

# Book Market Guide

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**Chukwuemeka Ike, (ed) THE NIGERIAN DIRECTORY OF BOOK DEVELOPMENT, The Nigerian Book Foundation & Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, 1997.**

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**N**IGERIAN Book Foundation (NBF) is a non-governmental, non-profit, organisation dedicated to book development in Nigeria. As an umbrella organisation bringing together key participants in the book industry, NBF ensures that the various links in the book chain function optimally and that the state provides an enabling environment for the growth of the book. This publication is, therefore, in partial fulfillment of its responsibilities.

The *Directory* has four segments: Directories, The Nigerian Book Foundation, Appendix, and Indexes. The first, Directories, is further subdivided into five parts. Spanning some 190 pages, it forms the trunk of the book. Each of the five parts is a major directory on its own. The first part, Authorship, begins with a brief essay, 'Authorship in Nigeria', which outlines the state of writing in Nigeria. The essay manages to alight, like a bird ever so briefly, on such topical issues as the emergence of small scale 'publishers' and the spate of memoirs/autobiographies by distinguished, retired public servants and army officers in the past twenty years or so. Brief as it is, the attention given to the Association of Nigeria Authors should have been extended to such bodies as Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association of Nigeria, the Association of West African Young Writers, Women Writers of Nigeria (WRITA), Writers, Artists and Kindred Ensemble, Mathematical Association of Nigeria, and Science Teacher's Association of Nigeria. These were dismissed in two sentences, and, except Writers, Artists and Kindred Ensemble, have no contact addresses. The essay introduces the Directory of Published Nigeria Authors, which list 749 authors of creative, educational and technical works. The listing was done alphabetically, using authors' names and not according to the kind of books published. Considering the existence of *Nigerian Books in Print* published by Nigerian Publishers' Association in 1996, one wonders if this part of the NBF Directory

is not a duplication. It is incisive to note that Nigerian Book in print is a 460-page work while NBF Directory treats published Nigeria authors and their books in 105 pages only (pp 11-116). This gives birth inevitably to the suspicion that the NBF Directory may not have been very comprehensive. This suspicion is enhanced by the admission in the introduction that 'to ensure that staff of tertiary institutions who had published books were not left out, the Foundation sought the cooperation of staff of those institutions known to the President of the Foundation...' (emphasis mine). This is an inadequate method of reaching out to authors. The Academic Staff Union of Universities, university libraries and librarians, Public Relations Units of universities and institutions of higher learning, would have done the job better.

Again, most of the book entries do not have International Standard Book Number (ISBN). A few are denuded of such data as place of publication, name of publishing company and year of publication, like some trees of foliage in winter. Much as we appreciate the problems associated with data collection in Nigeria - the most fundamental being our appalling disregard for data and statistics, it will be expected that since most of the entries with missing ISBN and other bibliographic information have the addresses of the authors, these authors should have been contacted for information on their books.

Part 11 of this first segment, Publishing, features a short essay which introduces the main section, Directory of Book Publishing Houses. Here, as in other segments, the *Nigerian Directory of Book Development* exists as an invaluable pool of information. With such entry as heading, Year, Titles, Number of Titles in Print, and Distribution Arrangement, data analysis and cross-comparison are made easy. A cursory glance reveals that most of the publishing houses have less than fifty titles in print, despite their being established over a decade ago. Most released less than ten titles

in the preceding year (1996, or in some case, 1995). In all there are sixty-six publishing houses. University Press Plc, Ibadan, established in 1978 and with more than 1,000 books in print, could release only fourteen titles in 1995. University of Lagos Press, established in 1980, with 102 titles in print, released only three books in 1996. Again in 1996, Evans Brothers, established in 1966 and with over 2,000 books in print, released only ten books, and Fourth Dimension, established in 1977, with over 800 titles in print, released only ten books. The deduction could be reached that the decay in publishing hit an all-time high in the past ten years. If the companies above were publishing ten books or less annually since their establishment in the 60s and 70s, they could not have released such large number of titles that they have. While the contemplation of this landscape of decay depresses us, Spectrum Books, Kraft Books and Zim Pan African Publishers come, like unravished maidens bearing a bouquet of hope, with their 36, 16 and 15 new titles respectively in 1996.

Another interesting fact emerging from a study of the entries in this part is that Nigerian publishers have not yet come to grips with the mechanics of international book distribution. Most of the companies distribute their books through one outlet: their showroom/warehouse/office. Almost all the publishers have no overseas distribution agent/channel; only a handful have an arrangement with African Books Collective, and because ABC accepts a very limited number from one publisher at a time, this arrangement is grossly inadequate.

The other parts of the segment on Directories (parts 111-V) feature the directories of Book Printing Presses; Bookshops and Book Distribution Organisations; and Libraries in

Nigeria. Statistics from the entries here show some sixty-six book printing presses, seventy bookshops and book distributors, and 824 libraries. The libraries include state, national, school and special libraries.

Two most thoughtful inclusions in the Directory are the last two segments entitled Appendix and Indexes. The Appendix features questionnaires on all the directories. This will enable those who were not included to furnish information for inclusion in a future edition; it could also be used to update already published information. The Indexes - listed alphabetically by surname for authors, and business names for publishers, printers, etc., - make tracing any entry in the Directory a delight.

*Directory of Nigerian Book Development* is a well laid-out and timely publication that attests volubly to the editorial skill of Chukwuemeka Ike. Hopefully an update would follow soon. Perhaps, the Directory of Organisations Involved in the Production, Importation, and Distribution of Paper and other Materials for Book Development in Nigeria, and the Directory of Nigeria Book Publishing and Distribution Personnel shelved for lack of adequate data will be included then. For that future edition, the segment on published Nigerian authors should indicate the type of book written/edited by an author, and the ISBN. These pieces of information would help international acquisition librarians immensely. In its present state, however, with five directories (on Authorship, Publishing, Printing, Distribution - bookshops - and Libraries) the Directory of *Nigerian Book Development* is a unique reference material on the book industry in Nigeria.

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## Under Western Eyes

Krydz Ikwuemesi

SINCE the beginning of this decade, there has been a re-newed interest in African art within Western art circles. This has given rise to a number of exhibitions and other projects focussing on African art in Western Museums, galleries and related institutions. Such international shows as Africa Hoy! Africa Explores, Les Magiciens de la Terre, Contemporary African Artists: Changing Traditions, Africa '95, The Poetics of Line: Seven Artists of the Nsukka Group, and Transvanguard are very familiar.

They are interesting, too, not so much for their scope and ambition as for the history they generate. In the characteristic Occidental tradition, each of these exhibitions is accompanied by quality publications, some of them grand narratives, which extend the frontiers of what could be seen as internationalist monologic artistic discourse led by the West. Out of the exhibitions cited above, The Poetics of Line and Transvanguard are the most recent and, in line with tradition, they have given rise to two separate books. The first, written by

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