

The Benefits and Challenges of the Adoption of Digital Publishing by Print Publishers in Nigeria: A Review

Faustina C. Haco-Obasi*, Scholastica A.J. Chukwu

The Library, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author**

Abstract: The integration of digital technology in book publishing has positive implications and benefits that far outweigh whatever fears and disadvantages that print publishers associate it with. Also, the fact that contemporary information users are largely making use of digital resources is glaring and cannot be disputed. Digital publishing improves book publishing process from the initial stage of text creation to the final stage of distribution and access by readers. Regardless of these benefits, partial or wholesome transition to digital publishing among Nigerian book publishers is hazy. This article is a review of digital publishing in Nigeria; its adoption, benefits and challenges as well as the way forward for indigenous publishers in Nigeria.

Keywords: Publishing, book publishing, digital technology, benefits, challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital technology arrived with structural modifications in the process of book production, distribution and sale. Publishers, printers and every other firm that operates with paper and book viz library and information centers are keying into the scheme and gradually adopting the technology of the day in their operations and services. As such, largely available are e-books, digital newspapers and magazines, digitized encyclopedia and dictionaries in CDs and DVDs sources. The integration of digital technology in publishing operations and the dexterity of today's information users occasioned by availability of internet connections using smart phones and personal computers have drawn wider readership for these digital knowledge resources. It is consequently almost compulsory for persons in book trade to tune in to digital technology if they must survive. Though, Nigeria in its slow pace of adapting to new technologies still have readers who patronize and use print materials, it is asserted that publishers who do not digitize their current and future book titles may lose out in the emerging publishing market (Stamp and Hodson, 2010).

Digital technology has played and is still playing crucial role in transforming book publishing (Keh, 1998). When commercial printing and publishing began in mid-fifteenth century following the invention of Guttenberg's printing press, the publisher manipulated all production processes, distribution, readership and even profit. With content digitization through wireless technologies and the internet,

book production, distribution, readership and profit have been severely altered. Internet and digitization has overtaken the economy causing increased productivity in existing industries, as well as new business opportunities and markets that may well undermine known established industries (Øiestad & Bugge, 2014). Hence, digital technology is now seen as a disruptive technology in the traditional print publishing environment and a quagmire for analogue publishers on retention of the old model of analogue publishing or adaptation to the new model of digital publishing (Gaigher et al., 2014).

A Condensed History of Print Publishing in Nigeria

Print publishing in Nigeria has its antecedents in the efforts of the early Christian missionaries. In 1846, Reverend Hope Waddell of the Presbyterian church of Scotland mission established the first printing press in Calabar for publication of religious books and subsequently, arithmetic books for schools. Following closely in 1854, Reverend Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established his own press which eventually printed the first Nigerian Newspaper the "Iwe Ironhin". Other missionaries followed the trend in Lagos and Ibadan to publish religious materials to build the faith of their members. Publications of the 19th century where completely exclusive of advanced educational books as the book trade was relying on imported books. There were affiliates of European publishers and sales agents who stocked these imported books in their various warehouses and sold to users. According to Echebiri (2005), Oxford University Press (O. U. P) renamed University Press Plc, was the first to establish contact with Nigeria in 1928 and create an office in Ibadan in 1949. As demand for its books increased, O. U. P became, in 1959, the first multinational book publisher in Nigeria to own a warehouse and, in 1963, to publish locally. More European firms followed such as Longman Group Ltd in 1957, Heinemann Educational Books in 1961, Macmillan Publishers in 1963. Gradually, the foreign publishing companies began to publish locally ushering publishing activities into Nigeria. By 1977, the Nigerian Enterprises promotion decree made it compulsory for foreign publishing enterprises to become indigenous companies through 60% equity participation of Nigerians. This led to transfer of ownership rights and control of

companies like Longman, Macmillan, Heinemann and others to Nigerian nationals (Ezekwe, 2019; Udeze & Ogbonna, n.d.). Other indigenous publishing enterprises sprang up following independence such as Lantern Books Publishers formerly known as Literamed Publications Limited in 1969, Onibonje Press which started business in 1970 and Africana First Publishers, formerly known as Africana-FEP Limited in the mid-70s' (Udeze & Ogbonna, n.d). Another event that had remarkable impact on Nigerian publishing industry was the universal free primary education in 1976. There was consequently, a double enrollment of children into schools with a parallel high demand for books and more publishers coming up. According to Uche (2015), the Universal Primary Education (UPE) created enormous opportunity as well as challenges for the Nigerian publishing industry as primary school enrollment doubled over with a parallel spill-over effect on secondary and tertiary education as well. The year 1982 came with the introduction of a new national policy for education known as the 6-3-3-4 system and as expected, there was an ensuing need to publish books for the new curriculum (Obidiegwu, 2005).

Print versus Digital Publishing in Nigeria

Due to the high material costs, foreign currency fluctuations and the resulting high cost of monographs and other print resources, significant access barriers erupted for students and researchers thereby decreasing demand for monographs, increasing their preference for digital books and frustrating writers and publishers of the analogue cadre. Bankole (2005) views that a remarkable achievement of the early publishers in Nigeria is their good rapport with their authors which consequently exposed the works of early geniuses of literature such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Amos Tutuola. But with the new technology, there is a dramatic turn of events. According to Joseph and Jha (2015), as sales of printed monographs decreased, publishers were more hesitant to produce monographs. Even authors who spent years researching and writing monographs struggled to find publishers (Steele, 2008).

The analogue printing procedure using offset must have book demand of over 500 copies if the publisher is to recover initial cost of plate making (Joseph & Jha, 2015) Conversely, print on demand (POD) publishing being a means of printing an electronic copy of a book based on user's demands, provides a better alternative economically where even one single copy of monograph can be printed at a reduced cost. POD was first used in the banking sector to print out customer transactions but currently used by publishers as a term referring to the printing of books individually as their orders come (Igwe et al., 2015). Print on demand publishing has an added advantage of managing storage space and solves problems of unsold copies. According to Ahmed and Babalola (2015), POD is a feature of electronic publishing and consist of hybrid publications that reside in cyber space until they are printed on special digital printing machines. For Ugocha (2014), POD combines the internet with more traditional publishing

methods using modern giant xerox machines to instantly print and bind a book whenever a copy is ordered online. Print on Demand (POD) thereby eliminates the need for editions to be printed beforehand greatly reducing upfront publishers' costs. Igwe et al. (2015) report that even among traditional publishers, POD is used to print old back catalogue titles which are needed in few copies and would not warrant sizeable print run in offset printing.

The Adoption of Digital Publishing in Nigeria

The hype surrounding e-books and digital publishing has been on the increase especially since the first e-book was published in 1971. In response to the government's reduction of telecommunications monopoly, mobile network providers such as Glo, Airtel, and MTN have established digital platforms for e-publishing and knowledge sharing (Abulude, 2014). The newly evolved bookshops are open access resources, electronic books contained in digital publishers' websites, general and specialized databases available using internet in personal computers, smartphones, mobile tablets, e-reader and ePub formats. Some websites such as fictionwise.com, gutenberg.org and memoware.com offer e-books specifically for smartphones and PDAs. These digital books are then collated for handling and physical use either in CD-ROMS or downloaded through the print on demand (POD) option. That goes to show that digital technology has offered the information user control and choice of how to receive needed information. It has changed the way books are published, distributed and sold (Baran, 2009). The physical appearance of the book is not left out with digital technology. The hitherto "pages bound by covers" have been altered because the internet has created an opportunity for an author to gather ideas, write a book, put it on a website and offer it for sale. And such book is equally purchased via the internet, either read from the screen, downloaded in CD-ROM or printed without being snuck between the traditional book cover.

Electronic books are appropriate in today's information era, where learning can take place outside of the confines of a school's walls and buildings. When it comes to teaching and learning, e-books will improve engagement and comprehension between educators and students (Shiratuddin et al, 2003). Digital technologies are improving the process of book publishing especially in the areas of typesetting, layout and editing, on-line distribution, on-line ordering, marketing, advertising, pricing, payments and hiring (Abegunde, 2003; Iwu, 2011) Most digital publishers now provide diversified publishing services such as copy editing, online publishing, jacket design, promotion, and even distribution to local book stores for agreed royalty or price. Today, the publishing industry is facing a constraining high level of clamour, demand, familiarity and consumption of e-book as more readership, consultation and use of information and knowledge is carried out online. According to Ifeduba (2010), electronic books distributed through the internet as on-line books are now prevalent and sold directly by authors and

publishers, or through on-line bookshops such as Amazon.com. However, investigating the adoption of digital publishing by Nigerian publishers, he discovered that digital publishing is still in its lava stage and can be seen in book covers, cover finishing, impression quality, audio books and CD-ROM format of published books. Ani and Ogboh (2018) report that the rate of adoption of digital technology by educational publishers in the southeast Nigeria, though low at the time of study, is gradually gaining ground as publishers used e-books to release books that consumers would not have been able to locate in standard retailer's bookshops owing to insufficient demand for the traditional print run. The situation in Nigeria, though not as in the developed countries, shows there is gradual but steady progress in the use of digital content. The president of the International Publishers Association (IPA) Hugo Setzer, while emphasizing the role of digital technology in publishing advised Nigeria publishers at the 19th Nigerian International Book Fair 2020, to adapt to the changing times in order to remain relevant. Even as he endorsed digital publishing, Setzer encouraged a mixed model of business with both traditional and digital publishing technology. The study by Ifeduba and Shoki (2008) show that digital publishing innovations such as setting, editing, digitizing, uploading and downloading book products are already adopted by a good number of Nigerian publishers and that other aspects have not been adopted for fear of lack of appropriate reading habits and computer literacy among local readers. According to Ani and Ogboh (2018), adoption of digital technology has contributed to an improved quality in published books in the areas of cover design, book content, inside illustration and layout. Amobi (2013) also noted growth rate of online publishing to be higher in developing countries like Nigeria (44.7%) compared to developed countries like the U.S.A (9.6%).

II. BENEFITS OF DIGITAL PUBLISHING

There are no doubts about the benefits of digital technology to both customers and publishers, particularly in terms of cost savings compared to traditional book publishing.

A noteworthy emphasis is that digital books have no physical costs such as paper, printing, or binding, books are distributed directly to consumers without accompanying delivery costs arising from wholesale and retail costs. Since e-books are delivered by digital content management systems (CMS), there are no costs associated with storage, pilferage, or the return of unsold stock (Joseph and Jha, 2015). With digital publishing, there is improvement in publishing processes such as reformatting and editing, ease of input, redesigning, general layout and printing. There is also the availability of content in various formats and viewing modes dependent on consumer preferences (Kleper 2001) and a potential for new forms of digital content, such as original digital texts to be accompanied by contemporary reviews and commentaries (Shatzkin 2008). According to Abulude (2014), digital technology creates opportunity for readers to gather digitally to discuss, create and share content to their respective unique

communities. Furthermore, the products of digital publishing are readable in low light or even total darkness as readers have the ability to display motion, enlarge or change fonts, use Text-to-speech software to read the text aloud for visually impaired, partially sighted, elderly or dyslexic people or just for convenience, search for key terms, find definitions, or allow highlighting, bookmarking and annotation. Ahmed and Babalola (2015) enumerates advantages of digital publishing to include:-

1. Faster publishing time for accepted manuscripts
2. Greater flexibility in the relationship between the writer and the publisher
3. Writer's opportunity to update texts often and at no cost
4. Digital technology offers longevity for works with slower sales through the unlimited archiving capacity of digital technology
5. There is an opportunity to distribute and retrieve time-sensitive and compact contents through mobile phones, PDAs and other wireless devices
6. Digital technology distributes information cost-effectively to a wider audience compared to delivery of print books.

The benefits of digital publishing listed by Duncan (2014) are more peculiar to the author or writer of a manuscript than the publisher. However, these benefits are:-

- a. These are increased chances of an author having his manuscript published as digital publishing guidelines are not as narrow as that of print publishing with almost no limitation on length of manuscript or type of characters, etc.
- b. Digital publishing allows authors to stay in control of the publishing process than print
- c. Higher royalties
- d. The author has the opportunity of checking out the publisher's contract before submitting his manuscript
- e. There is reduced response time from the publishers and speedy publishing
- f. The book becomes available all over the world from the moment it is published with possible sales going on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

III. CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL PUBLISHING IN NIGERIA

The travails of the analogue publisher in contemporary publishing with digital technology began from the explosion of information as a consequence of innovation and adoption of information and communication technologies in the generation and dissemination of information. Thus, book publishing got demarcated into traditional and electronic publishing (Christopher 2010). With the introduction of digital technology in publishing process, there came a new paradigm of alteration and modification of current business model, new user demands and new quality for information

resources if they are to attract contemporary information users. Analogue publishers especially in the Nigerian environment have not found it easy to completely adopt digital technology in their operations due to several attendant constraints. For instance, there is the issue of mode of payment for online resources. Payment of e-resources is usually by credit card. In this regard, Ikpaahindi (2011) notes that customers in Nigeria either dislike paying by credit card or do not have it at all. This is challenging to the publisher in selling his books online. Ikpaahindi (2011) further highlights the importance of high internet bandwidth and steady power supply in digital publishing which are lacking in Nigeria. According to Ani and Ogboh (2018), some of the challenges undermining Nigerian publishers in adopting digital technology are high cost of digital equipment, incessant power failure, high cost of using alternative power supply and lack of adequate regulations for the protection of electronic intellectual resources thereby increasing piracy and reducing profit derivable from e-resources. Ahmed and Babalola (2015) note that e-publishing is posing some bedeviling challenges to publishers especially those in Africa. Such challenges are problem of developing e-reading software that is compatible with several formats; high incidence of piracy and confusion on who actually has the authority over an intellectual content; lack of credibility of publishers and ephemeral nature of materials on the internet where an information can be available today and become unavailable tomorrow in contrast to the permanent mode of print format. Bashorun et al. (2013) identify challenges of digital publishing in Africa as lack of adequate supply of electricity; language barriers of e-publishing equipment sent from developed countries; lack of qualified manpower; low and irregular internet connections and abnormally high cost of getting regular, stable and uninterrupted internet facilities; defective publishing infrastructure; lack of sustainable funding and high tariff charges for telecommunication services and power supply. For Abulude (2014), high cost of acquiring e-publishing infrastructure, piracy, plagiarism, power upsurge and poor content quality control are some of the serious constraints experienced in digital publishing.

From the South-African perspective, challenges faced by publishers with digital publishing according to Gaigher et al. (2014), include:-

- i. Costly transitions to digital publishing strategies and operational models (new systems for e-book production, archiving and distribution)
- ii. The necessity for extensive consultation and experimentation following the replacement of the printing process
- iii. Expenses related to electronic archiving and the development of systems
- iv. Preservation concerns
- v. The acquisition of new resources (including training staff in digital processes)
- vi. The problematic alignment of digital and traditional intellectual property rights, and the accompanying

digital rights management (DRM) restrictions and expenses

- vii. The plethora of different e-book formats and reading devices, and confusion about which one to choose
- viii. The confusion around pricing models, as there is a lack of standards in pricing, and the complication of users expecting e-books to be cheap or even free
- ix. Readers' reluctance to move away from the printed book
- x. Low internet access rates among the majority of the population
- xi. Slow and expensive broadband internet

The Way Forward

The goal of every publishing enterprise be it print-oriented or digital is to disseminate new discoveries or research results to the right audience, at the needed time and in the most comprehensible format for easy retrieval. The impact of digital technology can be felt by both the publishers and users of information. For the publisher, digital technology has ameliorated the publishing processes through its enhancement of an environment where several volumes of information resources can be published within a short time frame and for the user, an easy and use-friendly interface to view information and download for subsequent storage or printing.

As digital technology devices are being absorbed and used in everyday activities with a society ready to acquire and adapt to it, publishing products must be aligned to the taste and preferences of today's information users. Publishers need to import Ranganathan's fourth law of library and information science, "save the time of the reader" into their business modus operandi and adopt models that will bring about instant creation, editing, publication and distribution of information products to users whose presence and consumption of e-resources is on a geometric progressive speed.

Given that digital resources consumption is rife amongst the academia and even students, Nigerian Government and importers of digital publishing equipment should cut down the costs of these devices to enable publishers afford them. The government's contribution towards encouraging digital publishing is paramount especially in linking the libraries of Nigerian universities to those of foreign countries through the virtual digital library and compulsorily including computer literacy in Nigeria schools' curriculum. This would whet Nigerian readers' appetite for consumption of e-resources and consequently propel publishers towards complete adoption of digital publishing model.

On the other hand, publishers need to collaborate with university libraries and university presses to structure a workable modality for publishing textbooks and scholarly works in electronic formats. Publishers are encouraged to embark on a gradual transition to digital publishing in such a way that would be affordable for them and feasible in their publishing processes. They should seek the assistance of

Xerox and AGFA corporations for digital publishing equipment.

IV. CONCLUSION

The role of digital technology in publishing is all-encompassing and undeniable. Beginning from the early stage of inputting ideas in book production to the last stage of distribution to information users, digital technology tools such as emails, inventory management programs and P.O.Ds are apt. Even at the point of consumption of information, digital technology has innovative alternatives to print media as users can decide to read books from electronic copies aided by interactive user interfaces that enable highlighting, circling or page marking of texts while reading or still decide to print by themselves as against the high cost of buying print versions of such books.

Therefore, however hardly hit by digital technologies through user's unrestricted and free access to some digital knowledge resources, challenge of ownership of rights, reduced profits in the distribution and storage of information resources, self-publishing by authors, digitization of internal workflow processes (the editing processes and the transmission of content) or reduced sales and marketing profits of both physical and electronic content (Martin & Tian 2010), publishers of today have to brace up to the challenge and adapt to the demands and technology of the time. Digital technology is not as threatening as considered and thus poses no end to publishing business. Therefore publishers cannot afford to ignore the vast opportunities created by digital technology, the onus in the words of Guenette et al. (2010) is for them to improve publishing process and content using technology while aggressively seeking new models for profit.

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