LITERARY PUBLISHING IN NIGERIA IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Nkechi M. Christopher*

Abstract

Digital resources are now an integral aspect of education and literacy, including literary works creation and consumption. How Nigeria will become a significant player in global trends in literary publishing is not obvious, since apathy to reading and the book could discourage forays into the yet exotic digital formats. This paper discusses the role of literature in society, highlights issues in literary publishing in Nigerian, and draws attention to hindrances to literary publishing in Nigeria in the digital age. It proposes that literary forms be preserve features of the Nigerian nation and its heritage, and that the electronic format is available for documenting and distributing traditional and contemporary literacy forms.

บทคัดย่อ

เทคโนโลยีสารสนเทศได้กลายเป็นส่วนสำคัญและจำเป็นในทุกสาขาของการศึกษาและงานวรรณกรรม ทั้งการผลิตและการบริโภควรรณกรรม ไนจีเรียจะเป็นผู้นำในแนวโน้มของโลกด้านการผลิตวรรณกรรมได้หรือไม่ยังไม่ปรากฏชัดเจน เนื่องจากความสนใจในการอ่านและการทำหนังสืออาจจะยังไม่มากพอที่จะทำออกมาในรูปแบบดิจิทัล บทความนี้อภิปรายบทบาทของวรรณกรรมที่มีต่อสังคม หยิบยกประเด็นที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการผลิตหนังสือในประเทศไนจีเรีย รวมทั้งระบุอุปสรรคปัญหาในการผลิตหนังสือในไนจีเรียในยุคดิจิทัล ผู้วิจัยได้นำเสนอแนวคิดว่ารูปแบบวรรณกรรมจะช่วยรักษาให้คงไว้ซึ่งลักษณะความเป็นไนจีเรียและมรดกของชาติ และการนำเสนอวรรณกรรมทางสื่ออิเล็คทรอนิค จะทำให้สามารถบันทึกและเผยแพร่สู่ผู้อ่านได้ทั้งรูปแบบวรรณกรรมดั้งเดิม และวรรณกรรมร่วมสมัย

*Dr. Nkechi M. Christopher holds a Ph.D. in (Communication and Language Arts) from University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Currently she is working as a Lecturer in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION: ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

The pervasiveness, predominance in some cases, of electronic media in people's lives is not peculiar to Nigerians. In more than a decade, an average American child has considerable private control of many media of communication and does not "necessarily perceive print as the primary source of cultural meaning ..." (Mackey, 2003, p.403). Thus, Mackey's assertion that: "a one-medium user is the new illiterate" (p.403) is no longer applicable to only people in the western world. Digital information is accessible through in the Internet and World Wide Web, and very importantly, wherever mobile telephony is receivable. Moreover, Nixon (2003) noted that "meaning making is becoming increasingly multimodal". Similarly, McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence and Jang (2012) conclude from studies that:

> The advent of electronic media has expanded the notion of what counts as literacy, from the traditional print setting to digital environments that can include hypermedia applications and an emerging variety of social media.

> "Many young people move rapidly and apparently seamlessly between multiple media and modes of communication as they participate in global media culture" (Nixon, 2003, p.408). Playscience (2013), in fact, found that there is a drastic shift in children's book market "as the introduction of ebooks has digitized the reading experience and injected new excite-

ment into the market".

Therefore, technology is increasingly combined with traditional modes of teaching and communication. Instructional designs aim to include multiple dimensions of reading in order to facilitate the development of positive reading identities (McKenna et al., 2012). Universal Design for Learning promotes three kinds of flexibilities in the use of various media in teaching:

> To represent information in multiple formats and media;

> To provide multiple pathways for students' action and expression; and

> To provide multiple ways to engage students' interest and motivation (Rose and Meyer, 2002, ch 4).

In line with these principles, and developing *pari passu,* is the availability of literary forms in digital formats with multiple (multimodal) channels. "Moreover, several new devices have been designed to make reading e-books just as easy and convenient as reading the traditional paper-and-ink book" (Dominick, 2002, p.152). From picture books, graphic novels, talking books and storybooks on compact discs (CDs), accessible through computers, to e-books accessed by computers and handheld devices, the consumer has the freedom to use texts as desired - listen to them with or without pictures, manipulate font sizes, etc.

An online survey involving 603 US adults reveals that parents have keyed into the e-book evolution. "Almost 46% of parents plan to purchase a new device for their

child to read ebooks … nearly three-quarters of parents plan on buying ebooks for their children this holiday season" (Bryant, 2013).

Continuous integration of new technologies in the traditional book, and vice versa, has thrived through the impact of conglomeration in the information and communication industries. Media conglomerates also own book publishing chains, as they strengthen their positions in digital content delivery infrastructures across the world (Hillesund, 2001, 94). Hillesund observes that major US publishing companies, many of which in the first place are integral components of multinational media conglomerates, have launched extensive e-book production as well as signed agreements with dominant e-book retailers.

Again, collaboration between e-publishers (e-publishing) and traditional publishers (publishing) allows the product of one to be acquired by the other. "Large publishers are acquiring self-published books that have done well" (Greenfield, 2013). Bestselling literary e-books are acquired by regular publishers and rendered in traditional book formats; for example, Madison Park Press (Double Book Club) published the hard copy of *Mother* (by L. A. Rentschler, 2006) after a successful online rendition by BookSurge. On the other hand, traditional books are being digitised for electronic access.

Moreover, digital publishing has developed to the extent that individuals, rather than established publishers, now can publish and distribute their own books on the Internet in digital formats. In 1999, the *Best Laid Plans* (by Leta Nolan Childers) was

a bestseller d-book: buyers downloaded the book from their personal computers or into handheld devices; and in 2000, Stephen King's book, *Riding the Bullet,* sold 400,000 digital copies within twenty-four hours (Baran, 2002). D-books and e-publishing not only reduce the one to two years it takes a US publishers to publish a book to a matter of weeks, it also cuts down tremendously the amount of time and money required to promote and distribute books.

Some form of e-publishing is taking place in Nigeria; however, neither it nor traditional publishing alone or together produce literary works commensurate with Nigeria's socio-economic status or literacy level, despite the fact that Nigeria has a few literary icons. I argue that the docility in writing, publishing and reading of literary works in Nigeria is inimical to the establishment of a virile society, on the one hand, and on the other, a society whose future generation could appreciate its history through literary works - literary works constitute a significant aspect of a people's heritage and history. They preserve the past and show the way to the future, as well as the connection between both. Technological advancements provide tools for overcoming perennial problems hitherto experienced in reading, writing and publishing of literary works in traditional formats, is yet to be harnessed by the publishing industry.

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Writers can explore, exploit and expand rich oral traditions as well as present-day experience in interesting ways that draw

and sustain a level of readership capable of compensating the efforts of writers, publishers and booksellers in evolving societies/economies. Moreover, as acculturation of Western lifestyles engenders estrangement from primordial cultures, writing and printing provide alternatives and replacements for communication cum "documentation" methods that are nearing extinction, including traditional oratory, folklore and other oral traditions. In developed societies, histories and other cultural heritages are not allowed to fade away. *Beuwulf* and *Song of Roland* are two examples of many in Europe that have been preserved through the ages. *Beulwulf,* estimated to have existed before the widespread adoption of Christianity, was first written down in the eighth century; while *Song of Roland* is an oral tradition developed in the mid-eleventh century based on a tale set in the eighth century, and was written down in early twelfth century (The Applied History Research Group, 1998). It is obvious from these examples that early works are retrieved, preserved, cherished, studied, translated and can be accessed through the Internet. Moreover, classics continue to influence writing and story telling today.

Books document and preserve history. Literature documents and preserve yesterday. By implication, oral tradition depicts the marriage between history and literature in African societies. Contemporary literature illustrates this point: Wole Soyinka observed that "Achebe's confident narratives of the life that was destroyed under the colonial mandate serve as models both of historical restoration and stylistic mastery" (Oyedokun, 2006, p.6, quoting the *Time* magazine). Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka,

J. P. Clarke, Cyprain Ekwensi, among other well-known Nigerian writers, have endowed Nigeria with works that preserve some features of Nigeria's literary tradition cum history. Even when they retire (as Chinua Achebe did recently), future generations will derive insights of what obtained during these writers' lifetime and the lifetimes they wrote about. At his demise 2007, Cyprain Ekwensi left behind insightful tracings of his people and place of origin as well as life in other parts of Nigeria - he had forty published works and was writing his autobiography when he died (Adenekan, 2008).

Thus, it can be said that literature is an authentic record of the way people lived, since most works of fiction are usually contemporaneous with realities of the time settings. Chinua Achebe notes that in writing *Things* Fall Apart, he "deal[t] with the work of fiction truthfully" (*The Guardian,* January 7, 2007, p.28). Assenting that "certainly we are familiar with western history as literature and western literature as history", Meldrum's assertion (1985, p.32) further explains:

> Characteristically, the writer of western prose fiction appears faithfully devoted to presenting the "real" in which we all have to live, but it is the carefully rendered sense of the past universe in which our ancestors lived and died. The writer takes care to portray man speaking to man, to be sure, but also - in the manner of a historian - offers his audience the results of his research as well. (p.32).

Therefore, while historians and other

researchers may delve into history books and past literary works, the youth of the day will find interest in books that depict people with whom they can relate, past, present and future. The production of literary works should be a healthy continuum, ceaselessly infusing reality, thoughts and imagination into people's mind. Successful works survive through the ages to become essential documents of another generation's ancestors, their beliefs, values and practices. Since oral tradition is literature and history, incorporating it into recent literary works (as many authors have done), serves both history and literature audiences.

Modern African literatures have been influenced to a remarkable degree by the continent's long tradition of oral artistry. Before the spread of literacy in the 20th century, texts were preserved in memory and performed or recited. These traditional texts served many of the same purposes that written texts serve in literate societies-entertainment, instruction, and commemoration, for example. However, no distinctions were made between works composed for enjoyment and works that had a more utilitarian function. Africa's oral literature takes the form of prose, verse, and proverb, and texts vary in length from the epic, which might be performed over the course of several days, to single-sentence formulations such as the proverb (Owomoyela, 2007, 4).

In a similar vein, Unoma Azuah credits her initial inspiration and the development of her power of imagination to stories told her by her grandmother:

...my grandmother told me stories. My mother who was an English

and Home Economics teacher also read to me often. These early introductions to words and the use of imagination had a strong impact on my writing life. My imagination became my refuge. I used to escape whenever I felt like it. I would write about the events in my mind and delighted in sharing my little made-up tales with others. My childhood experiences definitely set the stage for my writing career (Verrisimo, 2007, p.57).

From another perspective, even without necessarily being sanctimonious, books are a veritable means of inculcating in people the sound way of life. It becomes imperative to deliberately tap this resource in the building of national and personal lives, particularly for people drifting away from their traditional homes, where sound morals are enforced by custodians of culture, to cities where recrimination is shunned. Fortunately, vestiges of traditional norms still exist in urban societies, especially among people who traverse between cities and their ethnic homes. However, when these connections are severed, as some families already have, the society could witness similar horrific crime levels that obtain in some other countries, due to loss of values. Literature can fill the void, and give people the direction that they need to make sense of life around them. Moral decadence in society can be tamed by the right literature, and as earlier mentioned, without necessarily sermonising.

A book can trigger or aggravate a revolution, as did Harriet Beecher Stowe's book. Baran (2002) avers that:

A fine work of literature, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* galvanized public feelings against slavery. Abolitionist sentiment was no longer the domain of the intellectual, social, and religious elite. Everyday people were repulsed by the horrors of slavery ... Abraham Lincoln ... abolished slavery (pp.118-119).

Baran (p.119) further observed that "books have traditionally been at the centre of social change in the United States", noting that Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (on clean food and abuse of workers) and other similar books and writings brought about significant health and labour legislations.

Many books have brought changes in the ways people perceive life; just as religious literature did during the Reformation and still does. Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* is said to have helped fuel the sexual revolution of the 1960s (Dominick, 2002). Interestingly, beyond such books as Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book* which contains political thoughts and beliefs, literature has deliberately been used as a medium to affect the minds of people in ways conducive to change in political perception. The post-World War II Australian Communist Party had a literature unit that produced radical literary tradition for this purpose (Merlyn, 2004). Merlyn assessed the British and Australian radical literary traditions as a seminal force in the development of adult education. Not surprisingly therefore, UNESCO (1970) had asked member-states to take into account "the particular role of the printed word for the transmission of knowledge and the stimulation of ideas" (p.57) in formulating book policies. The need for a book policy became necessary based on these considerations:

a. the importance of the written word for the progress of human civilization,

b. that books and periodical, along with the other material means of expressing thought, play an essential role in social life and its development,

c. that they perform a fundamental function in the realization of Unesco's objectives, namely peace, development, the promotion of human rights and the campaign against racialism and colonialism (UNESCO, 1970, p.56)

These considerations are not economic, intellectual or necessarily philosophical reasoning; rather, they are basic to an individual's existence, whether the individual is learned or not. Therefore, today's society can thrive and progress better with books than without books, considering that the traditional/cultural means of inculcating acceptable behaviours and norms, and of developing values and desirable attitudes in a person are being eroded by "civilisation" in conjunction with poverty which forces people/generations to drift to (or raised) in hybrid environments devoid of philosophical grounding inherent in traditional society.

LITERARY PUBLISHING IN NIGERIA

Literature has been a veritable instrument in the propagation of societal values,

religious norms and other information that people seek in the pages of books. Before Gutenberg, only the literate/aristocrats who could afford the books that were so painstakingly copied by stationers could access the information hidden in books. The Gutenberg evolution of printing technology in moveable types permitted reproductions (incunabula) of earlier books in numbers, thereby increasing access to literary works. Gutenberg's printing technology was adequately exploited by Christianity for the spread of the religion, especially by the Reformation Movement.

The new printing technology also brought about emancipation from Latin, the dominant language of learning and writing, allowing people to write and publish in the vernacular (e.g. English). This resulted in the preservation in print format of people's oral traditions, culture and other aspects of their life. In Nigeria, although printing was introduced over a century and a half ago (Calabar in 1846 and in Abeokuta in 1854), and the education system has turned out many potential consumers of literary works, traditional oral literature is yet to take its place in society, either in English or in the vernacular. Vernacular owners in Nigeria are not taking advantage of the ease provided by printing to establish their languages as a veritable means of documenting their experience spanning through the ages, and of passing it on. Similar assertion can be made of Nigerian literature in English which has failed to fill spaces in bookshops created by economic recession of the 1980s -90s that saw the thinning out of foreign books from the Nigerian book market. Unlike in the 1970s when supermarkets sold fictions and streets were lined up with book peddlers, bookshops are closing down and books are hardly a regular sight on the streets.

Book series get extinct or lose their place in the market without new ones taking their places. The African Writers Series symbol is not as ubiquitous as it used to be three decades ago. In the early 1980s, Pacesetters series by Macmillan competed for secondary students' pleasure reading list alongside thrillers and romantic novels, but after the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s it has failed to cut into the teenager market. For several years publishers have run different series, which however are yet to establish firm impression among any section of the public. Nonetheless, Joop Berkhout of Spectrum Books (Ltd) sustained a virile list of biographies and autobiographies before retiring from publishing recently.

Long-drawn economic recessions made it difficult for people to recover their reading habits. Similarly, the publishing industry, whose growth was severely truncated by the recession, fail to present products that can impress an unenthusiastic audience, who now feel that prices demanded for books are beyond their means. The cases of Europe and North America indicate that publishing and authorship developed because people were eager to be associated with books. According to Weisner-Hanks (1996):

Their major market, however, was what we today term the "general reader", the urban literate middle classes. And what did general readers of the Renaissance want to read? Mostly they wanted to read religious materials; the best-selling authors, particularly after the Reformation in the

1520s but even before, were religious (15) There is a need to expand literary genres to include themes relevant to contemporary Nigeria and Nigerian readers. Too often a reader feels hollow after reading an insipid book and wonder why time was expended on it in the first place. Staid styles and themes constitute one of the drawbacks to the effort being made to attract Nigerians to locally produced literature.

The next section highlights other hindrances to literary publishing and readership development in Nigeria.

HINDRANCES TO LITERACY PUBLISHING IN NIGERIA

Constant integration of new technologies in publication, promotion, distribution and consumption of literary works (Baran, 2002; Dominick 2002) has been very sluggish in Nigeria. On the other hand, the popular media explore technological advancement in meeting the information and entertainment of desires their audience, further drawing away potential audience of print literary works in Nigeria. Home videos proliferate and are more popular than books/reading as means of leisure. Easily marketed by word of mouth, the former are less expensive than books and readily available and accessible through neighbourhood clubs and friends. There is no doubt that popular media have their place in a person's life - even though their contribution to the propagation of time-valued social norms and mores is in question - they cannot take the place of books in personal development.

Literary publishing faces many challenges in the 21st century Nigeria, some of which are:

1.   low-level know-how and limited funding constrict capacities in all aspects of publishing, from manuscript generation to marketing and distribution books;

2.   Very slow pace in keying-in into publishing innovations to develop digital versions of books and documentaries, making digital format available online, or even marketing and distributing print formats online;

3.   Competition from better produced publications, traditional and digital books, originating from other countries;

4.   Retention of sustainable readership in the competition between books and other media. The growth in video clubs and, especially easy access to satellite television and multimedia machines, is not matched with the publication and distribution of "good" book versions or alternatives. The success of Harry Potter series indicates that despite the lure of electronic media, the book can still hold its own in the digital age;

5.   Poverty. The scourge of poverty in oil-rich Nigeria afflicts the haves and the have-nots alike, spreading its destructive tentacles to manufacturers and banks. Collapse of manufacturing and banks exacerbates the incidence of poverty and reduce access to books. Potential book audience, or its sponsors (parents), concentrate

spending on subsistence almost to the exclusion of higher ideals of reading. Unfortunately, books and reading are not necessarily associated with the rich in Nigeria. Apparently, when a child grows into an adult in a print-poor environment, it might be difficult to cultivate a reading culture, even when books are affordable.

6. Unemployment. This is closely related to poverty, but it also has a demoralising effect on the youth. High proportion of graduates without jobs in neighbourhoods could engender disenchantment with education and reading among the youth; and

7. Perceived benefits. If readers do not see much benefit in reading or education, they may find literacy activities a waste of time. Therefore, books should educate and entertain at the same time.

It is often said that "Nigerians don't read", but Uwalaka (2000) also observes that Nigerian book publishers have not persuasively touched the nerves of the society with the kinds of books that potential readers would want to buy or spend their time on. Publishers need to cultivate editors with skills, foresight and talent to pick potential authors with whom they can develop book content that meet the needs of readers. The book industry has largely been unable to develop and retain an adequate crop of professionals.

Poor promotion and distribution of literature books is another problem in the development of print literary tradition in Nigeria. Many books exist that potential readers are unaware of, just as some works are only rumoured about without copies made available where they can be accessed. Some books only get honourable mention in the media during their launch (to raise money) and disappear thereafter; the more important part of getting the book read is not always given paramount attention. Nigerian publishers do not effectively promote and distribute their books, especially literary works which have the potential for wider readership beyond the confines of bread-and-butter educational books. Vincent C. Ike, a literary icon and prominent publishing development enthusiast, among other critics, has consistently decried skewed business attention devoted to elementary and high school (elhi) books to the disadvantage of other kinds of books. An empirical study of the state of publishing business in 1994 found that educational titles constituted 60.2% and general interest books only 19.3% of publishers' last ten titles (Uwalaka, 1997). The disparity is more pronounced in volume output and sales than in title output: in a year an established publisher may fail to satisfy demand after selling 500,000 copies of an English textbook, but may not sell more than 1,000 copies of a "successful" literature title. Booksellers have similar experience in sales recorded. In another study, Uwalaka (2000) found that the profiles of publishers' book output and booksellers' sales were very similar - (publishers/booksellers): elhi books = 63.3/62.5%, tertiary books = 16.7/14.6% and other titles = 20.0/ 22.9%. The awkwardness of Nigeria's book production and distribution profiles can be better appreciated when they are

compared with those of developed countries where the ratio is usually in the reverse order in favour of non-educational books (Uwalaka, 2000). It is not surprising therefore, that writers of literary works in Nigeria find it difficult to get their works published.

Nigerian authors, such as Femi Osofisan, often complain of being short-changed in royalty payment (Uwalaka, 1990). Therefore, some writers opt for self-publication, believing that they are better-off producing and selling their own books themselves. However, self-publishing in traditional format has its own drawbacks. The author has limited marketing and distribution means and avenues, and sales by acquaintances may not be remitted. Recently, Okechukwu Ofili (Channels Television, 2013) informed viewers that he had to apply different kinds of pressures on booksellers to have them release sales from his book. On the other hand, poor quality editorial and production output can further discourage readers from consuming locally produced books.

Established publishers tread with caution for fear of receiving poor returns on investment made on literary works and other cultural products. This fear may be justified on the one hand by low sales. But considering the growing population of literate Nigerians, it is obvious that publishers' marketing know-how and effort are grossly inadequate to whip a docile people into readers. Poor reading habits and apathy towards books have persisted over the years since the economic downturn of the 1980s, such that many students are no longer eager to buy and read school textbooks and other books as it used to be.

Publishers are best-placed to develop and retain a market for their products. The onus is on publishers to cut across to parents with the right messages, so that they can change children's orientation towards reading by buying them interesting books and encouraging them to read them. Publishers should attract into the book industry some of the money that Nigerians spend on vanities like jewelleries, flamboyant clothes and on catering to their habits. Among the working class, some do not allocate sufficient funds to the purchasing of their children's school books, even though they can afford to. To such parents, supplementary materials and books for pleasure reading may seem outlandish. On the other hand, parents support, directly or indirectly, their kids entertainment via the Internet and satellite television, but fail to commit money and time to developing them in the area of pleasure reading.

If one-tenth of money and time spent on subscription for and the watching of satellite television/videos is spent on books and literacy activities, personal and national development would be significantly impacted. Saying this is not in any way to condemn veritable sources of entertainment. Home videos play a role in documenting society and are good sources of education and information. Indeed, in the United States, media literacy is part of the reading programme in schools (e.g. Trier, 2006); and Japan's video games have motivated people of Japanese descent in the US to take up the study of the language so as to be able to participate; they, thereby, learn about the Japanese culture and people (Fukunaga, 2006). However, the situation of books and reading in Nigeria is wors-

ened by the absence of libraries in immediate communities and schools - books are hardly available to compete for attention in the information and communication milieu.

Levels of government fail to establish sufficient libraries in cities and communities, leading to books being too far removed from the consciousness of the average person. It is imperative that those in places of authority provide facilities for enshrining literacy as a crucial element of development in society. To achieve this, publishers need to synergise with other professionals in the industry to design a road map(s) for governments to adopt. Similarly, the bodies should constitute a pressure group(s) to get the government and others to act. On the importance of Africans to seek information out of books and libraries, Chinua Achebe remarked that:

> … it's all there in the libraries. We must go to libraries to get the story, in those early days, we did not keep libraries in Africa and if you don't keep libraries, your story will be changed if it's not recorded. We must [not] have a situation like that again, knowledge and the storage of it helps people understand who they are, and why they have an identity that they can be proud of (*The Guardian,* January 7, 2007, p.37).

A LIGHT IN THE TUNNEL

E-publishing provides increased access to literary works but is yet to be explored in Nigeria meaningfully, despite its grow-

ing importance):

> Most of those involved in information dissemination recognise that the use of and demand for e-books and other digital content is gathering pace. More publishers are implementing digital strategies, and both general and niche aggregators are growing in strength, and continually acquiring more content. The estimated (US) Book Publishing Industry net sales for e-books (2002-2005) has risen 81.5% from $29.9m to $179.1m7). Pricing, licensing and access models are now being refined and made more acceptable, and next generation devices are becoming more user-friendly (Marlow 2006, p.195).

Greco (2004) somewhat downplayed the growing significance of e-books. His prediction about the influence of this evolution is debatable:

> A careful review of basic consumer data indicates that widespread acceptance of electronic books and the widespread distribution of book content via Web-based sites will not occur before 2015 and possibly not before 2020 (p.289).

Books are being distributed via web-based sites, sometimes with just one click on Amazon. Moreover, informational books are also being sold online in digital formats. However, Nigeria is yet to really explore electronic publishing as a means of enhancing traditional publishing or overcoming problems that have been hindering

distribution and consumption of print. Although computer access is low, it is growing - families and schools are acquiring computers, and federal and state governments are now supplying some public schools with computers. But there may not be local content to run on the computers. Visionary publishers must follow the trend of events in society, and key into them to satisfy the book industry's responsibility to the public as a supplier of cultural products. There is no doubt that digital publishing holds the key for overcoming many hindrances to publishing and information access in Nigeria.

Recent figures indicate that over 45 million Nigerians use the Internet (Internet World Statistics, 2013). They access the World Wide Web using a variety of gadgets including desktop computers, laptops, Kindle readers, Ipads, Androids and Smart phones (Alvarez, 2012). With over five million users, smart phones seem to be the most widely adopted device in Nigeria by 2012 (Haag, 2012). But 2013 market estimates indicate a phenomenal growth in the use of mobile devices, especially smart phones. Oketola (2013) observed that about 25% of Nigeria's 105 million mobile telephone subscribers use smart phones. With steady increase in inexpensive Internet plans and falling price of mobile devices, it is expected that access to devices, and by implication digital content, will widen (Haag, 2012; Ekhasomhi, 2013). However, only a minority (15.3%) use their smart phones for research and educational purposes (Alvarez, 2012).

It is not clear how many reading devices such as Kindle, Ipad, Android, Nook and Sony Reader are in use in Nigeria. Although downloading and reading software like the Kindle can be downloaded on smart phones and computers, a major problem is that Nigeria is not granted access; and a minor one, where such access exists, it requires the possession of an international transaction instrument such as credit or debit card. Nevertheless, the Questia library permits payments with Nigerian currency-denominated cards. Additionally, readers can access and download free titles from global sources such as www.gutenberg.org using their mobile devices.

Against the gloomy picture painted above is a silver lining. A young Nigerian engineer has set up online book apps mid 2013 that has enabled many Nigerians to access and publish books. Similarly, Tunde Leye, a banker found that a year after its launch/publication, millions of bloggers had accessed his books online. The local applications, *Okadabooks,* introduced by Okechukwu Ofilli on the Google Play Store already had about 3,000 users and over 7,500 books in its library by July, 2013 (Walter, 2013). The library collection includes classical titles such as *Alice in Wonderland* and recent bestsellers such as Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* (Water, 2013). In two months it recorded over 7,500 downloads (Okechukwu on Channels Television). Its uniqueness is that payment is made with phone credit, making the store accessible to anyone that uses phone. One would like to see this venture firmly established. Flourishing, it should also avail its patrons Nigerian and African classics.

Efforts are being made to provide digital books in Nigeria, but mainly by tertiary institutions. The National Open University

of Nigeria provides on its website hundreds of modules for free download by its students. The University has also installed a print-on-demand (POD) machine to facilitate local download and printing of educational materials. Institutional libraries have arrangement with foreign content suppliers which permits people to access digital resources on campus.

Some educational institutions are also collaborating with device suppliers and content developers to provide teachers and students with tablets for accessing educational content. For instance, in 2013, the Redeemer's University introduced a customised Samsung Galaxy for all members of staff, and plans to extend the same to students. In a similar vein, the Osun State government introduced customised tablets in all secondary schools in the state, with content of recommended texts pre-paid on it.

CONCLUSION

In exploiting digital media, relevant bodies in government and the publishing professions need to determine what the goals of publishing in Nigeria should be so as to tailor activities towards achieving them. In addition, and of urgent importance, is the documentation in book and electronic formats of Nigeria's dying heritage in both literary and historic forms. "Antiquity has a great importance for the understanding of the reality of this age, since the information given includes all aspects of historical plot" (*The* corpus *of the epistolography of the Late Antiquity and its study*). Therefore, governments and/or

peoples of Nigeria, in recognising the importance of diverse national cultural heritages, can establish relevant academies to oversee the gathering and management of literary traditions and histories. The archival materials that will result from such a process could serve as a veritable resource for future writers.

REFERENCES

Adenekan, S. (January 24, 2008). Cyprian Ekwensi: Bringing world acclaim to Nigerian literature. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from http://archive.is/O38H1.

Alvarez, K. (2012). Nigeria Study: What do most people use Blackberry for? Retrieved from http://blackberryempire.com/nigeria-study-what-do-most-people-use-blackberry-for/

The Applied History Research Group. (1998). Language and literature. (The end of Europe's Middle Ages). Retrieved from The University of Calgary website: http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/endmiddle/FRAMES/langframe.html

Baran, J. S. (2002). *Introduction to mass communication: Media literacy and culture* (2nd edn.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Bryant, A. (November 20, 2013). Nearly Half of Parents Plan on Buying E-Reading Devices for Kids This Holiday Season. Retrieved from http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2013/nearly-half-of-parents-plan-on-buying-e-reading-devices-for-kids-this-holiday-season/?et_mid=649201&rid=241004386.

Channels Television. (Aug 29, 2013). Channels Book Club (24 August 2013 edition). Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Wyu7HClMbc.

The corpus *of the epistolography of the late antiquity and its study.* (n.d.). Retrieved from Universitat Barcelonia website: http://www.ub.es/gratgrat03.htm.

Dominick, R. J. 2002. *The dynamics of mass communication: Media in the digital age* (7th edn.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Ekhasomhi, S. (2013). How Nigerian book lovers can tap into the advantages of reading Kindle books. Retrieved from http://www.nairaland.com/1253232/going-ki9ndle-nigeria

Fukunaga, N. (2006). "Those anime students". Foreign language literacy development through Japanese popular culture. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy,* 50(3), 208-222.

Greco, A. N. (2004). *The book publishing industry.* Mahwah, NJ.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Greenfield, J. (November 18, 2013). Shatzkin: The Challenge and Opportunity of Self-Published Authors for Publishers. Retrieved from http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2013/shatzkin-the-challenge-and-opportunity-of-self-published-authors-for-publishers/?et_mid=648714&rid=241004386

The Guardian. (2007, January 7). Achebe in Jamaica. *The Guardian,* pp.28 & 37.

Haag, M. (2012). Blackberry market still growing strong in Nigeria accessed. Retrieved November 5, 2013 from http://crackberry.com/blackberry-market-growing-nigeria accessed.

Hillesund, T. (2001). Will e-books change the world? *First Monday,* 6. http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/891/800>

Ike, V. C. (1990). The book crisis in ECOWAS sub-region: An African writer's appraisal. In NERDC (Ed.) *International seminar on book and reading in ECOWAS sub-region.* (pp.39-41). Nigeria: NERDC.

Mackey, M. (2003). Researching new forms of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 38(3), 403-407.

Marlow, M. (2006). E-volution of revolution: Some observations on emerging trends in content, technology and service provision. *Information Services & Use,* 26, 191-197 http://iospress.metapress.com/content/4c7jkddd91tpux82/fulltext.pdf.

McKenna, M. C., Conradi, K., Lawrence, C. Jang, B. C. (2012). Reading attitudes of middle school students: Results of a U.S. Survey. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 47(3), 283-306.

Meldrum, B. H. (1985). *Under the sun: Myth and realism in Western American literature.* New York: Whitston Pub. Co.

Merlyn, T. (2004). *Writing revolution: The British radical literary tradition as the seminal force in the development of adult education, its Australian context, and the life and work of Eric Lambert* (Unpublished PhD thesis). Griffith University, Australia. Retrieved from http://www4.gu.edu.au:8080/adtroot/uploads/approved/adt-QGU2000

40616.131738.public/01Front.pdf.

Nixon, H. (2003). New research literacies for contemporary research into literary and new media? *Reading Research Quarterly,* 38(3), 407-413.

Oketola, D. (2013). 25% of Nigerian Mobile Subscribers use smart phones. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com/business/technology/25-0f-nigerian-mobile.

Owomoyela, O. (2007). African literature. *Microsoft®Student* [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation.

Oyedokun, T. (2006, November 12). Fela, Achebe join Mandela on Time's Heroes list. The Guardian, p.6.

Playscience. (2013). Understanding the e-reading habits of children aged 2-13. An introduction to a 2013 DBW conference material. Retrieved from http://store.digitalbookworld.com/abcs-of-kids-and-ebooks.

Rose, H. D. & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning* (Chapter 4) Retrieved from Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) website: http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/2002rose/2002rosetoc.html

Trier, J. 2006. Network: Still "mad as hell" after 30 years. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy.* 50(3), 232-236.

UNESCO. (1970). Records of the general conference. Sixteenth session, Paris, 12 October to 14 November 1970. Vol 1: Resolutions. Retrieved from UNESCO website: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001140/114046.pdf.

Uwalaka, M. N. (1990). Report on workshop on the Nigerian copyright law:

Implications for the book industry (unpublished report) University Press Plc., Nigeria.

Uwalaka, M. N. (1997). Book publishing in Nigeria: The findings of a pilot study (Unpublished doctoral paper). University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Uwalaka, M. N. (2000). *Book publishing performance in the Nigerian economic environment* (Unpublished dissertation). University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Verissimo, J. (April 22, 2007). Unoma Azuah: Writing gives me sanity. *The Guardian,* p. 57.

Verissimo, J. (January 7, 2007). My works are my babies - Chika Unigwe. *The Guardian,* p.45.

Walter, S. (2013). Would you read Nigerian books on mobile devices? Okadabooks is betting on it. Retrieved from www.mymmdsnaps.wordpress.com.

Weisner-Hanks, M. 1996. The world of the Renaissance print shop. http://www.uwm.edu/library/special/exhibits/incunab/incmwh.htm.