans Zell in conversation with Olatoun Williams of Borders—Literature for all Nations <http://www.bordersliteratureonline.net/index.html>, a new Nigerian forum and book review media platform set up to encourage a lively reading culture in Nigeria and Africa, and promote the reading of African books worldwide. In a wide-ranging interview he talks about this engagement with publishing and the book in Africa over a period of over four decades, as well as answering questions about the Hans Zell Publishers imprint, the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa, author-publisher interaction in Africa, the new boom in self-publishing, and conveys his views on the potential negative consequences on the African book industries of the activities of overseas book donation programmes, shipping millions of free books to Africa every year.

COUNTRY STUDIES

Note: most articles or blog postings on particular topics or areas of the book trade, for example publishing for children, publishing in African languages, copyright, scholarly publishing, etc. are classified under STUDIES BY TOPIC, see p. 33.

Nigeria

Lababidi, Lesley **Olatoun Williams: Reviewer of African Literature and Founder of Borders Literature for All Nations.**

<https://nomad4now.com/2018/01/07/olatoun-williams-reviewer-of-african-literature-and-founder-of-borders-literature-for-all-nations/> (Posted 07 January 2018) [18/01/18]

Olatoun Williams, interviewed here by cultural historian Lesley Lababidi on her lively blog, is a Nigerian literary reviewer actively promoting the reading culture in Nigeria. She reads African books on television, radio and online platforms, as well as providing visibility for African-published books worldwide. Williams is the founder of Borders Literature Online <http://www.bordersliteratureonline.net/>, which has recently featured a series of interviews with prominent members of the Nigerian book professions, and the site also includes a rich archive of book reviews.

Williams, Olatoun **Interview with Gbenro Adegbola** in this section:

http://www.bordersliteratureonline.net/tradedetail/Gbenro_Adegbola [30/10/17], also at https://www.academia.edu/34941205/Interview_with_Gbenro_Adegbola_First_Veritas.

Williams, Olatoun **Interview with Bankole Olayebi.**

http://www.bordersliteratureonline.net/tradedetail/Bankole_Olayebi [15/10/17]

Also at https://www.academia.edu/34784471/Interview_with_Bankole_Olayebi_Bookcraft
An insightful interview with Nigerian publisher Bankole Olayebi of Bookcraft Ltd <http://bookcraftafrica.com/index.php>. Established over twenty years ago, the company has published a large number of high quality titles in a diverse range of subjects, including art, biography, history, literature, politics, current affairs, as well as general trade books and large format coffee table titles. Olayebi talks about the challenges of the book industry in Nigeria, challenges which have become ever more acute in recent years. One of them is the dearth of qualified and well-trained, publishing professionals (designers, editors, proof readers, book packagers, and others) “who understand how the book business should work. It seems to me that over the years regrettably, not enough time and effort has been invested in the training of publishing professionals. The result is that today, it has become very difficult to find the right people to fill various roles; and it's not very easy to find people to train for these roles.” Bookcraft is now actively involved in e-book publishing, but Olayebi says “I do not see e-books completely supplanting print book, anytime in the immediate future. I believe that print, or physical books will always be with us. Even in the US and in Europe, the advent of the e-book has not resulted in the death of the print book, as some people were so quick to predict, a few years ago! To paraphrase Mark Twain, 'reports of the death of the print book have been grossly exaggerated'.”

Publishing in Nigeria is in crisis, and efforts to strengthen the Nigerian book industry is going to require the involvement or contribution of the entire gamut of stakeholders – government, the private sector, academic institutions NGOs, philanthropists even – in order

to put the industry back on its feet. It seems to me, Olayebi says, “that we have got to start from scratch and build the industry back. There’s no question that the book industry as a whole has suffered a number of setbacks in the last couple of decades; some of this self-inflicted, in my opinion. And this is because not enough has been put back, especially by those in the industry, in terms of investment in human, financial resources, infrastructure, etc., to properly grow the industry.”

Williams, Olatoun **Interview with Gbenro Adegbola.**

http://www.bordersliteratureonline.net/tradedetail/Gbenro_Adegbola [30/10/17]

Also at

https://www.academia.edu/34941205/Interview_with_Gbenro_Adegbola_First_Veritas

A further interesting interview in the Borders Literature Online series of interviews with members of the African book professions. Here Olatoun Williams is in conversation with Nigerian publisher and digital entrepreneur Gbenro Adegbola of First Veritas <http://1stveritas.com/>, in which he talks about his background, how he got into publishing, the digital vs. print debate, developing digital content, the need to invest in publishing training and education, the major challenges facing the Nigerian book industries and the main threats to the industry, with the menace of piracy high up on the list. Another major hurdle, he says, is access to funding and credit: “I find that the financial industry is blissfully ignorant of what we do. They don’t understand it. They confuse it with printing and that has affected access to credit. In fairness to them, the role of the publisher is not so obvious. The understanding of what publishing constitutes how publishers make money - you find that a lot of people don’t understand it.”

One major challenge for the book industries, Adegbola says, is the current dearth of training opportunities and professional development courses: “The industry can’t go into universities and tell them to set up publishing courses. What is needed is for the self-help courses organised by the industry to be strengthened and expanded initially. And individual companies should invest more in training, possibly overseas training as well. The traditional excuse is that if you train someone, there is no guarantee they will stay. My position is that the experience will not leave the industry. It remains in it even if they don’t stay with your company. So people have to take an industry-wide attitude.”

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